

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th January, 2014

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Robinson (Chairman);
Aldermen Browne and Campbell;
Councillors Attwood, Clarke, Corr, Haire,
Hargey, Hendron, Jones, Kennedy, McCabe,
Mac Giolla Mhín, McVeigh, Mullan, Newton,
Reynolds and Spence.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Mrs. S. Wylie, Director of Health and Environmental
Services;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Carson and McCarthy.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 6th January.

Declarations of Interest

The Chairman (Alderman Robinson) declared an interest in Items 3(a) Proposals on iESE Support to the Council, in so far as he was a member of the Board of iESE; and Item 2(a) in so far as he was Special Adviser to the First Minister; and Councillor McVeigh declared an interest in Item 2(c) Leisure Transformation Programme, in that he was employed by SIPTU.

Notice of Motion re: Real Jobs Clause

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 6th January, had considered the undernoted Notice of Motion:

“This Council recognises the increasing social and economic hardship experienced by people in our communities as a result of growing unemployment and cuts to welfare benefits. The Council accepts that it has a duty to use the powers available to it (including but not limited to planning, regulation and procurement powers), to generate positive outcomes for the most marginalised in our communities and hereby

commits to including at every available opportunity a 'Real Jobs' clause in contracts tendered by the Council to procure goods, services and capital works. The 'Real Jobs' clause will guarantee ring fenced, fully paid jobs and apprenticeships for the long-term unemployed (12+ months)."

The Committee was advised that, in accordance with Standing Order 11(e), the Motion had stood referred without discussion to the Committee.

It was agreed that a report in the matter be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Investment Programme

Area Working Update

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

"1.0 Relevant Background Information

Role of the Area Working Groups

- 1.1 Members are aware that the Area Working Groups (AWGs) were established last year as a means of connecting Members to local areas in preparation for their role in community planning under the Reform of Local Government. In governance terms, the AWGs were established to have an advisory role, informing the implementation of the Investment Programme. It was agreed that the AWGs would have no delegated authority and no budget.**
- 1.2 Since this time, the AWGs have played an integral role in recommending investment decisions for their areas in terms of the Local Investment Fund, the Feasibility Fund and Local Interventions Funds to the SP&R Committee. It was also previously agreed at SP&R in November 2012 that the AWGs would play a central part in the decisions related to the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) given their knowledge of local areas and projects.**

2.0 Key issues

Area Working Group Updates - East AWG - Local Intervention

- 2.1 Members will recall that in August 2012, it had agreed to support area interventions to address particular problems or take advantage of opportunities which had been identified by the AWGs. A fund of £100,000 per AWG, with a pro rata amount for the Greater Shankill, was established for taking these forward. A series of interventions have already been agreed for**

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AREA	INTERVENTION	DIRECTOR
North	£100,000 towards an intervention to tackle anti social behaviour in the North area including looking at the provision of alleygates	Director of Health & Environmental Services
South	£50,000 to support retail initiatives within South Belfast	Director of Development
West	£100,000 towards a co-ordinated approach by various agencies in regard to crime and anti-social behaviour issues in the Lower Falls/Divis area	Director of Health & Environmental Services
Shankill	£40,000 towards a range of community events and activities designed to animate the local area, bring people together and contribute to local businesses	Director of Development

An update on the Local Interventions will be brought to a future Committee.

- 2.2 The East AWG has made the following recommendation for the consideration of the SP&R Committee in relation to their Local Intervention Fund money:

Project	AWG Comments
Diamond Project	Diamond project - That £60,000 be allocated from the East's AWG's Local Intervention Fund to support the Diamond project in East Belfast under two parts – Part 1 £30,000 support to Charter NI, Part 2: £30,000 to develop a local action plan, on condition that discussions take place with CharterNI to ensure that all necessary issues can be put in place, including the appropriateness of the split as suggested. <i>Members are asked to note that subsequent discussions have taken place with CharterNI in relation to this split and this has been agreed with them. It is recommended that this is taken forward by the Director of HE&S</i>
Willowfield Parish Community Association	That £7,500 be allocated from the East's AWG's Local Intervention Fund to support the development of business plan – this is being matched funded by DSD/BRO. <i>It is recommended that this is taken forward by the Director of Property & Projects.</i>

Members are asked to note that an update on LIF, including the latest projects, which have completed due-diligence and/or have now received funding agreements have been circulated.

Social Investment Fund (SIF) – Update

- 2.9 Members are aware the OFMdfM established an £80m Social Investment Fund (split between capital and revenue) aimed at *'reducing poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration through strategic areas based interventions of significant scale'*. SIF is being delivered in partnership with communities across 9 investment zones with 4 zones in the Greater Belfast area – North, South, East and West and each zone was required to put together an area plan with 10 identified priority projects – these included clusters of capital projects.
- 2.10 Members will be aware that there have been delays in the SIF process due to issues with the economic appraisal process and also that the Fund itself was massively oversubscribed. Council officers met with OFMDFM officials last week for an update on the current status of SIF. Decisions on the allocations of monies per zone have now been taken at Ministerial level and details of the projects which will receive funding are now becoming clear. Members will be aware that when the draft area plans were submitted each zones was asked to rank their ten projects in terms of priority. This has now been used as the basis for which projects will receive funding. A number of zones in Belfast have looked at reprioritising their projects on this basis now that allocations are clear.
- 2.11 Members were previously updated in March 2012 that the Council was named as the potential delivery agent for a series of capital projects across the four Belfast zones. Committee at this stage gave an 'in-principle' agreement for this on the basis that further detail was brought back when this was available. Members are asked to note that following the discussion with OFMDFM last week it is still envisaged that the Council will be the main delivery agent for the majority of capital projects across the 4 Belfast zones. This includes a number of cluster projects and at this stage it is likely that the Council may be the delivery agent for over 30 projects.
- 2.12 There will be associated resource implications and resources costs in delivering projects and the impact of delivering these also needs to be taken in the context of the Council's other project delivery commitments under the Capital Programme, LIF and projects which may emerge through BIF. However at this stage it is not possible to quantify the exact resource implications and Council officers are working with OFMDFM officials to quantify the exact scope and scale of emerging projects. Members are asked to note that a management fee has been build into each project and Council officers are also progressing discussions about how this is best allocated.

- 2.13 In the interim, so that projects are ready to be progressed, Members are asked to authorise the Director of Property & Projects, in conjunction with Legal Services, to progress the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with officials from OFMDFM in relation to the delivery of SIF projects within the four Belfast zones. This will be considered in the context of the ongoing resource implications and further detail on both the projects and the management fee associated with these being provided. Further detail on this will be brought back to Committee next month.
- 2.14 A number of SIF projects could provide substantial matched funding for potential BIF projects (see appendix B). Likewise there are also some potential BIF projects that had been dependent upon SIF funding which is not now forthcoming.
- 2.15 In these circumstances officers will bring a full report on the current status of BIF projects particularly in regard to matched funding to the February Committee. Members will be asked to consider BIF projects for economic appraisal in the light of matched funding possibilities, feasibility and in accordance with Investment Programme principles such as balanced investment.
- 2.16 SIF and BIF are only two possibilities open to Members in terms of obtaining resources that might be used to make a real difference to the lives of constituents across the City, there are now further emerging possibilities outlined below.

3.0 Area Planning - Emerging Opportunities

- 3.1 Committee is asked to note however that the current changes now facing the local government sector provide a great opportunity for Members in terms of making a real difference in Belfast, in particular in terms of physical investment decisions.

Planning Opportunities

- The Council's approach to community planning is now beginning to crystallise which will provide a citywide framework and context for taking decisions – the STC agreed on 10th January that a community planning workshop, to which all Members would be invited, would be held. This workshop has now been provisionally agreed for the start of March

- there are increasing opportunities to work in partnership with government departments including DRD/DCAL and opportunities for enhanced relationships with the other anchor agencies such as INI/BHC/SIB/UU/QUB/NITB etc. which in turn will assist in attracting private sector investment
- Committee has agreed that a major piece of work in terms of regeneration focusing on the city centre, which will link to the ongoing work in relation to community planning, is progressed
- there are a number of significant strategic projects (both planned and underway) across the city which provide a timely opportunity for Members to consider the development of comprehensive strategic regeneration plans around these (e.g. Girdwood/North Gateway, Casement Andersonstown LC, Windsor/Olympia, CCG/Avoniel LC). These types of plans would help pick up additional issues and programmes around existing projects

Resource Opportunities

- detail is now forthcoming on what projects will be funded across the city under SIF – these includes a range of capital projects as well as revenue programming projects. There is nearly £40m being invested in the city under this funding stream and this could allow Members the opportunity to cluster investment decisions which will have a greater strategic impact
- detailed information is being provided by DSD in terms of the assets, liabilities, contracts, masterplans and resources which will transfer under LGR and the outcome of this should be factored into decisions on project investment. The DSD transfer issue also involves the new boundary areas and a number of interfaces with other government departments
- no money has yet been committed under BIF
- money may be decommitted from projects under LIF where projects are unable to complete the DD process and/or where there are other reasons why projects are not advanced (match funding not secured etc.) and there is an opportunity for Members to look at the reallocation of this

- The intervention approach (as outlined in 2.1 above) has been a pilot to date with a limited budget ringfenced for these. There is learning that can be taken on board from these that will become more relevant when area planning becomes grounded within Council

3.2 As part of the community planning process endorsed by the STC in January the proposed BIF paper will provide Members with up to date information that can be fed into community and area plans to create optimum benefit, officers can also provide updated capital programme progress together with LIF schemes and emerging DSD transfers to develop an overall investment picture.

4.0 Equality Implications

As part of the Stage approval process, a screening will be carried out on each project to indicate potential equality and good relations impacts and any mitigating actions needed.

5.0 Recommendations

Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and -

Local Intervention Fund

- agree the Local Intervention recommendations as proposed by the East AWG

Social Investment Fund

- authorise the Director of Property & Projects, in conjunction with Legal Services, to progress the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with OFMDFM in relation to the delivery of SIF projects within the four Belfast zones. This will be considered in the context of the ongoing resource implications and further detail on both the projects and the management fee being provided.

Area planning

- Members are asked to note the STC decision to host a community planning workshop in March and to receive updates on BIF and other investment opportunities during February.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Capital Programme Update –
Multi-use Games Area Programme**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of report

1.1 The Capital Programme is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council assets or provides new assets. This report provides an update on –

- **The development of a MUGA programme for new and replacement MUGAs**

2.0 Relevant Background Information

Rolling Capital Programme 2013/14 onwards

2.1 Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a 3 Stage process where decisions on which projects progress are taken by SP&R. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Importantly it will also enable Members to focus on delivering the projects which can have maximum benefits and investment return for the city and local areas.

2.2 Members are aware that the Capital Programme (as agreed by Committee on 22nd March 2013) has been reconfigured to reflect the 3 approval stages as agreed –

- **Committed projects (Stage 3) - projects which have completed a Full Business Case (FBC) and where approval has been obtained by SP&R to proceed to tender and award contracts**
- **Uncommitted projects (Stage 2) –projects where a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) has been agreed by Committee and work on the project is being progressed through the development of an Outline Business Case (OBC), but they have not yet been developed to a stage where permission could be sought from SP&R to proceed to tender**
- **Emerging proposals (Stage 1) –proposals which require completion of an SOC before they could be considered further by SP&R Committee**

- 2.3 Members will recall that they agreed at SP&R Committee in November that various proposed MUGA projects be moved into a discrete MUGA Programme and be moved from Stage 1 – Emerging project to Stage 2 – Uncommitted on the Capital Programme and that officers progress the development of this programme and report back to Committee in January.

3.0 **KEY ISSUES**

Capital Programme – MUGA Programme – New and Refurbishment

- 3.1 Members are asked to note that a MUGA is a Multi-Use Games Area which are suitable for a variety of informal sports including football, netball and basketball etc. Due to their nature the majority of MUGAs are accessible and free to use. The Council currently has 37 MUGAs across the city. There are a number of different types of MUGAs which are classified as –

- Type 1 - Surfaced using bitmac, incorporating basic line marking and free standing goal units. Used primarily as kick-about areas or for other informal recreation. Sizes are flexible depending on site conditions
- Type 2 - Surfaced using bitmac, incorporating sports pitch markings, goal units and high ballstop fencing systems. Can normally be locked to prevent access after dark.
- Type 3 - Surfaced using polymeric rubber crumb, incorporating sports pitch markings, high ball-stop fencing systems and goal units. The majority of these facilities will include floodlighting. Type 3 MUGA's are accessible and free to use during daylight hours; however booking/charging may be required for sites that utilise floodlights in the evenings. Type 3 facilities can be managed by the council or by local users/stakeholders.

MUGA Programme – Phase 1 (Refurbishments and New)

- 3.2 It is proposed that the work is progressed on the following MUGAs (as at 3.4 below) under Phase 1 of the MUGA Programme. This is broken down into two strands – refurbishments and new builds.
- 3.3 Members are asked to note that the majority of sites under Phase 1A are linked to the Council's ongoing Playground Improvement Programme – however refurbishments to the MUGAs are not covered under this programme. The linkages to the playground programme will facilitate work on these sites and upgrading the MUGA provision will provide further enhanced facilities for local people. The majority of these sites can be delivered by the end of this financial year. In relation to

Springfield Av Site A, Members will be aware that there are a number of access and community issues in relation to this site and a number of feasibility studies are being carried out in the wider area. It is therefore recommended that an interim refurbishment is carried out which will test demand for the site and will allow for further community consultation. This refurbishment will include resurfacing, lining and the installation of goal units.

3.4

MUGA PROGRAMME – PHASE 1		
Phase 1A – Refurbishments - £300,000		
1.	Clara Street	Completion by end of March 2014
2.	Victoria Park	Completion by mid April 2014
3.	Finlay Park	Completion by mid February 2014
4.	New Lodge	Completion mid March 2014
5.	Springfield Av Site A	Completion by end of February 2014
6.	Willowbank	Completion mid March 2014
7.	<i>Dover Street</i>	Complete December 2013
Phase 1B – New Builds - £565,000		
8.	Annadale	New build. Preparatory work to commence now. Due for completion March 15
9.	Clarendon Playing Fields	New build. Preparatory work to commence now. Due for completion March 15

3.5 If Members agree Phase 1 above, approval is further sought to initiate the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

3.6 The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that Phase 1 of the MUGA Programme is within the affordability limits of the Council and that Phase 1A will be financed through non-recurrent underspend and the new builds will be progressed under the Capital Programme. Members are therefore asked to agree to move the MUGA Programme to Stage 3 – Committed on the Capital Programme.

4.0 Development of a rolling MUGA Programme 2014/15 and beyond

MUGA Refurbishments

- 4.1 Members will be aware that there is already a very successful rolling programme of improvements in place for the Council's playground which is based on robust independent condition surveys. It is recommended that a similar process is put in place to assess the remaining existing MUGAs and the results of this assessment form the basis of a rolling programme of refurbishments for the Council's MUGAs going forward. Members will be aware that a number of MUGAs are transferring in under the LGR (both from DSD and from Lisburn/Castlereagh) and it is recommended that these are included in the inspection programme.
- 4.2 Members are therefore asked to approve the progress of a rolling programme of MUGA refurbishments including the appointment of independent consultants to undertake condition surveys. If approved it is envisaged that this work could be completed by the Autumn time and a further report on a rolling programme will be brought back to Committee after this.

New MUGAs

- 4.3 Members will be aware that the Council also receives requests to develop new MUGAs from time to time. However currently there is no framework within which to assess these requests. Members are asked to agree that officers progress the development of a policy framework in relation to the provision of new MUGAs. This will be carried out in parallel to the work being progressed on the condition surveys and will be brought back to Committee at the same stage to allow Members to consider an overall Programme.
- 4.4 Members will be aware that work is also ongoing on rebaselining the Pitches Strategy and looking at Facilities Management Agreements within the Parks & Leisure Departments. The work on development of a rolling MUGA programme will be looked at in the context of these.
- 4.5 Approval is also sought to initiate the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) for the rolling MUGA programme, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

5.0 Resource Implications

- **Financial -Phase 1 - £865,000 for Phase 1 of the MUGA Programme which includes £300,000 for Phase 1A to be funded under non-recurrent underspend and £565,000 towards the new builds for Annadale and Clarendon Playing Fields. The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. *Rolling Programme* - Members have already agreed that £30,000 from the Feasibility Fund is set aside to progress the development of a MUGA Programme.**
- **Human Resources – Staff from Parks & Leisure and Property & Projects will deliver the MUGA Programme**
- **Assets and other implications – The MUGA Programme will enhance enhanced facilities for local people**

6.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to –

- **agree the projects under Phase 1 of the MUGA Programme as outlined above, agree to move the MUGA programme from Stage 2 – Uncommitted to Stage 3 – Committed Projects on the Capital Programme; agree the development and next steps in relation to the development of a rolling MUGA Programme going forward and agree that the MUGA Programme (Phase 1 and rolling programme) is advanced to the invitation of tenders, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendation, subject to the Springfield Avenue Site A project being included in Phase 1B – New Builds.

Leisure Transformation Programme – Business Model Appraisal

(Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant background information

- 1.1 At its meeting in December, SP&R Committee was to consider a report which provided a detailed analysis of the three business model options for the future delivery of leisure services in the City. At the meeting, the Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Trades Unions to address the Committee in relation to the proposals.**

Prior to the Council’s TUs being admitted to the Committee meeting, Members agreed to defer consideration of the report until its second meeting in January, 2014 to allow consideration of the comments made by the Council’s TUs.

The Committee noted the views expressed by the TUs and agreed that the Deloitte report and any other relevant information should be made available to the Council’s TUs.

2. Key issues

2.1 Summary of progress to date and decision to be made

Appended to this report, is a summary of the Committee’s decisions over the past 12 months in relation to the Leisure Transformation Programme. It notes:

- Agreement of strategic principles;**
- Physical programme phasing;**
- Capital funding strategy; and**
- High level business model options appraisal.**

The summary highlights the interdependency of the decision on the business model and the capital phases.

2.2 Consultation and engagement with staff and trade unions

Consultation and engagement on the potential future Leisure model started between Council management and each of the Council’s Trade Unions in September 2013 and has included :

- Meetings with full time officials of all unions and the Chief Executive, Director of Parks and Leisure, Director of Finance and Resources and the Head of HR.**
- Sub-group meetings between Leisure trade unions, the TU Co-ordinators and management**

- A visit by each of the trade unions full-time officials, a BCC TU Coordinator and Leisure shop stewards to Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) which included a meeting with GLL Chief Executive, GLL Director of HR and other relevant members of its team.**
- Meeting between BCC TU's and the Leisure expert engaged by Deloitte**
- A number of training days and road-shows undertaken by the Director of Parks and Leisure.**

Management has provided information to the trade unions including details on current staffing costs (including overtime and shift allowance payments); the Deloitte report; further explanation and detail on some of the analysis contained in the Deloitte report.

Management has also provided its view of those HR issues that would need to significantly change (for example, more flexibility in jobs, significant reduction in overtime; flexibility in working hours; robust management of leave arrangements and attendance; attainment of commercial skills; introduction of individual performance management and targets etc).

The trade unions have been asked to provide their views on how an in-house model might operate effectively to achieve the £2m savings by April 2016. They have also been asked to articulate those issues that are of significance importance to trade unions and staff should a non-profit distributing organisation (NPDO) model be pursued. This could include, for example, pensions, use of apprentices, misuse of zero-hour contracts; protection of BCC Leisure staff's terms and of conditions of employment.

2.3 An 'in principle' decision

The professional analysis and advice is that the only model that will deliver the required £2m savings by 2016 is the non-profit distributing organisation.

Any other decision will jeopardise the capital financing strategy, thereby compromising the new build programme, and importantly, the overall social (health, well-being, employability, regeneration, etc.) and financial (value for money) outcomes of the Leisure Transformation Programme.

2.4 Next steps

Committee is now asked to consider each of the business cases and make an 'in principle' decision to support the non-profit distributing organisation as its preferred business model.

This will grant officers authority to develop a detailed business plan, drawing on expert advice, which will be subject to due diligence testing over the period March-May 2014. It will also enable the development of a shell company and contract specification. Management will also formally consult with the trade unions and staff as part of this process. This will include the development of a series of 'protections' for transferring employees in relation to pensions, terms and conditions, training, etc.

Members will also engage in a series of discussions on the next phases of the capital programme.

2.5 Conclusion

This is an ambitious timeframe within which to business plan for a radically changed business model. However, it is recognised that this is a decision which catalyses radical transformation, and shapes and sustains leisure and well-being services in the city for now and for generations to come. By making this decision Members will:

Position the Council's leisure and well-being provision to be a 'best-in-class' service;

Maximise the benefits of an unprecedented £105m capital investment in the city;

Significantly improve the value for money of the service, in order to safeguard its longer term sustainability;

Retain the Council as 'democratic guardians' to oversee the delivery of a wide range of social outcomes not limited to health and participation; and

Most importantly, enable and attract more people to be more active, more often

3.0 Decisions required

Committee is asked to:

- 1. Consider the information contained in the report and appendices, and to indicate their preferred 'in principle' business model option as the non-profit distributing organisation.**
- 2. On this basis, grant authority to officers to undertake the necessary steps to undertake work to prepare a business plan, governance arrangements and due diligence reports for consideration at Committee in June 2014.**
- 3. Grant authority to facilitate formal consultation with staff and the trade unions, including the development of a series of protections for transferring employees.**

4.0 Resource Implications

This is a major physical and service transformation process and the implications for resources (staff, assets and financial) will be fully scoped and assessed as part of the business planning process, with continuous engagement with staff and trade union reps.

5.0 Equality Implications

Provision has been made within resources to screen the Leisure Transformation Programme at relevant intervals in line with the Council's equality obligations. A high-level Equality Impact Assessment is currently being prepared and will be presented to Committee in due course for its approval."

After discussion the Committee agreed to reconsider the preferred business model at its meeting scheduled to be held on 21st February to allow the Trade Union Group additional time to prepare its proposals for a transformed in house option.

In order to leave all options on the table, the Committee further agreed at risk to grant authority to officers to take the necessary steps to prepare the business plan, governance arrangements and due diligence reports for the creation of a non-profit distributing organisation and to facilitate formal consultation with staff and trade unions to include the development of a series of protections for transferring staff

Local Government Reform

Proposals on iESE Support to the Council

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

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that at its meeting in September 2013 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to join the Improvement and Efficiencies South East organisation (iESE), a social enterprise owned by local authorities in the South East of England which provides services and support to public sector bodies across the United Kingdom. Given their experience and access to member peers it was agreed that they may be able to support the Council in the delivery of parts of the LGR programme.
- 12.2 iESE have spent some time in the Council meeting with officers and facilitating a few workshops and a number of pieces of work where they are able to support the Council have emerged.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to outline the relevant areas of work and seek approval from committee to proceed with the proposals as outlined.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The main areas of work that the Council is discussing with iESE relate to Local Government Reform and the Council's Efficiency Programme. A summary of the proposal is set out below.

Local Government Reform

2.2 Governance

At its meeting on 13 December 2013 Committee agreed that iESE would support the organisation in the development of new decision making structures. The initial pieces of work include;

- A workshop with the Member Governance Steering Panel looking in more detail at the key governance issues, how they apply to the various models outlined in the Re-organisation Bill and how they would operate in practice.
- Briefings with Party Groups on the various elements of any new governance structure including the out workings of the Governance Steering Panel.
- A Report to Committee on the feedback from the various sessions including draft governance proposals for the new organisation.

All sessions will be facilitated by iESE with input from Jonathan Huish and other member peers and will draw on examples from other areas. In addition party groups will be able to draw on advice from the Member peer over and above the process outlined above. This process has already begun with party group briefings being held week commencing 20th January 2014.

Service Convergence

iESE have also been discussing the support they could provide in developing our approach to extending the delivery of services to the areas currently in Lisburn and Castlereagh which will transfer to Belfast in May 2015. In the first instance it is recommended that iESE facilitate a workshop for staff involved in service convergence in January to help develop the process in more detail. Further support may also be required in the following areas;

- Participation in the governance arrangements
- Critical friend and quality assurance in the development and implementation of the methodology and guidance
- Change management advice and support
- Workshops and engagement with other stakeholders

Efficiency

- 2.4 To help the Council secure efficiency savings over the next three years iESE will provide support to the Council to develop a 3 year efficiency programme which will identify the major areas for change, the approach to delivery and the business case for change. This work will include identifying areas for review where possible savings could be made; supporting the Council in the delivery of a number of front line services impacted on by the transferring areas of Lisburn and Castlereagh.

They will also undertake a review of procurement activities and spend and efficiency plans to identify:

- Prioritisation of existing efficiency projects and rationalisation as appropriate to ensure that resources are focused on the major savings
- A programme of efficiency and procurement targets with identified realisable savings over next 3 years

- A plan to accelerate delivery of savings already identified

Organisational Development Framework – Regional Work

2.5 iESE have also been commissioned by the DoE to provide support to Councils in implementing Local Government Reform specifically to address Organisational Design and Service Delivery. The work includes:

- establishing a ‘toolkit’ for a best practice approach to organisational design to include a set of core organisational design principles which will inform preparatory work and planning undertaken by Statutory Transition Committees and Shadow Councils for the establishment of new organisational structures and/or service delivery models;
- taking account of the future role of Councils; the new performance management framework for local government; Councils’ governance arrangements; potential sector service delivery models (or other potential shared service models); and the emerging work on the organisational design best practice toolkit and principles develop model options for effective function and service delivery in the 11 new councils.

The Council will participate in this programme with iESE ensuring that it complements the specific piece of work on Governance outlined above.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 iESE will provide their service at a rate of approximately £570 per day which represents a 10% discount to the Council. The Council will only pay for the days it uses. All costs associated with this have been included in the previously agreed budgets for Local Government Reform and Invest to Save.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to agree the proposal for support from iESE as set out in the report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Members' Remuneration Panel

The Committee was reminded that, as part of the Local Government Reform Programme, the Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland was conducting a review of Councillors' remuneration and advising on the system and level of allowances appropriate to the eleven new Councils. The Panel had been requested to make recommendations that fairly reflected the roles and responsibilities which Councillors would be taking on in the new Councils, post reorganisation in April, 2015. It was considering also the allowances which should be paid during the shadow period following the Local Government elections in 2014 when the new Councils would operate alongside the existing twenty-six. The Panel had been appointed on 1st May, 2013 and had initially been given six months to submit its final recommendations to the Department of the Environment.

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Department of the Environment giving notification of a number of focus group engagement events which had been scheduled for Local Government and other stakeholders to discuss the emerging proposals of the Remuneration Panel and to inform the finalisation of the scheme of allowances which would apply. A Belfast-based event was scheduled for 10th February from 10.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m. in the Grosvenor House Conference Centre, 5 Glengall Street.

The Committee granted authority for any Member who so wished to attend the afore-mentioned event.

Democratic Services and Governance

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

The Committee was advised 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 Tug of War Association	Tug of War International Federation Congress Reception 12th April, 2014 Approximately 70 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates at this Conference will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the Conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £350

<p>University of Ulster</p>	<p>8th International Conference on Ubiquitous Computing and Ambient Intelligence (UCAmbI 2014) Reception 2nd December, 2014 Approximately 150 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception</p>	<p>Delegates at this Conference will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the Conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for people and communities.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £500</p>
<p>British Oculoplastic Surgery Society</p>	<p>Annual Scientific Meeting and Conference Reception 17th June, 2015 Approximately 200 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception</p>	<p>Delegates at this Conference will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the Conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for people and communities.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £500</p>
<p>Belfast Health and Social Care Trust</p>	<p>Service of Remembrance for Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children 19th October, 2014 Approximately 200 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of Tea, Coffee and Biscuits</p>	<p>This event will provide an opportunity for bereaved parents and relatives of children to come together and remember their loved ones and to share their experiences with other parents. 250 parents and children along with staff from the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children participate and every year the Lord Mayor is invited to attend to light the Candle of Remembrance. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of Tea, Coffee and Biscuits Approximate cost £500</p>

<p>Chartered Institute of Management Accountants</p>	<p>Chartered Institute of Management Accountants Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony 2nd May, 2014 Approximately 220 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception</p>	<p>This event will acknowledge those CIMA members who have made a significant contribution to their profession and to the success of Belfast. The event will also seek to recognise those who have contributed to the professional development of individuals throughout the City. This event would contribute to the Council's key theme of 'City Leadership – strong, fair, together', 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £500</p>
<p>NI4Kids Limited</p>	<p>Ni4Kids Family Awards 13th June, 2014 Approximately 250 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p>	<p>This event will recognise the individuals and companies who constantly strive to improve the lives of families with young children. Among the awards presented will be: Family Visitor Attraction of the Year; Primary School Teacher of the Year; Family Support Organisation of the Year; and Family Event of the Year. The individual family member award categories are an opportunity to recognise outstanding achievements in overcoming adversity and dedication by individuals to their families. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together' and 'Better support for people and communities' and in addition would</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits Approximate cost £625</p>

			contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.	
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The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Use of the City Hall as a Sporting Venue

The Committee was reminded that, on 14th May, 2013, the Deputy Lord Mayor had hosted a charity boxing match in the City Hall in order to raise funds for the Oscar Knox Appeal, which was one of the charities she had supported during her term in office. Each of the three Civic Dignitaries was permitted the use of the City Hall for two charity events. That was the first occasion that the City Hall had been used for a boxing event. In addition, the Council had the previous year approved a boxing strategy which sought to provide greater support to boxing clubs in the City.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that a request for the use of the City Hall for a boxing event had been received from the Dockers' Amateur Boxing Club. The event was the 25th Anniversary of a boxing tournament between the Dockers and the Repton Boxing Club from London. The event was held annually and, when held in Belfast, was usually hosted at the Dockers' Club. The Club had also requested the provision of Civic Hospitality and estimated that approximately 250 persons would be in attendance. The event would comprise a five-course sit down meal following by a boxing tournament featuring nine fights. The Council was being requested to grant the use of the City Hall and to provide a pre-dinner drinks reception.

He pointed out that the criteria for the use of the City Hall did not envisage the building being used as a sporting venue and, therefore, it was not possible currently to assess the application using that criteria. Had the application been for the use of the building for a 25th Anniversary reception alone, without the boxing element, then it would have met the Council's established criteria and would have been recommended for approval.

The Democratic Services Manager requested that in considering the application the Committee note that:

- the granting of approval would establish a precedent that the building was a potential venue for sporting events;
- allowing the City Hall to be used for such sporting events placed it in competition with outside hotels and stadia and also in direct competition with Council-owned venues such as the Ulster and Waterfront Halls which were income generating for the Council; and
- there were not any logistical concerns which would prevent the City Hall from being used for such sporting events.

Facilities Management had confirmed that the Council's Entertainments Licence allowed such events to take place, although they had highlighted that any event of that nature would need to adhere to very strict conditions laid down by the Boxing Authorities such as health and safety and first-aid, including having an ambulance on site.

Accordingly, he requested the Committee consider two questions:

- (1) should the criteria for the use of the City Hall be amended to provide that applications for sporting events would be considered; and
- (2) if the Committee was minded to do so, to then consider if the use of the City Hall should be approved on this occasion for the Dockers' Club event.

If the Committee was minded to agree to the use of the City Hall for sporting events then, in order to mitigate against a proliferation of applications being received, it was recommended that some restrictions were established. For example, the Committee might wish to restrict the use to sporting events which were celebrating a significant anniversary (25th, 50th, 75th) and/or it might wish to establish that only a certain number of sporting events would be supported each year.

After discussion, the Committee granted approval for the Dockers' Boxing Club to use the City Hall for the event as outlined since the boxing element of the event was secondary to the celebration dinner for the 25th Anniversary of the tournament and agreed further that the overall question of the use of the City Hall for sporting events be considered in the ongoing review of the criteria for the use of the City Hall which would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Use of the City Hall for Local Election Training

The Committee was advised that the Electoral Office Northern Ireland had submitted a request to use the Great Hall in the City Hall on 24th and 25th March for the purposes of holding election training for Deputy Returning Officers and their senior election staff. The Democratic Services Manager stated that it was considered that this would be beneficial in ensuring the effective and efficient running of the local elections in May. He pointed out that the Council had always had a good working relationship with the Electoral Office and had granted use of the City Hall for such training events on several past occasions.

The Committee granted the use of the City Hall to the Electoral Office for election training on 24th and 25th March and agreed also that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to grant authority to the Electoral Office for the use of the City Hall for any other appropriate events to be held in connection with the holding of the local elections in May, 2014.

Initial Arrangements for the Local Elections

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 Local Elections to the Shadow Belfast District Council will be held on 22nd May, 2014. The poll will be a joint one with the European Parliamentary Election.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The final timetable for the Elections has not yet been issued by the Chief Electoral Officer and I will report back to Committee when this is received. However, there are some early decisions which the Council is required to take to allow officers to make early preparations.

2.2 Count Venue

It is expected that the counts for the 10 District Electoral Areas (DEAs) in the new Belfast District will take place on Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th May. The suggestion is that 5 counts will take place on each day and it is recommended that the Committee agree that the venue for all of the counts will be the City Hall. This would require 3 counts to take place in the Great Hall and 1 each in the Banqueting Hall and the Reception Room.

2.3 Order of Counts

It is recognised that most Members would prefer the count for the DEA in which they are standing to take place on the Friday rather than the Saturday. In deciding which 5 DEAs should be counted on the Friday, there are some logistical matters which need to be taken into account:

2.3.1

- The Reception Room is being used as a count venue and it is significantly smaller than the other count venues in the City Hall. The Banqueting Hall is the largest of the venues being used.

2.3.2

- The 10 DEAs do not all elect the same number of councillors. Black Mountain and Ormiston DEAs elect 7 members each; Balmoral and Botanic DEAs elect 5 members each; and Castle, Oldpark, Court, Collin, Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEAs each elect 6 members.

2.4

It is accepted that the number of members to be elected to a DEA does not necessarily mean that the count will take less time to complete but that is the only variable which can reasonably be used to assess which counts should be held in which venue. Accordingly it is suggested that the following breakdown is agreed:

2.5

Reception Room – Balmoral and Botanic DEAs (5 members each)
Banqueting Hall – Black Mountain and Ormiston DEAs (7 members each)
Great Hall (1) – Castle and Oldpark DEAs (6 members each)
Great Hall (2) – Court and Colin DEAs (6 members each)
Great Hall (3) – Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEAs (6 members each)

2.6

If this is agreed, the Committee is requested to decide which of the 2 counts in each venue should be held on the Friday and which on the Saturday. It should be noted that the Friday morning will be spent undertaking a joint verification for both the European and Local Elections with the counts being held that day not likely to commence until after lunchtime, whereas the counts on the Saturday will commence at 9.00am. Therefore, although being held a day earlier, it is likely that the counts being held on the Friday will run for several hours later than those being held on the Saturday.

3

Resource Implications

3.1

The local elections will be financed from the existing elections revenue budget.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 There are not any equality or good relations implications associated with this report.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is requested to note the information provided and to:

- 1. Agree that the count venue will be the City Hall.**
- 2. Agree to the venue allocation as set out in paragraph 2.5.**
- 3. Decide which 5 of the counts should be held on the Friday and which 5 on the Saturday.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that the counts for the District Electoral Areas be conducted on the following days:

Room	Friday, 23rd May	Saturday, 24th May
Reception Room	Balmoral DEA	Botanic DEA
Banqueting Hall	Black Mountain DEA	Ormiston DEA
Great Hall (1)	Castle DEA	Oldpark DEA
Great Hall (2)	Court DEA	Colin DEA
Great Hall (3)	Lisnasharragh DEA	Titanic DEA

Election Protocol

The Committee was reminded that the Council had an Election Protocol which guided officers on the organisation of events and meetings, particularly those involving Elected Members, in the immediate run-up to elections in Northern Ireland. The Protocol had been updated and was being submitted to the Committee for approval in advance of the Local Elections on 22nd May, 2014.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that the current Election Protocol had, in the past, led to some confusion for Departments in that the principles set out were held to apply strictly for the “Purdah” period – the period from the publication of the Notice of Election until Polling Day – but Departments were required to give consideration as to whether the same principles should be applied for an unspecified additional period of time leading up the Purdah period.

In order to make the Protocol more easily understood and, consequently, more likely not be breached, it was suggested that a change should be made. Effectively, the change would remove any ambiguity about the organisation of events or meetings in the period immediately before the Purdah period. Essentially, what was being suggested was that the Protocol would apply only for the Purdah period itself and that any events and meetings in the period leading up to that would be permitted to continue as normal. The Democratic Services Manager suggested that the Committee give consideration to two options for when the Purdah period should commence – 1st April or 14th April, the day upon which the Notice of Election would be published. The longer the Purdah period the more the Election Protocol would impact upon the normal interaction between

Members, officers and members of the public. For that reason, it was recommended that the Committee agree that the Protocol should apply from the date of the publication of the Notice of Election on 14th April to polling day on 22nd May inclusive.

The Democratic Services Manager pointed out that the provisions of the Protocol set out in Sections 2.1 – 4.3 would continue to apply for the period leading up to the Local and European Elections in May, 2014 as it was expected that the receipt of Royal Assent for the Local Government Bill would not be in place prior to the nomination period for those elections having ended. Accordingly, the possibility, as included in the Bill at present, of an officer of the Council standing as a candidate in the Local Elections, would not in fact materialise and officers would be excluded from being able to stand as candidates under the existing provisions of the 1972 Act. If the Local Government Bill was passed in its current form, then the Protocol would have to be revised accordingly for the Local Elections to be held in 2019.

The Committee agreed to adopt the amended Election Protocol, a copy of which is set out hereunder, and agreed that the Purdah period would be from the date of the publication of the Notice of Election on 14th April to polling day on 22nd May inclusive:

“1.0 Introduction

This protocol has been prepared primarily to provide guidance to Council Officers in dealing with issues relating to the functions and policies of the Council which might impact on the election process, particularly in the run-up periods to the various elections held in Northern Ireland. It sets out some general advice and principles to ensure that the impartiality and integrity of Council Officers is maintained during such periods when there is increased political sensitivity.

The protocol also provides useful information to Members of the Council, other elected representatives and prospective candidates for election in terms of the principles which the Council will observe in the run-up period to any election.

2.0 Types of Election

The four main types of election in Northern Ireland are;

Local Council Elections (scheduled for 22nd May, 2014)

Elections to the European Parliament (scheduled for 22nd May, 2014)

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly (scheduled for 2016)

Westminster Parliamentary Election (scheduled for 2015)

There is also potential for bye-elections in relation to vacancies which might occur at a Westminster level although the introduction of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (Amendment) Order 2010 makes it most unlikely that bye-elections will be required for casual vacancies arising in the Council.

The guidance contained in this protocol relates to all of the elections mentioned above but it does not refer to the actual arrangements and procedures for the running of such elections.

The responsibility for running all elections in Northern Ireland rests with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland and enquiries relating to the running of elections should be made to him or his Electoral Officers in Belfast as set out below:

Mr Graham Shields, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland,
St Anne's House, 15 Church Street, Belfast, BT1 1ER.
Telephone: 0800 4320 712 (freephone)
Textphone: 0800 3284 502 (freephone)
Fax: 028 9033 0661
Email: info@eoni.org.uk

Mr Peter McNaney, Chief Executive, is the Deputy Returning Officer for local elections in the Belfast City Council area and he is responsible for making the arrangements for Council elections in Belfast.

3.0 General Principles

The guidance contained in this protocol relates to the main areas of Council activity which might impact on the election processes including the conduct of employees, the provision of support services to Members, the use of Council premises, publicity and the holding of public meetings. However, it is recognised that because of the Council's diverse range of functions there may be other issues outside of these general areas of activity which might from time to time impact on the election processes. It is important therefore to set out some general principles which Council Officers should observe when conducting business during the run up period to any election.

The run up period is generally taken to be that period from the issuing of the notice of election to polling day at the election. The notice of election would generally be issued some three or four weeks in advance of election day but the Chief Executive's Department will issue to Departments the proposed date of publication of the notice of an election as soon as this is known.

The general principles which Council Officers should observe in relation to all activity during the run-up period to any election are:

- they should not undertake any activity which would call into question their political impartiality
- they should ensure that Council resources are not used for party political purposes
- they should not undertake any activities which could have a direct bearing on the election campaign

In relation to matters which are not specifically mentioned in this protocol and about which there may be uncertainty Departments are advised to seek guidance from the Democratic Services Section.

4.0 Employees and Elections

There is specific legislation, together with rules and guidance, which relates to the participation of Council employees in political activities.

4.1 Disqualification

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, Section 4, provides that a person shall be disqualified for being elected or being a Councillor if he holds any paid officer or other place of profit in the gift or disposal of that or any other Council. Any Council employee therefore wishing to stand for election as a councillor within Belfast or any other Council area would first have to resign from the Council.

4.2 Political Activity

The Council's Standing Order 57, states 'Whilst the Council concede to all officers and servants employed by them the fullest liberty of private judgement in exercise of their franchise, it is ordered as a matter of discipline that they shall not be permitted to take any public part in support of or in opposition to any candidate at the election of the Council.'

The Council's code of conduct states:-

‘Employees must follow every lawful expressed policy of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

While the Council recognises and respects the rights of all employees to hold personal or political opinions; employees should ensure that the expression of those opinions does not constitute a conflict of interest for their role within the Council. Employees who have concerns about whether there is a potential conflict of interest should raise the matter with their line manager.’

The requirements of Standing Order 57 and the Code of Conduct are clear and should be observed at all times by all employees.

4.3 Political Neutrality

The Council’s code of conduct also states ‘Employees serve the Council as a whole. They must serve all Councillors and not just those of a particular group and must ensure that the individual rights of all Councillors are respected.

Some employees of the Council may be required to advise political groups. In the provision of such advice employees should not compromise their political neutrality. Any advice given should be available to all political groups, if requested.’

The requirements of the code of conduct in relation to political neutrality are pertinent at all times but assume particular sensitivity in the run up to an election.

The holding of public meetings and other events involving elected representatives, for example, needs careful consideration in such a period and this is dealt with separately elsewhere in the protocol.

5.0 Support Services to Elected Members

Belfast City Council provides a wide range of support services to its elected Members including the provision of party rooms, research and library services, the provision of personal computers and typing, photocopying and postal services. The support services provided to Members are to assist them in discharging their roles as Councillors and are not for use for political campaigning or private purposes.

On this basis the Council will continue to provide a full range of support services to Members in the run up period to elections.

6.0 Use of Council Premises

The Council owns and operates a wide range of properties within the City and the use of such properties for election purposes will depend on the conditions which apply to each property.

The Belfast Waterfront Hall, the Ulster Hall, Malone House and Belfast Castle all operate on a commercial basis and are used from time to time for party political meetings and events. The normal booking arrangements would apply to the use of these buildings for political purposes even in the run up period for an election. Other Council premises including the City Hall, Leisure and Recreation Centres and Community Centres would not be available for political purposes although there is a discretion for the Council to permit the use of the City Hall for an event involving a range of political parties which has the purpose of increasing voter interest and participation in the electoral process generally.

7.0 Publicity

7.1 Legislation: The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 amended the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 to provide for the prohibition of political publicity. The relevant insertion to the principal Act reads as follows:-

115A – ‘Publicity

- (1) A council shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.**
- (2) In determining whether material falls within the prohibition regard shall be had to the content and style of the material, the time and other circumstances of publication and the likely effect on those to whom it is directed and, in particular, to the following matters.**
 - (a) whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party or promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another;**

- (b) where the material is part of a campaign, the effect which the campaign appears to be designed to achieve
- (c) A Council shall not give financial or other assistance to a person for the publication of material which the council is prohibited by this section from publishing itself.'

7.2 Specific Requirements at Election Time

The run up period to any election is a particularly sensitive time in terms of Council publicity. The Council communicates regularly with the people of Belfast through responding to media enquiries, issuing press releases, holding press launches of major initiatives and publishing the Council's newsletter.

It is important in the run up period to an election that any Council publicity issued could not be perceived as seeking to influence public opinion or to promote the public image of a particular candidate or group of candidates. The Council should also in this period, in its communication, avoid dealing with controversial issues or reporting views or proposals in a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members. The Council should avoid where possible mentioning or quoting individual members in press releases.

This is not to say that all Council publicity should be stopped in the run up period to an election. It is appropriate for example that the Council should respond to the media in relation to legitimate service enquiries or to important events, such as major emergencies. The media also have their protocols in place during election periods and the council will need to take that into account. The Lord Mayor will continue to carry out civic engagements and it will be a matter for the media whether they wish to cover these events or not. Depending on the nature of the issue, the usual policy of political primacy may have to be set aside and Directors or other senior staff members may be quoted if required. Council comment to the media will be factual in nature and will avoid issues of political controversy. If the council is unable to put up official political spokespersons, Members may wish to comment individually or as a spokesperson for their party on events in their own locality or of a city wide nature if approached by the media.

The council holds a range of photographs featuring elected members who request use of these from time to time in their election material. These can be provided if they feature only the politician in question and/or colleagues from the same party who are happy for the images to be used. However, images that also include elected representatives from different political parties cannot be used without their stated permission. Photographs that include members of council staff will not be provided and cannot appear in any election material at any time.

In relation to elections where the polling date is known in advance (such as the European Assembly Elections and the Local Elections) Council Departments should avoid arranging major press launches or other such publicity events in the run up period to the elections.

Where the date of an election is not known in advance, and where it transpires that a major launch or other publicity event has been arranged during the run up period to the election, then the Department concerned should consider the postponement of the event until a later date.

8.0 Public Meetings

In the normal course of events, Chief Officers, Heads of Service and other Senior Officers will meet regularly with Members of the Council and other public representatives about a range of issues affecting their constituents. Where such meetings are about legitimate service issues then there is no reason why they should not continue even in the run up period to an election. Officers, however, should observe the general principle that there should be even-handedness in considering requests for one-to-one meetings with members or other public representatives particularly during the run up period to an election.

Particular care needs to be exercised at election time in cases where a public representative wishes to bring a delegation of local people to a meeting with a Council Officer. Even though this may be a private meeting it may be perceived that one candidate at an election is being given an advantage over another candidate. It is suggested that unless such a request for a meeting relates to some urgent service delivery issue then the meeting should be delayed until after the completion of the election.

Officers should avoid participation in public meetings involving public representatives during the run up period to an election. Such meetings could involve representation from some political parties and not others and officers may also be asked to comment on sensitive political issues in a public forum. To avoid a situation where officers may be accused of promoting the views of one political party as opposed to another the general assumption should be that participation in public meetings is to be avoided during the run up period to an election.

However, the situation might arise whereby the Council has issued a policy document for consultation and the consultation period extends into the run up period to an election. If this consultation includes the holding of public meetings or meetings with particular interest groups, then the Council officers should firstly seek the authority of the appropriate Council Committee before proceeding and, if such authority is granted, ensure that all political groupings on the Council are afforded equality of opportunity to either attend or arrange such meetings.

9.0 Conclusion

This protocol is not likely to have covered all the many different situations which are liable to occur during the run up period to an election. However, the general principles set out in section 3.0 and the general thrust of the advice contained in the protocol can be applied to specific situations which arise.

If Departments are unclear about how they should act in any given situation then they should seek advice from the Democratic Services Section.”

Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland – Spring Seminar

The Committee was advised that notification of the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland Spring Seminar had been received. The event would take place in Bundoran, County Donegal, on 14th and 15th February, 2014. The main aim of the seminar was “The Local Government Landscape from June, 2014 Onwards”. It would, amongst other things, examine the mechanisms which Local Government could put in place to maximise service delivery for citizens. There would also be sessions on learning from the past and focusing on the future and how the utilisation of social and printed media could assist Elected Representatives. The total cost per delegate would be £570.

Accordingly, it was recommended, in accordance with Council policy, that the Committee authorise the attendance at the Spring Seminar 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 Parties on the Council not represented by the aforementioned Members.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that a report on the policy of attendance at such events be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Finance/Value-for-Money

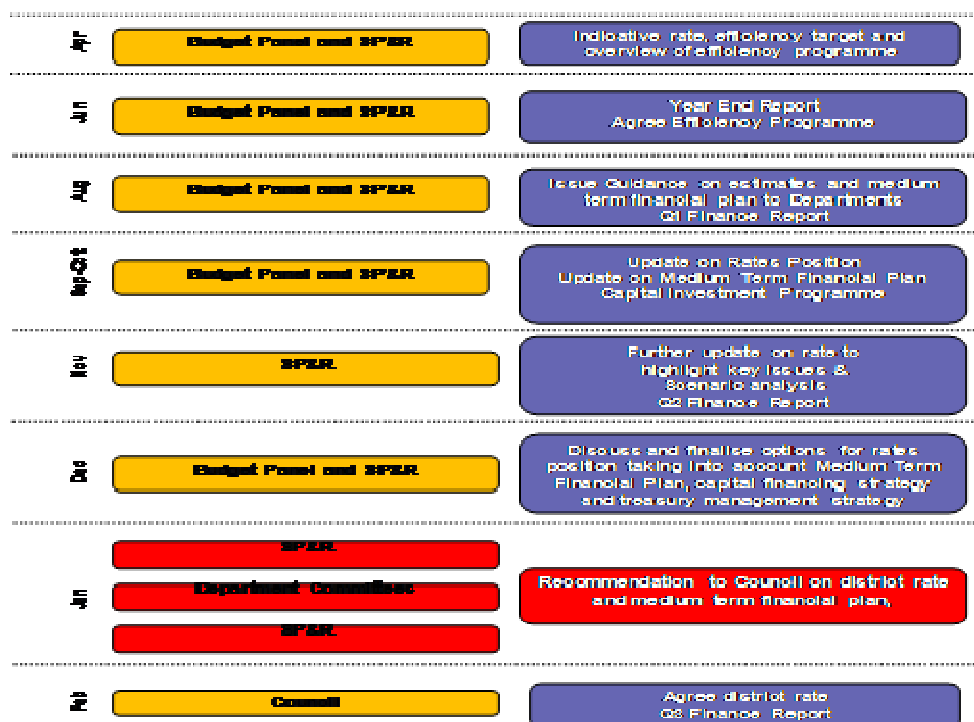
Financial Estimates and District Rates 2014/15

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will recall that the following process has been agreed for the setting of the district rate and agreeing the estimates for 2014/15.

Agreed rate setting process for 2014/15



At the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 10 January 2014, Members approved the following recommendations in relation to the 2014/15 revenue estimates, which would result in a zero increase in the district rate for 2014/15:

1. That the total amount to be raised through the district rate for 2014/15 of £129,716,358
 2. That the revenue estimates for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of £32,563,620 for 2014/15.
 3. That the cash limit for the Town Planning Committee of £3,750 for 2014/15.
 4. That the following departmental cash limits should apply for 2014/15:
 - Health and Environmental Services Department £39,497,245
 - Parks and Leisure Department £23,971,115
 - Development Department £19,144,021
 5. That the general reserves will not be enhanced through the district rate in 2014/15
 6. A central budget of £870,000 to make provision for a 1% pay rise. This budget will be retained centrally under the control of the Director of Finance and Resources and only released to departments on the basis of a nationally agreed pay award.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to consider the district rate increase for 2014/15, including the domestic and non-domestic rate increase, following the presentation of the detailed revenue estimates reports and cash limits to the to the standing committees.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The table below summarises the revenue estimates for Belfast City Council for 2014/15 based on a Zero District Rate increase.

<u>REVENUE ESTIMATES</u>	<u>2014/15</u>
	£
Policy and Resources Committee	32,563,620
Development Committee	19,144,021
Parks and Leisure Committee	23,971,115
Health and Environmental Services Committee	39,497,245
Town Planning Committee	3,750
Employee Pay Rise	<u>870,000</u>
NET DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE	116,049,751
WASTE FUND CONTRIBUTION	2,159,047
CAPITAL FINANCING	
Investment Programme	10,137,676
Leisure Transformation Financing	<u>3,230,000</u>
	13,367,676
BELFAST INVESTMENT FUND	2,770,000
LESS GENERAL EXCHEQUER GRANT	<u>(4,630,116)</u>
AMOUNT TO BE RAISED THROUGH DISTRICT RATE	<u>129,716,358</u>

Standing Committees

- 2.2 Detailed reports on the revenue estimates and departmental cash limits were considered and agreed by each Standing committee during the period 10 - 16 January 2014.

Key Messages

- 2.3 A summary of the key messages and lines to take in relation to the setting of the district rate for 2014/15 has been prepared by the Head of Corporate Communications and included as Appendix A to this report.

Impact on Ratepayer

- 2.4 A rates bill in Belfast is made up of 56% Regional Rate and 44% District Rate. The Regional Rate, subject to Executive approval, is due to increase by 2.7%. A zero rate set by the council will mean that a ratepayer's total bill will increase by 1.49%. The table included in Appendix B illustrates the monetary impact on average property types.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report and agree:

- That the increase in the district rate for 2014/15 should be zero, based on an Estimated Penny Product of £4,800,110 which means that the domestic rate for 2014/15 is recommended to be 0.3094p and the non domestic rate to be 27.0236p.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Department for Social Development Funding Model

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 As part of the Local Government Reform programme a number of new functions and powers will transfer from central government departments to local government in April 2015 including spatial planning and regeneration related functions. Councils will be given operational responsibility for the delivery of local urban regeneration and community development activities currently under the remit of the Department for Social Development.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Regionally work is currently underway to assess and define the actual baseline resources (e.g. budget, staffing, assets and liabilities) attached to those functions and powers transferring to local government. Each relevant central government department are currently working on establishing this baseline information and are also giving consideration to the potential allocation model(s) through which the resources could be apportioned to each of the new 11 Councils.

2.2 Accordingly, correspondence has been recently received, dated 18 December 2013, from the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland, MLA, setting out proposals on a Budget Allocation Model for the break-up of the Department’s resources currently attached to the delivery of urban regeneration and community development when transferred to 11 Councils in April 2015.

- 2.3 A copy of the Budget Allocation Model proposals put forward by the Department has been circulated. Whilst feedback had been originally sought by Friday 24 January 2014, subsequent correspondence has been received stating that the consultation period has been extended to 28 February 2014.**
- 2.4 The following provides a regional high-level summary of the key proposals contained within the paper:**
- (i) Budget - £70.9m (based on 2014/15 projections) comprising of the following elements:-**
 - (a) £29 million in the baseline for tackling disadvantage (£21 million other resource; £8 million capital);**
 - (b) £25.7 million in the baseline for physical regeneration;**
 - (c) £2.7 million for Laganside (this is the average annual cost of maintaining the Laganside assets; actual expenditure varies widely between years);**
 - (d) £7.2 million in the baseline for the Community Support Programme and Community Investment Fund; and**
 - (e) £5.6 million in staff costs and £0.7 million in general administrative expenditure (GAE) costs connected to the transferring activities.**
 - (ii) Efficiency – Members should note, however, that the paper states that a 4% efficiency saving on budgets has been included in the Allocation Model and therefore it is proposed that budget to transfer would be £68.127m**
 - (iii) Budget Allocation Model – whilst the report sets out a number of possible models, Option 4 ‘Combination Model’ has been proposed for the allocation of funding. This model is based on the following:**
 - (a) tackling disadvantage on basis of needs weighted urban population;**
 - (b) budget for physical regeneration on basis of urban population;**
 - (c) budget for Laganside transferred to Belfast City Council;**
 - (d) budget for the community development (e.g. Community Support Programme and Community Investment Fund on basis of socio-economic needs weighted population);**
 - (e) staffing budget in proportion to the programme allocations.**

- (iv) **Belfast Budget Allocation – whilst Annex 3 of the DSD report provides a full breakdown of the resource allocations across the 11 new council areas, the following table provides a summary of the proposed allocations to Belfast City Council i.e. £20.418m budget allocation.**

Belfast City Council Budget Allocation Proposals			
		Belfast	All councils combined
Tackling Disadvantage Component	Income Deprived Population Settlement bands A – G	107,505	344,027
	% of total	31.25%	
	Indicative allocation (£,000)	8,700	27,840
Physical Regeneration Component	Total Population Settlement bands A - G	319,375	1,411,836
	% of total	22.62%	
	Indicative allocation (£,000)	5,585	24,690
Laganside	Average Annual Cost	2,592	2,592
Community Development Component	Income deprived population of District	109,900	442,900
	% of total	24.81%	
	Indicative allocation (£,000)	1,715	6,912
Total Programme	Indicative allocation (£,000)	18,592	62,034
	% of total	29.97%	
Salary & General administrative expenditure allocation		1,826	6,093
Total Allocation	Indicative allocation (£,000)	20,418	68,127
	% of total	29.97%	

Belfast City Council Response

- 2.5 Officers have reviewed the proposed funding model and would suggest that the following issues be included in the draft response the DSD Minister.

(i) Overall Level of Funding

The paper advises that funding will transfer through the rates system and will form the basis of an on-going allocation. This would be an acceptable approach to the Council as the level of future income will be based on the decision of the Council in setting the district rate.

However the paper also suggests that the 2014/15 level of funding for these services may be cut by at least 4% at the point of transfer to the new councils on 1 April 2015.

Two of the fundamental principles of RPA are that transferring services should be fit for purpose and rates neutral at the point of transfer. A 4% cut to the budget would be contrary to these principles. The Council will therefore be seeking assurances from the Minister that the fundamental principles will be maintained and that there will be no reduction to existing budgets.

(ii) Proposed Allocation Method

The Council notes the following aspects of the recommended allocation model (Option 4).

- **Tackling Disadvantage:** The department has recommended an allocation model based on a calculation which weights the population of a Council area by a measure of socio-economic need. The measure chosen is the income deprived population in a Council cluster. This measure is viewed as a reliable indicator of the level of multiple deprivation in a Council area and is already collected by NISRA. The urban population will be based on settlements with populations greater than 1,000.
- **Physical Regeneration:** The allocation of funds on the basis of urban population based on settlements with populations greater than 1,000.
- **Community Development:** The use of income deprived total population rather than urban population has been used on the basis of DSD's view that community development expenditures have not been limited to urban areas but have focused in the areas of greatest economic and social need.

It is recommended that the Council accepts the proposed allocation model as it fairly reflects the need to apportion budgets on both urban population and socio-economic need. There are, however, a number of issues which Members may wish to bring to the attention of the Minister. These are outlined below.

(iii) Definition of Urban Areas

DSD have advised that in developing the funding allocation model, the Department has assumed that there will be EU funding for rural development provided to the new Councils through DARD. There is a risk, however, of double funding, as the DSD model changes the definition for 'urban' areas from settlements with populations of 4,500 or above to those with 1,000 and above. The Council would therefore seek assurances from DSD that engagement has taken place with DARD to ensure that both departments' definitions of urban and rural are aligned.

(iv) Rural Development Funding

It is also important to note that the £68m to be allocated to Councils from DSD does not present the total amount of money which will be available for regeneration purposes. From 2007-2013, £100m was available to Council clusters from the Rural Development Programme which supports a diverse range of activities in rural communities including diversification into non-agricultural activities; business creation and development; encouragement of tourism activities; basic services for the economy and rural population; village renewal and development; and conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage. Axis 3 funding is administered through 7 Local Action Groups (clusters of councils). Attached at Appendix 3 is a breakdown of the allocation of the £100m Axis 3 Rural Development Programme funding across the 7 council cluster areas.

DARD has recently consulted on the next round of Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020; however, the amount of funding available is unknown at this stage.

(v) Current DSD Funding and Future Project Plans

The Council has received schedules of potential schemes under consideration by DSD which could have financial implications for capital financing post April 2015. The Council is undertaking due diligence on the potential schemes in conjunction with the Department to assess the impact of such schemes within the context of future resource availability, including any revenue and capital commitments in place at the point of transfer.

To ensure the continued regeneration investment in Belfast and the wider region there may be a need for a transitional funding package to be put in place to enable schemes which bridge the transition period to be completed.

(vi) Neighbourhood Renewal Revenue Funding

An analysis of the information provided by DSD indicates that in 2013/14 the level of funding for the new Belfast City Council area relating to Neighbourhood Renewal Revenue equates to £11.1m as compared to the proposed allocation model of £8.7m creating a shortfall in funding of approximately £2.4m. This expenditure supports established structures such as the Belfast Area Partnerships and associated programmes of work within the City.

The Council would highlight that any consideration being given to the potential extension of existing neighbourhood renewal contracts or programmes during the transition period should be considered within the parameters of the funding model.

While the Council would agree with the recommended approach of the funding model for tackling disadvantage, there is the need to explore the totality of the funding available for neighbourhood development through the due diligence process given the funding shortfall identified above.

(vi) Laganside including the Weir

The funding model proposes the calculation of an annual budget using actual expenditure levels over the past three years with the removal of expenditure for major works. The result provides an average base level of annual expenditure to which DSD has added the annual costs of physical works to dredge the river, refurbish the weir and maintain revetments.

The Council would wish to continue its discussions with DSD regarding the funding and operation of the weir to include the timing and funding implications for future major works.

The Council would seek clarification from the Department as to whether or not the weir is considered to be a flood defence system and therefore this would have significant liabilities attached to it when transferred. If so, the Council would commend that the weir be considered as 'regional infrastructure' rather than purely a Belfast City Council urban regeneration

asset and therefore appropriate contingency resources made available within the Department and/or NI Executive. There are also issues of reputational and financial risk associated with the weir should the flood defences fail and these are also issues which the Council will seek to resolve with DSD before the transfer date.

(vii) Other Transferring Assets and Liabilities

Over 160 physical assets will transfer to the Council from DSD in April 2015. The Council notes the proposed arrangements to cover the annual maintenance costs at the Weir, but would be concerned there appears to be no allowance in the transfer model for the annual maintenance of other transferring assets. The Council is currently assessing the potential financial implications of such assets and would welcome further engagement with the Department on this.

The Council is also aware that the Department holds a significant budget to cover site acquisitions (vesting of land) in circumstances whereby the site owner is not known at point of vesting. The Council would seek clarification as to whether the Department would retain this budget and make payment to any owners who may come forward regarding land vested pre transfer, or alternatively that any such budget would transfer with the assets to the Council.

(viii) Regional Due Diligence Exercise

Belfast City Council has commissioned Deloitte on behalf of the LGR Transfer of Functions Group to undertake a due diligence exercise on the total DSD funding to be transferred to local government. Although the scope of the exercise is to agree the overall allocation to local government, the Council will ensure that the shortfall of funding identified in paragraph (iv) above is referred to the consultant for consideration.

2.6 Members shall note that the draft response, as considered by the SP&R Committee, will be submitted to the Belfast Statutory Transition Committee on 12 February 2014 for consideration and submission to the Social Development Minister by 28 February 2014.

3 Recommendation

3.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the contents of this report and appendices attached;
- (ii) outline any initial observations and/or comments on the proposals put forward for inclusion in the draft response to be submitted to the Social Development Minister;
- (iii) agree that a response be submitted to the Social Development Minister based on para 2.5 above and taking account of any comments raised at Committee and Statutory Transition Committee”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

ICT Contracts

Framework for ICT Hardware and Software

The Committee approved the Council entering into a contract under the SPRINT II Framework, which enabled all Government organisations to avail of pre-negotiated deals on computer hardware and software, for a period of two years while establishing further options around other Government procurement methods.

Fixed-line Telephony and Mobile Phones

The Committee agreed that Digital Services undertake tendering exercises using the frameworks from the Government Procurement Service to ensure that the Council was receiving the most competitive rates available for fixed line and mobile phone telephony services.

Belfast Connection Vouchers Scheme – Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 This report provides an update on the Super-connected Belfast project following the city-wide launch of the Belfast Voucher scheme – 7 December 2013.

- 1.2 **Belfast was one of ten cities to launch in December. It is anticipated that a further 12 cities will go live in February 2014 one of which is Derry City Council (DCC).**
- 1.3 **Officers from DCC have asked the Belfast Super-connected project team to investigate if our Voucher Scheme, back office system and processes could be scaled up to support the administration of the DCC voucher scheme.**
- 1.4 **The DCC Development committee 14-01-2014 has agreed in principle to request that Belfast carry out the administration of the DCC voucher scheme if value for money can be demonstrated.**

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 **The DCC project has targeted a voucher uptake of 350 from approximately 2,400 potential SMEs. These figures are significantly lower than the targets set by Belfast, which are 3,250 vouchers from approximately 11,000 businesses.**
- 2.2 **It should be noted that there is no requirement for Belfast to conduct demand stimulation activities on behalf of DCC. Nor will the staff of Belfast carry out any onsite visits to applicants.**
- 2.3 **The nature of the proposed service will solely be focused on hosting the online application forms, telephone support in the form of inbound and outbound calls, application approvals, and the payment to suppliers.**
- 2.5 **Officers from DCC have indicated that they would pay £80,000 for the service provided by Belfast City Council.**
- 2.6 **The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has already indicated support for the proposal and are content that Belfast already has the processes and systems capable of delivering a successful project both for Belfast City Council and DCC.**
- 2.7 **Members will also recall approval for up to 5 additional staff to support the Belfast Connection Vouchers Scheme. These additional resources will provide the capacity to support both schemes with no detriment to the success of the Belfast programme.**
- 2.8 **The Belfast Connection Voucher Scheme project team estimate that:**

- A small number of changes to existing processes and procedures will be required,
- limited changes to the back office IT system will be required to cater for DCC,
- BDUK funds can be recouped through DETI using the same mechanism for both schemes,
- Belfast's role in the DCC scheme will be limited to back office administration and call centre activities minimising any reputational risk to Belfast City Council,
- and, additional effort to administer the DCC scheme will not affect the aims and objectives of the Belfast Connection Voucher Scheme.

3. **Resource Implications**

- 3.1 No additional staff will be required to administer the Derry City Council voucher scheme.
- 3.2 To meet the costs of scheme administration and overheads BCC will charge DCC £80,000.

This will remain a fixed price and is not dependent on the number of applications processed or vouchers redeemed.

- 3.3 The Belfast Super-connected project team will draw up a service level agreement indicating the roles and responsibilities of both councils which will form part of a legal agreement between both parties.

4. **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

- 4.1 N/A

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1 That committee authorise the Super-connected Belfast team to enter into an agreement with Derry City Council for the administration of their Voucher Scheme.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Approval for Short-term Extension
of Energy Supply Contracts**

The Director of Property and Projects reported that it was the Council's intention to enter into a managed service contract in respect of its corporate energy procurement and management and that that arrangement had the potential to provide significant savings in terms of the cost of energy across the organisation. A preferred supplier, Schneider Electric Limited, had been appointed to provide the managed service and the necessary preliminaries were currently under way. It was anticipated that the arrangement would be in place and operational by 1st July, 2014.

However a number of the Council's existing energy contracts were due to expire before that date. The Director of Property and Projects reported that the existing contracts with Power NI and Airtricity for the supply of electricity and the contract with Firmus for the supply of natural gas were all due to terminate on 31st March, 2014 and, in the absence of a contractual relationship with those companies, the Council would be facing steep increases in energy prices in the interim as standard business tariffs would be applied. Therefore, it was proposed that the contractual relationship with those companies be retained via a formal extension of the existing contracts and/or the negotiation of favourable short-term contracts. Those arrangements would be for a period not to exceed six months. He pointed out that, because of the volatility of the energy market and the frequent fluctuations in price, it would not in most cases be possible to extend the existing contracts at current rates but consultation with the relevant suppliers would indicate that increases could be kept within the range of 4.11%, which was significantly lower than if the standard business tariffs were applied.

The Committee authorised the Director of Property and Projects to make the necessary interim contractual arrangements to ensure energy supply and minimise costs for a period not to exceed six months and to issue any notifications and instructions necessary in order to do so.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 6th December.

Post Christmas Marketing Campaign

(Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

On the 15th November 2013 SP&R Committee approved £275,000 funding towards a Christmas animation campaign and up-weighting of the Christmas marketing campaign. The funding breakdown was:

- 1. to provide £150,000 towards an Animation Programme, to include the outline areas and the arterial routes;**
- 2. to provide funding in the sum of £50,000 for additional advertising and public relations for a pre-Christmas campaign; and**

3. to provide a sum of £75,000 towards advertising and post Christmas activities for the period January-March 2014.

The marketing and animation campaigns ended on the 2nd December.

At the meeting on the 15th November committee agreed to;

‘provide a sum of £75,000 towards advertising and post Christmas activities, to be determined in consultation with the business community for the period from January until March 2014’.

Final evaluations of the pre-Christmas animation and additional marketing will be available late in January and will be brought back to committee for consideration.

2 Key Issues

In line with the Committee’s decision regarding financial support for a post Christmas campaign, the following proposal was received from the Chamber of Trade on the 20th December 2013.

Marketing Proposal

A Spring campaign is proposed, highlighting the abundance of attractive opportunities after the inevitable post-Christmas lull: to visit shops with new season merchandise, enjoy family outings to the city’s great and many attractions, festivals and events, bars and restaurants and generally enjoy quality time in and around Belfast.

With Easter falling later-than-usual in 2014 the kick-start to the season can’t wait until mid-April or it will most certainly result in lost business opportunities (particularly given 2012 and 2013’s poor performing first quarters). Therefore extra marketing support and a targeted campaign is considered critically important at this time for city businesses to stimulate and encourage footfall and spend from both local residents and visitors from the wider region. Building on the momentum of previous campaigns, this will serve to keep Belfast, and all it has to offer, at the forefront of people’s minds, promoting positive images and confidence, combined with strong call to action messages that uplift and differentiate the destination from all other competing offers.

Key platforms identified to communicate this message are:

TV (UTV) – this will deliver mass awareness to the NI population with overspill into the ROI market for no additional cost.

Radio (Downtown, Cool FM, Q Radio, Citybeat, U105, Talksport)

– selected to ensure a broad cover of demographics across NI

Outdoor - targeting arterial routes in and out of Belfast, plus across major towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

Online – digital advertising across broad appeal websites

Proposed timings:

Late February / March, extending into April

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

Total cost of the campaign is £75,000.

The proposed campaign breakdown of expenditure is follows;

- TV Advertising £15,000
- Radio £5,000
- Outdoor Advertising £10,000
- Press Advertising £20,000
- Online £5,000
- Production costs £10,000
- PR Support £10,000

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members agree:
That Visit Belfast delivers the additional campaign up to the value of £75,000 finishing in April in line with the request from the Chamber of Trade.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that a meeting be arranged between the political party leaders and the Chamber of Trade to commence discussions on future support for City Centre retailers.

Procurement of Waste Treatment Facilities
Via arc21 – Interim Report

The Committee noted the contents of report which provided and update on the procurement of Waste Treatment Facilities via arc21 and agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Department of the Environment asking them to clarify their views of the project, taking into consideration the findings of the Mills Report.

Human Resources

Value for Money Review of Security and
Review of Civic Head Quarters – Progress Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

VFM Review of Security

- 1.1 Since agreement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18 May 2012 for a VFM review of Security to be undertaken the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Property and Projects have provided regular updates on the progress of the review to Members.
- 1.2 In order to assist in the development of a preferred operating model for the Council’s manned guarding and CCTV/ alarm monitoring and to establish the extent to which this could be achieved and delivered on a voluntary basis, it was agreed by SP&R on 22 November 2013 that a trawl for ‘expressions of interest’ in voluntary redundancy among Security Unit employees likely to be affected by the review could commence. The trawl was therefore undertaken in December 2013.

Civic HQ Review

- 1.3 A report in relation to the re-structuring of the Civic HQ Unit was presented to the Committee at its meeting of 22nd November 2013, and approved (Appendix 1).

2 Key Issues

VFM review of Security

Proposed option

- 2.1 Officers have now scoped the potential costs, savings and organisational design implications resulting from each potential operating model and a preferred option and structure has now been identified.
- 2.2 The proposed option will result in a reduction of 11 FTE posts from the current Security Unit and can be implemented on a voluntary basis. Details of the current and proposed Security

Unit structures have been circulated for the information of the Members.

- 2.3 The current security arrangements at Duncrue will remain unchanged and Dunbar Link and Raphael Street operations will be kept under review. A summary of the proposed changes has been circulated.

Benefits of the proposed model

- 2.4 The proposed Security model offers a number of benefits which address many of the key issues identified by IJA:
- Reduces annual costs by in excess of £300,000, achieved by a reduction in employee costs, specifically salaries and overtime costs;
 - Enhances the security presence at City Hall;
 - Maximises use of access control technology in key locations – CWB; Digital Services – ensuring that staff are deployed to sites where they add maximum value;
 - Addresses the issues that the Control Room in its current state is expensive and adds limited value
 - Removes physical staff from sites where they add limited value.

Review of Civic HQ

- 2.5 A report in relation to the re-structuring of the Civic HQ Unit was presented to the Committee at its meeting of 22nd November 2013, and approved. This revised structure is made up of a number of underlying structural changes which are summarised below for members' information:-
- a total of 12 posts (full-time and part-time) have been deleted from the current structure ; and
 - a total of 13 new (full-time and part-time) posts have been created.

(NB The full structure was set out in appendix of the SP&R report of 22nd November 2013 attached as Appendix 1 of this report).The net annual additional cost (excl. on-costs) of the revised structure is as follows:-

2.6	Cost of new posts:	£189,196
	Savings from deleted posts	<u>£155,814</u>
	Net annual cost:	£33,382
		(as reported to SP&R 22/11/13)

- 2.7 The HR implications of this review will be managed in accordance with the council's normal policies and procedures.
- 2.8 In the course of the review, 2 members of staff (Civic HQ Manager & Tour Services Officer) made application for voluntary redundancy under the council's standard protocol. At the time of writing the report of 22 November 2013 it was not possible to quantify the cost. The overall one-off cost to the council will be £134,328.

Trade union engagement

- 2.10 There has been regular consultation with staff and trades unions and this will continue during the implementation phase to address any operational issues that may arise. Three of the recognised trade unions have indicated their broad agreement with the principles underpinning the proposed Security model. Specifically, they have noted the enhanced use of access control technology, integration of the operational Security posts and the use of external contractors to support manned guarding and CCTV monitoring provision. The fourth trade union, NIPSA, has indicated that they will provide their feedback in advance of the committee meeting, in order that a verbal update can be provided.

The trade unions did, however, note that their priorities for the implementation phase of the review are that:

- Final agreement of the new structure would be dependent upon the grade of the new post;
- The proposals for the Digital Services building should be reviewed to determine the potential for BCC staff to provide night shift cover;
- All applications for VR are accepted; and
- They are fully involved and consulted during the implementation phase of this review.

Next steps

- Further engagement with staff and trade unions will take place to evaluate the requests for voluntary redundancy and to ensure the proposed Security structure is implemented by April 2014 in line with agreed HR policies and procedures.

- The Head of Facilities, with support from the Corporate Efficiency Unit, will continue to keep under review the proposed operating model to identify the scope to deliver further efficiency savings for 2015/16 and to allow for consideration of the wider LGR implications for the Service.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial Implications:

- The proposed Security option will result in ongoing annual efficiency savings in excess of £300,000. Any initial costs to facilitate the proposal will be funded from existing operational budgets. The anticipated payback period is 1.4 years with no additional cost to the ratepayer.
- The proposed Civic HQ structure will result in a net annual cost of £33,382.

3.2 Human Resource Implications:

- Reduction in the number of Security Unit FTE by 11.
- A net increase of 2 Civic HQ FTE.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 4.1 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee is requested to note the information and progress made in each review as set out above, and to authorise officers to continue with the development and implementation of the revised structures on the basis outlined above.

A detailed report on the Security Review will be brought the Committee prior to the commencement of the new financial year.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Standing Order 55 – Employment of Relatives

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Order 55 and the authority delegated to him, the Director of Finance and Resources had authorised the appointment of a member of staff who was related to an existing Officer of the Council.

Asset Management

Damage to City Hall Toilet Area – East Entrance

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided details in relation to damage caused to the City Hall toilet area in the east entrance following an informal event held on 20th December. He pointed out that the total cost of the repairs was approximately £650 and the Sinn Féin Party had undertaken to cover those costs.

The Committee was advised also that, as the party was an informal event and as there was no contractual terms and conditions agreed regarding accidental or other damage to the building nor was there any actual evidence as to who caused the damage, the Committee might wish to reconsider the terms under which informal events in the City Hall were approved, including certain conditions requiring the organiser to accept responsibility for any damage that might occur as a fault of a guest attending an event.

He pointed out that the standard clauses for formal contractual bookings included the following:

“5.3 The Hirer will be responsible for all damage noted on the damage report and will indemnify the Council against all losses, damages, costs and expenses incurred or suffered by the Council as a result thereof (except in respect of any damage caused by the Council or its agents or employees or otherwise not being attributable to the holding of the relevant event);

5.4 The Hirer is responsible for guests attending the relevant event and for ensuring that they cause no damage to the Building/Grounds.”

The Committee agreed that the aforementioned conditions be applied to informal events.

Licence Agreement – Signage at Lagan Valley Regional Park

The Committee was advised that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 13th September, 2012, had received a report regarding the Laganscape Partnership Scheme Project which was managed by the Lagan Valley Regional Park. The Director of Property and Projects pointed out that that organisation had been successful in drawing down Heritage Lottery Funding for works, including interpretation development at various locations within the Lagan Valley Regional Park. As part of the aforementioned interpretation development, the organisation wished to erect new visitor signage at a number of locations including the following Council-owned sites:

Lagan Meadows
Clement Wilson Park
Barnett Demesne
Mary Peter's Track
Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park

In order to regulate the installation and subsequent maintenance of the proposed signage, it was proposed that a Licence Agreement be entered into between the Lagan Valley Regional Park and the Council to document the responsibilities of each of the parties and to ensure there was a mechanism to allow the Council to approve the nature, position and upkeep of the relevant signage.

The Committee approved the grant of a Licence Agreement for ten years to the Lagan Valley Regional Park to allow access to the Council sites as listed for the installation and future maintenance of approved visitor signage.

Disposal of Land at Colin Glen to Clanmil Housing Association

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 At its meeting of 22nd March 2013 the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed to the disposal of land at Colin Glen to Clanmil Housing Association subject to a premium of £1,100,000; Members also agreed to withdraw this offer should Clanmil seek to condition the agreement beyond the usual contract terms.**
- 1.2 As far back at its meeting of 21st September 2007 the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee had agreed in principle to dispose of this land to Clanmil, having being nominated by NIHE as the social housing provided for this site, at a price to be approved by LPS with a further report being brought back to Committee.**
- 1.3 Clanmil's unacceptably low valuation of £50,000 had made it impossible to reach agreement on an appropriate premium for the land and following a protracted period of negotiation Clanmil undertook to accept a transfer value as assessed by Land & Property Services (LPS) as a means of settling the valuation issue. LPS subsequently provided a written report and valuation at £1,100,000 in October 2012 – Clanmil were provided with a copy of the full report.**

- 1.4 Despite Clanmil having agreed to the role of LPS in this matter and thereafter confirming acceptance of their assessment of £1,100,000 they have refused to complete this transfer citing the unacceptable quality of the LPS report (not full RICS Red Book standard) claiming this to be a DSD requirement and which would also impact the public accountability and probity of Clanmil in this transfer.
- 1.5 Based on the Committee's decision to withdraw the offer following Clanmil's failure to accept the agreed valuation Council Officers have asked the Housing Executive and DSD to consider appointing a new housing association but this has not occurred. Meanwhile Clanmil have continued to lobby Members for a sale on terms acceptable to them.
- 1.6 Following a meeting with Clanmil and the Council's Chief Executive in November 2013 we agreed to seek Members' views on requesting LPS to undertake a further valuation of this site that would satisfy the standard that Clanmil require – fully compliant RICS Red Book valuation report that fully addresses impact on value of any perceived site development abnormalities.
- 1.7 The RICS Red Book valuation standard is only to satisfy Clanmil who have now taken 7 years to get to this point. It is not a requirement of DSD in terms of sit disposals for housing and the Council has never had this issue with any other housing association. In order to protect the Council's position Officers would suggest that the Council caveat that any valuation must be equal to or better than the current £1.1m for the site which is the entirely reasonable in a rising housing market. Furthermore Clanmil have stated on a number of occasions and also put in writing they are prepared to pay the £1.1m.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Despite seeking to base the value of this site on 44 units Clanmil have now secured full planning consent for their proposed scheme of 67 social housing units which had formed the basis of the LPS assessment. However, Clanmil feel that there are a number of development abnormalities that also affect the site which LPS had failed to reflect in their assessment of £1,100,000. In instructing LPS a full list of these perceived abnormalities and associated costs had been provided. LPS deal with land transfer assessments involving housing associations on a regular basis and have now provided a further update report to the Council detailing how perceived abnormalities are treated in such assessments.

- 2.2 Challenge of the LPS valuation report by Clanmil, despite agreeing to be bound by it, has introduced delays in completing this transfer for over a year. This means that this original assessment no longer meets a key DSD requirement which is to have any such valuation made within 12mths of date of completing a transfer – the LPS report and valuation was dated October 2012 and has therefore expired. This means in effect that irrespective of Clanmil’s request for a new valuation the DSD guidance requires that new assessment is undertaken.**
- 2.3 Whilst DSD guidance requires a further update assessment in this case they do not require a fully compliant Red Book valuation report as now sought by Clanmil. The DSD guidance states that any valuation provided by LPS carries the ‘approval of DSD’ Correspondence from DSD confirms their desire to have this transfer completed without delay, this view has also been verbally endorsed by NIHE who fully support the provision of social housing at this location.**
- 2.4 Council officers have continued to facilitate the timely completion of this transfer to Clanmil in providing the required title and issued the draft Contract for Sale. However, Clanmil’s solicitors have failed to engage in order to progress the necessary legal work without instruction as to the agreed premium – this legal work could proceed in the absence of an agreed premium and would facilitate an immediate transfer following completion of any further LPS report without any further delay.**
- 2.5 Should Members agree to a further valuation LPS would be instructed to undertake a fully compliant RICS Red Book valuation report that fully accounts for any site development abnormalities as identified by Clanmil. Whilst LPS have indicated that the originally reported premium of £1,100,000 would remain unchanged there can be no guarantee until completion of the new valuation report.**
- 2.6 Members will be aware of the requirement of Section 95(5) of the Local Government Act (NNI) 1972 which obliges the Council to achieve the best price reasonably obtainable for the sale of land. Given that the land was valued for housing purposes at £1.1m in October 2012 Council should bear this value in mind in any subsequent transaction.**

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The sale of these lands could result in a capital return to the Council of £1,100, 000 which could be directed to the Councils Investment Programme or other priorities. However, there is no guarantee that this premium will remain unaltered

3.2 Human Resources

Staff resource in Estates & Legal Services to progress.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

Disposal of this land to provide 67 social housing units should lead to improved social, economic and regeneration benefits for the area, as well as providing a capital return for the Council.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 There are no equality implications to this proposal

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees to the Clanmil request and instruct LPS to undertake a further fully compliant RICS Red Book valuation report for this site and complete a transfer to Clanmil at a premium equal to or greater than that previously reported to Committee at £1,100,000. Should the valuation assessment reduce below £1,100,000 it is recommended that the Committee withdraws the offer to sell this land to Clanmil.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Contractor’s Access to Drumglass Park Gate Lodge

The Committee was advised that, in 1991, the Council had sold the Gate Lodge at Drumglass Park on an 850 year lease to a private purchaser. The property had been marketed and sold with the benefit of pedestrian access from the Lisburn Road but no vehicular access.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that a building contractor had been engaged by the current owner of the Gate Lodge to carry out substantial repairs to the roof of the house and the contractor had sought a facility to bring deliveries of materials to the rear of the Gate Lodge through Drumglass Park. Due to the parking restrictions on the Lisburn Road, the contractor had also sought a facility to allow parking of a contractor’s van on an adjoining hard standing area within the Park. The arrangements with the contractor would be for approximately 6 weeks duration and an overlap with the Councils proposed improvement works at the Park would be avoided. Movement and interaction of the contractor’s vehicles and pedestrians within the Park would be required

to be strictly controlled. In addition, appropriate local arrangements between the Park Manager and the contractor would be necessary in relation to the opening and closing of the vehicle access gate to the Park.

The Committee agreed to grant limited access to a building contractor through part of the Drumglass Park for a period of approximately six weeks to carry out building works on the privately owned Drumglass Gate Lodge, subject to a Licence Fee of £50 per week and an appropriate Licence Agreement to be drawn up by the Legal Services Section.

North Foreshore – Site Disposal for a Commercial Solar Renewable Energy Scheme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members give approval on the 22 March 2013 to release a Marketing Prospectus for the disposal (by way of lease) of a site up to 10 acres in the northeast section of the North Foreshore for Solar PV renewable energy use.**
- 1.2 Members will be aware that the Council has previously agreed that the North Foreshore should be developed for waste management, environmental businesses and recreational uses. The environmental business proposal comprises the development of an environmental resource park to create an innovative ‘Green Technology Business Cluster’ for Belfast. This would have the benefit of diversifying the economy to encourage investment and job creation.**
- 1.3 The development of a green technology business park at the North Foreshore is included within the Investment Programme 2012 – 2015 and Members will be aware that the Council has submitted a £8 million European Regional Development Fund Application to develop the infrastructure for this environmental resource park. Invest NI and DETI are currently assessing the application, and the Council expects a decision in March 2014.**
- 1.4 The Council has already commenced the regeneration of the North Foreshore with the development of a waste transfer station and a landfill gas electricity generation power plant. We are currently progressing a proposed revised agreement for lease with arc21 / NWP for an in-vessel composting facility and the disposal of two sites for potential cleantech renewable energy facilities to create a sustainable renewable energy hub**

- 1.5 The electricity substation on the North Foreshore site currently generates 3mw of renewable electricity which is exported to the local grid network and is sufficient to power up to 3,500 homes. The substation does, however have sufficient spare export capacity of 7mw to the local grid network, which provides the opportunity to encourage the further development of renewable energy facilities to create a sustainable energy hub at the North Foreshore.
- 1.6 A renewable energy hub at the North Foreshore would demonstrate Council's leadership in promoting the development of the cleantech environmental technology sector to build the City's resilience in an era of growing energy insecurity, increasing energy cost and fuel poverty. The NI Executive is promoting the development of solar pv facilities to generate renewable energy to reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels and to improve our security of energy supply. It would also help contribute to the NI Executives' renewable energy target of 40% by 2020.
- 1.7 Currently Northern Ireland is providing circa 12% of its energy from renewable sources. It is worth noting that in 2009 the Council's landfill gas electricity generation power plant at the North Foreshore was providing 5mw which accounted for 1% of the 12% renewable target established by the Executive for 2012.
- 1.8 The disposal of a site for a commercial solar array scheme will form part of the renewable energy hub being created at the North Foreshore.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council identified and agreed a potential development opportunity to release a site of up to 10 acres to the market. The Marketing Prospectus was advertised in the local papers, the council website and in the European Official Journal in July 2013. Developers were invited to submit development proposals to acquire up to 10 acres for a Commercial Solar Renewable Energy Scheme. Developers were requested to offer an unconditional financial bid for an easement fee (to connect to the grid via the substation on the North Foreshore site) based on the amount of electricity produced. The closing date for the Development Submissions was the 26 September 2013.

- 2.2 An Evaluation Panel was established, comprising of representatives from Estates, Legal Services and Corporate Services, to undertake the assessment the Development Submissions. The Evaluation Panel used the following assessment criteria which was outlined in the Marketing Prospectus;
- I. Financial offer for the electricity cable easement fees.
 - II. Company background, financial viability of the project and the financial capability of the operator to fund, deliver, and operate the facility.
 - III. Experience of the Developer and project Development Team to deliver and operate similar solar energy facilities.
 - IV. Quality of the design proposal and the socio economic benefits.
 - V. Delivery of the project within a reasonable timescale.
- 2.3 The Evaluation Panel are of the view that the submission received from the company RePower – Warik Energy best meets the criteria as set out in the Marketing Prospectus, in terms of its unconditional financial offer, funding and delivering a commercially robust solar PV renewable energy project.
- 2.4 RePower - Warik Energy is proposing to develop a 2.5mw Solar PV Array facility on the 10 acre site. They have advised that this would be capable of generating sufficient power for c2,500 houses. The investment value of the scheme is £2.1 million. The developers involved have previous experience of funding and delivering Solar PV Schemes in Ireland and they are proposing to establish RePower as a Special Purpose Vehicle to deliver the project.
- 2.5 RePower – Warik Energy have provided an unconditional financial bid for easement fee and confirmed the site rental of £1,000 per acre for the 10 acre site. The total return will be dependent upon the amount of electricity generated but based on predicted figures this could potentially generate an income to the Council c £33,500. The Developers have indicated that they would be keen to offer public and school tours to the solar pv facility to promote greater understanding of the solar pv technology to generate renewable electricity. In addition there will be associated jobs created by the project.
- 2.6 Independent technical advice was sought from Action Renewables in relation to the submissions received, as well as background company and legal checks undertaken by Legal Services to assess the Development Submissions.

- 2.7 The Committee is asked to consider the assessment above and to make a recommendation to appoint a preferred developer to develop a commercial solar pv array scheme at the North Foreshore.

3 Resource Implications

Finance

- 3.1 The Council will receive a financial return for the site based on a ground rental (reviewable every 5 years) and a further return based on the amount of electricity generated from the facility. The return from electricity is based on an agreed (unconditional) price per mw hour. The total return will be dependent upon the amount of electricity generated by the Solar PV. The estimated return to the Council is circa £33,500 per annum.
- 3.2 The proposed investment by RePower – Warik Energy is £2.1 million. In addition to job creation for the City, this facility will also add to the City's rate base.

Assets

- 3.3 The development of this site represents an important regeneration opportunity for Belfast and has the potential to create significant economic, social and environmental benefits.
- 3.4 The development of this facility is important to firmly position the North Foreshore Environmental Resource Park as a cleantech cluster that will encourage further development interest from the renewable energy and cleantech sector.

Human Resources

- 3.5 Staff resource will be primarily from Property & Projects and Legal Services.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 None at this stage.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that Members give approval to grant RePower – Warik Energy preferred developer status and to enter into negotiations to complete a Site Options Agreement and Agreement to Lease for the disposal (by way of lease) of a site at the North Foreshore, as detailed above, and subject to detailed terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager and Legal Services.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that a meeting of the North Foreshore Steering Group be convened as soon as possible in order to consider the North Foreshore site.

Appropriation of Land at Skegoneill Avenue

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

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The site of the former Health Centre and Library at the bottom of Skegoneill Avenue was acquired by the Council as part of the arrangements associated with the development of the Grove Well-Being Centre. It had originally been envisaged the site would be incorporated with the adjoining Grove Playing Fields however after having explored a number of options the Parks and Leisure Department determined such incorporation was inappropriate. At its meeting on 5 December 2013 the Parks and Leisure Committee agreed to declare the site (as outlined red on the attached map – Appendix 1) surplus to Parks and Leisure requirements and further agreed that a report be brought to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in line with Standing Orders. It is envisaged by Parks and Leisure that the site should be appropriated to the Corporate Land Bank, and managed by Estates Management Unit. An extract from the minutes of the Parks and Leisure Committee is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.**
- 1.2 The site extends to approximately 1 acre, is cleared of buildings and is surrounded by fencing on all sides. There are dwellings to the west of the site and dwellings facing the site on the opposite side of Skegoneill Avenue.**
- 1.3 In 2013 Parks and Leisure Department encountered difficulties associated with conflicting priorities within the local community in relation to bonfire management on the site. The bonfire which was constructed fell outside the Council's bonfire management programme and for reasons around continuing inter-community issues Good Relations Unit have advised it may not be possible to bring it within the 2014 programme resulting in an unregulated bonfire site with ongoing associated unresolved community difficulties.**
- 1.4 In terms of managing assets within the Corporate Land Bank the primary role of Estates Management Unit is to consider future development and disposal options whilst overseeing the management of such assets in tandem with the responsibilities of other relevant services. In respect of this site this will include consideration of alternative uses for the site which are likely to comply with the Council's title to the site, Planning requirements, the physical limitations of the site and the**

compatibility of any development with the surrounding land uses and the Council's wider goals. The outcomes from the process could result in development of the site for Council purposes, its disposal for other appropriate purposes, or a combination of these uses.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 In order to reduce the prospect of anti-social behaviour on the site, including potential issues around bonfires, will require a corporate consultation process led by Community Safety/Good Relations Unit and involving local Elected Members, other local representatives and the PSNI. This consultation may result in a requirement to carry out some physical works on the site, which may include landscaping and potentially measures to provide interim use by the local community while the longer term use of the site is being considered.
- 2.2 The proposed transfer of this site from Parks and Leisure to the Corporate Land Bank does not include the transfer of any budget. Any future capital works are subject to normal approvals associated with the Council's Capital Programme.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Finance

Initial consultations with the local community may result in interim physical works being required at the site in order to reduce the prospect of anti-social behaviour on the land. The cost of such, as yet unquantified, measures is not presently known but there is currently no budget for any such works. Estates Management Unit may commission a Planning Assessment and a preliminary assessment of contamination risks associated with the site in order to inform decisions around future use. There is currently no specific budget to cover this and any cost would require to be re-aligned from within the existing Property and Projects departmental budgets.

3.2 Human Resources

Staff from Estates Management Unit, Community Safety and Good Relations Unit would be involved in co-ordinating and dealing with the Council's response to site management issues until such times as a new use for the site is brought to fruition.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications

This is a substantial site which, subject to Planning and other constraints, could present an opportunity for a range of developments. However, this potential can only be realised following resolution of the issues around establishment of the land as a bonfire site.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 There are no current equality issues related to this report. A process associated with potential Good Relations issues is considered within the body of this report.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Committee is recommended to authorise the early commencement of a community engagement process by the Council's Good Relations Unit/Community Safety and their proactive involvement in this process, with a framework developed by Good Relations/Community Safety and agreed by Parks and Leisure Department and Property and Projects Department prior to transfer of the site. Subject to this Committee is recommended to authorise the appropriation of the land from Parks and Leisure Committee to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to be managed as part of the Corporate Land Bank, with a further report being brought back in due course in relation to any interim physical works and options for future use of the site and subject to the continued proactive involvement of the Council's Good Relations Unit/Community Safety towards addressing the community issues outlined in this report."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Good Relations and Equality

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting on the Good Relations Partnership of 13th January.

**International Women's Day –
Council Support for Public Rally**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd December, 2013 had passed unanimously the following Notice of Motion which had been proposed by Councillor Kelly:

“International Women’s Day on 8th March is acknowledged globally as a day on which to celebrate the achievements of women across the world. For the past four years, the women’s sector in Belfast has marked this special day with a public rally to the City Hall. This public event has become popular recently and, in 2013, the Council provided some financial support for it.

The Council has recognised that, within the City Hall, the role of women has not been fully recognised, in terms of memorabilia. Providing support to an annual public event would be a simple way of demonstrating our acknowledgement of this special day and pledging our commitment to working towards greater equality of opportunity for all women in Belfast.”

Subsequently at its meeting on 6th January, 2014, the Council had agreed that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

The Director of Health and Environmental Services reminded the Committee that the 2013 financial support which had been referred to by Councillor Kelly in her Notice of Motion had been provided under the Decade of Centenaries programme, since one aspect of that programme had focused directly on the role of women and the campaign for women’s suffrage a century ago. Last year’s funding had been used to cover the costs of a temporary stage and sound system for the public rally at the front of the City Hall and the Council had met also the costs of a modest lunch for 150 of the rally participants.

She pointed out that the women’s sector in Belfast was very keen that the Council should maintain its support for International Women’s Day and had provided estimated costs for similar provision this year, along with musicians and drummers to encourage public participation and for the use of signers at the rally to ensure the inclusion of those with hearing impairments. The Committee had agreed also, at its meeting in April 2013, that the City Hall should be illuminated purple to mark International Women’s Day.

The cost for an appropriate temporary stage and sound system, along with signers, music, drummers was estimated to be in the region of £4,500. The cost of the lunch would be an additional £1,500, giving a total of £6,000. The Director of Finance and Resources had indicated that that could be met from within existing budgets and the Committee was requested to note that it was likely to be a recurring annual expenditure.

The Committee granted the approval to the provision of funding for various aspects of support for the public rally to mark International Women’s Day as outlined.

Development of an Interface Strategy for Belfast

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The Council will be aware of the Notice of Motion from Alderman Ekin which was unanimously agreed by the Council in September 2011:

1.2 'This Council can demonstrate true civic leadership by agreeing to tackle one of the biggest problems which affects all of the citizens of the City, that is, the continued existence of the so called 'Peace Walls'. These walls performed a necessary security purpose in the past in the several interface areas of the City but now serve to increase alienation and to inhibit regeneration and development of those very same areas and the time has now come to seek to move towards their removal.

1.3 The Council agrees to take the lead in devising a strategy which seeks to move towards the removal of a number of these walls within the current Council term. This strategy should be inclusive and include the direct involvement of all appropriate organisations from the business, public and voluntary and community sectors, with the wishes and needs of those people who live in the interface areas being paramount.'

1.4 The Motion was referred to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee which agreed that the development of a strategy and framework for action, which seeks to move towards the removal of a number of walls/barriers, should be taken forward by the Good Relations Partnership in conjunction with the Safer City Group.

1.5 The Council's Corporate Plan makes specific reference to interfaces, stating that we commit to lead on an Interfaces Strategy to ensure that we support a shared city.

1.6 Our Investment Programme notes that:

'... segregation and division produce significant additional costs in the city. The 'diseconomies of segregation' are borne disproportionately by the most disadvantaged communities. All of this projects a negative backdrop as Belfast presents itself as an outward looking and modern location for living, investment and tourism.

We will continue to work with local communities who are seeking to reduce and remove barriers, in the context of local area working. We will support and advocate for a number of neighbourhoods in the city, close to interface barriers, to regenerate those neighbourhoods while safely and sensitively working towards removing and reducing barriers.'

- 1.7 Members are aware that improving the quality of life and connectivity in the city are clear priorities for the Council and the preparation of a more integrated strategy for interfaces within broader regeneration proposals is timely, given the imminent introduction of community planning and the transfer of regeneration powers which provides the framework for such place shaping actions.

2 Key Issues

Interfaces feature prominently in the NI Executive's recent *Together: Building a United Community* strategy, which states that:

' In building a safer community, we will:

- Create a 10-year Programme to reduce, and remove by 2023, all interface barriers; and
- Create an Interface Barrier Support Package.'

- 2.2 Funding of approximately £420,000 was previously awarded under Phase 2 of the EU Peace III Programme for work in a number of cluster areas of Belfast identified in previous surveys as being the most likely to be receptive to transformation of barriers. Work over the past 18 months has included changing the appearance of barriers, providing landscaping and other softening features and providing support for local community consultation and visioning exercises. This Peace III funding is due to end in March 2014.
- 2.3 To date efforts have focused on those areas considered as 'early wins' based on Peace III and IFI target areas, using the tried and tested IFI model of community-led delivery, which is generally agreed as being the best model.
- 2.4 Work on the development of a longer-term integrated multi-agency Interface Strategy is now proceeding under the auspices of *TBUC* in conjunction with the Department of Justice, the International Fund for Ireland and the NI Housing Executive. The aim is to ensure a holistic approach that eliminates duplication, targets resources more effectively and builds on existing good practice.

- 2.5 The Department of Justice has assumed the role of lead partner in the development of this Interface Strategy and envisages a co-ordinated delivery programme by a number of interested agencies, including the City Council and NI Housing Executive.
- 2.6 The DOJ team will apply for additional resources to the OFM/DFM under the *United Community* framework to cover the cost of this programme. This application will include a bid for sufficient funding to support resources within the Council which are specifically dedicated to working on the interface strategy, in terms of planning, design and delivery. Work to date has been undertaken by one of the Good Relations Officers funded by Peace III but the programme planned will require staff with a mix of skills from a number of different Departments– planning, legal, project management etc.
- 2.7 OFM/DFM have expressed support for this proposed programme since the interfaces form such a central plank within *TBUC* and will request and encourage other Government Departments to support it through the release of staff, funding and experience. It is envisaged, for example, that existing expertise available within BRO/DSD will be utilised, along with lessons learned from existing and previous programmes, including evidence based decision making and interventions, use of quality visioning tools and effective consultation.
- 2.8 The Council's current work on tackling sectarianism and promoting positive relationships in the city will continue in parallel with this programme.
- 2.9 Any programme would be co-designed by both the DOJ and Council. This approach could be regarded as a holistic model of good practice , and if successful could be rolled out NI wide – the OFM/DFM are keen to see how such a model might be used for example in Lurgan/ Portadown.

Longer term

- 2.10 In the longer term, when planning and regeneration functions have been fully devolved to local authorities, the Council is likely to continue this central role round interfaces, mainstreaming it within the broader context of community planning/ local area working/local regeneration plans. However, funding physical works will still be required.

- 2.11 It appears likely that a Peace IV Programme would include a specific programme to tackle interfaces and experience gained at this stage would be crucial.

3 **Resource Implications**

None at this stage – the Council’s bid will be for funding at 100%.

4 **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

This proposal seeks to improve the physical environment and the quality of life of residents from the most deprived communities within the city; any implications will be positive.

5 **Recommendations**

That the Committee notes the information in this report and grants authority to proceed on the basis as outlined above; further reports will be submitted in due course.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Cross-Cutting Issues

**Tidal Flooding – Recognition Event
for Staff and Community Volunteers**

The Committee noted the contents of the report which provided details in relation to the action which had been undertaken in preparation of the tidal surges which had threatened Belfast between Friday 3rd and Monday 6th January.

The Committee agreed to the Council hosting a recognition event for the volunteers and staff who were involved in the response to the risk of tidal inundation in the Sydenham and Docks areas.

Building Successful Communities

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 **Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 In October 2013, Minister for Social Development announced six ‘Building Successful Communities’ pilot areas to take forward a housing-led regeneration programme. Five of these six areas fall within Belfast, with the sixth area in Ballymena (covering the Doury Road area). The five areas in Belfast include:

- Lower Oldpark/Hillview;
- Divis/Albert Street;
- Tiger's Bay/Mouncollyer;
- Lower Shankill/Brown Square; and
- Andersonstown

1.2 The 'Building Successful Communities' initiative is part of the 'Facing the Future - Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2017'. The Housing Strategy sets out the criteria for the selection of these pilot areas which includes areas that are already designated areas of deprivation and which have good potential for recovery with available land or properties that can be refurbished. The aim of the programme is to use housing intervention as one of the main catalysts for local regeneration. It is intended to complement existing departmental programmes including the Social Housing Development Programme, Neighbourhood Renewal and other capital regeneration activities.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The programme will involve concerted social, economic and physical interventions by the DSD, the NI Housing Executive, Housing Associations, local communities and key statutory and voluntary agencies to develop solutions that will reverse decline and create more sustainable communities.

2.2 A 'Regeneration Forum' will be set up within each of the designated 'Building Successful Communities' areas to develop plans with economic, physical and social interventions and take work forward to meet community needs. Once the plans are in place, DSD will secure appropriate funding from DFP for delivery. Membership of Regeneration Forums will be sought from the Housing Executive, elected representatives, council officials, housing associations and representatives from education, health and the voluntary and community sectors.

2.3 A dedicated 'Regeneration Manager', will be recruited for each area to support the forums to identify the issues in their respective areas, design and deliver solutions relating to housing, regeneration, infrastructure, employment and social enterprise, together with other issues that the forum feels is important.

- 2.4 A Programme Board will be established to provide strategic direction, agree the action plans for each area and oversee the delivery of the Building Successful Communities pilot programme. The pilot programme is designed to build upon examples of best practice in Manchester and Liverpool and the intention is that it will be expanded to other areas if the pilots prove successful.**
- 2.5 The formation of each of the forums is at an early stage. DSD have written to request Council participation on each of the five Regeneration Forums as well as senior officer involvement in the Building Successful Communities Programme Board to oversee the initiative. DSD are also approaching local councillors and MLAs within each of the target areas to confirm interest and participation in the forums. It is anticipated that the forums will be established within the next few months.**
- 2.6 Members have previously agreed that the development of area plans will be considered within the context of the emerging community planning framework and, as demonstrated in other cities, there is likely to be a strong relationship between neighbourhood regeneration and community planning at a local level. It will therefore be important for the Council to ensure the programme ties in with existing programmes and targeted regeneration initiatives as well as the future plans for a transformed integrated regeneration and place-shaping agenda.**
- 2.7 As this is likely to impact on the Council's delivery of regeneration post-2015 it is recommended that the Director of Development is nominated to the Programme Board and that a programmed and co-ordinated approach is adopted to manage council representation on each of the five Regeneration Forums. To support this co-ordinated approach, it is suggested that in the first instance, appropriate council officers from the Urban Development Unit be assigned to each of the five Regeneration Forums in Belfast.**

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Human: Officer time in terms of participation on the Regeneration Forums and co-ordination will be accommodated within existing responsibilities.**

Financial: None at this stage; however, there may be future implications in terms of the delivery of agreed regeneration plans.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 There are no equality or good relations implications at this stage. Equality screening will be carried out as part of the Building Successful Communities programme development.**

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to note the content of this report and at this stage to agree to the nomination of the Director of Development to the Building Successful Communities Programme Board and to the co-ordinated approach to support appropriate officer representation to each of the 5 pilot Regeneration Forums.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman