

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th September, 2010

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. C. Quigley, Town Solicitor;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. J. Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Adamson and Hendron.

Minutes

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

Transition Committee Business

Review of Public Administration Update

The Committee was reminded that discussions were ongoing within the Northern Ireland Executive in respect of the Review of Public Administration and how the reform of Local Government within Northern Ireland would be progressed. At present there remained significant uncertainty about the future of the Review and the associated implementation timetable. Despite such uncertainty, the Local Government sector had recognised the need to maintain momentum and seek to develop its own proposals in respect of an "improvement, collaboration and efficiency" programme for Local Government. The intention would be to support Councils in delivering more efficient and value-for-money services to the citizen. Such work was particularly important given the current financial pressures facing Local Government and the wider public sector. The Chief Executive drew the Committee's attention to the following key issues:

Meeting with the Environment Minister

A delegation from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives met with the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots, on 15th September to discuss the proposed next steps in respect of the Review of Public Administration. It was understood that the Minister intended to submit an options paper for the consideration of the Northern Ireland Executive in October, 2010.

Update on Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency Work

At the aforementioned meeting, the Environment Minister had been provided with an update on the ongoing local government led work on developing proposals for an improvement, collaboration and efficiency programme, a copy of which had been circulated to the Members. That report had indicated that exploratory work was ongoing in order to examine and identify potential collaborative opportunities on a local, sub-regional and regional level, which might support service improvement or drive efficiencies in delivery. Areas which were currently under consideration included procurement, information systems, human resources, asset management, finance and customer-facing services. Council officers had been involved in that scoping work, in line with the Committee's previous decision that the Council engage with potential partners to explore collaborative opportunities and ensure that those were considered within the context of the Council's own efficiency programme. It would be the intention that that work would culminate in the development of an over-arching business case for local government which would set out potential opportunities and a cost-benefit analysis. The Committee would be kept fully informed as that work progressed and, in particular, of any potential opportunities which might emerge.

Legislation

The Council had received correspondence from the Department for Regional Development indicating that the draft Roads (Transfer of Functions) District Councils Bill would be withdrawn from the Northern Ireland Executive's legislative programme. The Council had responded previously to the consultation exercise on the draft Bill, the aim of which was to transfer certain roads related functions, currently undertaken by the Department for Regional Development's Roads Service, to the proposed new eleven Councils following the implementation of the Review of Public Administration. The correspondence stated that, given the fact that it would not now be possible to create the envisaged new Council structure by 2011 as had been planned, the Minister had decided that it would be impractical to consider transferring the functions contained in the Bill to the existing twenty-six District Councils.

Transfer of Functions

A Transfer of Functions paper, suggesting that a number of voluntary integrated area based pilot schemes be investigated with the aim of bringing together regeneration, planning and community development, was being currently prepared and a further report in this regard would be submitted to the Committee for its consideration in October.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for the Department for Regional Development seeking discussions in respect of further strengthening the relationship between the Roads Service and the Council.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Future Leadership Requirements

The Committee was reminded that the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Local Government Association had resigned recently to take up a post in the Health Sector. The Association had appointed consultants to undertake a review of its future leadership requirements, with a view to informing a recruitment process to appoint a new Chief Executive. The consultants had compiled a draft report in this regard which had been circulated to all Councils for consideration and comment. The draft report gave consideration to the changing environment in which the Association operated and the associated challenges which it faced, for example, the uncertainty in respect of future funding. It set out also suggestions in regards to the potential future activity of the Association and proposals in relation to the appointment of a new Chief Executive.

It was pointed out that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association received currently a large element of funding from the Department of the Environment to support the Review of Public Administration reform programme and the established implementation structures which had been in place, that is, the Strategic Leadership Board and the Policy Development Panels. The uncertainties around reform, the fact that the majority of the Review of Public Administration policy-related work was largely complete and the budgetary pressures facing the Department of the Environment meant that such funding was unlikely to be maintained at the current level. Furthermore, given the current economic pressures facing all Councils, continued payment of annual subscription fees would be subject to a value-for-money assessment.

Within that context, it would be important in looking forward that the Association ensured that it was a lean and focused organisation which provided value-for-money to its members. It was suggested that the Committee might wish to respond to the Association on that basis and recommend that it might wish to concentrate its efforts on those issues which might need regional co-ordination and consistency. In addition, consideration would need to be given to the sustainability and relevance of the current organisational structure and staff complement of the Association, given that it had been put in place as an interim measure to assist the policy formation phase of the Review of Public Administration process which was now complete.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to respond to the Association on the basis outlined.

Annual General Meeting

The Northern Ireland Local Government Association had held on 17th September its Annual General Meeting and a list of the confirmed elected member appointments to the positions of President and Vice-President, the Executive Committee, Working Groups and Outside Bodies had been circulated to the Members.

Noted.

**Consultation Event –
Sustainable Development Implementation Plan**

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, in partnership with the Sustainable Development Division of the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, had issued an invitation to attend a consultation event to be held on 28th September in the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown. The purpose of the event would be to populate the Office of the Minister and Deputy First Minister's Sustainable Development Implementation Plan with Local Government commitments and to provide views on the commitments proposed by Central Government. The invitation was for two Elected Members and he recommended that the Committee be represented by two Members on the Northern Ireland Local Government Association's Health and Environment and Economic Development Working Groups.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Performance Management and Corporate Plan

**Corporate Plan Update
from Members' Workshop**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of the report

To outline key points from the strategic planning workshop held 8 September 2010 in the Ulster Hall.

Background

A workshop, to which all Members of Council were invited, was held on 8th September 2010. The purpose of the workshop was to give Members the opportunity to discuss future priorities in the context of the Council's financial environment, including the capital programme. The workshop was the culmination of a series of North/South/East/West briefings held for Members on the development of the corporate plan, the capital programme and Strategic Regeneration Frameworks. Twenty-two Members attended the workshop.

Outcome of the workshop

After presentations from the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Property and Projects, Members broke up into round-table workshop sessions to discuss what they had heard and to give their views on the way forward. Members discussed four broad areas:

- What do Members want to achieve at the end of the plan and the role of Members in taking the plan forward;
- The main themes in the current corporate plan - economy, environment and people and communities and if these need to change;
- The capital programme - finding a process to reach agreement about priorities
- Process – Members’ views on the current broad structure of the current corporate plan and whether this should be retained.

Key points made by Members and Issues raised

Members raised vital issues both in terms of the development of the corporate plan and what the Council’s future focus should be. Discussion revealed a rich spread of views across Members about the role of the Council and what its corporate plan should contain; however, all comments focused on improving life for citizens across the city and on the importance of the Council’s leadership, especially in economically uncertain times. Some of the key points most consistently raised by Members at the workshop are summarised below; however, it is important to reiterate that this was only the beginning of discussions with Members about the development of the plan. The issues raised by Members will be worked on by officers as the basis of continued and on-going engagement on whatever basis members feel is most appropriate – in party groups, in Committees and on an area basis with a view to developing a plan that is stretching but realistic and deliverable, bounded within the limits of what we can afford and is a real reflection of Members’ commitment to improving quality of life in Belfast.

Views on current corporate plan

- The overall framework of the plan – in terms of the broad themes of leadership, economy, environment, people and communities and better services - is still solid; however, consideration needs to be given in the months ahead to what the priority projects and programmes are within this and how success will be measured;
- The number of priorities and performance measures need to be reduced and focused;
- The plan needs to be realistic and focus on areas where it can make demonstrable improvements; citizens need to see and experience these improvements;
- The corporate plan needs to be focused but also allow the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities in what is an uncertain and fluctuating environment;

- The right set of values, behaviours and way of working is important to future success;
- A balance needs to be found between area-based and city-wide discussions;
- The plan needs to be action focused but more strategic – too much of a mix of the strategic and operational at present.

Leadership and Influence

- Need to use democratic mandate to influence and shape the city – should look at the city on a local, area and citywide basis. There should be a particular focus on urban regeneration;
- There should be a balance between ambition for the city and focus on core issues;
- We need to measure how well we are dealing with issues where our focus is influence or civic leadership
- We should look to the future and anticipate the areas where the Council may eventually have further influence – such as planning and regeneration
- There needs to be clarity about the Council's leadership role so effort is focused, not dissipated.
- We need a much more strategic approach to city planning and development
- Should continue to move forward with a community planning approach – with clear member input and a local area focus.

Priorities and Issues

- Particular concern about how to make things work locally - need to think about how we plan and allocate resources at a local level;
- Concerned about the lack of integration between the work of statutory agencies in local areas;
- Renewing the routes; alley gating cited as examples of where Council's intervention was visible to local people;
- Need to find balance between core mandatory activity and contribution to the broader priorities of citizens such as safety and support for children and young people;
- Support for high impact / low cost initiatives;
- Economy a key issue for the city but need to focus on the right things to have influence, connectivity across the city is key;
- Need better integration across services and to use our assets and services in a way that has most impact;
- Improving key services remains a priority.

Process

- Support for Members in the process and new Members' induction is vital;
- Need an effective framework for prioritisation;
- Scenario planning for setting the rate helpful and briefings helpful Members want options with consequences to help them make decisions;
- New Council after May elections – need to have the flexibility to allow new Council to modify and shape the plan further.

Capital

- Need to get into process about prioritisation and the consequences of decisions about ceasing/continuing investment;
- Need a city-wide perspective;
- Need to balance iconic and local schemes;
- Need to be imaginative about financing options including the role of other sectors.

Next steps

Members stressed the importance of continued engagement in the corporate planning process and the rate setting and capital programme prioritisation processes. A series of briefings will therefore be organised to take place during October on these issues with further reports brought to the Committee until the plan is finalised. As Members discussed at the workshop, the Committee is working towards January 2011 to have a high level draft of the plan in place.

Resource Implications

Financial

The development of the corporate plan is being taken forward in tandem with the development of financial plans for 2011 and beyond so that Members can consider its content in the context of affordability.

Decisions required

Members are asked to note the key points emerging from the workshop and agree to further briefings to take forward the process of developing the corporate plan;

Work is on-going at service and departmental level across the Council to provide proposals for Members consideration in terms of projects, programmes and performance measures for inclusion in the new corporate plan. In order to facilitate this work the Committee is asked to agree that these plans can be developed within the broad framework of the current Value Creation Map subject to its amendment by the Committee.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Corporate Consultation Exercise – Public, Employees and Members

The Committee discussed a report which set out high level feedback on the consultation exercises which had been carried out to inform the development of the new Corporate Plan, provide performance management information and help the Council fulfil its duty to consult, which is part of the Best Value Legislation.

The Committee was informed of the key priorities emerging from the consultations and other findings, including the fact that the overall rate of satisfaction with Council services had improved to 78%.

During discussion, a number of Members highlighted the importance of continued engagement with local communities and the Committee noted that, within the context of agreeing the new Corporate Plan, a detailed communication plan would widely disseminate the results to all key stakeholders.

Democratic Services and Governance

Requests for the 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
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	International Conference Dinner 2nd June, 2011 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall	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 Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together', 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.	The use of the City Hall

Organisation / Body	Event / Date – Number of Delegates / Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, Queen's University Belfast	Third International Cancer Conference Dinner 7th September, 2011 Approximately 250 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 Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Political Studies Association	Political Studies Association 62nd Annual Conference Dinner 4th April, 2012 Approximately 350 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 and Together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Nutrition Society, Queen's University Belfast	Nutrition Society Conference Dinner 18th July, 2012 Approximately 300 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 and Together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Queen's University Belfast	International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies Conference Dinner 26th July, 2012 Approximately 250 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 and Together'.	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 Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists	Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists Conference Dinner 17th November, 2012 Approximately 300 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 and Together'.	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
Worshipful Company of Engineers, City of London	Worshipful Company of Engineers Annual Conference Dinner 27th September, 2013 Approximately 120 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 and Together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £480
British Council Northern Ireland	Business Education Initiative Graduation Ceremony 22nd October, 2010 Approximately 110 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to recognise those students who have been successful in completing the Business Education Initiative. The event will award these students with scholarships to study business and management for one academic year at colleges in the United States. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £165
Gems NI Limited	Young Entrepreneurs Pilot Programme Awards 16th December, 2010 Approximately 45 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to recognise those participants who have successfully completed the Young Entrepreneurs Pilot Programme. The programme aims to provide participants with an opportunity to explore enterprise as a viable means of employment while improving their confidence, self-esteem, motivation and team building skills. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £70

Organisation / Body	Event / Date – Number of Delegates / Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Network for Youth	Youth Achievement Awards 24th November, 2010 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to recognise the achievements of young people and the subsequent contribution made by these individuals to the areas of Suffolk and Lenadoon. Furthermore, the awards aim to highlight the support available for young people from within the communities and promote the sense of pride among young people for their local area. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £150
The Scout Association	Queen's Scout Award and Chief Scout's Award Certificate Presentation 7th January, 2011 Approximately 450 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event aims to recognise the achievements of young people who have successfully demonstrated the determination and persistence required to achieve their personal best in terms of effort, commitment and self-reliance. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £675
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Volunteer Services	Belfast Trust Volunteer Awards 6th June, 2011 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall	The Belfast Trust has approximately 300 volunteers who support existing services in a variety of roles. This event seeks to recognise the contribution made by the volunteers in supporting service delivery in both acute and community settings. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together', 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.	The use of the City Hall

Organisation / Body	Event / Date – Number of Delegates / Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
National Deaf Children's Society	Young Authors and Artists Prize Day 7th June, 2011 Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event aims to promote 'a world without barriers' by recognising the talents and achievements of deaf young people. Furthermore, the awards seek to improve the confidence and self-esteem of participants as well as promote their involvement in the decisions which will have an impact on the services they require. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together', 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £300
Parks and Leisure Department Belfast City Council	City of Belfast International Rose Trials Luncheon 14th July, 2011 Approximately 150 attending	The use of City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a Civic Luncheon	The City of Belfast International Rose Trials will be held during Rose Week. The Trials are renowned worldwide for attracting international rose growers in addition to a significant number of visitors. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together'.	The use of City Hall and the provision of a Civic Lunch Approximate cost £3,750
Cooke Rugby Football Club	Cooke Rugby Football Club Centenary Dinner 29th January, 2011 Approximately 300 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	This event seeks to celebrate the 100 th Anniversary of Cooke Rugby Football Club and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes	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 Committee adopted the recommendations.

Burma Star Association (Belfast Branch)

The Committee was advised that the Burma Star Association had been established in Northern Ireland in 1954. It comprised ex-service personnel who had been awarded with the Burma Star, for service in Burma during World War II, or with the Pacific Star with Burma Clasp. Today there were forty-four surviving members of the Belfast Branch, most of whom were between 81 and 95 years of age. Each August the Belfast Branch paraded to the Cenotaph at the City Hall on the Sunday closest to the 15th in order to mark the anniversary of VJ Day in 1945. Due to ill health and mobility problems, only a dozen or so veterans were now able to take part in the parade. It was for that reason that the Belfast Branch would be disbanding and handing over its Standard at a service in St. Anne's Cathedral on Sunday, 3rd October, 2010.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that, given the Council's close relation with the Burma Star Association over a number of years, several Members of the Council had expressed a desire for the Council to mark the disbandment of the Belfast Branch with a civic reception. He indicated that, if the Committee were minded to host such a reception, it was anticipated that it would be held in November or December this year over a lunch-time as that was more suitable for the elderly veterans and he recommended accordingly.

The Committee adopted the recommendation

Member Development Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information"

The Council is at vital stage in its planning process - setting the rate, agreeing a capital programme for five years and a new three year corporate plan.

New aspirations and strategic direction will emerge through the work to develop the corporate plan for 2011 and beyond. In the context of discussions about the new corporate plan, Members have outlined the need to manage change within the organisation and evolve new ways of working with communities, partners and central government and its agencies. Members' leadership of these is vital and capacity will be needed across a number of areas, including for example:

- **Pursuing high performance to ensure that productivity is high and the value of public services is optimised.**
- **Exploring ways to build community capacity and engage local people in a dialogue about how delivery systems can change while protecting social outcomes.**
- **Seeking efficiency savings while protecting valuable services to residents.**
- **Building relationships and trust with partners to have challenging conversations about how resources might be moved around.**

The political leadership role required by elected Members is becoming increasingly complex and challenging at a time when building the Council's collaborative leadership capacity will be key to us taking a leading role in delivering an ambitious agenda for the city.

In addition, the local government elections are expected to take place in May 2011 and experience has shown that there is usually a significant turnover in Members at the elections resulting in a loss of knowledge, skills and experience.

It is therefore timely to consider the support that Members receive through effective training, development and induction.

Key Issues

It is proposed therefore to:

- Revise the Council's current Member Development Plan (which was agreed by the former Policy and Resources (Members) Sub-Committee in May 2007) and
- Provide immediate training and development support to newer Members of the Council.

Revision of Member Development Framework

Benchmarking work with high performing local authorities has highlighted the following as being key elements of successful elected Member development:

- There is a need for cross party steering group to oversee the development and implementation of a Member Development Strategy.
- The Member Development Charter should be used to develop the Strategy.
- Members' roles and responsibilities should be clearly set out and communicated.
- Structured induction and personal development planning processes should be in place.
- There should be an allocated Member development budget.
- Development activities should be facilitated internally in the main with some use of external expertise.

Many of these elements are contained within our current Member Development Plan and consequently it is proposed that a Member/Officer Steering Group is established to review this and oversee the development and implementation of an integrated, revised Member Development Strategy. It is proposed that the group should comprise one Member from each of the Party Groupings and staff from the Democratic Services and Human Resources Sections. The Steering Group would also be assisted in its deliberations by Chief Officers and/or Senior Managers as required.

Provision of Induction support for newer Members

Since the last government elections 13 new Members have joined the Council. These newer Members are expected to become involved in a range of complicated and crucial decisions including the rate setting process, the affordability limits for the capital programme and the development of the new corporate plan. It is proposed therefore to offer relevant support to these new Members through a programme of training sessions relating to finance; rate setting; planning for the future and performance management delivered between October and December 2010. Clearly, these sessions will also be available to any other Member who wishes to attend.

Resource Implications

None. The Steering Group will be serviced by staff during normal working hours.

The training sessions will be provided in-house and therefore no costs will be incurred.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree to:

1. The establishment of a Member/Officer Steering Group comprising one Member from each of the Party Groupings;
2. The first meeting of the Steering Group, to establish terms of reference and agree a programme of work, to be held in October, 2010.
3. Training sessions to be provided for newer Members (and any others who wish to attend) between October and December 2010.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Transitional Governance Arrangements
for the Education Sector**

The Committee was reminded that it was intended that the five Education and Library Boards should be replaced with an Education and Skills Authority. That required political agreement at Assembly level and, in the period prior to the establishment of the new body, streamlined Education and Library Boards were being put in place as an interim measure.

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 11th December, 2009, it had considered a request from the Minister for Education to put forward, in line with the guidelines published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the names of at least eight Councillors who would be willing to sit on the transitional Board. The Committee had agreed to nominate only four Members with the representatives being selected using a one-off d'Hondt process. That had resulted in the nominations falling to the Sinn Féin, Democratic Unionist, Ulster Unionist and Social Democratic and Labour Party Groupings, with Councillors Convery, Hartley, Rodgers and Rodway having been put forward for selection.

Subsequently, further correspondence had been received from the Minister on 17th February reiterating the need for the Council to nominate at least two persons for each vacancy and requesting that an additional four names be forwarded to her. That had been drawn to the Committee's attention at its meeting on 19th February, when it had been decided to affirm the decision of 11th December to nominate only four Members to the four places to which the Council was entitled under the legislation.

The Democratic Services Manager explained that the Minister for Education had written again to the Council requesting it to review its position with a view to providing a total of eight nominees in order to comply with the guidelines of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. In her letter, the Minister had explained that she was required to follow the procedures laid down by the Commissioner and that twenty-four out of the twenty-five other Councils in Northern Ireland had complied with the request to provide multiple nominees. Accordingly, the Committee, at its meeting on 21st May, had agreed to an additional four nominees, which were to be provided by the same four Party Groupings as previously agreed, being forwarded to the Minister for consideration for appointment to the interim Belfast and Education Library Board, on the basis that the Minister would agree that the final selections made by her would entail one selection from each of the four largest Party Groupings on the Council. That decision had been ratified by the Council at its meeting on 1st June. However, the Democratic Unionist Party Grouping had refused to nominate a second candidate and a letter was sent to the Minister on 9th June supplying seven names requesting that the Minister make her selections from that list, whilst ensuring that one Member of each of the four largest Party Groupings on the Council was included.

A further letter had now been received from the Department of Education indicating that two of the seven candidates nominated by the Council, that is, Councillors D. Browne and N. Kelly, had subsequently informed the Department that they no longer wished to be considered for the appointments. Accordingly, the Department had asked for the submission of an additional three names in order to allow the process to proceed.

After discussion, it was agreed that it be left to each of the four main Party Groupings to decide whether to submit one or two names to the Minister to be considered for appointment to the transitional Board.

2011 Somme Pilgrimage

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Somme Association enquiring if the Council would wish to be represented on the 2011 Pilgrimage to the Somme, France, from 28th June till 2nd July, 2011. The Somme Pilgrimage, to mark the 95th Anniversary of the battle, would follow the route taken by both the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions during their service in the First World War. Services of Commemoration would be held in both Thiepval and Guillemont, in addition to the attendance at the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres. The cost per person of attendance was approximately £595 per person.

In previous years the Committee had authorised the attendance on the Somme tour of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council. It was pointed out that places on the Pilgrimage were limited and, in previous years, late replies had resulted in Members failing to obtain a place on the Tour. In addition, the Local Government Elections would be held in May, 2011 and, if the Committee were minded to approve attendance at the event, no confirmation of names would be able to be submitted until that time. Therefore, it would be the intention to book one place for each of the current Party Groupings on the Council, which would require a deposit of £100 per person, with confirmation of those attending being sought after the Local Government elections in May, 2011.

The Committee approved the attendance on the Tour of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council and the Chief Executive (or his nominee).

The Social Policy and Ageing Research Centre Conference

The Committee was reminded that one of the Council's current priorities was improving services to older people. To ensure that that priority was given due regard across all Council services, an All-Party Reference Group on Older People, which reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, had been set up a number of years ago. In addition, a cross-Departmental officer group had developed an action plan for improving those services and, as part of that action plan, an opportunity had been identified to present a paper on the civic engagement opportunities provided by the Council for older people at the Social Policy and Ageing Research Centre Annual Conference 2010, which was being hosted by Queen's University Belfast and Trinity College in Dublin on 16th and 17th November.

The Conference, which was entitled "Becoming Visible: Older people as Active Participants in the Community and in Long-term Care Settings", would consider how policies and practices for engaging older people in the community and in long-term care settings differed across countries and would identify good practice. It would explore also the principles and practicalities of optimising older people's participation and the mechanisms for engaging greater numbers of older people as active citizens.

The All-Party Reference Group, at its meeting on 20th June, had agreed to submit a paper for the event and, if approved, had agreed also that it should be delivered by the Chairman of the Reference Group (Councillor B. Kelly). The paper had subsequently been approved by the organisers.

Accordingly, it was recommended that Councillor B. Kelly be authorised to attend the conference, the cost of which would be approximately €150 and that an officer be authorised to attend one day of the event at a cost of €30 (special rate).

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Maximising the Impact of European Union Funds Conference

The Committee was advised that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association was facilitating a seminar in the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick on 27th October. The event was entitled “Maximising the Impact of European Union Funds – Energising Growth”, the purpose of which was to explore not only current European Union funding opportunities but to start a discussion on future European programmes post 2013. Importance would be placed on identifying those funding areas within the current round of European Union funding programmes which were under-represented by Local Government and to encourage Councils to draw down those monies while the opportunity still existed. There would be a number of practical workshops on dealing with funding obstacles and the benefits of working in partnership. There was no cost associated with the event.

The Committee approved the attendance of a representative of each of the Party Groupings, together with the European Manager (or her nominee), at the aforementioned conference.

Finance

Financial Reporting - Quarter 1 2010/2011

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

It was agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18 June 2010 that financial reporting packs would be produced for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and each Standing Committee on a quarterly basis and following discussion, that the first reports for the quarter ended June 2010 would be available for Committees in September. Monthly financial updates were also agreed to be provided to the Budget and Transformation Panel, if there were any significant issues to report.

The reporting pack contains a summary dashboard of the financial indicators and an executive summary explaining the financial performance. It also provides a more detailed explanation of each of the relevant indicators covering the year to date and forecast financial position, progress in year on the capital programme, implications for reserves, payments to creditors and recovery of debt.

As was advised in the 18 June 2010 Committee report, the reporting pack should be viewed as still under development and the style and information in the reports will continue to evolve, in liaison with Members.

The information within these financial reporting packs has been developed through collaboration between central finance and departmental management teams. The information for Standing Committees has therefore been reviewed and endorsed by central finance. As was outlined in the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee report of 18 June 2010, a number of practical issues have been resolved in the development of the reports. In particular, Members are asked to note the following:

- (i) the original 2010/11 rates setting exercise included a budget for a pay rise of 1.5%. The pay position of the council is determined by national negotiations and currently no pay rise has been offered for 2010/11, which is causing significant trade union concern. The budget of £1.1m has therefore been removed from departmental budgets, for reporting purposes, so that the true departmental variances can be identified. The current unutilised pay rise budget underspend has been logged centrally;
- (ii) demand led internal charges have also been removed from the budgets and expenditure of service users and applied to the budgets of service providers (eg ISB, facilities management etc) for reporting purposes which keeps the budgetary treatment for 2010/11 in line with that agreed by Members on 18 June for 2011/12
- (iii) capital charges are non cash items which have been removed from departmental budgets so that accurate variances can be identified.

Key Issues

A. Current and Forecast Financial Position 2010/11 and Implications for Reserves

The current year to date financial position for the council is an underspend of some £1.1m (4%) with a forecast end of year underspend of some £2.9m (3%). The reasons for this underspend relate to the current unutilised pay rise budget, additional electricity generation income, fuel costs being lower than anticipated and the deferred roll out of food collection as part of waste management. The financial reporting pack contains more detail on both the overall council position and the financial performance in each of the Committees.

It should be emphasised that it is very early in the financial year and therefore it is difficult to make an accurate forecast of the end of year financial position. There are considerable uncertainties which could impact on the forecast, for example, the level of bad debt which the council may have to bear on its rates income or any changes to the pay rise assumptions. Nonetheless, an early forecast is helpful to Members in making financial decisions for the remainder of 2010/11 and in advance of the 2011/12 rates setting exercise.

The district reserves of the council were planned to be some £9.1m by 31 March 2011, being the opening reserves of £4.6m at 1 April 2010 and the £4.5m contribution from the rates to reserves, agreed as part of the 2010/11 rates setting exercise. The current forecast underspend of £2.9m would lead to reserves of some £12m by 31 March 2011, unless Members agree alternative uses of the forecast in year underspend.

B. Recommended Actions on the Forecast Financial Position

As already stated, it is difficult to make an accurate financial forecast so early in the year. Therefore a degree of prudence is needed and we would recommend, in consultation with the Budget and Transformation Panel, that only some £1.9m of this underspend is subject to debate at this stage with any remaining underspend considered at a later point in the year, when the financial position is clearer.

In terms of the utilisation of the remaining £1.9m forecast underspend, it is recommended that Members take into account:

- (a) that this is an in year underspend which should be utilised to support one off revenue initiatives rather than ongoing revenue expenditure, to avoid an implication for the 2011/12 rates setting exercise; and
- (b) in order to maximise the benefit for the 2011/12 rates setting exercise, it would be preferable if such one off revenue initiatives either pulled expenditure forward into 2010/11 from 2011/12 (eg. invest in reserves in 2010/11 rather than as part of 2011/12 rates setting etc) or lowered the cost base of the council in 2011/12 (invest to save type initiatives); and
- (c) the monies must be capable of being planned for and spent by 31 March 2011

It is recommended that officers bring back specific proposals for use of the forecast underspend to the Committee at its meeting on 22 October 2010.

C. Other Financial Indicators

The financial reporting pack includes information on a number of other financial indicators - progress in year on the capital programme, payments to creditors and recovery of debt. Of these indicators, recovery of debt is currently red and cause for concern. It is recommended that a further report is provided to Committee in October on the current processes for billing and collection and proposals for improvement.

D. Training

As was agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18 June 2010, to provide training in financial management for Members. It is currently planned that this will be provided in liaison with the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DEA) and will take place in three sessions on 27 September. Members have already been advised of this training and attendance is encouraged, wherever possible.

E. Links to performance management

Members should note that officers are currently working on the development of performance management reporting packs which in time will become available for Members' consideration alongside the financial reporting packs. Further updates will be brought to Members as the work progresses.

Resource Implications

There is a year to date underspend of £1.1m and a forecast underspend of some £2.9m.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- (i) Note the above report and associated financial reporting pack;
- (ii) Agree to the criteria for the assessment of proposals for the utilisation of £1.9m set out in section B above;
- (iii) Agree to consider a report on specific proposals for the utilisation of the £1.9m underspend at the Committee on 22 October 2010;
- (iv) Note that a further report is provided to Committee on the current processes for billing and collection and proposals for improvement; and,
- (v) Note that financial training is to be provided to Members on 27 September and attendance, wherever possible, is to be encouraged."

After discussion, during which the Director of Finance and Resources answered a number of questions in relation to the overspend in the Parks and Leisure Department, the payment of invoices and debt collection and indicated that liaison was ongoing with representatives of the Department of Finance and Personnel in relation to the rates setting for the next financial year, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Minutes of Meeting of the
Budget and Transformation Panel**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 2nd September.

Minutes of Meeting of Audit Panel

The Committee adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel of 14th September.

Approval to Seek Tenders

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

- (i) banking services to the Council, with an effective operational date of 1st April, 2011 for a period of three years. It was agreed also that an independent expert assessor be used to provide assurance and advice on the tender specification and evaluation processes;
- (ii) the lease of a new colour printer/photocopier for the Reprographics Unit for a five year period; and
- (iii) the supply of catering foodstuffs for a two year period.

Human Resources

Standing Order 55 - Employment of Relatives

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Order 55 and the authority delegated to her, the Director of Finance and Resources had authorised the appointment of an individual who was related to an existing officer of the Council.

Noted.

Asset Management

Belfast Telegraph Roadshow

(Mr. E. Deeney, Head of Corporate Communications, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Belfast Telegraph editor Mike Gilson wrote to the chief executive at the end of June requesting the council’s involvement with the newspaper in a series of roadshows to be held at eight different locations beginning in Ballymoney (16 September) and running through to Belfast on 8 November. The Telegraph has requested use of the City Hall for the Belfast event. The purpose is to listen to the voices of the people and get their views on the issues that affect their lives

Key Issues

Subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Telegraph has requested the following:

A venue where Belfast Telegraph can park a small branded van in a location at the City Hall to access as many people as possible to conduct vox pops between 11am and 3pm on Friday, 5 November.

- A venue for an evening panel discussion (7pm-8pm) on Monday, 8 November. The newspaper will informally invite (by email) a core list of guests to this but will be encouraging members of the general public to turn up also.
- Facilities Management has advised that we cannot allow the promotion of commercial businesses in the grounds of the City Hall. However, the council will be given the opportunity to put its own branding at the locality of the van and the event will be promoted as a joint enterprise between the council and Belfast Telegraph to comply with council regulations.

As part of this partnership, the Belfast Telegraph has requested that the City Hall be provided free of charge for the panel discussion. The banqueting hall – with theatre style seating that can accommodate 250 people, is the preferred venue and it is available on 8 November.

JPR, a PR company which is organising this on behalf of the Belfast Telegraph, is proposing that the panel be made up of the leaders of the political parties. The Lord Mayor has agreed to host and introduce the event, subject to council approval for the proposal, but will not take part in the panel discussion as he will have to leave early due to another commitment. JPR is happy to consider any other suggestion we have in relation to the council's involvement and members may wish to consider asking each of the parties on the council to send a representative and/or the committee chairs being invited to attend as part of the audience in order to listen to the views of the public.

The event will provide the council with an opportunity to be seen to be supporting an initiative which is aimed at listening to the citizens of Belfast and taking on board their views on a range of issues. The Belfast Telegraph's intend to give extensive coverage to the initiative across all of their editions and will highlight the council in a positive light in publicity leading up to the event and in the reporting that follows.

Resource Implications

The event will be organised by Belfast Telegraph but the Council will provide the banqueting hall free of charge and Facilities Management will assist in the preparation of the room and event management (access, security etc)

Recommendations

Members are asked to approve the proposal and consider if committee chairs and/or party representative(s) be invited to attend."

The Committee approved the use of the City Hall for the event but agreed that an appropriate reimbursement be sought from the Belfast Telegraph for its use.

Approval to Carry Out Energy Conservation Projects

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd January, it had approved an overall budget of £78,000 for a range of projects under the strategic theme of Better Care for Belfast's Environment. At that time, it had been agreed that officers would seek approval for each specific project from the relevant Committee prior to its commencement. Accordingly, there were three projects which required the Committee's endorsement.

The Committee was advised that energy usage in Council properties cost £2,849,144 in 2009/10, with over 60% of that having been used within the Parks and Leisure Department. The Director of Property and Projects explained that, from 1st April, 2011, the Council would be statutorily required to participate in the Government's Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme, which was intended to deliver greater energy efficiency and cut emissions of greenhouse gases. Under that scheme, the Council was required to purchase an allowance or "credit" for every tonne of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that it emitted. In the longer term, once a baseline position for emissions had been established, the intention was that those credits would be traded on a quasi-commercial basis under a 'cap and trade' type scheme. It was anticipated that the annual cost to the Council of participating in the scheme would be in the region of £211,000 based on present emissions trends. However, that cost could potentially be reduced by improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions in Council-owned premises. The following proposals, which had been endorsed by the Sustainable Development Working Group, set out ways how that could be achieved:

Improvements to the Control of Energy Use in Leisure Centres

A sum of £14,000 was required to make alterations to existing energy controls at seven leisure centre buildings. The project had the potential to achieve energy savings as well as providing management with a daily indication of energy usage.

During discussion, the Chairman pointed out that in several local authorities in England it was possible for the public to access on the internet live information in the energy usage of various Council properties. He suggested that such a scheme in Belfast would encourage officers to ensure that energy conservation was given a higher priority and that it might be useful to introduce a pilot scheme in one of the Council's properties.

The Use of Waste Woodchip as a Fuel for Heating

A sum of £10,000 was required to investigate the feasibility of using existing waste woodchip from Council-owned parks and from street trees as an alternative heating fuel in some of its premises. The Carbon Trust had already funded a study into several of the Council's buildings, including the Botanic Gardens and the Ozone Tennis Centre, both of which could be suitable for switching from oil/gas to a woodchip fuel. That type of fuel was regarded as carbon neutral and, therefore, had the potential to reduce the Council's financial obligations under the aforementioned Energy Efficiency Scheme. The purpose of the study would be to determine whether the Council's existing supply of waste woodchip was suitable for use as a fuel and, if so, to investigate the issues around storing and drying that product as well as growing further wood as required.

Staff Training on Energy Conservation

Further energy conservation training for approximately 200 staff within the Parks and Leisure Department was required to be undertaken at a cost of £3,000.

The Committee approved the expenditure in the sum of £27,000 from the Corporate Strategic Thematic Budget in order to undertake the three projects. In addition, the Committee agreed that a pilot exercise be undertaken in one of the Council's buildings in relation to the reduction of energy usage.

World Police and Firefighter Games – Provision of Accommodation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

As Members may already be aware, the World Police and Fire Games (WPFG) are coming to Belfast in 2013. The Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and Northern Ireland Prison Service will host approximately 10,000 law-enforcement officers and fire-fighters from around the world who will compete in a wide variety of sporting events.

The WPFG event is a larger participation sporting event than the Commonwealth Games, bringing an estimated 15,000-20,000 uniformed-services competitors and family members to Northern Ireland from more than 70 countries worldwide for the duration of the Games. In all, the competitors will participate in more than 60 sports (individual and team) that will showcase sporting excellence, health and well-being. The games are held every 2 years, and in recent years the event has been held in cities such as New York, Adelaide, Quebec and Barcelona.

The Council is already supporting the funding of the games with a contribution of £400,000. However a request has recently been received from the event organisers in the hope that it may be possible to provide access to Council accommodation for a group of approx. 27 staff made up of both existing council employees and staff seconded from other organizations, whose role is to organise and co-ordinate the games. These staff would require accommodation for a period of about 30 months in the run-up to and during the games in the summer of 2013.

The Committee will be aware that we are currently approaching the end of a planned series of decants designed to rationalise the council's property portfolio and generate efficiencies by surrendering costly leases and improving utilization of existing property.

At the conclusion of this process a single half-floor will be temporarily available on the 4th floor South in the Cecil Ward Building (originally planned to allow for any transfer of staff under RPA etc) and this area could, if the Committee is so minded, be made available to the games organisers for the required period.

However, if this area is to be offered to the organisers (who will be a company limited by guarantee) then the issue of charging must be considered. The Local Government Act (NI) 1972 [sec 96(5)] provides that councils must 'dispose of land at the best price or best rent or otherwise on the best terms that can be reasonably obtained'. However the Legal Services Department has advised that, under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (Art. 8) the Council has the power to promote economic development within its district and in so doing may make a financial contribution where appropriate, and that the arrangement proposed herein would satisfy this criterion.

In addition the Recreation & Youth Services (NI) Order 1986 provides that councils shall secure the provision for its area of adequate facilities for recreational social and physical and cultural facilities and may assist, by financial contributions, or otherwise any person to establish, maintain and manage any such facilities or to organise any such activities, and Legal Services have also advised that the criterion in this Order would also be satisfied.

The Estates Unit have confirmed that current commercial leasing costs for city-centre office accommodation of a similar standard and on basis of non-exclusive occupation as in the current situation are in the order of £9-£11 per ft², and the working area in question is 3,085 ft². Adjusting for the fact that approx. 37% of the staff will be existing BCC employees for whom no charge would be made (unless any secondments are backfilled), this would involve a charge to the WPFG organisers of £17,492 per annum based on £9 per ft², plus an appropriate contribution in terms of utility costs.

However, given the statutory powers and provisions outlined above the Committee can, if so minded, agree to absorb a greater proportion of the overall costs and thereby reduce the annual charge to the organisers. If approval is granted a Licence will be prepared and executed by the Legal Services Department.

The decanting, equipment and other costs associated with this arrangement in respect of non-BCC staff would not be covered by this arrangement and would be the responsibility of the respective organizations.

Committee should note that the Belfast City Marathon Ltd a smaller but similar type company pay a commercial rent for Council premises at the Stables in Lady Dixon Park.

Key Issues

The key issues are:-

- (a) whether or not the Committee wishes to extend an invitation to the WPFG organisers in respect of the 4th floor (S) of the Cecil Ward Building for the period involved and, if so;
- (b) on what financial basis this offer would be made.

Resource Implications

Staffing/HR

There will be no direct staffing implications.

Finance

This would depend on whether or not the request is approved and on what financial basis.

Assets

There may be a corporate implication in that this area will not be available for BCC use for the duration of the arrangement if approved. However following the completion of the current sequence of decants there is no immediate requirement for this area, and the postponement of RPA would allow its use until 2013 as requested.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee approve that an offer of accommodation for the WPFG organising team be made in respect of the 4th floor (South) of the Cecil Ward Building for the specified period, on the basis of an annual charge of £17,492 plus utilities, or of such other sum as the Committee may determine.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation on the basis of an annual charge of £17,492 plus utilities. It was agreed also that a press release be issued on behalf of the Committee emphasising its full support for the event.

Major Projects Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"Relevant background information

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as the Investment Decision Maker (IDM) for the Council in regard to major projects following a report on governance agreed to receive regular updates on major projects. Major projects were defined as projects which significantly affect the Council's budget, reputation and/or operation.

In this context major projects can be both pure capital projects totally funded by Belfast City Council or City investment projects where Belfast City Council is one of a number of funders or indeed organisational change projects.

Besides the obvious financial risk to the Council in undertaking these projects, a further feature is the broader impact of these projects on various Council functions and the community and the need to ensure full co-ordination and co-operation of all those involved.

Given the potential complexity it is useful to have informal Councillor input via stakeholder or other working groups as well as the formal Committee input and this issue will be further explored in the paper.

Key Issues

1. Connswater Community Greenway/Flood Alleviation Scheme (CCG/FAS)

This project is joint funded by the Big Lottery, Department for Social Development, the Rivers Agency and Belfast City Council via the City Investment Fund. The project will create a 16km walkway along the Knock, Loop and Connswater rivers in East Belfast from the Castlereagh Hills to Belfast Lough. Planned works on flood alleviation will be carried out by Rivers Agency in a joint contract thus realising savings on individual contracts and preventing nugatory works. The scheme will pass through a number of the Council's parks and open spaces and will include a range of enhancements such as new sports and play facilities, public art and new public squares as well a number of community based activities.

There is a Councillor stakeholder group that works well consisting of all elected representatives in East Belfast and which meets regularly for breakfast briefings and updates.

To date the project has been led by East Belfast Partnership Board who submitted the lottery bid with the Council playing a major role in assembling the necessary land, advising on design and procurement and undertaking to manage and maintain the scheme.

2. Titanic Signature Project (TSP)

The Titanic Signature Project is jointly funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment/Titanic Quarter Limited (Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Harcourt) and Belfast City Council and is a £90m visitor attraction due for completion in 2012 in time for the Titanic Centenary and will be the centrepiece of the 2012 celebrations. The Council's financial commitment is £10m from the City Investment Fund. As part of its commitment the Council also required Titanic Quarter Limited to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding that aims to enhance community benefit and involvement in the greater Titanic Quarter development particularly in regard to issues such as employability, access etc. A detailed report was submitted last month to Committee which advised that the Titanic Foundation Ltd (TFL), the charity established to lead on the project would like a political stakeholder group to be kept regularly informed and to act as a sounding board.

Given that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is providing the £10m investment and the Development Committee is most associated with the Memorandum of Understanding issues and also has the Council's tourism remit, it is suggested that a stakeholder group should consist of the chair and deputy of both committees together with party nominees of those parties not represented by those positions.

The current position is that the Titanic Signature Project is on target both in terms of construction programme and costs and that a change from a Flying Theatre to an Immersive Theatre is being considered by Titanic Foundation Limited following views from funders including Belfast City Council and confirmation of costs and visitor number impacts.

A Committee site visit is currently being arranged and Committee have agreed to receive a presentation from Titanic Foundation Limited.

Given the issues that have arisen regarding the MOU it may be more appropriate to have a special joint Strategic Policy and Resources/Development Committee meeting to get all outstanding matters addressed.

3. North Foreshore

The North Foreshore is at present more a series of concepts or ideas rather than one specific project. The site is approximately 300 plus acres of heavily polluted landfill which has planning approval for a mix of uses including waste management, industrial/economic development and open space/recreation. A number of attempts have been made to turn various ideas into firm projects e.g. Giants Park, Energy to Waste Plant, Crusaders/Newington Sports Complex etc which have not been realised for various reasons but primarily a lack of resources. The projects that have materialised are the Waste Transfer Station, a capital investment by Belfast City Council and the gas to electricity generator, a joint venture between Belfast City Council and the private sector which is producing an income. There is also a statutory closure plan which is ongoing.

In order to give greater corporate focus to progressing the development of the North Foreshore, it was agreed that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (as the Investment Decision Maker) would take primary responsibility for co-ordinating activity across the Council. A Member Steering Group now needs to be established and it is suggested that it should be chaired by the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources, and its membership should incorporate the Chairs of Development and Health and Environmental Services, together with the North Belfast Councillors.

The Chief Officers Management Team will be responsible for implementation of the plan agreed by the Steering Group, appropriate Committees and Council.

4. Accommodation

The future accommodation needs of the Council does not exist as a project but is something that needs addressed. The current decanting exercise caused by the City Hall refurbishment, overcrowding issues and restructuring as part of the Review of Public Administration and Improvement agendas is now virtually complete.

Earlier this year the costs of decanting/accommodation were reported to Committee and it was agreed that the Accommodation Group should be re established to look at future commitments.

In essence the Council has two major City centre buildings which it leases ie Adelaide Exchange and Lanyon Place both of which have break clauses in their leases that need to be exercised around 2015, otherwise the leases will need to be extended.

If Committee is minded to take a different approach such as building a new City centre office, dispersing staff to non City centre offices or leasing different buildings, such decisions would need to be made and acted upon prior to the break clause dates.

Working back from 2015 various options need considered and agreed by around 2012 to allow sufficient time for planning, building acquisition etc as required. Of course any decision will be bound by available finance and the uncertain environment of local government.

The previous accommodation group was a cross party group from the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and it is suggested this group is re-established to get Members up to speed with the detail of what will be a key future issue.

Conclusion

Further reports will be forthcoming on other projects such as these in the capital programme or those with limited council input such as the MAC and Lyric theatres.

Resources Implications

Resources of particular projects are as reported within the key issue updates together with additional Member time as suggested.

Recommendations & Decisions

Committee is asked to:

1. Agree to create a Titanic Signature Project Member Stakeholder Group as suggested or considered appropriate by Committee and to agree a special joint Committee meeting.
2. Agree to create a North Foreshore Steering Group as suggested or as considered appropriate by Committee.
3. Agree to re-establish the full Accommodation Group or as considered appropriate by Committee.

Decision Tracking

Following decisions on membership the relevant groups can be activated from October 2010.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**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 reopening of the Peace III Priority 2.1 ‘*Creating Shared Public Spaces*’ call for capital projects.

Relevant Background Information

The overall aim of the Peace III Programme is: to *reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation*. Under Priority 2.1, entitled ‘*Creating Shared Public Spaces*’, the SEUPB is seeking strategic physical project submissions that can be easily recognised as a Peace III project after the programme completes in 2015. The central issue that projects need to demonstrate is their ability to deliver peace and reconciliation outcomes and to be iconic, transformational projects that would provide a lasting legacy to the PEACE III programme. All monies under this call have to be committed by December 2013 and spent by 2015 so the timescales are extremely tight for capital projects.

Members are asked to note that each Peace III Priority 2.1 application is 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 deliverability within SEUPB timescales, including planning permission
- Financial competence and long term sustainability.

For a project to be successful it has 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.

Members will recall that the Council submitted 4 applications under the last call for this Priority in November 2009. Of these 3 were rejected by SEUPB – the Sports Village, the Cultural Corridor and the Gasworks Bridge while the Girdwood Community Hub application was deferred pending further information. Members are asked to note that work on the Girdwood Hub submission is continuing and an update paper on this will be brought to Committee in October.

Key Issues – Reopening of the call

The Council has now been informed that SEUPB intend to reopen the Priority 2.1 call in October. The first few weeks will be set aside for Expression of Interest and it is anticipated that completed applications will need to be submitted by the end of January 2011. Members are asked to note that these dates may still be subject to change.

There is €29million available under this call. At present only one application has been successful while two other applications, in addition to Girdwood, have been deferred. Discussions with SEUPB have indicated that they are confident that all the money under this Priority will be allocated and spent within the necessary timeframe. It is important that the learning from the previous rounds of applications is taken on board if any new projects are submitted under the reopened call, including –

- (a) it is recommended that if new projects are chosen for submission this should be limited to 1 or 2 very well defined projects
- (b) in order to maximise the Council's chances of a getting a successful application under the next call it will be necessary that any new projects which are chosen can clearly demonstrate their peace and reconciliation outcomes, are iconic and transformational, will provide a lasting legacy to the Peace programme in Northern Ireland, clearly identify the need for the project and are fully costed. Members are asked to note that previous bids have failed on their capacity to be iconic, transformational and have had an insufficient focus on peace and reconciliation
- (c) it may also be beneficial to establish a short term Member Group to develop an influencing strategy and make use of the existing Member experience with SEUPB.

Following the SP&R Committee meeting in August and the Party Group briefings on the new Corporate Plan in early September, a number of potential projects have already been identified that could be submitted under this call. These are detailed below along with some points for Members to note –

1. *North Belfast Cultural Corridor* – As highlighted above the Cultural Corridor was knocked out by SEUPB in the last round and was rejected by SEUPB at the first stage – i.e. it did not meet the thresholds for progressing to economic appraisal. SEUPB had advised that they felt the Corridor project was much more of an environmental and tourism project and that it was weak in demonstrating peace and reconciliation outcomes and their feedback was that the Corridor project would be unlikely to meet the aims of the Priority 2.1 programme.

However Members are asked to note that provision for parts of this project have now been made under the Council's recent submission to Peace III Priority 1.1 'Building Positive Relations at a Local Level' and will be taken forward through this and potentially renewing the routes options.

2. *Sports Village at the North Foreshore* – Crusaders/ Newington would like Belfast City Council to lead on a cross community facility aimed at promoting good relations via sport, recreational training and education. Crusaders/Newington are also working with a private investor and would be interested in a linked development on the North Foreshore involving a new stadium and other commercial developments. The original bid got through to second phase but was rejected on grounds of limited peace inputs and gaps in the business plan.

3. *Gasworks Bridge* - Like the Cultural Corridor project above the Gasworks Bridge also did not meet the threshold scores for progressing to economic appraisal stage and was knocked out by SEUPB in the initial round. Discussions with SEUPB indicated that this project fell down on its demonstration of peace and reconciliation outcomes and its ability to provide a lasting legacy to the peace programme. It was also considered weak in terms of its ability to act as a catalyst and be transformational. Concerns were also raised over the value for money and the need for the project. SEUPB drew comparisons with the Peace Bridge in Derry which had successfully received funding under an earlier call for this priority highlighting that this was seen as a project which had an impact on the whole city whereas it was considered that the impact of the Gasworks proposal would be much more localised and therefore less iconic and transformational. However this project could be reworked if Members wish to proceed with this.

4. *North Foreshore Bridge* – As Members are aware the North Foreshore Bridge was submitted under one of the previous calls to Priority 2.1 in 2007 and was narrowly rejected at economic appraisal stage. This project could be reworked and resubmitted if Members wish this to be pursued.

5. *Blackmountain Shared Space Project* – Officers from the Council meet recently with representatives from the Black Mountain Shared Spaces project. This project is being brought forward by the Upper Springfield Neighbourhood Renewal Forum. The Black Mountain has, over recent years, become the focus of anti-community behaviour mainly, but not exclusively, on the part of young people from both sides of the community. The Black Mountain Shared Spaces is an innovative project being developed on a cross-community and cross-sectoral basis. The project has a number of elements including education and employment, youth provision, building good relations and development of a social economy project of benefit to the area, Belfast and beyond. Members are asked to note however that this project is still in the developmental stage and it is unlikely that it will meet the tight timeframe for submission under this call of funding. Officers from the Council will continue to work closely with reps from this Group on bringing this project forward and advising on other potential funding streams.

6. *Good Relations* have noted that the Belfast Interface Trust has produced some ideas for interface areas in Belfast. Whether or not any of these could form the basis for a Peace III capital project is something that could be explored further.

Members are asked to consider the projects listed above and are asked if there are any other projects they wish to be wished to be considered at this stage. Members are asked to note however the tight timescales for the submission of projects. Chief Officers have been tasked with providing further inputs so that Committee can consider serious options in October.

Resource Implications

Financial

None at present.

Human Resources

Additional officer time will be required to progress work on applications that the Council wishes to proceed with.

Recommendations

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

1. note that work is progressing on submitting the additional information that SEUPB have requested regarding the Girdwood bid and that updates on this will be brought back to Committee as necessary
2. note that provision for some of the North Belfast Cultural Corridor project has been made under Priority 1.1
3. in light of the fact that SEUPB are intending to reopen this call, consider the projects listed above and consider any additional projects which could be submitted.
4. Consider establishing a short term member Group to work on an influencing strategy.

Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that consideration be given to including the HMS Caroline on a list of potential projects.

Connswater Community Greenway Lottery Offer, Land and Tender Issues

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Connswater Community Greenway:

“Relevant background information

The Connswater Community Greenway/Flood Alleviation Scheme (CCG/FAS) is a project jointly funded by the BIG lottery fund, Department for Social Development, Rivers Agency and Belfast City Council. The project will create a 16km walkway along the Knock, Loop and Connswater rivers in East Belfast from the Castlereagh Hills to Belfast Lough. Planned works on flood alleviation will be carried out by Rivers Agency in a joint contract thus realising savings on individual contracts and preventing nugatory works. The scheme will pass through a number of the Council parks and open spaces ie Orangefield Park, Dixon Playing Fields, Loop Play Area, Flora Street Walkway, Victoria Park etc and will include a number of upgrades and enhancements of sports and play facilities. In addition there will be new public art pieces, tourist trails and a number of upgraded public spaces currently in a poor state of repair.

To date the project has been led by the East Belfast Partnership as the recipient of the lottery offer with the Council playing the major role in terms of land assembly, design and procurement input and undertaking to manage and maintain the completed scheme for 40 years which was a condition of grant.

Key Issues

1. BIG Lottery Fund Letter of Offer

Earlier this year given the potential cash flow risk of this major project to the East Belfast Partnership Board, at their request and with the support of the other funders, Council was asked to accept the role of employer subject to BIG lottery agreement.

The Council agreed to accept the role and have worked up agreements with the East Belfast Partnership Board and other funders that reflect the continuing 'co production' of this scheme with the community but at the same time make clear the Council's employer role and the risk manager.

As the employer under the contract, the existing grants held by the East Belfast Partnership Board need to be transferred to the Council.

The BIG Lottery Fund (BIG) have now agreed to the Council becoming the employer and the Assistant Chief Executive has received a letter from BIG confirming this. The letter asks the Council to sign a Transfer Agreement to formally transfer the grant to the Council. BIG have agreed to fund the project to the sum of £22,723,240. This is essentially an assignment of the existing grant on the same terms as were offered to the East Belfast Partnership Board including the management and maintenance of the scheme for a 40 year period which the Council has already signed up to. The Transfer Agreement must be signed and returned to BIG by 8 October and authority is sought for the Chief Executive to sign the document on the Council's behalf.

2. Land Issues

An area of land at Connswater Retail Park consisting of 0.793 acres has been identified as being required for the Connswater Community Greenway. Council officials have agreed to take a lease of the area subject to the following terms:

Term: 99 years from 1/1/2011

Premium: £40,000 with an annual rent of 5p if demanded.

Repair/Maintenance: Council to be wholly responsible for the upgrade, renewal, repair and maintenance of the demised area together with fixtures and fittings thereon.

Use: Creation of public paths and associated landscaping.

3. Works Tender

Members will be aware that a tendering exercise was commenced earlier this year. Completed bids were received from six consortia by the tender return date of 9 July. Since then a rigorous and robust tender assessment exercise has been ongoing involving McAdam Design the employers agent, Central Procurement Directorate and Council staff.

The most economically advantageous tender has been received from SIAC/Galliford Try and has been accepted by the Project Management Team on behalf of the East Belfast Partnership Board, following a presentation from McAdam Design and CPD. The tender price is £20,026,310.00 which is below the pre tender costs and to some extent reflects current market conditions.

Council officers have asked that all funders keep to their current funding commitments despite the low tender price until final project outturn costs are known. The aim of this request is to ensure sufficient funds remain within the project to mitigate any potential claims, ensure highest quality to defer ongoing maintenance costs, address some pre tender omissions and deal with any additional issues. The BIG letter of offer commits all their monies and Council Officers have sought similar assurances from the Department of Social Development.

The Committee is asked to agree this approach to the tender so that the East Belfast Partnership Board can issue results and begin debriefs from 28 September. An alcatel period during which all substantive challenges must be considered then runs from 28 September to 8 October in accordance with EU procurement legislation.

Provided there are no substantive challenges it is anticipated that East Belfast Partnership Board will award the contract after the 11 October and shortly after the Council will become the employer and take ownership of the contract.

Resources Implications

Financial

This proposal requires expenditure of £40,000 to acquire the land plus reasonable professional and legal fees.

The purchase costs for all of the land required for the Connswater Community Greenway are included in the Connswater Community Greenway budget of the City Investment Fund and there will be no additional cost to Council.

Human Resources

No additional human resources required.

Asset and Other Implications

The additional land will form part of the Connswater Community Greenway which when complete will be managed and maintained by the Council.

Recommendations & Decisions

It is recommended Committee agree:

- (i) to the Chief Executive signing the BIG letter of offer
- (ii) to purchase by way of lease the lands outlined
- (iii) to accept the tender and process as outlined in the report."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Meeting with Ministers

Arising out of discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed that meetings be sought with the Ministers for the Department of Social Development, Regional Development and Agriculture and Rural Development in relation to the schemes at the Woodvale and Dunville Parks, the flood alleviation scheme at the Connswater Community Greenway and other relevant capital schemes.

Land at Templemore Avenue

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th June, 2008, it had declared surplus to Council requirements the public conveniences at Templemore Avenue and had authorised the submission of an outline planning application for the demolition of the public conveniences and redevelopment of the site for housing, with the site being placed for sale on the open market. Subsequently, on 18th December, 2008, outline planning approval had been granted to provide a residential development of six townhouses.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that the site had been placed on the open market for sale and, despite extensive marketing over the previous number of months, there had been limited interest and the offers which had been received were below expectations and reflected a weak market with limited demand and lack of funding. However, Habitat for Humanity NI had recently made a revised offer of £120,000 for the site. The next highest offer received had been £75,000 from a private housing developer who was unwilling to increase that offer. There had also been some interest, although no offer had been made, from another Housing Association but it had withdrawn its interest at the present time due to the current proposals by Habitat for Humanity.

The Director reported that Habitat for Humanity was a non-registered housing association which had built 85 homes in Northern Ireland and was on-site currently for a six house project in Madrid Street, off Templemore Avenue. As in Madrid Street, Habitat for Humanity proposed to develop the Templemore Avenue site as a self-build, community-based and volunteer supported project, which delivered affordable housing. The organisation selected home partners (self-builders) according to certain criteria, including housing need, lower household income, willingness to self-build and local associations. It would sell the houses at market value through a shared equity arrangement with 45% mortgage, 5% charitable grant from themselves and 50% shared equity funding from a registered housing association or Northern Ireland co-ownership. Whilst planning approval had already been granted for six two-bedroom townhouses, Habitat for Humanity proposed to make a revised planning application for six three-bedroom townhouses of a different layout and style. The Council's Marketing Agents had confirmed that they would recommend acceptance of the offer for the site should the Council wish to dispose of it at this time.

The Director explained that Habitat for Humanity had requested that the Council, if it were minded to sell the site, consider a request that the sale be subject to staged payments. He explained that staged payment was not something the Council would normally accept in terms of disposals of that nature. However, if the Committee wished to approve the request then it could be done by way of a Development Agreement whereby the Habitat for Humanity Northern Ireland organisation and the Council would enter into an agreement which would permit the organisation to occupy the site by way of a Building Licence to undertake works within a specified time period from the date of the grant of the revised planning application, but title to the site would not transfer until all the monies had been received. A deposit would be payable on receipt of planning permission and the issue of the Building Licence, with the remaining monies payable in staged payments within a one-year timeframe.

After discussion, the Committee approved the disposal of the Templemore Avenue site to Habitat for Humanity Northern Ireland in the sum of £120,000 and acceded to the organisation's request for staged payments and that that be effected by way of a Development Agreement as outlined.

Land at McClure Street

The Committee agreed that a report on the disposal of land at McClure Street be submitted to a future meeting.

Land at Clara Street

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th March, it had been advised that the Health and Environmental Services Committee had declared the Clara Street Civic Amenity site surplus to its operational requirements and had agreed that it be transferred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for inclusion within the corporate landbank.

The Director of Property and Projects advised the Committee that the site, which extended to 1.106 acres, also contained former public conveniences which could be accessed from Clara Street. A number of future options had been considered for the use of the site and a preliminary planning appraisal had been undertaken recently which indicated its potential suitability for residential or commercial usage. It was understood that a Housing Association had registered an interest in the site with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the purpose of providing social housing, of which there was a shortage in that area. He pointed out that, whilst disposal of the site would result in a capital receipt which could be used in the furtherance of the City Investment Fund, capital projects or other Corporate objectives, the current economic climate had led to significantly reduced open market values as a result of low levels of demand and the limited finance available to purchasers. In addition, a site contamination/preliminary risk assessment was required to be undertaken to ascertain any environmental issues.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to declare the former Civic Amenity site at Clara Street surplus to the requirements of the Council and to place it for sale on the open market, subject to a further report being submitted to the Committee in due course for approval to the terms of any disposal.

Disposal of Land to the Ulster Museum

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to the disposal of land to the Ulster Museum to enable further information to be submitted.

Land at Boucher Crescent

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd April, it had agreed to lease a portion of 0.437 acres of land at Boucher Crescent in the sum of £38,000 per annum on the basis of a 125 year lease, with five yearly rent reviews.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that the proposed Lessee had now sought to alter the terms of the agreement and was seeking a twelve month rent free period at the commencement of the lease. Accordingly, the offer was no longer the highest available. The Council's Agent had subsequently contacted all of the parties who had expressed an interest during the initial marketing process. The highest bid was now the previous under bidder who was prepared to stand over his previous offer of £37,000 per annum without requesting any rent-free periods and the Director recommended that that be approved.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Libraries Northern Ireland:
Closure of Libraries in Belfast**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th June, it had considered a report in relation to the decisions which had been made by the Libraries Northern Ireland Board in terms of library closures and had agreed that the Council continue discussions with Libraries Northern Ireland in relation to potential collaboration in an attempt to develop proposals on how the Council could help minimise the impact of the closures through the development of partnerships with other organisations.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that both he and the Estates Manager had met subsequently with the Chief Executive and other officers from Libraries Northern Ireland to discuss any potential for collaboration. At that meeting, representatives of Libraries Northern Ireland had outlined their future development programme for libraries within Belfast, both in terms of buildings and services. They had stressed that their new library services were not wholly about buildings but about taking the service out to communities where demand existed. They would be focusing on providing more mobile stops in certain areas; providing more individual housebound visits; and developing outreach work in community settings. For example, they were looking currently at a pilot scheme at Tullymore Community Centre, as well as working with the East Belfast Community Development Agency to examine the potential for the future provision of a library service at the Old Templemore Avenue School as part of a larger community facility.

He explained that there was a significant focus on the Belfast Central Library and opportunities for collaboration might exist in terms of hosting the "Belfast Story" and subsequent meetings had taken place with the relevant Council officers on that option. In addition, there still remained the possibility of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Centre relocating to that site, but as the Board of Libraries Northern Ireland were to have its Outline Business Case finalised by December, the Council would need to confirm, as a matter of urgency, whether or not it wished to consider relocating there in order that that proposal could be incorporated into the Business Case. The Director of Development would continue discussions on the matter and a further report would be submitted to the Committee as appropriate.

The Director pointed out that the Girdwood site also remained as a possibility for a joint collaborative project and the Board of Libraries Northern Ireland had expressed previously a willingness to co-locate there as part of the proposed Community Hub. However, the Girdwood proposal obviously depended on wider agreement in relation to the development of the overall area. He stated that major refurbishment and capital investment was due to take place at the Falls, Shankill and Whiterock Libraries, with the commencement of work proposed for the end of December/early January. The Ormeau, Lisburn Road, Chichester and Ardoyne Libraries were also included in their three year development plan either at their existing site or on new sites. At the planning stage of any new libraries, consideration would be given to co-location with other services and Libraries Northern Ireland was keen that any new library developments would be integrated with community planning requirements for the areas concerned. The Board was keen to continue dialogue with the Council in terms of future developments and collaboration, subject to the financial context within which it had to work.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that an All-Party Deputation from the Council meet with the Chief Executive of Libraries Northern Ireland in order to discuss the library provision in Belfast in general and in areas of need in particular.

**Water Main Laying and Refurbishment –
East Belfast Area**

The Director of Property and Projects advised the Committee that Northern Ireland Water, through its contractors, had advised the Council that it would be commencing work in the East Belfast area as part of a £100 million programme to upgrade the water main infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland. The latest package of work, which crossed also into the Castlereagh and North Down Borough Council areas, would involve replacing approximately 25 kilometres of water mains and represented an investment in the region of £3.5 million. During the works, the contractor had indicated that he would be liaising with Roads Service to ensure that any disruptions were kept to an absolute minimum and, in addition, he had indicated that he would be keeping local residents and businesses fully informed of the work.

The Director pointed out that the proposed route was primarily on the roadway and did not, according to the plans which had been submitted, affect Council-owned lands. In terms of the Connswater Greenway proposals, the interfaces were limited between the Northern Ireland Water Services and the Connswater Community Greenway/Rivers Agency. There were possible interfaces at Ladas Drive, Holywood Arches, Parkgate Avenue and Brandon Parade. However, representatives for the Connswater Community Greenway project were aware of the proposals and preliminary discussions had taken place already with Northern Ireland Water. There would be further liaison between the two bodies to ensure that any impact on the Connswater Community Greenway proposals were avoided or minimised and the timing of any works were co-ordinated.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that the contractors for the works be requested to contact directly the local Elected Representatives for the area in order to discuss the proposals.

**Regular Meetings with
Northern Ireland Assembly Ministers**

Arising out of discussion in the aforementioned matter, several Members expressed the view that there were a number of major issues, such as those outlined, which the Council needed to discuss with the Northern Ireland Assembly Ministers. Therefore, there was a need to establish a regular meeting cycle with the Ministers to enable the Members to discuss such major projects, to ensure the Council's views were taken into consideration.

Proposed Disposal of Lands at Belmont

The Committee was advised that the former Community and Recreation (Parks and Cemeteries Services) Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 27th November, 2006, had agreed in principle to the disposal of an area of open parkland at Belmont Park to Strathern School, subject to further advice on the appropriate vehicle for such a transfer. It was intended that the land would be incorporated within the school campus and its initial use would be for playing pitch provision. The land was required by the school as part of a £13 million scheme to rebuild much of the school and reorganise the provision of facilities on its site. The scheme was being funded by the Department of Education and was one of the schemes which that Department were to part fund during the financial year.

The Director of Property and Projects pointed out that Members would be aware from the proposed disposal of the former Beechmount Leisure Centre site that transactions for proposed school use had many stages to pass through within the Department and those could extend over a considerable time period. The most recent discussions with the Department of Education and its valuer, Land and Property Services, had been based around the agreement of the disposal price of the Council's land, and other terms, for Economic Appraisal purposes. After lengthy negotiations with the valuer, a disposal price of £350,000 had been agreed in respect of 2.66 acres of land. That figure would be included in the Department of Education's Economic Appraisal and might well form the basis of disposal to the school if the appraisal process was concluded and the disposal was to proceed before the end of the current financial year.

He explained that, as well as discussions on the disposal price, the Council's Legal Services Unit had prepared a draft lease which included:

- (i) the disposal of an area of land of 2.66 acres;
- (ii) use of the land being restricted to educational purposes;
- (iii) the provision of a sixty metre long storm sewer wayleave across adjoining Council-owned land at Belmont Park to serve the whole of the school site;
- (iv) as the school site sat in a traditionally high land value locality, the lease would include a clawback arrangement which would benefit the Council in the event that the School made disposals of land from the site for commercial/residential development; and
- (v) the school remained open to discussion with the Council on some form of community use for the proposed playing pitch facilities. Any such arrangements would sit outside the lease and would be by mutual agreement.

It was intended to further refine the detailed lease terms in preparation for potential disposal in early 2011.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the disposal of the land on the terms outlined.

**Use of the City Hall Grounds –
Poster for Tomorrow Exhibition**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that on 18th June 2010 the Committee debated the original request from an organization named 'Poster for Tomorrow' to use the City Hall grounds for a poster exhibition in respect of their international campaign to have capital punishment abolished. The issue was discussed at some length and went to a vote, resulting in the request being approved.

At full Council in July the matter was referred back at the request of a member. The report was therefore considered again by the Committee on 20th August 2010 and, following a further debate, the original decision was re-affirmed by the Committee, and subsequently ratified by Council.

At the outset the Committee was advised that, given the subject-matter, the exhibition would obviously have the potential to offend but that the council would have the option to 'veto' specific images if concern was expressed. It should also be acknowledged that, in the course of the first debate on this matter, the Chair specifically raised the issue of the council seeking to exercise a veto over the exhibition's content, and warned that this could be construed as censorship.

The decisions taken in respect of this matter at that time were, of course, taken without the benefit of having the proposed images to hand, because the organisers had not agreed or prepared the final artwork when permission was first sought back in June 2010. The final artwork was requested by the Facilities Management Section and has now been received and circulated to a number of senior officers for comment. It appears from the comments received that a significant sub-set of the material gives some cause for concern amongst officers particularly from Good Relations and Corporate Communications. On foot of this the organisers were reminded of their commitment that BCC could veto particular images, however they have responded by suggesting that they may cancel the event entirely if this were to occur on any significant scale. COMT considered the issue this week and feel that committee needed to be alerted to this matter hence this late report.

Obviously if the organisers are asked and agree to withdraw any images from the exhibition they will wish to replace these images with others, which would also need to be 'vetted' before inclusion.

This event is scheduled to take place on 7th – 10th October 2010 so there would not be a great deal of time in which to address these issues, and the organisers are obviously keen to finalise their preparations.

It should also be noted that this exhibition will be taking place alongside a BBC children's event in the City Hall grounds, although the 2 events will be physically separate.

Key Issues

The Committee is requested to consider whether, in the light of the images supplied, the Committee wishes to review or revise its previous decision in this matter.

Resource Implications

There are no direct resource implications in respect of this report.

Recommendations

The Committee's direction is sought in terms of whether or not to approve this request.

Key to Abbreviations

None.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Campbell,
Seconded by Councillor Rodway,

That, due to the inappropriateness of the images contained therein, that the Poster for Tomorrow Organisation be refused permission to display any of the posters in the grounds of the City Hall.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Attwood,
Seconded by Councillor McCann

That, in line with its decision to approve the use of the City Hall grounds for the exhibition, the Committee agrees to approve the display of posters as submitted but, due to local sensitivities around the issue of suicide, discussions take place with the Organisation and suicide awareness groups to discuss the removal of those images of people being hanged.

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

The amendment was thereupon put as the substantive motion when nine Members voted for and eight against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Good Relations and Equality

(Mr. D. Robinson, Senior Good Relations Officer, and Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager, attended in connection with these items.)

Minutes of Meeting of Memorabilia Working Group

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Memorabilia Working Group of 9th September, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "Proposed Stained Glass Window" which was referred back to the Group for further consideration.

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings of the Good Relations Partnership of 3rd and 17th September and adopted the recommendations in respect of the following:

Peace and Reconciliation Plan 2011/13

The approval of the Partnership Agreement for the implementation of the Belfast City Council Peace and Reconciliation Plan 2011-2013 (Peace Plan).

Glenbank Artwork

The recommendation of the Partnership to approve funding for the Glenbank Artwork project, the amount of which would not exceed £5,000 for the cost of the artist, community engagement and materials and, 75% of which could be recouped under the District Council's Good Relations Programme through the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister.

Belfast Migrant Forum Project

The approval for an additional print run of a booklet which provided information on living and working in Belfast and accessing services and information on volunteering, which had been produced by the Belfast Migrant Forum Project under Action 3.5 of Phase 1 of the Local Action Plan. The cost of which would be approximately £3,000 and would be met from within the agreed allocation for the Migrant Forum and would not represent an additional cost to the project.

Chairman