

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th March, 2011

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Crozier (Chairman);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Adamson); and
Councillors Attwood, D. Browne, W. Browne, M.
Campbell, Garrett, Hartley, Hendron, N. Kelly, Lavery,
McCarthy, McVeigh, Newton, O'Reilly, G. Robinson,
Rodway and J. Rodgers.

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

Modernisation and Improvement

Local Government Composite Recruitment Advertisement (Pilot)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th March, it had considered a report on the Local Government Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency Programme and agreed that any proposals arising from the Programme should be submitted to the Committee for consideration.

The Director of Finance and Resources reported that there was an opportunity for Local Government collaboration in recruitment advertising under the Programme. She explained that the most significant avenue for recruitment was now Council websites and other on-line services, rather than newspaper advertising. Nonetheless, each of the twenty-six Councils currently placed job advertisements separately, with a collective annual spend of approximately £520,000 per annum. The Human Resources Task and Finish Group of the Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency Programme had identified that efficiency gains could be achieved through a sector approach to Council job advertisements and had proposed to pilot, for a period of six months, a Local Government composite advertisement under the title "Local Government Jobs".

The layout of the composite advertisement would contain 'sign-posting' of jobs with call/click details on how to obtain further information. The black and white composite advertisement would be placed fortnightly by a central source, that is, Belfast City Council, and jobs would appear in alphabetical Council order. However, the Council would retain the right to advertise separately for its most senior posts, as appropriate. Such an approach had the potential to result in sector-wide savings of over £290,000 per annum, including estimated savings of over £50,000 per annum for the Council.

The Director reported that, in addition to savings, there was a potential for income generation as a result of Belfast's role as the central co-ordinator for the Local Government composite advertisement. While the detail of the Council's 'handling' fee had yet to be finalised and agreed as part of a service level agreement with other Councils, it was estimated that that income would be in excess of £15,000 per annum. Twenty-one Councils had expressed interest in participating in the pilot project, subject to their final management/Council approvals. The views of the remaining Councils were still being sought.

The Committee agreed that, given the estimated savings and income for the Council from such a collaborative initiative, to approve:

- (i) the Council's publicly advertised jobs appearing in a 'sign-posting'/click style advertisement with other jobs from other Councils; and
- (ii) the Council being responsible for the co-ordination and management of public advertisements for other Councils for an agreed charge on a pilot basis for a period of six months, subject to review.

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
Queen's University of Belfast	11th European Conference on Symbolic and Quantitative Approaches to Reasoning with Uncertainty Conference Dinner 29th June, 2011 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and '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 £400

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Centre of Excellence for Public Health Northern Ireland	The UK Clinical Research Collaboration Centres of Excellence Summer School Dinner 30th June, 2011 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key 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
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency	International Association for Official Statistics Conference Dinner 19th August, 2011 Approximately 300 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of '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
British Dental Association Community Dental Services Group	British Dental Association Community Dental Services Group Conference Dinner 13th October, 2011 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key 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
National Council for the Training of Journalists	Journalism Skills Conference Dinner 30th November, 2011 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together', and 'Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
SPRED	Annual Day of Celebration 4th June, 2011 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	SPRED is an organisation which aims to help integrate those individuals with learning difficulties into local community life. This event seeks to celebrate the effective work which has been undertaken by the organisation to date as well as recognise all the individuals who have contributed to the achievement of its aims. 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 £1,000
Knock Bowling Club	Centenary Celebration Dinner 12th Oct, 2011 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	This event seeks to celebrate the 100 th Anniversary of Knock Bowling 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 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
Make-A-Wish Foundation	Make-A-Wish Foundation 25 th Anniversary Event 15 October, 2011 Approximately 60 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to celebrate the 25 th Anniversary of the Make-A- Wish Foundation 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 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

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Belfast Samaritans	50th Anniversary Dinner 3rd December, 2011 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	This event seeks to celebrate the 50 th Anniversary of Belfast Samaritans 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 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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Policy for Members

After lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to a Conflicts of Interest Policy for Councillors to enable a further report which addressed some of the outstanding issues, such as the Indemnity legislation, and provided clarification on the types of outside bodies to which Members were appointed by the Council and their role on those bodies to be submitted in due course.

Elections Update

The Democratic Services Manager submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will be aware that the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Local Councils, together with the national referendum on the Alternative Vote System, will be held on Thursday, 5th May, 2011.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is a timetable for the local elections setting out important dates in the lead up to, during and following polling day on 5th May.

2.2 Members are also asked to note the following significant points:

- **At previous local elections, the nomination papers had to be delivered on one of two set days. This time around, however, nominations from prospective candidates will be acceptable on any working day from 10.00am to 4.00pm from 28th March till 6th April and from 10.00 am till 1.00pm on 7th April. Officers will be in touch with the Party Groups represented on the Council to arrange appointments for the submission of nomination papers.**
- **Nomination Papers for the local elections may be downloaded from the Electoral Office website at <http://www.eoni.org.uk/localcouncilnominationpapers-3.pdf> or can be collected from Room G42, the Principal Office for the purpose of the election.**
- **Candidates are advised to fill in the forms and submit them in draft, including the signatures of the proposer, seconder and attestors, to the Democratic Services Section where they will be checked. This will avoid any problems when the signed forms are submitted for nomination.**
- **Each candidate is entitled to receive a copy of the Electoral Register for the District Electoral Area in which they are standing. These are available in electronic and/or hard copy form from Room G42, the Principal Office for the purpose of the election.**
- **At the close of poll at 10.00pm on 5th May, all ballot boxes for the Assembly and Council elections and for the Referendum will be taken to the appropriate Count Centres where the Assembly and Referendum Counts will be held. This will mean that Belfast Council ballot boxes for the Balmoral, Court (part of), Laganbank, Lower Falls, Pottinger (part of) and Upper Falls District Electoral Areas will go to the King's Hall, Belfast; those for the Castle, Court (part of) and Oldpark District Electoral Areas to the Valley Leisure Centre, Newtownabbey; and those for the Pottinger (part of) and Victoria District Electoral Areas to the Ards Leisure Centre, Newtownards.**

- At 7.30 am on Friday, 6th May the verification of all the ballot boxes for both elections and the referendum will take place in these count centres. Local Council candidates and their appropriate election and counting agents will be entitled to be present for this verification.
- It is anticipated that the verification process will be completed by 1.00pm on the afternoon of 6th May. When the verification is completed, the Local Government ballot boxes will be removed with the Belfast City Council boxes being delivered to the City Hall for secure storage until Monday 9th May.
- The Assembly count will commence once the verification has been completed and the will continue to 11pm. If necessary, the Assembly counts will continue on Saturday, 7th May until completion.
- The Referendum count will start at 4.00pm on 6th May.
- The Local Council counts for the Upper Falls, Lower Falls, Oldpark, Pottinger and Victoria District Electoral Areas will commence at 9.00am on Monday, 9th May in the Great Hall and Banqueting Hall, City Hall and continue until completion. The counts for the remaining District Electoral Areas of Court, Castle, Balmoral and Laganbank will be held on Tuesday, 10th May.

2.3 Please note that, as the verification process for all the Council District Electoral Areas will have been completed on Friday, 6th May, there will be no need to repeat the exercise and the counts in the City Hall will commence with the sort of the ballot papers into the 1st preferences expressed by voters. This should mean that the counts will be finished slightly sooner than would have otherwise been the case.

If Members have any questions in relation to the local elections, please contact me, Jim Hanna (ext 6313) or Gareth Quinn (ext 6316).

3 Resource Implications

None.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report.

6 Decision Tracking

No decision tracking linked to the report.

7 Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Local Council Election Timetable.

Appendix 1

Publication by DRO of notice of election	Friday, 25th March, 2011
Registration with the Electoral Commission of political parties to field candidates at the election	Friday, 25th March, 2011
Delivery to the DRO of nomination papers	Between 10am and 4pm on Monday, 28th March, to Wednesday, 6th April and between 10am and 1pm on Thursday, 7th April, 2011
Delivery to the DRO of notices of withdrawals of candidature	Between 10am and 4pm on Monday, 28th March to Wednesday, 6th April and between 10am and 1pm on Thursday, 7th April, 2011
The making of objections to nomination papers at the DRO's office	Between 10am and 4pm on Monday, 28th March to Wednesday, 6th April and between 10am and 2 pm on Thursday, 7th April, 2011
Receipt by the DRO of notice of appointment of election agents	1pm on Thursday, 7th April, 2011
Publication by the DRO of statement of persons nominated	Friday, 8th April, 2011
Receipt at Area Electoral Offices of postal and proxy vote applications	5pm on Monday, 11th April, 2011

Receipt at Area Electoral Office of applications to be included in the Register of Electors	Thursday, 14th April, 2011
Receipt at Area Electoral Office of late postal and proxy vote applications on ground of unforeseen illness	5pm on Thursday, 21st April, 2011
Receipt by DRO of notice of appointment of polling and counting agents	5pm on Tuesday, 26th April, 2011
Publication by the RO of notices of alteration as a result of late registration	Tuesday, 26th April, 2011
Polling day – 7am to 10pm on	Thursday, 5th May, 2011
Verification of ballot boxes commences	8am on Friday, 6th May, 2011
Count commences	9am on Monday, 9th May, 2011
Receipt by candidates/agents of claims for election expenses	21 days after the result of the election is declared
Payment by candidates/agents of claims for election expenses	28 days after the result of the election is declared
Receipt by DRO of return of election expenses	35 days after the result of the election is declared
Receipt by DRO of candidate's declaration of expenses	7 days after receipt of the agents declaration and return

Note: the above timetable excludes Saturdays and Sundays and the following public holidays:

- **Good Friday 22nd April, 2011**
- **Easter Monday 25th April, 2011**
- **Bank Holiday Friday 29th April, 2011**
- **May Day Bank Holiday Monday 2nd May, 2011**

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed, given the importance of the election process to Councillors and candidates, that a letter be forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer of Northern Ireland expressing the Committee's dissatisfaction at the decision to hold the Local Government verification process in the three Count Centres identified for the Assembly and Referendum Counts, which would result in the verification of the District Electoral Areas of Pottinger and Court having to be undertaken in two separate locations.

A Member pointed out that the Belfast Counts would take place on 9th and 10th May and that it was proposed that five District Electoral Areas would be counted on 9th May, with the remaining four being counted on 10th May. He expressed his concerns that for a number of years the order in which these Counts took place disadvantaged the candidates for those Areas counted on 10th May and in relation to the fact that the order of the Counts had not been rotated so that the process was fair for all concerned.

Northern Ireland Task Force Visit to Belfast

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 **Relevant Background Information**

1.1 **Members will be aware that on 9th December, 2010, Belfast City Council was represented at the official opening of the NI Executive Office in Brussels which acted to re-ignite the work of the NI Taskforce for Europe.**

1.2 **The first meeting of the Taskforce to take place since this visit will occur in Belfast on 30th March and the Council has been requested to:**

(a) **provide a venue along with audio visual equipment for a plenary session which has been arranged to take place in Belfast Castle; and**

(b) **host a drinks reception at the City Hall from 6.30pm to 8.30pm on the evening of 30th March for 150 guests which will include delegates from Brussels as well as officials from Belfast.**

2 **Key Issues**

2.1 **In May 2007, Jose Manuel Barosso, President of the European Commission, set up the NI Taskforce for Europe. The purpose was to ensure that NI government departments work more closely with their EU Commission counterparts to maximise EU opportunities for NI. This resulted in a report in May 2008, whereby the NI Assembly set out its commitment and targets which would encourage better engagement with Europe.**

2.2 On 9th December, President Barosso reignited the NI Taskforce on Europe at the official opening of the NI Executive Office in Brussels. At the opening of the office, President Barosso and the First and Deputy First Ministers for NI, committed publicly to a newly launched NI Taskforce in Europe. In practice, this means that each government department in NI will have assigned officers who will work closely with their counterpart colleagues in the similar departments of the EU Commission. Their job will be to:

- Identify and maximise EU funding for NI; and
- Intervene at early stages with respect to the formulation and influencing of European policy and legislation.

2.3 On 15th December 2010, the Deputy First Minister, on behalf of the NI Assembly, made a speech again publicly committing NI government to the NI Taskforce whose job it was, he explained, 'to provide us with a route map to better and more effective engagement with the European Union and to exploiting the opportunities that this presents'.

2.4 From March 30th to April 1st officials from Brussels and members of the Taskforce will meet in Belfast. During their meetings they will take forward previous discussions held and will focus on 4 key themes, namely,

- Competitiveness and Employment
- Social Cohesion
- Energy and Climate Change
- Innovation and Technology

These discussions will inform future NI engagement in Europe with the aim of increasing funding leverage by 20%.

2.5 On the evening of March 30th a drinks reception will be held at the City Hall. Members are invited to attend this event which will provide an opportunity to improve key relationships between Belfast and Brussels and will showcase the city in respect of how important it is and can be in the future to Europe.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Provision has been made in the revenue estimates for hospitality and the amount of £2,000 to cover the cost of the drinks and canapés can be met from the relevant budget.

3.2 Provision has been made with the EU unit Budget for the cost of £800 associated with the hire of Belfast Castle for the plenary meeting. Costs for catering of the event will be covered by OFMDFM.

4 **Equality Implications**

4.1 N/A

5 **Recommendations**

5.1 The Committee is asked to agree to:

5.1.1 the use of the City Hall on 30 March to host a drinks reception which will include delegates from Brussels as well as officials from Belfast and to cover the cost associated with the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks and canapés, expected cost approximately £2,000; and

5.1.2 approve the use of Belfast Castle as the venue which will host the Taskforce plenary meeting on 30th March, at a cost of £800 which will come from the EU unit budget.

6 **Decision Tracking**

Officers responsible:
Laura Leonard, European Manager

April 2011.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that, given the scale and the purpose of the visit, the hospitality be upgraded to a dinner to be hosted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, together with a representative of the Progressive Unionist Party which was not represented on the Committee.

**National Association of Councillors –
The Localism Bill and Big Society Conference**

The Committee was advised that the National Association of Councillors (English Region) was holding a weekend Training Conference in Scarborough from Friday, 8th till Sunday, 10th April. The theme of the conference was the Localism Bill and Big Society. The conference would focus on the challenges faced by Local Government in responding effectively to the needs of local communities and the impact the Big Society policy intervention would have on the community and voluntary sectors. Delegates would participate in a series of interactive workshops and would be presented with training certificates on completion of the conference. Mr. Eric Pickles, M.P. and Secretary of State had been invited to address the conference and other speakers would include representatives from the emergency services, National Bodies and the Westminster administration. The Council had been represented at such events in previous years. The estimated cost of attendance would be £700 per delegate.

The Committee agreed to authorise the attendance at the National Association of Councillors Training Conference of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region), the Democratic Services Manager (or their nominees) and a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council not represented by the aforementioned Members.

Finance

Update on Rating Issues

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 4 February 2011, Members discussed the issue of the late notification of a significant change to the estimated rates with LPS officers. At this meeting it was agreed that a further update report would be brought to Committee in March.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the issue and to recommend a suite of performance indicators and actions to be included in the Memorandum of Understanding between the council and LPS.

2 Update

2.1 Following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 4 February, a cross-party delegation of Members met with the Minister for Finance and Personnel to record their concerns and to seek reassurances on the revised rates figures which had been provided to the council by LPS.

2.2 Subsequent to the meeting the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee wrote to the Minister (Appendix One) to inform him that the council would commit to the following actions which be incorporated into the Memorandum of Understanding between LPS and the council for 2011/12:

- **Work with LPS and IRRV on benchmarks to compare LPS and BNCC performance with other local authorities;**
- **Work with LPS to develop monitoring statements;**
- **Continue to support LPS through the work of the Building Control Unit; and**
- **Based on the information provided by LPS on non-domestic vacant properties, work internally and with other external bodies to actively manage the rates base.**

2.3 In response the Minister confirmed in a letter dated 2 March (Appendix Two) that LPS would:

- Ensure that the Department was positioned to carry out a short review of the rates estimating process;
- Commit to playing a full part in the performance and benchmarking framework;
- Provide agreed monitoring data; and
- Enhance the oversight role played by local government through completing the review of the terms of reference for the Strategic Steering Group.

2.4 In the letter the Minister also recognises the significant effort by both the council and LPS in building a strong working relationship. He goes on to assure the council of his commitment to ensuring that the rating system in Northern Ireland is as effective as possible.

2.5 In addition, on behalf of Solace, Julie Thompson and Ronan Cregan attended the Committee for Finance and Personnel on 8 March to provide further information on LPS issues, prior to the Committee's evidence session with LPS. Council officers explained the difficulties earlier this year, emphasised the need to work in partnership with LPS to ensure this does not happen again and the need to work across government to maximise rates income through minimising vacant properties.

3 Performance Indicators and Monitoring Statements

3.1 Over recent months the council and LPS have been working with the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation to develop a suite of performance indicators which are capable of being compared to other collection authorities. They cover the following key areas of rating activity:

- The time taken to process the information required to issue a rates bill;
- The actual collection of rates;
- The cost of collecting rates;
- Adherence to agreed timetables for sharing information;
- The accuracy of LPS forecasts;
- Vacant properties; and
- Debt collection.

- 3.2 The performance information based on these proposed indicators will be reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis, starting with the second meeting in August 2011. A meaningful report will be provided for Members to explain the indicators, any issues that arise from and any suggestions for improvement. The indicators will also be reported, in parallel, to the LPS Management Board.
- 3.3 In addition LPS has also agreed to provide a number of monitoring statements which will support the performance indicators. These are:
- A detailed analysis of the cost of collection.
 - Monthly collection performance including details of any debt written-off.
 - Quarterly comparison of original Estimated Penny Product against in year revised Actual Penny Product. This is an essential monitoring tool to ensure that the figure used in preparation for setting the rate is on target.
 - Quarterly analysis of vacant properties in the city.
 - Quarterly analysis of Benefits take-up.

4 Memorandum of Understanding 2011/12

- 4.1 Members are aware that the council has an agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with LPS. The MOU sets out the statements of intent regarding the interactions between the two organisations. As part of the MOU, Appendix E of the document sets out the particular areas of focus in the coming year. It is recommended that for the coming year the areas of focus should be the implementation of the performance indicators and the associated monitoring statements. This will enable the council to compare the performance of LPS and the rating system with other authorities and, if necessary, work with LPS to pursue improvements. A copy of the proposed Appendix E of the MOU for 2011/12 (including the performance indicators and monitoring statements) is provided at Appendix Three.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the above report and agree the key priorities for monitoring rating system performance as set out in Appendix Three.

Documents Attached

Appendix 3 - Proposed Appendix E of MOU 2011/12

Appendix Three: Proposed Areas of Focus for MOU 2011/12

AREAS FOR SPECIFIC FOCUS

LPS and the Council agree that the following areas for particular focus in 2011-12 will be the implementation of a performance management framework based on the following performance indicators and monitoring statements:

	Performance Indicator Name	Performance Indicator Purpose
LPS 1	Average time from the occupiable date to the issue of a valid rating assessment for domestic properties	Overarching efficiency measure covering the 3 stages from the occupiable date for domestic properties to the date that a valid rate assessment is issued by LPS. The shorter the time period the quicker rates can be collected.
LPS 1.1	Average time taken, from the occupiable date, for Building Control to supply a valid domestic survey to LPS	Step 1 of 3 (see LPS 1)
LPS 1.2	Average time taken from the date LPS receives a domestic survey from Building Control to the date the valuation certificate is issued	Step 2 of 3 (see LPS 1)
LPS 1.3	Average time taken to issue a valid rating assessment for domestic properties from the date of the valuation certificate, regardless of property status.	Step 3 of 3 (see LPS 1)
LPS 2	Average time from the occupiable date to the issue of a valid rating assessment for non-domestic properties	Overarching efficiency measure covering the 3 stages from the occupiable date for non domestic properties to the date that a valid rate assessment is issued by LPS. The shorter the time period the quicker rates can be collected.
LPS 2.1	Average time taken, from the occupiable date, for Building Control to supply a valid non-domestic survey to LPS	Step 1 of 3 (see LPS 2)

	Performance Indicator Name	Performance Indicator Purpose
LPS 2.2	Average time taken from the date LPS receives a non-domestic survey from Building Control to the date the valuation certificate is issued, regardless of property status	Step 2 of 3 (see LPS 2)
LPS 2.3	Average time taken to issue a valid rating assessment for non-domestic properties from the date of the valuation certificate, regardless of property status	Step 3 of 3 (see LPS 2)
LPS 3	Collection performance	This measures the percentage of income due in that accounting period compared to the amount actually collected during the year.
LPS 4	Collection loss on vacant properties	This measure represents the cash value of rates not collected on vacant properties as a percentage of the gross rate income.
LPS 5	Average cost of collection per hereditament	This measures the cost effectiveness of LPS's rate collection procedures by monitoring the average cost of collection per hereditament. A 'hereditament' is a property which is or may become liable to a rate by being a separate item in a valuation list.
LPS 6	Conformance with the agreed APP / EPP timetable.	This measure reports LPS's performance for the delivery of the actual figures / results against the agreed timetable. This is important to inform our budgeting process and to strike a District Rate for the incoming year.
LPS 7	% Deviation of Estimated Penny Product from the Final Actual Penny Product	This measures the accuracy of LPS's process to produce the Estimated Penny Product at the start of the year by measuring the deviation with the Actual Penny Product at year-end.

	Performance Indicator Name	Performance Indicator Purpose
LPS 7.1	% Deviation of the in-year Forecast Actual Penny Product from the Final Actual Penny Product	This measures the accuracy of LPS's process to review and hence forecast the Actual Penny Product mid-year by measuring the deviation with the Actual Penny Product at year-end.
LPS 8	% Variance between the outstanding arrears at the end of one financial year as compared to the outstanding arrears at the end of the subsequent financial year	This is the percentage variance between the outstanding arrears at the end of the financial year relative to the level of outstanding debt at the end of the previous financial year. This measures the efficiency of the enforcement process.
LPS 9	% Cash collected against Non Domestic Vacant Rating (NDVR)	This is the percentage of cash collected in year against the current year non domestic vacant properties
LPS 10	LPS Proof of Debit	This ensures that the gross rate income has been derived from the relevant data.

Monitoring Statements	
	Cost of collection
	Monthly collection performance including details of any debt written-off
	Quarterly comparison of original Estimated Penny Product against in year revised Actual Penny Product.
	Analysis of vacant properties in the city
	Analysis of Benefits take-up"

The Committed adopted the recommendations.

Minutes of Meeting of Audit Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel of 7th March.

**Approval to Seek Tenders –
Electrical Services Installation**

The Committee granted authority for the commencement of a tendering exercise and delegated authority to the Director of Property and Projects, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, to invite and approve the invitation of applications for inclusion on a Select List and the submission of tenders in respect of electrical services installations. The duration of the contract would be for a period of one year, with an option to extend for two further twelve month periods. The estimated annual value of the contract was £135,000.

**Capital Programme - Potential Relocation
of Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
and Belfast Welcome Centre and Options for
the Development of Conference Facilities in Belfast**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

**Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau and the Belfast Welcome
Centre**

- 1.1 At a special meeting on 22 February 2011 the Development Committee considered a report on the potential relocation of the Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau and the Belfast Welcome Centre (BVCB/BWC), including an economic appraisal.
- 1.2 The Development Committee agreed to note the information which had been provided within the report and agreed further to allocate £15,000 towards the development of a full business case for each of the options, subject to the SP&R Committee agreeing that the project be included within the Capital Programme.
- 1.3 An extract from the minute of the meeting of the Development Committee is attached as Appendix A to this report.
- 1.4 This minute was subsequently amended at Council on 2nd March for further sites within the City to be included as options for the relocation of the BVCB/BWC.

Options for Development of Conference Facilities in Belfast

- 1.5 At their meeting of 15 February 2011 the Development Committee considered a report on the options for development of conference facilities in Belfast.

- 1.6 The Development Committee agreed to an economic appraisal being undertaken to provide a detailed financial and operational appraisal on the available options.
- 1.7 An extract from the minute of the meeting of the Development Committee is attached as Appendix B to this report.
- 1.8 This minute was subsequently amended at Council on 2nd March for other parts of the City, particularly the North Foreshore, to be considered within the options for the development of conference facilities within the City.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The main issue for the SP&R Committee is that both the BVCB/BWC and the Conference Facilities are emerging uncommitted proposals for the capital programme and there are currently no capital funds available.
- 2.2 To move these proposals forward the SP&R Committee would need to agree that they should be committed to, subject to capital funding being agreed at a future date, and for a full business case and economic appraisal (respectively) to be developed to facilitate the submission of fully informed applications for funding from the NITB capital grants scheme and other potential funding sources, subject to the Gates process.

Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau and the Belfast Welcome Centre

- 2.3 The recommendation of an economic appraisal undertaken by the Development Department is that the most advantageous available option would be for the BVCB/BWC to relocate to ground floor premises in Donegall Square North.
- 2.4 The existing first floor facility opened in April 2001 and, although the premises were suitable at the time, the tourism product has changed significantly and the BVCB/BWC had an aspiration for some time to move to ground floor premises.

- 2.5 The lease on the current premises expired at the end of July 2010 and whilst the landlord initially made an application to the Lands Tribunal for renewal of the lease for a further 10 year term, they have subsequently indicated that they will now seek a new 5 year term. The Council had, however, applied for a new lease for 1 year from August 2010 and monthly thereafter. However, given that the programme for any relocation is likely to extend beyond August 2011, Council officers would now propose to seek agreement to a new lease term of 3 years from August 2010 or, alternatively, a 5 year lease with a break option at the end of year 3 or earlier.
- 2.6 In any event the time taken to select an option, agree funding and lease arrangements at a new site together with design, procurement and fitting out may take around 18-24 months.
- 2.7 Although it would be beneficial for a new BVCB/BWC to be available at the beginning of 2012, the outcome of the NITB grant application is unlikely to be made in time for a relocation to be completed by then and for the Council to agree capital funding of the balance and arrange the design, procurement and completion of fit-out works. In any case, relocation by the start of 2012 is not deemed to be essential; rather, as there will be a considerable tourism draw arising from next year's events, a new facility would subsequently promote sustainable tourism development following 2012.
- 2.8 This would enable a programme to be developed for the opening of a new facility by August 2013, on the assumption that a 3 year lease term is agreed. Negotiations are ongoing with the landlord but the matter is still scheduled for determination by the Lands Tribunal if agreement cannot be reached between the parties and there is no guarantee that the Lands Tribunal will award a term shorter than 5 years.

Options for Development of Conference Facilities in Belfast

- 2.9 There are several options available for this proposal and the economic appraisal will consider each in detail and make a recommendation as to that which is most advantageous for reporting back to the Committee for further consideration.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 These proposals are currently two of a number of emerging, uncommitted capital programme proposals and are only being brought forward due to the Development Committee decisions.

Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau and the Belfast Welcome Centre

- 3.2 Implementation of the recommended option would require a capital funding requirement of £1.62m, although there may be consequential revenue savings in funding support by BCC of c£46,750 per annum. It is proposed that an application will be made to NITB for funding under their capital grants scheme, for which a short window of opportunity for applications will soon become available.
- 3.3 However, to advance the proposal to the next, Gate 2, stage would require approximately £15,000 to develop a full business case.
- 3.4 Should the SP&R Committee agree to this, the proposal would advance in the capital programme as a committed project subject to the Gates process, with the outcome of the full business case to be presented to the Committee on completion to enable the SP&R Committee to consider the proposal further.
- 3.5 There would be no commitment at this point to any expenditure beyond the development of the full business case.
- 3.6 Furthermore, to be realistic the SP&R Committee would need to agree to an amendment of the minutes which approved a full business case for each option in the economic appraisal and to include further options.
- 3.7 To advance this proposal would need a business case to be completed for a generic city centre location and selection of a site from available options at the appropriate time following future decisions on availability of grant and capital funding.

Options for Development of Conference Facilities in Belfast

- 3.8 Implementation of options would require a capital funding requirement of up to £22.2m. It is proposed that an application will be made to NITB, the EU Sustainable Competitiveness Programme and other relevant potential funding sources.

To advance this proposal would need an economic appraisal to be undertaken for available options, at a cost of approximately £30,000, with future decisions to be based on availability of grant and capital funding.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 None.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee consider, from a financial perspective, these proposals from the Development Committee and agree to:

1. approve the development of a full business case for the Relocation of Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau and Belfast Welcome Centre; and
2. the undertaking of an economic appraisal for the Options for Development of Conference Facilities in Belfast.

6 Decision Tracking

6.1 The outcome of the full business case, the economic appraisal and the funding applications will be presented to the Committee when available to permit the Committee to consider the proposal further.

7 Key to Abbreviations

7.1 BVCB/BWC – Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau and the Belfast Welcome Centre”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Northern Ireland Budget Statement 2011-2015

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the key elements of the Northern Ireland Assembly’s final agreed budget for the period 2011 – 2015.

(In the absence of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, it was agreed that Councillor Hartley take the Chair.)

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 individuals who were related to existing officers of the Council.

Noted.

**Recruitment for the Post of Director
of Finance and Resources**

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

The Director of Finance and Resources has advised that she plans to leave the council at the end of June 2011, subject to the completion of formalities for her new post in the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety. Arrangements therefore need to be put in place now to ensure the effective recruitment of a suitable candidate for this vital post.

Key Issues

1. Background to Job Role

Members will be aware that the post of Director of Finance and Resources currently has responsibility for Finance ; Efficiency; Performance Management; Audit, Governance and Risk (including Health and Safety); ICT and Human Resources.

There are considerable agendas associated with the council's two most important assets – money and people. Each requires effective, efficient management and scrutiny while supporting the organisation to make significant improvements.

(a) Financial Challenges

Clearly the effective management of our money is vital. The council must ensure it has sound financial governance and fit for purpose strategic financial planning and management, particularly in these financially challenging times. At its meeting on 4 March, the Committee discussed the need to not only manage our own finances as effectively as possible and to continue to find efficiencies but to explore new and innovative ways of financing investment in the city. Members stressed the need for key strategic relationships to be developed with the aim of advocating for and proactively leveraging resources into key projects. This would come together through the development and implementation of a resourcing strategy for the city.

In short, therefore, moving forward the role of Director of Finance and Resources, in terms of finance, has three key elements:

- (i) tight organisational management, linked to efficiency, performance management and continuous improvements across all departments,
- (ii) addressing rating setting issues and related management of budgets; and
- (iii) an enhanced externally focused role to secure financing/income - building key relationships, identifying new and innovative funding streams and creating a long-term, collaborative approach to growing the rates-base, the Council's key source of income.

(b) Human Resources/Organisational Development (OD) Challenges

The effective management of our workforce is equally important and the nature of HR as a function has also changed. While there is still clearly a need to ensure compliance with relevant employment legislation and best practise, we have been moving to a more strategic approach to managing our people in order to build the capacity of the organisation to improve, deliver value for money services and achieve efficiencies. There is also a significant industrial relations agenda which needs to be managed in a time when we must do more with less.

To support this agenda, the council's former Business Improvement section has largely merged with HR, with some staff moving to the Efficiency Unit. In addition arrangements are being implemented to ensure that HR Officers across the council link to the Head of HR (Finance Officers across the council already link into the Director of Finance and Resources on an informal basis).

2. Proposed revision to Job Role

In summary, following discussion with the existing Director of Finance and Resources, the current economic climate and the significant challenges expected over the next few years in finance and HR/OD mean that the role of Director of Finance and Resources has changed considerably, both in scope and significance.

Consequently, it is felt that a role that is responsible for Finance; Efficiency; Performance Management; Audit Governance and Risk (including Health and Safety) ICT, HR and a new externally focussed City Resourcing Strategy; is too extensive given the significant external pressures and the efficiency, organisational development and improvement agenda ahead.

High performing councils in England, Scotland and Wales (and private sector organisations) have Finance and HR / Organisational Development (OD) within the same tier in the organisation, with each of the lead officers for these functions reporting directly to the Chief Executive. This recognises the significance of and difference in each of these functions.

It is proposed therefore to keep Finance (including a new externally focussed City Resourcing Strategy) Efficiency, Performance Management, Audit, Governance and Risk (including Health and Safety), and ICT under the Director of Finance and Resources and place HR and OD with the Chief Executive alongside Legal, Policy and Planning and Communications.

Members will be aware that each director within BCC has a 'flexibility' clause within their job description allowing for functions to be changed as required. There would be no change to the salary scales of either the Director of Finance and Resources or the Head of HR, nor would there be any change to the current governance arrangements in that the Director of Finance and Resources and the Head of HR would continue to report to the Audit Panel, Budget and Transformation Panel and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in each of their specific areas.

3. Filling the post

The appointment for the Director of Finance and Resources will be made in accordance with the council's normal recruitment and selection procedure. Given the significance of the post, it is proposed that we follow the arrangements used the last time the post was filled and to perform an executive search in order to obtain the best possible pool of capable candidates for consideration by the council.

Council policy, in accordance with guidance given by the statutory Code of Employment Practice issued by the Local Government Staff Commission provides that the selection panel for such posts should comprise the Chair, Deputy Chair, two Members and the Chief Executive. (Community balance is to be provided across the Members and gender balance is to be provided across the panel.) A non-voting Local Government Staff Commission professional assessor/observer should also be in attendance.

Recommendations

Subject to the recruitment formalities being completed for the present Director's new post, it is recommended that:

1. the Director of Finance and Resources should be responsible for Finance; Efficiency; Performance Management; Audit, Governance and Risk (including Health and Safety); ICT; and city resourcing strategy with the functional responsibility of HR and OD moving to the Chief Executive.
2. the Committee agree elected members' nominees to comprise the selection panel.
3. The Chair and Deputy Chair agree the recruitment plan and documentation with the Chief Executive; and
4. the selection panel will have delegated authority to make the appointment with the outcome being reported to June's Council meeting for members' notification.

Resource Implications

The cost of executive search will be subject to a four quote specification process based on quality and price and will be within the limit set for delegated authority."

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that, in addition to the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, that Councillors Hargey and McCarthy be appointed to the selection panel.

Asset Management

Disposal of Land at Musgrave Street

The Committee was advised that, in December, 2000, the Council had been approached by the then Royal Ulster Constabulary Estate Services Business Unit regarding the potential acquisition by the Police of a small area of land in Council ownership at Musgrave Street. Discussions had taken place since that time regarding the potential value of the land, which extended to approximately 238 square metres. The land in question had for a long period been under the control of the Police and a single storey brick building had been constructed on the land. It was claimed that the building dated from the 1970s. The Estates Services Business Unit wished to consolidate its title to the site and therefore purchase the land at market value.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that, following lengthy discussions, a disposal price of £50,000 had been agreed with the District Valuer, Land and Property Services. The agreement provided also for a clawback arrangement whereby the Council would benefit from any disposal of the land by the Police Service of Northern Ireland over a period of ten years following the sale.

The Committee authorised the disposal of the area of land on the terms as outlined, to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, subject to a suitable legal agreement to be prepared by the Legal Services Unit.

**City of Belfast Golf Course –
Proposed Land Exchange**

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee was advised that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 13th December, 2007, had approved an exchange of lands at the City of Belfast Golf Course with a member of the public, Mr. H. Montgomery. Since that time there had been further discussions which had culminated in an agreement on improved site-line provisions of 6.0 metres x 215 metres at the new entrance. Mr. Montgomery would carry out all the works associated with the provision of new vehicle access. That arrangement maximised the prospect of the Council being able to utilise the access point for further commercial/residential development in the medium to longer term. The Council would be in receipt of a capital sum of £35,000 on completion of the land exchange.

The Committee approved the exchange of land as outlined.

**Former Civic Amenity Site –
Boucher Road**

The Committee was reminded that the former civic amenity site at the Boucher Road, Balmoral Industrial Estate covered an area of 0.588 acres, the frontage of which was on the Boucher Road close to its junction with Stockman's Lane. The site was held within the Corporate Landbank by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Committee was advised that Balmoral Industrial Estate contained a number of sites which were leased from the Council by way of long leases, usually 125 years, subject to the payment of reviewable ground rents. Rents receivable from that estate represented a valuable income stream for the Council, with a rental income in 2010/11 amounting to approximately £3.1 million. Leases within the estate were proactively managed by the Estates Management Unit to ensure rent reviews and lease terms were adhered to and optimised for the benefit of the Council. It was now proposed that the land be advertised to let on the open market on the basis of a 125 year lease, subject to a ground rent with five-yearly rent reviews.

The Committee approved this course of action and noted that a further report would be submitted to the Committee in due course seeking approval to the terms of any proposed letting.

Requests for Use of the City Hall Grounds

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the Committee has delegated authority for routine requests for use of the City Hall grounds etc. to the Director of Property & Projects on the basis of an agreed set of criteria. However it was recognised that there would still be occasions on which the nature, scale and/or scope of the request means that it is appropriate to place the matter directly before the Committee.

The very recent requests from 2 separate Church-based organisations detailed below fall into this category, and the direction of the Committee is therefore sought.

The first request is from New Life City Church. The Church's pastor, Jack McKee, would like to have a 'CU @ the CROSS' event in the City Hall grounds between 3pm and 4pm (set up 2pm) on Saturday 18 June 2011.

The event would involve four large crosses being carried from the four compass points of the city along the main arterial routes to meet at the City Hall at approximately 3.00pm. Each cross would be followed by an estimated crowd of 200-300 people.

When the estimated crowd of 800-1,000 people reach the City Hall grounds there would be a one hour outdoor event consisting of singing, drama and speaking. The special guest for this event would be Arthur Blessitt from the USA, who has previously walked through the streets of Belfast carrying a cross in 1971, 1972 and 1979.

The purpose of the event is to 'promote the positive message of the Christian faith as one of love, forgiveness and reconciliation'. Various churches from across Belfast will be supporting the event with the lead being taken by New Life City Church.

No access to the main building is required, and the organisers will be providing their own stewarding, staging and PA system etc.

A formal request is being made to the PSNI and the Parades Commission in respect of the march through the city, however if for any reason this permission is not granted the organisers would still wish to use the City Hall grounds for the event.

The second request is from the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a local church based in Belfast. They would like to stage a 3 hour 'Place of Victory for all Nations' event in the City Hall grounds sometime between 12noon and 6.00pm on Saturday 23 April 2011. This date can be moved if necessary.

The event would be an open-air gospel concert involving bands and choirs from various churches in Northern Ireland. Entry to the event would be free and is suitable to people of all ages. The organisers have previously held the event at the Exhibition Centre in the Europa Hotel and estimate up to 1,000 people would attend. No further details are available in terms of what the event actually entails.

The organisers apparently have experience of organising large scale events and will be supplying their own stewarding, staging and sound system. No access to the main building is needed.

Key Issues

This is the first time that Church-based organisations have formally requested to use the City Hall grounds for this type of large-scale event. Both events may attract up to 1,000 people and are being held over an extended period of time. The council's bye-laws provide that *'no person shall preach, lecture, or take part in any meeting for political, religious, or any other purpose, or take part in any public show, performance or demonstration, except with the prior consent of the Council and in such part of the Grounds as may be set aside by the Council for that purpose.'*

These requests inevitably raise the question as to whether or not the City Hall – as the political and administrative headquarters of the council – is an appropriate place for religious meetings, or whether this important public space ought to be used in a purely secular capacity.

Members will also be aware that a special meeting of this Committee has already been agreed to consider a report on the future use of City Hall, including the issue of charging for the use of the main building and grounds and amended criteria governing access to the grounds etc, and may therefore wish to defer taking a decision on this request at this time, in order to allow for consideration of the use of the grounds for religious purposes as part of that wider debate.

Alternatively the Committee may wish to look beyond these 2 specific applications and to deal with the broader issue of access to the City Hall grounds for religious events in the round, and thereby create a policy position for future application.

In practical terms, both events would involve substantial set-ups including staging and sound systems. Although the events will provide their own stewarding, Members should be aware that they are taking place on a Saturday during the summer months, when the grounds are extensively used by local people and by visitors and tourists. If approved, these events would not have exclusive access to the grounds but would be taking place alongside the other users of the grounds.

Consideration also therefore needs to be given to the potential for other users of the grounds to object to or take offence at religious events taking place. Although both events are being promoted as cross-community, other people using the grounds may perceive them differently, and those with no religious beliefs may complain that public displays of religion are inappropriate and ought to be pursued in places of worship and in the home, rather than be facilitated on public property.

The Committee will also be aware that the creation of a precedent in these cases could potentially create very significant additional demand from all faith groups and denominations in the future.

If permission is granted for one or both of these events a full event-management plan with appropriate risk assessments would be put in place.

Equality and Good Relations implications

This matter has been considered in liaison with the Council's Good Relations unit. It is felt that this proposal could potentially have adverse implications both for equality and good relations in the city, given the high profile of the City Hall building and grounds and the stated commitment of the Council to provide a shared space that can be enjoyed by all.

Resource Implications

There would be no direct resource implications in respect of either application as the organisers would make the appropriate arrangements in terms of stewarding, staging etc.

No access to the main building is required and the organisers would be required to comply with all the standard terms and conditions including indemnities and lawn reinstatement etc. if approval is given.

Decision(s) required

The direction of the committee is sought on whether or not to approve the requests from New Life City Church and RCCG for use of the City Hall grounds for the stated purposes. Several options are available in this regard, namely:-

- (a) to defer any decisions until after the party briefings and the special Committee dealing with the use and management of the City Hall have taken place; or
- (b) to agree a policy position on the use of the grounds for religious purposes, and then apply the policy to the 2 current applications; or
- (c) to deal with the 2 specific, current requests on their individual merits.”

After discussion, the Committee indicated that it was minded to refuse the requests for the use of the City Hall grounds for the purposes outlined, but agreed that discussions take place with representatives with both organisations to identify any other potential Council-owned venues at which the events could be held and that the final decision on the matter be taken by the Council at its meeting scheduled to be held on 4th April.

Girdwood Community Hub - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. **Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will recall that the Council’s bid for a community hub located at Girdwood was deferred in May 2010, under the Peace III Priority 2.1, total value £9.6m. SEUPB has now advised the Council that it requires all outstanding information by 20 April 2011.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the Community Hub proposal has not yet been formally signed off for an award. It is anticipated that a number of projects will be brought to the June meeting of the SEUPB Priority 2.1 Steering Committee.
- 1.3 All expenditure for the capital project must be claimed from SEUPB by mid-2015, at the very latest. After this point, any capital expenditure will be carried at risk by the Council. No allocation has been made for this in the Council’s capital programme.

2. **Key Issues**

2.1 As per Committee's recommendation in June 2010, Council officers have continued to develop the proposal for final submission to SEUPB. This has included a number of community meetings, briefings for the relevant Ministers and meetings with relevant departmental officials. Following a briefing paper and subsequent meeting with community representatives (10 March), 4 key issues have emerged:

2.2 **Proposal relocation of Hub**

As landowners for the site, DSD and OFMDFM officials raised that it will be difficult to proceed with the location as previously envisaged. It was suggested that the footprint for the hub should move towards the Cliftonpark Avenue end of the Girdwood site. This revised footprint would encompass some of the land set aside for 'mixed-use' development and a strip of derelict land owned by the NIHE. It was agreed that the appropriate Ministerial approvals be sought, subject to engagement with community representatives and Council agreement. An indicative map is attached.

At the meeting with community representatives (10 March), there was some discussion on the location. It was noted that there is real potential to use the Hub to transform Cliftonpark Avenue from a barren 'no-man's land' into an attractive, vibrant building and public realm on the edge of the Girdwood site. It was generally agreed that there were benefits to this relocation but further engagement needed to happen to address some of the concerns raised regarding access and safety.

2.3 **Political endorsement**

Community representatives are keen to secure the potential for a substantial investment into North Belfast. At the meeting, it was highlighted that political leadership was critical to the success of any community engagement process, and the sustainability of the Hub itself. It was suggested that it would build confidence in the project if political representatives publicly endorsed the community engagement process and the Hub concept. Community representatives were also anxious that political representatives would participate in a community engagement process, as a visible demonstration of commitment to the project.

2.4 Community engagement process

Given the sensitivities in the process, community representatives stressed the need for an inclusive and participative engagement in designing the Hub, its management and the facilities, services and programmes therein. The Director of Property and Projects highlighted that this needed to some degree to be time-bound, in order to meet pressing deadlines, such as planning approvals. It was agreed at the meeting, subject to Committee approval, that the representatives would convene again to design a robust engagement process with support from Council, DSD and OFMDFM.

Representatives also raised the real need to maximise local community benefit realised by the Hub. The Director of Property and Projects agreed to draft a Business and Community Opportunity Plan for future discussion.

It was proposed that a number of other partners could support the process. This included the Belfast Regeneration Office and the NI Housing Executive. Initial discussions with these agencies have been positive towards the process. Further partners will be identified as the project develops.

2.5 Strategic partners

When the application was submitted, it was envisaged that the library would be a key anchor tenant. This is no longer possible due to budgetary constraints. There is now scope to identify other strategic partners as tenants or users.

2.6 Conclusion

This iconic, transformational project will not proceed in the short- or medium-term without Peace III funding. The costs for this capital project are not included in the council's current capital programme priorities and, resources are unlikely to be made available in the next 5 years, given the current economic situation of the Council, its partners and the wider economic environment.

3. Resource Implications

Financial

Up to £3,000 towards the costs of the community engagement process. Provision for this been made within revenue budgets. An application will be made to the Community Relations Council for £3,000.

Human Resources

Officer time to participate in engagement process.

Assets

Further updates will be brought to Committee on a timely basis.

4. **Equality Implications**

An equality consultation document, community engagement/consultation process and equality screening will be submitted as supplementary information to SEUPB.

5. **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked:

- For their feedback on the issues highlighted above;
- To publicly endorse the community engagement process and the overall project; and
- To agree to participate in the wider community engagement process, including innovative ways of engaging people in design processes and longer term programming of the Hub.

6. **Decision Tracking**

The Director for Property and Projects will complete the submission to SEUPB by 20 April 2011 and report to SP&R Committee in September 2011 on the outcomes of the community engagement process, subject to an award from SEUPB.

7. **Key to Abbreviations**

DSD – Department for Social Development
OFMDFM – Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister
SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Good Relations and Equality

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

Minutes of Meeting of Historic Centenaries Working Group

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Historic Centenaries Working Group of 7th March.

Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 7th March and adopted the recommendations contained therein.

Peace III - Dealing with Physical Manifestations – Additional Programme

During discussion on the foregoing minutes, the Good Relations Manager provided an update in relation to the funding available for the Additional Programme. She explained that the total amount available had reduced to around £20,000, of which approximately £16,000 would be available for grants to existing Groups on the Tackling Physical Manifestations Programme to hold 'Springtime Events'. This would equate to a maximum grant of £400 per group. The remaining £4,000 would be paid to Groundwork Northern Ireland to administer the Programme.

Noted.

**Notice of Motion re:
Centenary of International Women's Day**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st March, had passed the following Notice of Motion which had been proposed by Councillor B. Kelly:

“Belfast City Council notes that the Centenary of International Women’s Day will be celebrated on 8th March, 2011.

International Women’s Day is a global celebration of the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

The Council, while recognising the progress made towards equality between men and women, acknowledges that this journey is not complete, particularly in relation to women’s economic independence, equal representation in decision-making roles and ending violence against women.

The Council joins with women from across Belfast in celebrating the achievements thus far and pledges its support to work towards a more equal future for women.”

The Committee was reminded that, at the request of the seconder, Councillor M. E. Campbell, the proposer had agreed to the inclusion of the following paragraph:

“The Council agrees that consideration be given to the erection of a piece of public art, within the environs of the City Hall or its grounds, to celebrate the contribution and achievements of women in the City.”

The Council had agreed that consideration of the public art be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee was reminded that it had agreed previously to the establishment of the Cross-Party Memorabilia Working Group, which consisted of the six elected Members on the Good Relations Partnership. Part of the remit of that group was to discuss the display of City Hall memorabilia in the longer term and to agree a programme of work and the acquisition of materials to ensure that the items on display in the City Hall were representative of all communities in the City. Accordingly, it was recommended, in the first instance, that the matter be referred to the Memorabilia Working Group, with a report thereon being submitted to the Committee in due course.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman