

# Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Wednesday, 3rd December, 2014

## SPECIAL MEETING OF SHADOW STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McAteer (Deputy Chairman) (in the Chair);  
Councillors Attwood, Beattie, Boyle, Hargey,  
Hutchinson, Kingston, McCabe, Rodgers and  
Spence.

Also attended: Councillors Austin, R. Brown, Bunting, Clarke, Convery,  
Dudgeon, Garrett, Graham, Heading, Johnston, Kyle,  
Magee, McAllister, McConville, McGimpsey and  
Mullan.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;  
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources/  
Deputy Chief Executive;  
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;  
Mrs. J. Minne, Director of Organisational Development;  
Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

### Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from the Chairman, Councillor Stalford.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

### City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan

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

#### **"1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will aware that as part of the Local Government Reform programme a range of new powers will transfer to the Council on 1 April 2015 including the Statutory Planning Function, Community Planning and Local Economic Development powers. In addition the Regeneration powers**

currently held by DSD will be extended to the Council on 1 April 2016.

- 1.2 In preparation for the transfer of the Planning and Regeneration functions the Council agreed in December 2013 to commission the development of a City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan following which a consortium led by the Toronto based Urban Strategies Inc. was appointed to undertake this work. Urban Strategies, an internationally renowned urban planning, design and regeneration consultancy practice were supported by Deloitte's Economic and Property teams with Arup providing expertise in the areas of Transport and Connectivity.
- 1.3 The primary objectives of the Regeneration and Investment Plan were:-
  - To provide an integrated strategic policy framework which will inform the City Centre element of the Local Development Plan;
  - Promote the sustainable physical regeneration of the city centre and linkages to the city neighbourhoods;
  - Drive economic growth and increase sustainable employment levels;
  - Grow the City's Rate Base to increase the resources available for redistribution into the city's neighbourhoods.
  - Enhance the city's performance as the economic driver for the region.
- 1.4 The consultancy team conducted an intensive stakeholder engagement process in the initial phases of the commission. An Initial Directions Paper was presented by Joe Berridge to members and a broad range of city stakeholders at the Future City Conference at the Waterfront Hall on 20 June 2014. The presentation was well received by those present and was the subject of positive comment in the local media.
- 1.5 Between July and October the Consultancy team have conducted a number of further visits to Belfast during which they have had further meetings with stakeholders. They have taken on many of the views expressed at the Future City Conference and subsequent feedback to both the council and directly to the consultants. These are reflected in the draft

**Belfast City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan which is attached in Appendix 1 of this report.**

**2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 The transfer of the Planning Function to the Council on 1 April 2015 places a statutory responsibility on the new Belfast City Council for the formulation of the City's Development Plan. This will replace those parts of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan which apply to the new Belfast City Council Area. Although only recently adopted much of the BMAP has become outdated as many of the social and economic circumstances facing the city and its residents have changed substantially since the plan was initiated in 2001.**
- 2.2 Realistically the Council is unlikely to be in a position to adopt a new Statutory Development Plan until 2019 and as a result BMAP will remain the statutory plan until that point in time. It is important therefore that in the interim the Council has a policy framework which:**
- is deemed to be a material consideration as part of the future development management process;**
  - addresses the socio- economic challenges and opportunities which the city currently faces and**
  - reflects the ambitions of the new City Council to encourage economic growth, environmental sustainability and social cohesion through physical regeneration and investment in the city.**
- 2.3 It is also widely recognised the DSD's City Centre Regeneration Policy which has guided DSD's regeneration activity within the city in recent years was also formulated in a very different economic climate and needs to be replaced by a policy which reflects the current needs of both the city and the region.**
- 2.4 In order to address the deficiencies in both planning and regeneration policy it is proposed that when adopted by Council the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan is regarded as a material consideration for future planning decision making and replaces the current DSD City Centre Regeneration Policy as the key policy document to guide the Council's future regeneration activity in the city centre.**

**2.5 The Draft City Centre Regeneration Strategy & Investment Plan**

In developing the plan Urban Strategies were encouraged to take a collaborative approach with city stakeholders to identify the key development opportunities that exist in the city centre and to provide a coherent strategy to help shape regeneration and investment in the city.

**2.6 The strategy seeks to deliver upon eight key policy areas which are critical to the city's international competitiveness, its economic success and the wellbeing of its citizens. These policies are:**

- *Increase the employment population*
- *Create the region's learning and innovation centre*
- *Increase the residential population*
- *Create a green, walkable, cyclable centre*
- *Manage the retail offer*
- *Connect to the city around*
- *Maximise the tourism opportunity*
- *A shared space*

**2.7 The consultant team adopted an approach that sought to deliver on these policy objectives by harnessing the potential of a number of large scale development projects already planned such as Royal Exchange; the Great Victoria St Transport Hub; the potential BBC Relocation and the University's Greater Belfast Campus Development as catalysts for city regeneration.**

**2.8 In addition to the large scale developments the plan identifies numerous City Centre wide projects including: reimagining the inner ring road; considering the potential for a new tourist attraction / event; improving the cycle network; improving community connections; enhanced management of the city centre; the development of an integrated city 'App'; and the conversion of vacant office and retail space.**

**2.9 The plan also goes on to identify 5 Special Action Areas. These are areas that offer an immediate opportunity for development but require a detailed and integrated approach**

to planning, project development, project financing and delivery. These Special Action Areas are defined as:

**South Centre – including the proposed Great Victoria Street Transport Hub, completion of the South Link, and Grade A Office Development in Traditional Office Core**

**Oxford Street and Queen’s Quay District - including City Quays; Sircooco; Queen’s Quay and Oxford Street**

**The Western Quarter – including Castle Street, Bank Square; Castlecourt and surrounding areas;**

**The North East Quarter – the Area surrounding and including Royal Exchange**

**North Centre – including the UU Greater Belfast Development; potential BBC relocation; and Cathedral Quarter**

- 2.10** Members are therefore asked to consider these Special Action Areas as city centre priorities and approve engagement in further detailed work to identify how Council and partners can facilitate the delivery of projects and ensure the regeneration potential for each area is fully realised.
- 2.11** Subject to the Draft Regeneration and Investment Strategy being endorsed by the Committee it is intended that we will undertake a full public consultation exercise in the New Year which will facilitate further opportunities to shape the plan before it is finalised. We will also undertake additional Equality Impact and Strategic Environmental Assessments in parallel with the consultation process to ensure the plan can be fully considered as a material document moving forward.
- 2.12** It on this basis that Members are asked to endorse the key elements of the plan its projects, policies and Special Action Areas and approve the plan for public consultation in parallel with any other impact assessments as necessary.

### **3 Resource Implications**

- 3.1** As part of the consultant team Deloitte Property has focused on project delivery with a particular emphasis on potential funding models including the use of the Council’s Belfast Investment Fund and external sources such as Financial Transaction Capital. Work in this area is on-going and further

detailed reports will be brought to Committee for consideration.

- 3.2 Appendix 2 provides an outline of the relationship between rates income, city centre investment and funding for neighbourhood development. Basically, rates income joined with external financing support the delivery of city centre projects. The Council will aim to make a return on the initial financing which can then be re-invested in other city centre regeneration projects. At the same time, this investment in the city centre will result in growth in the value of the rates base. This will provide additional finance for investment in neighbourhoods which as well as delivering improved social incomes should lead to enhanced neighbourhood rate bases. In this way the Council will build a sustainable model of financing both city centre and neighbourhood regeneration.

#### 4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 4.1 Equality and good relations screening will be conducted in parallel with the proposed consultation process

#### 5 Call In

- 5.1 This decision is subject to call-in.

#### 6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are asked to:

- consider the contents of this report;
- endorse the Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan as set out in Appendix 1
- agree to proceed to public consultation;
- approve to further detailed work being conducted on the planning, financing and delivery of projects within the Special Action Areas set out in the Plan.”

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 24th October, it had agreed to hold a special meeting, to which all Members of the Shadow Council would be invited to receive a presentation from Mr. Joe Berridge, Urban Strategies, on the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Framework.

With the assistance of visual aids, Mr. Berridge provided a detailed presentation of the Plan. He indicated that the strategy was grounded in an understanding of Belfast City Centre as it was today, that is, the policy context, physical context, market context and transport context. He stated that these contexts constituted the starting point for the

policies and projects developed. Eight policies for the City Centre provided a vision for the eight areas of intervention considered most essential to Belfast's success. The policies addressed the universal elements of a thriving City Centre as well as challenges and conditions that were unique to Belfast.

The eight policy areas are as follows:

- Increase the employment population
- Increase the residential population
- Manage the retail offer
- Maximise a tourism opportunity
- Create the region's learning and innovations centre
- Create a green, walkable, cycleable centre
- Connect to the City around
- A shared space

Mr. Berridge then reviewed the details of each of the policy areas and a number of special action areas which included the Northern Quarter, Western Quarter, North East Quarter, including Royal Exchange, a transport hub and Oxford Street and the Eastern Bank district.

Following a detailed question and answer session, the Committee:

- 1) agreed to proceed to public consultation with The Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan; and
- 2) approved further detailed work being conducted on the planning, financing and delivery of projects within the Special Action Areas as set out in the Plan.

Chairman