

Development Committee

Wednesday, 16th January, 2008

Meeting of Development Committee

Members present: Councillor Browne (Chairman); and
Councillors Humphrey, Campbell, Convery, Crozier,
Cunningham, Dodds, Ekin, Hartley, Kelly, Kyle, Maskey,
McCarthy, McCausland, Mhic Giolla Mhin and Stoker

In attendance: Ms. M.T. McGivern Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay Head of Economic Initiatives;
Mr. T. Husbands Managing Director, the Belfast
Waterfront and Ulster Halls; and
N. Malcolm Committee Administrator

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Attwood and C. Maskey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th 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 7th January, subject to:

- (i) the amendment of the decision under the heading "Belfast Welcome Centre and the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau Business Plan" to provide that that portion of the decision which referred to the provision of an additional amount of £500,000 for marketing and visitor servicing by the Bureau be deferred to enable discussions to be held between Council officials and representatives of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board with a view to that organisation providing a contribution to the operating costs of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, in recognition of the fact that for many visitors Belfast acted as a gateway to the Province; and
- (ii) the amendment of the decision under the heading "Broadway Junction Public Art" to provide that the Greater Village Regeneration Trust and the St. James Forum be represented also on the Project Board established to implement the Scheme.

Development Committee Revenue Estimates 2008

(Mr. T. Salmon, Director of Corporate Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which had been prepared by the Director of Corporate Services in respect of the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the Year 2008/2009. A copy of that section of the report in so far as it applied specifically to the Development Committee is set out hereunder:

“A spending limit of £23,796,450 is recommended for the Development Department in respect of the financial year 2008/09. Excluding capital charges of £1,326,950 this represents an increase of 10.64% over last year.

The main budgetary intentions of the Department for next year are set out below:

	£
Economic Initiatives Section	8,897,530
Community Services	6,268,450
Waterfront Hall / Ulster Hall	3,446,540
Directorate	5,183,930
Total Net Expenditure	<u>23,796,450</u>

In line with other Departments, increased costs of £213,840 must be borne in respect of superannuation. Capital charges have reduced from £1,422,710 in 2007/08 to £1,326,950 in 2008/09.

The National Agreement on Single Status is now effective. As the actual consequence of changing Terms and Conditions of employment are now known, an additional £214,500 has been added to the Estimates of the Waterfront Hall.

There are a number of areas where significant change has occurred from last year.

The majority of the annual tourism budget continues to be ‘contracted out’ to the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau for marketing Belfast and providing information to visitors at the Belfast Welcome Centre and Tourist Information Centres at the City and International Airports. The Council has agreed to uplift its funding of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau. The impact of this decision on the Estimates is almost £500,000.

The Department will also incur increased costs of £190,800 for a number of new posts. Of this sum £75,000 relates to Policy Officer and European Officer posts which are no longer funded by the new LED Plan. To support the implementation of SNAP a new Citystats Officer is required at a cost of £39,100. This is a statistician post and is required to validate and quality assure the internal data which will be input into the Citystats software. An additional £36,700 is included for a Public Arts post to develop the Council's capacity in the areas of Public Art and Festivals. An additional £40,000 is required within the unit to provide for the transfer of the EU Officer budget from Health & Environmental Services and the creation of a third EU Officer Post to work on a joint basis with Corporate Services.

An additional £50,000 has been included to further promote and establish Open Air Markets within the City.

There are a number of areas of growth within the Departmental budget.

The Tall Ships 2009 event will require £1.1m of funding over the next two years. Funding of £400,000 is included in the 2008/09 budget. The Civic Events programme includes an additional £100,000 for the World Irish Dancing Championships. Further growth of £100,000 is also included with regard a Policy and Resources Committee decision in March 2007 to support the Nomadic Restoration Fund.

With the Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall now fully operational after closures in 2007/08, the Department has estimated additional income of £122,000 and £42,000 respectively.

The Department will make a contribution of £49,900 to the efficiency programme in 2008/09. Efficiency savings will be made as follows:

	£
1. Insurances	12,500
2. Budgetary Efficiencies	37,400
Total Departmental Efficiency Savings	49,900

Belfast City Council like all other Local Authorities across the country is faced with the constant pressure of balancing increasing demands against ever decreasing resources and 2008/2009 will be no exception.

A major effort has been made by all concerned to ensure that the estimates presented are meaningful, realistic, and correlate closely with the key tasks and activities within the Corporate Plan.

On 4 February 2008 the estimates of the various Council Departments and Committees will be approved and adopted. In due course a full copy of the Corporate Plan incorporating a summary of the financial information will be distributed to each Member of Council.

My thanks are due to all for the continued co-operation and assistance which I have received over the past months in what has been a long and exhausting exercise to compile the Revenue Estimates.

DECISION REQUIRED:

1. To approve the undernoted Estimates of the Development Committee for the year commencing 1 April 2008.

**DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
REVENUE ESTIMATES 2008/09**

	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
Estimate 2007/08		21,731,400
Efficiency Savings		
Insurances	(12,500)	
Budgetary Efficiencies	<u>(37,400)</u>	(49,900)
Increased Costs		
Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau	500,000	
Single Status (WFH)	214,500	
Superannuation	213,800	
New Posts (Public Arts/Citystats/Econ.Dev.Assist.)	190,800	
Open Air Market Development	<u>50,000</u>	1,169,100
Growth		
Tall Ships	400,000	
Nomadic Restoration Fund	100,000	
World Irish Dancing Championships	<u>100,000</u>	600,000
Cost Reductions		
Capital Charges		(95,800)
Increased Income		
Waterfront Hall	(122,000)	
Ulster Hall	<u>(42,000)</u>	(164,000)
Normal Increase (eg pay awards / supplies and services)		605,650
Estimate 2008/09		23,796,450

**DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
MAIN ITEMS OF ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2008/09**

	Inc. Capital Charges	Exc. Capital Charges
	£	£
Community Services	6,268,500	5,856,900
Waterfront and Ulster Hall	3,446,600	2,529,500
Economic Initiatives		
Events	2,610,600	2,610,600
Tourism	2,321,200	2,321,200
Arts and Culture	1,686,400	1,686,400
Economic Development	1,021,200	1,021,200
Planning and Transport	514,100	514,100
North Foreshore	398,600	398,600
Markets – Operations and Management	345,500	343,800
Directorate		
Development Directorate	2,625,100	2,625,100
City Development	930,100	930,100
Policy and Research	751,600	751,600
SNAP	530,200	530,200
European Unit	346,900	346,900

The Director of Corporate Services outlined the factors which had been taken into consideration in the preparation of the Estimates and highlighted the increased costs across a number of areas which had contributed to a Departmental increase of 10.6% from the previous year.

After discussion, the Committee approved the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the Year 2008/2009 as submitted in respect of the Development Committee.

Belfast City Centre Management Company - Presentation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

At a meeting of the Development Committee on 12 December 2007, Members agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of Belfast City Centre Management on their draft Business and Operation Plan for 2008/2009.

In 2007 executive changes took place with the appointment of Mr Billy McGivern as Chairman of the BCCM Board, and Mr Andrew Irvine as City Centre Manager.

Under its new management team, Belfast City Centre Management Company has repositioned itself, the Company's initiatives and operating plans are now centred on:

'delivering additional services into Belfast city centre, on behalf of its core funders, which contribute in a measurable way to a cleaner, safer and more accessible city.'

A copy of the BCCM 2008/2009 Operating Plan has been circulated to the Committee.

Key Issues

The City Centre Manager reports that some existing BCCM initiatives have been extremely successful, including the 'Retail Crimewatch Scheme'. This scheme in 3 years has delivered a 51% reduction in stock loss due to retail crime (shoplifting), saving and estimated £8.2m of stock. BCCM are now keen to extend this scheme to cover juveniles, who are responsible for 36% of retail crime in Belfast City Centre.

The success of BCCM's Safer City initiatives has placed pressure on BCCM's small administrative resources.

The work of BCCM, which is presented in detail in the Operating Plan, covers three areas of work:

- *Delivering Direct city centre services:*

BCCM will deliver its own services, which add value to the city centre, e.g. City Centre Representatives, City Beat Policing, Radiolink, City Safe Crimewatch scheme.

- *Facilitating and assisting in the delivery of our funders City Centre Initiatives:*

BCCM will work 'on the street' (when requested and as directed) to assist with initiatives such as the Evening Economy, Independent Retail Training, Retail Benchmarking and Gap analysis, Belfast in Bloom, Waste Management and Streets Ahead.

- *Direct liaison with City Centre Businesses:*

BCCM will provide strong communication links between the private sector businesses in the city centre and central and local government.

In order to deliver the specific targets provided in the 2008/2009 Operating Plan, BCCM has put in place a structured programme of Retail Forums, Area Focus Groups and Activity Working Groups to support the 'on the ground' work of the City Centre Representatives and City Beat Police Officers. BCCM report that additional resources are needed to deliver the appended plan for two reasons:

1. Existing operational staff are being utilised for administrative duties when they are sorely needed on operational business liaison duties.
2. With the opening of Victoria Square on 6 March 2008 the retail floor plate of the City Centre will increase by over 30%, representing some 200 new retail businesses.

In order to fully implement the business and programme activity of the 2008/2009 Operational Plan additional human and financial resources will be required. Specifically BCCM needs 3 additional City Centre Representatives for business liaison, 2 administrative assistants to support Board, Area Focus Group and Activity Group meetings, and a suitably qualified accounts clerk. It is also envisaged that the duties and responsibilities of the Office Manager would be increased to include a Project Management role.

The Committee is asked to note that in 2008/2009 BCCM's funding for the City Centre Representatives through the Community Safety Partnership is likely to be cut from £20,000 to £12,000.00.

BCCM is seeking equal funding for 2008/2009 of £190,000.00 each from Belfast City Council, Department of Social Development and private sector businesses. A financial forecast is included in the Operating Plan.

The Governance and auditing structure for BCCM is included within the Operating Plan and officers can report that BCCM has now fully met all the requirements of the Council's Internal Audit section.

The work of BCCM, as detailed in the Company's Operating Plan, is extremely important to the success of Belfast City Centre, and crucial to achieving the buy-in of the private sector within the City Centre to key Council initiatives such as the Evening Economy, Committee Safety Partnership, Retail Training Initiative and Belfast in Bloom.

An on-going review is being undertaken into the roles and responsibilities of Belfast City Centre Management and Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau; however it is unlikely that any structural changes would be brought forward within the next two years. In this context, some security of tenure would greatly assist BCCM to deliver on its objectives for the city.

Financial Implications

Belfast City Centre Management Company is seeking £190,000 in core funding.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the details of the Belfast City Centre Management Company Operating Plan for 2008/2009 and to consider an increase in annual funding for Belfast City Centre Management from £140,000 to £190,000.00 per year for two years commencing 1 April 2008.

Key to Abbreviations

BCCM - Belfast City Centre Management.”

The Committee was advised that representatives of the Belfast City Centre Management Company were in attendance to address the meeting. Accordingly, Mr. A. Irvine, City Centre Manager, and Mr. N. Gordon, who was a member of the Board of the Company, were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Irvine thanked the Members for providing Belfast City Centre Management with an opportunity to address the Committee. He pointed out that, following changes to the Board Membership and with the appointment of a new City Centre Manager during 2007, the organisation was determined to operate in a more effective and efficient manner and would ensure that its core purpose would be to deliver additional services to the City centre and would not replicate the services already provided by the Council's Development Department. He pointed out that Belfast City Centre Management's Business Plan for the year 2008/2009 contained specific, measurable targets which he was confident the organisation would be able to meet.

Mr. Irvine indicated that it was his intention to improve the relationship between the Company and the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and, to this end, both organisations had agreed integrated actions for the coming year, including how they would work together to ensure that the retailers paid a fair element of the costs which would be associated with the 2008 Christmas Advertising Campaign for Belfast.

He informed the Members that it would be easier for the Company to recruit suitably qualified staff and would assist in the motivation of staff if the Council were to agree to fund the organisation for a period of two years rather than on an annual basis. He also requested that the Committee provide an additional sum of £50,000 for each of the next two financial years, which would mean the Council providing a total of £380,000 over that period of time.

In answer to a Member's question, Mr. Irvine indicated that the Department for Social Development had indicated verbally that they would match the increased funding provided by the Council. In addition, discussions had been taking place with the House of Fraser, which would be opening a branch in the Victoria Square Development, regarding the Company becoming a core funder of Belfast City Centre Management.

After further discussion, the representatives of the Belfast City Centre Management Company thanked the Committee for receiving them and retired from the meeting.

During discussion on the presentation, the Director informed the Committee that the additional £50,000 which had been requested by the representatives of Belfast City Centre Management during the next financial year had not been included within the Committee's estimates which had been agreed earlier in the meeting. However, the Revenue Estimates contained an amount under the "Development of the City" heading and that the increase which had been requested by the Company could be found from within that budget heading.

The Committee was generally supportive of Belfast City Centre Management, but was concerned that the organisation was requesting funding for a two-year period when there was no certainty that match funding would be provided by the Department for Social Development or if the Company would be able to meet the targets which it had set itself for the next financial year.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed, in principle, to provide a sum of £190,000 per annum for a two-year period to Belfast City Centre Management, subject to the funding for the second year being reviewed in September, 2008.

Belfast Welcome Centre and
Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau Business Plan

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Council, at its meeting on 7th January, had amended the Committee's decision of 12th December to provide that the additional amount of £500,000 to be awarded to the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau for marketing and visitor servicing purposes be deferred to enable discussions to be held between Council officials and representatives of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. He requested the Director to update the Committee regarding this matter.

The Director indicated that the Council's Chief Executive would be meeting the following week with the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to discuss the matter and that the outcome of those discussions would be known prior to the Council meeting to be held on 4th February.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to affirm its decision of 12th December to provide an additional amount of £500,000 to the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau for marketing and visitor servicing purposes, to be paid in two instalments during the financial year 2008/2009.

Sustrans Application for Interreg 4a Funds

The Director informed the Committee that Sustrans Northern Ireland was seeking to obtain funding through the Interreg 4A Programme to provide a high quality link between Northern Ireland and the National Cycle Networks in Great Britain and in the Republic of Ireland. The organisation was aiming to provide a number of strategic long distance routes and crucial links in infrastructure in order to facilitate and improve cycle access between the three countries.

Sustrans had estimated that the various projects would cost in the region of £8,154,500 and was seeking 75% of this amount through the Interreg Programme. The organisation intended to secure the remaining amount from a number of organisations, including those local authorities which would benefit directly from the new cycling infrastructure. She indicated that, since none of the proposed projects would be located within Belfast, Sustrans would not be requesting financial assistance from the Council. However, the organisation had requested that the Council endorse formally the application for funding under the Interreg 4A Programme and she recommended that the Committee agree to this.

The Committee agreed to endorse the Sustrans application for Interreg 4A funding. In addition, the Committee agreed that the Council endeavour to ensure that the relevant responsible organisations make the upgrading of the cycling infrastructure within the City a priority.

Community Festivals Fund

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Attached (Appendix 1) is a letter received on 20 December 2007 regarding the transfer of Community Festivals Funding to Local Authorities. This funding was previously administered through the Northern Ireland Events Company on behalf of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL).

The letter indicates a transfer of funds totalling £450,000 to Local Authorities for funding of Community Festivals in local authority areas. It is indicated that under the proposed mechanism for distribution of funds Belfast will receive £77,300 which is 17.17% of the fund.

The Council has in the past considered proposals to develop the potential of Belfast as a City of Festivals. A Festival Policy was adopted by Council in October 2004 and options for a specific festivals fund have been explored.

Belfast as Northern Ireland's creative and cultural hub has a larger number of festivals based events than other parts of Northern Ireland. This includes a large number of ethnic festival and other community festivals which draw from a catchment area for audiences and participants from well beyond the local authority boundaries. This has been reflected in the allocation of funds administered under the Community Festivals Fund in previous years by the Northern Ireland Events Company who had allocated approximately 50% of the total fund within the Belfast Local Authority area.

Key Issues

There are several issues which are of concern regarding the proposed distribution of funds:

1. There is no proposed transfer of funds to local authorities for staffing resources to support the distribution of funding. The total resources allocated to the Northern Ireland Events Company for the fund in 2006/7 was £550,000 which included administrative costs of £100,000 and covered the employment of a Manager and two Community Festivals Officers.
2. Members will be aware that in order to ensure funding is in place for April 2008 funding schemes would normally be advertised in October/November 2007. Full details and a Letter of Offer on the transfer of funding has not yet been received. There is therefore unlikely to be adequate time to ensure funding applications can be assessed, processed and made available by April 2008.
3. It is a condition of the monies that Local Authorities will be required to contribute match funding to support community festivals. If the full level of match funding is not made DCAL will retain any surplus funds. It has, however been indicated that, in the first instance, Culture and Arts/ Good Relations funding administered under existing criteria would be eligible as match funds. There may, however, be a requirement to source additional fund for the scheme from Council sources.
4. It is anticipated that there will be considerable demand for the Community Festival Fund within the Belfast area. Belfast has over 50 cultural festivals including regional events plus additional sporting festivals. The allocation of £77,300 to Belfast is considerably less than the awards made through the NIEC within the Belfast area in previous year. (In 2007/08, of the £293k administered in Community Festivals Fund, grants over £146k (50%) were in Belfast). The funds proposed may prove inadequate to administer the fund and meet the anticipated demand for funding.
5. Further to this funding DCAL has also made available transitional funding for a number of community festivals in the Belfast area. In 2006/07 this totalled an additional £145k. In 2007/08 a further £50k was allocated. There is, as yet, no indication that any arrangements are in place to do this in the coming financial year. This will have implications for the viability of several community festivals.

It is clear that the funding level proposed falls short of the resources provided to Belfast under previous arrangements. The funds proposed may prove inadequate to administer the fund and meet the anticipated demand for funding.

Internal challenges

The allocation of the funding would present several administrative challenges for Belfast City Council:

1. Centralised Festivals Fund

Good Relations, Culture and Arts and Community Services have all grant administration responsibility within areas relating to Community Festivals. In addition, the Events section has taken a lead on the St Patrick's Day main event and in discussions with Orangefest.

The possibility of a centralised Festivals Fund has been discussed in the past as part of Festival Policy development however, this was left unresolved after cross party briefings on the issue.

2. Financial Resources

In addition to the issues outlined above, match funding will be required for the Community Festivals Fund. At present DCAL has yet to finalise the full administrative process. It has, however been indicated that in the first instance Culture and Arts/ Good Relations funding administered under existing criteria would be eligible as match funds. There may, however, still remain a requirement to source additional funding for the scheme from Council sources.

3. Staffing Resources

Staffing resources will be required to administer the fund. In excess of 25 and potentially up to 50 applications are likely to be received and will require assessment. Successful applicants will require administration, monitoring and evaluation. It is unclear how the resources are to be allocated – there is likely to be a regular draw down of funds but it is not yet detailed what level of reporting /feed back to DCAL/NILGA will be necessary. The Local Government Auditor will be required to review processes.

4. Timescale to administer funds

Various timeframes are possible depending on when Council receives final approval to go forward with a grant scheme. It is not possible to follow current Council procedure and have funding available by April 2008, although alternatives such as through a delegated authority may allow for a more rapid turn around of grants. The requirement for an appeals process is also indicated in the guidance from DCAL which may further delay availability of grants.

Immediate approval for officers to develop and advertise a grant scheme, from which recommendations would then be brought back for approval would allow funding to be available in June at the earliest, however, Members may wish to review and agree the criteria for such a fund at a future Committee, this would result in funding not being available until July at the earliest.

Resource Implications

Financial

Resources of £77,300 will be required to provide match funding for the Community Festivals Fund some of which may be provided through existing funding.

Human Resources

There are implications for additional staffing resources required to administer any proposed fund.

Recommendations

It is recommended that a response to the letter from DCAL regarding the proposed transfer of funding is made indicating that the allocation to Belfast as outlined is inadequate given the previous percentage of allocation of funds in the Belfast area.

It is further recommended that the response should highlight issues relating to the resources for administration and the short timescale and seek clarification on other transitional funding that may be available from Government sources.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Letter received from DCAL 20 December regarding the proposed transfer of Community Festivals Fund to Local Authorities.

Key to Abbreviations

DCAL - Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
NILGA - Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

APPENDIX 1

You may be aware that Edwin Poots, Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure made a statement today in the Northern Ireland Assembly about his plans to transfer funds to the 26 Local Authorities to administer community festivals from 1 April 2008.

By way of background I would explain that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has policy responsibility for the Community Festivals Fund and currently awards to festival organisations are made by the Northern Ireland Events Company through an open application process. The current Community Festivals Fund budget for distribution to festivals is £450,000.

Under the Review of Public Administration, the work of the Northern Ireland Events Company was to transfer to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board on 1 April 2008. As community festivals do not fit readily with NITB's tourism development remit the Minister agreed that the Community Festivals Fund will not transfer to NITB.

It was envisaged that the Community Festivals Fund would transfer to Local Government under the Review of Public Administration and this remains the position in Arlene Foster's paper on The Emerging Findings and Next Steps. There is a clear rationale for community festivals to transfer to Local Government as they play an important role in promoting social cohesion at community level.

With the agreement of the Northern Ireland Executive, the Department will now proceed to transfer funds to the 26 Local Authorities to administer community festivals from 1 April 2008. No Transfer of Functions legislation is required as Local Authorities already have statutory powers to fund local events and some Councils are already involved in funding festivals.

The proposed mechanism for transfer of funds is through a Specific Grant along similar lines to that currently operated by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to award grant to District Councils for their community relations programmes. DCAL will retain overall policy responsibility and Councils will be asked to take account of the Department's Policy and Guidance Framework on community festivals, a copy of which is enclosed. Councils will have considerable flexibility to develop their own application processes and funding criteria consistent with the ethos of devolving decisions to local level. Also, it will be entirely for Councils to decide which festivals should be funded and to what extent.

The Minister has decided that the budget for community festivals should be distributed among the 26 Local Authorities on the basis of population distribution, with a 10% weighting applied for deprivation as measured by the Noble Multiple Deprivation Measure. The proposed allocation to each Council on this basis is set out in the attached table. I would wish to make it clear that these are indicative allocations at this stage and will not be finalised until the draft budget has been approved by the Assembly early in the New Year.

You will also wish to note that the Minister proposes to make it a condition of grant award that each Council should provide match funding to support community festivals. If any Council decides that it does not wish to support community festivals to this extent, any surplus above the level of match funding provided will be retained by the Department and will be available for distribution to other Councils.

We would expect to issue the detailed Letters of Offer to each Council in the New Year after the budget has been approved. However I hope this letter gives you sufficient advance notification so that you can plan ahead and have procedures in place to administer funding to community festivals from 1 April 2008.

I will be liaising with NILGA on the detailed arrangements for this transfer but should you have any queries in the meantime I would of course be happy to discuss these with you.

The Department is also writing to festival organisations to advise them of the new arrangements.

**PROPOSED ALLOCATION TO DISTRICT COUNCILS
BASED ON POPULATION (90%) AND DEPRIVATION (10%)**

District Council	Proposed Allocation	
	£	%
Antrim	12,300	2.73
Ards	18,000	4.00
Armagh	13,700	3.04
Ballymena	15,600	3.47
Ballymoney	6,800	1.51
Banbridge	10,600	2.36
Belfast	77,300	17.17
Carrickfergus	9,700	2.16
Castlereagh	15,800	3.51
Coleraine	14,200	3.15
Cookstown	8,500	1.89
Craigavon	22,600	5.02
Derry	31,200	6.93
Down	16,500	3.67
Dungannon	12,800	2.84
Fermanagh	15,000	3.33
Larne	8,000	1.78
Limavady	8,900	1.98
Lisburn	28,400	6.31
Magherafelt	9,900	2.20
Moyle	4,400	0.98
Newry and Mourne	25,400	5.64
Newtownabbey	20,400	4.53
North Down	18,600	4.13
Omagh	13,100	2.91
Strabane	12,400	2.75
	£450,000	100.00"

The Director drew the Committee's attention to various aspects of the report and indicated that, since the Council provided grants to community organisations through the Culture and Arts Unit and the Good Relations Section, it might be advantageous for the Council to consider establishing a centralised Community Festivals Fund so that organisations would have to apply to only one Department within the Council for financial assistance towards such festivals.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed that:

- (i) the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure be advised that, given the funding allocated previously to community festivals in the Belfast area, the Council considers the amount being allocated to the City under the Community Festivals Fund to be inadequate;

- (ii) the response should highlight issues relating to the administrative resources required for the management of the Fund, the length of time available to introduce the Scheme and seek clarification regarding the possibility of funding being obtained from other Government sources which could be used to enhance the Community Festivals Fund;
- (iii) the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure be requested to liaise directly with the Local Authorities in Northern Ireland, rather than the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, as indicated in its letter; and
- (iv) letters be issued to the Local Authorities in Northern Ireland advising them of the Council's response to the letter from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

World Transplant Games Bid - Belfast 2011

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th September, 2007, it had agreed to provide a sum of £300,000 towards the costs associated with the hosting in Belfast in 2011 of the World Transplant Games, subject to the bid being successful and to an approved business plan being completed.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that the Local Organising Committee for the Belfast Bid had been provided with an amount of £25,000 towards the costs which would be associated with making the bid. This figure had been based on information received from the Canadian city which had hosted the 2005 Games. However, it had been ascertained recently that this amount would be insufficient due to additional costs associated with:

- (i) the production of a high quality bid document;
- (ii) hotel accommodation in Bangkok in August, 2007 which had to be rebooked at short notice when the original hotel had cancelled the reservation;
- (iii) a visit to Belfast in February by a delegation from the World Transplant Games Federation; and
- (iv) sending representatives to Brisbane in June to make a further presentation.

Accordingly, the Local Organising Committee had requested that all the organisations involved in the Belfast Bid provide further financial resources and had sought an additional £5,000 from the Council.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a further sum of £5,000 be provided towards the costs associated with the Belfast Bid for the 2011 World Transplant Games, on the understanding that, should the bid be successful, this amount be deducted from the £300,000 which the Committee had agreed to provide towards the costs associated with the hosting of the Games.

Delegated Authority to Appoint Conservators for Carey Paintings

The Managing Director of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls informed the Committee that, as part of the refurbishment of the Ulster Hall, the Carey Paintings, which depicted the history and mythology of the Belfast region and were located within the building, were being restored.

He reported that the procurement process to appoint a conservator to undertake the restoration was underway. In order to have this work completed as soon as possible, he recommended that authority be delegated to the Director, in consultation with the Chairman, to appoint the successful tenderer immediately on completion of the Procurement Process.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

European Funding for Economic Development Work

The Committee noted the contents of the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the Council’s Economic Development work has, to date, been co-funded by the European Union through Structural Funds programmes. Given changes within these programmes, the application processes, funding priorities and financial allocations will be different for the new programmes. These run from 2007-2013 but will be implemented from 2008. Activities undertaken will support the implementation of Council’s Local Economic Development plan.

Key Issues

Competitiveness and Employment Programme

This is the principal programme under which Local Economic Development activity will be funded. The programme will be administered by Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). Local authority representation on the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) includes Councillor Robin Newton MLA. The new programme is likely to open in late January 2008. Key issues to note include the following:

- **There will be no confirmation of ‘ring-fenced’ amounts for each local authority. DETI has suggested that the amounts available to each council will be roughly comparable to the allocation under the previous programme (£5.5 million, matched with equivalent amount from Belfast City Council funding) but Councils will no longer receive a letter of offer for this amount at**

the beginning of the programme. Instead they will be invited to 'bid' for funding – along with all other local authorities – and applications will be funded on a project by project basis. DETI has indicated that councils will not be competing against each other for funding and that they will using nominal allocations for each local authority against which they can draw down funding. DETI has suggested that the call for projects will be advertised in early 2008.

- Activities undertaken as part of this programme must wholly fall within the priorities set as part of the European Union's 'Lisbon Agenda'.

The six priorities are:

1. Business support infrastructure
 2. Business support services
 3. Business-education links
 4. Pre-enterprise activity
 5. Trade development
 6. Local tourism development.
- Councils consider that DETI is unconvinced of the legacy value of the work carried out under previous Local Economic Development programmes. Under the umbrella of the Local Economic Development Forum, they have agreed to proactively raise the profile of this work through a series of promotional activities. These should help underline local authorities' ability to develop, deliver and promote local economic development in the light of a possible transfer of powers under the Review of Public Administration (RPA).

Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme

At the November 2007 meeting of the Development Committee, members agreed to cluster with Lisburn City Council and another council (now confirmed as Castlereagh Borough Council) under the new Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme. The other two councils have also ratified this decision. The priority for the local authority-led measure is on improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity. Eligible activities include support for business creation and development and promotion of local tourism activity. A programme of activities will now be developed by the Councils, in conjunction with DARD. Activity should get under way by Spring 2008.

Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme

The European Social Fund programme focuses on training activity. No specific allocation has been set aside for local authorities under this programme, although they can make applications under the Access to Employment measures. Only two calls for applications are to be made: one call closed in November 2007 and another call will be issued in 2010. Belfast City Council submitted an application for funding in November 2007 for a three year programme to support training and access to employment in the retail and hospitality sectors. This application was successful and, pending the completion of an economic appraisal by Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), a letter of offer will be issued in February 2008. The value of this application is £495,000. The application was made in conjunction with a range of partners including the Sector Skills Councils in both sectors, local colleges and training providers and other local authorities in the COMET region. This programme should get under way by late Spring 2008, subject to the letter of offer being issued by DEL.

Resource Implications

No additional resources required.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note this report.

Key to Abbreviations

DETI – Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
RPA – Review of Public Administration
PMC – Programme Monitoring Committee”

Tourism Issues

Membership of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 12th September, following the introduction of the Council's new governance arrangements, the Chairman (Councillor M. Browne) and the Deputy Chairman (Councillor Humphrey) had been appointed as the Council's representatives on a number of outside bodies, including the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau. She pointed out that, previously, the Council had been represented on the Bureau by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the former Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee, together with six Members nominated by the Council.

She explained that the constitution of the Bureau entitled the Council to eight places on its Board and, accordingly, she recommended that, in addition to the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee who had been appointed on 12th September, Councillors Hendron, Mullaghan, McCausland, P. Maskey, Stoker and Smyth, who had been appointed to the Board of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau by the Council at its meeting on 26th May, 2005, be re-appointed to the Board of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Conference Subventions

The Committee agreed that, under the terms of the Council's Subvention Policy, the organisers of the Belfast Titanic Convention and the National Astronomy Meeting be each provided with £1,000 towards the costs associated with their respective events.

City Branding

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 14th November, it had received a presentation from representatives of Lloyd Northover regarding the development of a new brand image for Belfast.

She informed the Members that they would be receiving in the near future invitations to attend meetings in February of the City Branding Reference Group in order to progress the matter, prior to the brand being launched in the Spring.

In answer to a Member's question, she indicated that the meetings of the Reference Group would be receiving presentations regarding possible options for the new brand from which the Group would be asked to select the one to be used and she encouraged Members to attend these meetings.

Noted.

Belfast Strategy Group

The Director reminded the Committee that at recent meetings concern had been expressed regarding the membership of the Belfast Strategy Group, which had been established by the Department of Social Development to consider issues relating to the regeneration Action Plans being developed by the fifteen Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships in the City. Membership of the Group had, apparently, been restricted to Government Departments and the Committee had indicated that the absence of Belfast City Council representation on the Strategy Group was a major oversight. The Director pointed out that, as a result of correspondence between the Council and the Department regarding the issue, she had received an invitation to become a member of the Belfast Strategy Group and that she would be willing to accept the invitation if the Committee considered this to be appropriate.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Director accept the invitation to become a member of the Belfast Strategy Group.

SNAP City Places

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Strategic Neighbourhood Action Programme was established in April 2007 to develop the necessary policies and procedures to enable BCC to more accurately target its service delivery within well-defined geographical areas across the city, in other words, ‘City Places’.

Over the past nine months the SNAP team has undertaken work to design the neighbourhood boundaries. At the beginning of the Neighbourhood Boundary Design process, a range of guiding principles were established which can be detailed as follows:

- *Universal Coverage* - The composite of the SNAP districts must encompass every household in the local government district.
- *Alignment with District Electoral Areas* – City Places should align to the DEA’s thus matching the model to the Council’s existing areas for political representation.
- *Alignment to existing administrative tracts* – To ensure statistical robustness, the boundaries must reflect those existing administrative tracts.
- *Equal population proportionality* – To ensure equality of service delivery throughout Belfast the district must encompass an equivalent proportion of population. A minimum of 10 and a maximum of 25 with an average population size of 18,000.
- *Optimal number of SNAP districts* – the number of districts must be cost and time efficient whilst conducive to effective delivery of Council services.
- *Acknowledgement of existing neighbourhood structures* – The boundaries must be supportive of existing local area structures e.g. NR areas in order to alleviate duplication of effort.
- *Similar Needs* – each City Place should reflect areas of similar need as characterised by similar socio-economic and demographic variables.
- *City Centre* - The city centre should be included as a distinct City Place to reflect Council’s own policy priority in this area.

Key Issues

Following the development of the Guiding Principles a methodology was developed using the amalgamation of Census Output Areas (with an average of just 300 people living in each) to create larger geographical units that will enable data to be easily collated.

Four Options were identified using this process and each was examined in terms of compatibility with the previously established guiding principles.

A series of cross party briefings were held in September and the Options Paper was presented to the October meeting of the Development Committee which recommend Option 1 as the preferred City Places model. This decision was deferred at the full Council meeting and at the November meeting of the Development Committee it was agreed that a cross-party working group would be held to discuss key issues that had been identified with the model.

This meeting was held on 12 December 2007, a presentation was given on the methodology that was applied in developing the City Places. Members were also advised that the City Places areas would be primarily used to gather information about differing issues and priorities at smaller geographical areas and that service delivery could be implemented at an individual city place level or through an aggregation of a range of city places depending on needs.

Further discussion took place around the need for flexibility within each of the boundary areas to best meet service delivery needs. It was agreed that this could be achieved within the current Option 1 framework as each of the City Places can be aggregated to ensure that they meet the service delivery needs of areas.

At the workshop Members agreed to adopt Option 1 as the preferred City Places model providing that flexibility would be incorporated into boundaries to for service delivery.

Resource Implications

Human Resources

Co-ordinated by the SNAP team

Recommendations

- To note the report
- To adopt Option 1 as the City Places model

Key to Abbreviations

COA – Census Output Area”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the report.

Shaftesbury Community and Recreation Centre

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 12th December, it had agreed that the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum could surrender its current lease agreement with the Council in respect of Shaftesbury Community/Recreation Centre and that the facility be leased for a period of twenty-five years to the Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group, subject to the Members of the Committee being provided with further information regarding the membership of the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum, the Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group and the Inner South Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership, prior to the Council Meeting on 7th January. However, in the event that information had not been provided. Accordingly, a report, together with various appendices which contained the requested information, had been circulated with the papers for the current meeting.

The Director advised the Committee that, following a decision of the former Client Services Committee, Shaftesbury Community/Recreation Centre had been leased by the Council to the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum for a period of ten years, commencing in October 2000. The lease agreement had included a sports pitch adjacent to the Centre. She explained that under a Service Level Agreement the Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group delivered on behalf of the Forum a programme of activities in response to community needs. She explained further that the Group had been awarded funding of £2.3 million, £1,925,000 of which would be provided by Sport Northern Ireland, to undertake improvements to the Centre, including the upgrading of the sports pitch.

The Director pointed out that a Sport Northern Ireland condition required the lease for Shaftesbury to be held by the Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group, since that organisation would be responsible for all the work being undertaken to the facility and for the efficient and effective operation of the Centre. Hence the request from the Forum for permission to transfer the lease for the facility to the Group. In addition, Sport Northern Ireland had indicated that the Group would be required to meet stringent funding requirements regarding openness and accountability.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor P. Maskey,
Seconded by Councillor Hartley,

That the Committee affirms its decision of 12th December to transfer the lease for the Shaftesbury Community/Recreation Centre from the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum to the Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group.

On a vote by show of hands five Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Further Proposal

Moved by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly),
Seconded by Councillor McCarthy,

That the new Management Committee for the Shaftesbury Community/Recreation Centre, as required by Sport Northern Ireland's funding condition, be in place prior to the Committee agreeing to transfer the lease in respect of the Centre from the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum to the Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group.

On a vote by show of hands four members voted for the proposal and six against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Following further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Convery,
Seconded by Councillor Ekin and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to permit the Council to enter into a direct lease arrangement with the Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group in respect of Shaftesbury Community/Recreation Centre, subject to the facility's Management Committee, as required by Sport Northern Ireland, being cross-community, cross-Party and reflective of the population of South Belfast, and to this being in place prior to Sport Northern Ireland releasing its funding. In addition, the Committee agrees, in order to facilitate this arrangement, that the lease dated 20th December, 2000 between the Council and the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum be surrendered coterminously.

Partners For Change

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Partners for Change is an action plan for Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The *Partners for Change Strategy* emerged from the *Compact (1998)* and sets out how Government will put the principles and commitments in the *Compact* into practice. It is designed to promote the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in delivering services and to give some clarity around the range of activities that Government undertakes in partnership with the sector.

Key Issues

All Government departments in Northern Ireland have contributed to the strategy with the Department for Social Development taking lead responsibility. This document details the actions departments will take under three key themes:

- Building Communities/Promoting Active Citizenship – encourage voluntary activity and the involvement of communities (both ‘geographic’ and ‘of interest’) in the planning and decision-making process about matters which affect them;
- Shaping Policy Development/Working Together – ensure that the knowledge and expertise of the Sector informs policy development and that policies are sensitive to the needs of those who experience disadvantage; and
- Investment in the Sector/Capacity Building – build the capacity of the sector and ensure sustainable resources necessary to enable the sector to make an effective, continued contribution to society in Northern Ireland.

The Voluntary and Community Unit of the Department for Social Development together with the Joint Government / Voluntary and Community Sector Forum will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation of this plan.

DSD has asked for the responses to be framed under the following questions:

1. Do you agree that the key themes and outcomes identified in section two are an appropriate way of classifying departmental commitments to action?
2. How will you use Partners for Change?
3. How will Partners for Change impact upon the voluntary and community sector?
4. Do you believe that Partners for Change could be better targeted to promote equality of opportunity?
5. Does Partners for Change have any adverse impacts for any of the Section 75 groups (listed in Annex 1) that you feel we may not be aware of?

Considering that the deadline for responses was Monday, 31st December 2007 the Council submitted its response subject to Committee approval.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the content of the attached consultation response.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the following comments be submitted as the Council's official response to the Consultation Exercise:

"1. General comments

- 1.1 Belfast City Council welcomes this action plan which clearly acknowledges the critical role played by the community and voluntary sector and the way in which this sector can shape and deliver government objectives. The key themes and outcomes are comprehensive and legitimate, based on previously agreed objectives between Government and the community and voluntary sector.**
- 1.2 However, we would like to note that the timing of the consultation seems unusual, given that the strategy is for 2006 - 08. Nevertheless it is clear that a significant number of government policies and activities are already taking place which strongly involve or support the community and voluntary sector.**
- 1.3 As this action plan is very much focused on central government, we would like to stress the importance of the existing strong relationships between local government and the voluntary and community sector, and to ensure that local government is involved in the mentioned policies and activities.**
- 1.4 There are only a few references to local government, with possibly the most significant being on page 46 on the impact of the Review of Public Administration (RPA):**

'..there is a need to develop a strong relationship between Local Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. DOE is exploring with DSD and a Voluntary and Community Sector colleagues how the development of such a relationship might be facilitated.'

We feel that DOE should also involve local authorities in this process. This would allow the development of improved relationships between central and local government, which would ultimately benefit the voluntary and community sectors.
- 1.5 In the context of RPA and the desire of government to move to a two tier administration, the role of local government as the preferred delivery agent, at a local level, through an agreed community support plan, should be highlighted. A number of services within Belfast City Council work closely with the community and voluntary sector, for example Community services, through its delivery of the Community Support Plan,**

or a variety of community based initiatives to promote and raise awareness of environmental issues, good relations and culture and arts grants, to name a few. Future strategies should make more explicit reference to the work that could be achieved through working with councils, including the work currently being developed, such as the Strategic Neighbourhood Action Programme.

2. Specific comments

More detailed comments are outlined below under the specific questions:

Do you agree that the key themes and outcomes identified in section two are an appropriate way of classifying departmental commitments to action?

- 2.1 In principle, the Council agrees with the key themes and outcomes identified in section two of the document, as it believes that these are an appropriate way of classifying departmental commitments to action. However we would like further explanation of each of the key themes, and a reassurance that they are driving the commitments and not merely a classification developed around existing commitments.
- 2.2 It seems that the set of themes and outcomes are based around the social capital model which the Council strongly supports. They also seem quite closely related to the ingredients of a community development process which the Council has also endorsed.
- 2.3 However we would like to note that in the absence of a comprehensive Community Development Strategy the priority should be to develop an outcome driven regional community development strategy. A multi-stakeholder approach would be necessary in devising such a strategy. This would facilitate the agreement of roles and responsibilities for all partners and would promote a shared performance framework that would target better investment in the community and voluntary sector. In the absence of a regional strategy, this action plan presents merely a multiplicity of initiatives and interventions which might be confusing for citizens and the sector.
- 2.4 It is slightly surprising that the document which is outcome focused does not contain performance indicators which would be reported on a regular basis. Will the set of indicators be published at a later stage?

How will you use Partners for Change?

2.5 The Council plans to use this document in a number of ways:

- **To ensure that policy development, service delivery and any other actions undertaken by the Council, together with its partners**
 - **address social exclusion and contribute to the creation of a cohesive society; and**
 - **are supportive of the three key themes set out in 'Partners for Change';**
- **To seek further clarification concerning the DOE's work which is exploring better working relationships in respect of the new Council led community planning role; and**
- **As a reference guide to the main policies and activities of the central Government departments and how they link to the community sector.**

How will Partners for Change impact upon the voluntary and community sector?

2.6 The Council believes that this strategy will have a few important benefits for the community and voluntary sector as it will:

- **Clearly demonstrate central government's commitment to the three key themes as set out in 'Partners for Change';**
- **Create better networking and opportunities for collaboration between government departments and the community and voluntary sector;**
- **Encourage government departments to consult with and actively engage the community and voluntary sector;**
- **Identify potential funding or resource sharing opportunities for the community and voluntary sector;**
- **Identify good practice examples for the community and voluntary Sector; and**
- **Assist the sector to have a role in the planning and decision making process.**

- 2.7 We believe that Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) should make a more cohesive effort to alert community and voluntary sector of emerging EU funds as there will be so many organisations losing EU aid. Naturally, councils also have responsibility to make clear their role in EU funding, for example, in relation to Peace III funding.

Do you believe that Partners for Change could be better targeted to promote equality of opportunity?

- 2.8 Although, we agree with the three themes identified by the Partners for Change action plan, we sense that placing disadvantage within some cross-cutting themes and strategies actually lessens the focus on disadvantage. Thus, we believe that focus on disadvantage should be more explicit.

Does Partners for Change have any adverse impacts for any of the Section 75 groups (listed in Annex 1) that you feel we may not be aware of?

- 2.9 The Council believes that this action plan should have a better attempt at promoting accessibility (as mentioned on page 105).

- 2.10 We also believe that a reference should be made to Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 ('the Act'), as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, whereby public authorities, when carrying out their functions must have due regard to the need to:

- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- Encouraging participation by disabled people in public life."

Rapid Transit Study Presentation from DRD

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Department for Regional Development to make a presentation regarding the rapid transit study which was being undertaken as part of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan.

The Committee agreed that a special meeting, to which all Members of the Council would be invited, be held to receive the presentation.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Stage 2 of the BMAP Public Local Inquiry, coordinated by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), for the purpose of considering objections to the Draft BMAP Plan commenced on 1 October 2007. The second phase of the inquiry has addressed the remaining strategic housing issues from Stage 1 and commenced consideration of the Site Specific issues for the different Council areas.

The Council submitted Stage 2 written statements to the PAC on the 23 August 2007. Following the subsequent exchange of evidence the Council directly participated in informal inquiry hearings in relation to remaining strategic housing issues and Belfast site specific issues including the Harbour Strategy; North Foreshore; Titanic Quarter; Gasworks Northern Fringe; Kennedy Way Park & Ride and the protection of urban trees. The participation was assisted by use of specialist witnesses who provided technical evidence to support the Council position at the Inquiry hearings and responded to any new evidence submitted by objectors or Planning Service.

The inquiry process will continue through into 2008 and is currently considering issues from the other local authority areas. The remaining participation will focus on sites outside of the Belfast Council are in which there is either a direct Council interest due to ownership or potential for development proposals that could have a broader impact e.g. Sprucefield.

Key Issues

This report provides a summary of the more significant site specific issues for which the Council made representations at the informal inquiry sessions:

- Strategic Housing – The Council made representations on the following issues: BMAP contains no policy for sequencing and phasing the release of housing land; the issue of social housing and affordable housing is not addressed; the issue of windfall allowance and increased densities in Brownfield sites is not being considered before Greenfield land release. Planning Service stated that the site search sequence was carried

out at draft plan stage and there was limited capacity therefore phasing was not a necessary; social housing will be addressed at development control stage where a needs assessment is shown; and windfall allowances. Increased densities were unknown factor that could not be adequately assessed.

- **Belfast Harbour Strategy – the Harbour Commissioners made representations for the Port of Belfast to be designated a Special Economic Zone, in recognition of its strategic importance, with reference to be made in the policy to expedite planning processes in relation to future planning applications. Planning Service stated that the BMAP Harbour Strategy is already a positive policy which recognised the importance of the Harbour and did not agree to include a reference to expedite planning applications as this was considered an operational rather than plan matter.**
- **North Foreshore – Planning Service conceded at the hearing that Draft BMAP zoning BHA 19 for new open space in North Foreshore should be removed and the wider North Foreshore area zoned as one mixed use site on the basis that the policy text would specify that open space is a major component of the development. Roads Service conceded that any infrastructure improvements, that may be necessary for the development of North Foreshore, should be identified through a transport assessment at planning application stage rather than through a requirement in the Plan.**
- **Zoning BHA 01 Titanic Quarter - A Development Framework has been agreed with Planning Service therefore the Draft BMAP Zones A to G should be removed as they are overly prescriptive. Planning Service stated that it would continue to be necessary to restrict the size and type of office development in the Titanic Quarter area in order to protect the city centre and this would be reflected in policy.**
- **Gasworks Estate - The Council proposed the development of the Gasworks Northern Fringe through the extension of the Development Opportunity Site and Gateway designation through reference to the Masterplan for the site. Planning Service agreed to extend the Development Opportunity Site designation and the gateway designation to reflect the current Masterplan process for the Northern Fringe and the scale of development that could be accommodated.**

- **Kennedy Way Park & Ride** - The Council made representations challenging the location of the proposed site at Kennedy Way and seeking consideration of the potential for existing provisions at Blacks Road and Sprucefield to be made permanent. It was suggested that the proposed location was too close to the city centre and could have detrimental affect on the air quality in the vicinity. The Roads Service response stated that Kennedy Way was as part of an overall park & ride strategy for the city and it would be problematic to continue use of existing temporary sites due to capacity and land acquisition issues.
- **Urban Trees** - The Council made a representation seeking inclusion of a statement regarding the importance of urban trees and commitment to protect trees through monitoring and enforcement. The Department recognised there was merit of protecting urban trees and that a statement should be included in Draft BMAP.

Resource Implications

Financial

No additional financial implications in respect of participation in the public inquiry process.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the information provided in the report.

Key to Abbreviations

BMAP	–	Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
RDS	–	Regional Development Strategy
PAC	–	Planning Appeals Commission
SEL	–	Strategic Employment Location
MEL	–	Major Employment Location”

The Committee noted the information provided.

Draft Crumlin Road Gaol Masterplan Consultation Response

The Committee considered a report and a proposed response from the Council regarding the draft masterplan for the Crumlin Road Gaol/Girdwood Park site in North Belfast.

The Committee agreed that the undernoted comments be submitted as the Council's official response to the Draft Crumlin Road Gaol Masterplan Consultation Exercise, subject to it being amended to indicate that the Council acknowledges that the Advisory Panel could not reach a final decision on the housing issue:

“Introduction

- 1.1 Belfast City Council welcomes this ambitious proposal. For a long time the Crumlin road gaol has been a derelict site located in a contentious community area. In general the plan brings a significant opportunity for balancing development and regeneration across the city; given the ongoing development in the East of the City at Titanic Quarter and the Sirrocco Quays concept Masterplan.**
- 1.2 Our general comment would be at the lack of detail of the drawings in the documents. Overall the drawings do not seem to offer enough detail to comment on, especially the ones illustrating the whole site. Layout of some proposed spaces and buildings have been detailed in the main document, some areas omitted.**
- 1.3 The Council is currently targeting regeneration efforts along Belfast's arterial routes. The Crumlin Road is one of the priority routes identified as requiring targeted regeneration and therefore we are very supportive of the development of the Gaol site.**
- 1.4 A significant proportion of the draft Masterplan has been based around UK best practice case studies, which the Council strongly supports. We would also recommend to DSD to look at the development of Oxford Castle project that received Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Project of the Year Award 2007.**
- 1.5 In terms of more specific comments we have shaped our response around the sustainable communities concept. The Sustainable Communities agenda has become pertinent to Belfast as we are all working towards the common goal of creating 'Places where people want to live and work now and in the future'.**

This means:

- Balancing and integrating social, economic and environmental components of their community;**
- Meeting the needs of existing and future generations;**

- Recognising the cross cutting nature of issues affecting communities;
- Working in a coordinated way with a wide range of interests and organisations;
- Respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally; and
- Recognising that sustainable communities are diverse and reflect their local circumstances. There is no standard template to fit them all.

1.6 In the last six months the Council has been devising the Community Support Plan for Belfast for which it had to gather evidence on needs in Belfast. The Council focused on Belfast's four parliamentary constituencies. This response is based around the 'eight categories' and needs that the Council has found exist in North Belfast.

2. Leadership & Governance

2.1 North Belfast needs support to strengthen its community capacity and infrastructure, which this regeneration plan for Crumlin road will significantly help. However, the Council believes that this project could do a lot more to increase community capacity in the area by, for example, encouraging social enterprise and cultural tourism.

2.2 A particular concern is that the focus of the regeneration is not concentrated on the frontage of the Crumlin Road, as we feel it is here where all communities can benefit most and a successful proposal developed. The masterplan moves the focus of the site away from the Crumlin Road to the rear of the gaol site which:

- Compromises the Crumlin Road frontage as the arterial route/main street
- Undermines the strength of the Courthouse & Crumlin Gaol as focal point.

2.3 Currently the plan suggests to place the 'heartspace' to the rear of the Gaol and to the internal area of development which:

- Reinforces the internalisation of communities. We believe that focusing on the centre on the Crumlin Road would help create a focus to draw communities out.
- Could potentially have risks as anti-social behaviour and interface issues could be problematic without the surveillance of passing traffic and footfall especially at night.

2.4 Thus the Council would suggest that the Masterplan provides a greater balance between outwards and inwards orientation.

3. Transport & Connectivity

3.1 It is crucial to improve the connectivity of North Belfast with other neighbourhoods in the city. The Masterplan does place a lot of emphasis on transport, but the Council's concern is too much emphasis on car parks and car uses. In order to support the concept of 'safe space' & 'shared space' consideration needs to be given to good public transport links in addition to car access.

3.2 The creation of a major junction could seem an unnecessary use of land as the existing junction with minor re-design could accommodate site traffic. The new junction would further erode the road frontage. The development of buildings is preferable with the retention of the existing street frontage in order to strengthen the urban form.

4. Services

4.1 Improving access to services and more open spaces are very important in North Belfast. The Masterplan does seem to incorporate the needs of different age groups.

4.2 The Council has recently commissioned Deloitte to undertake research on 'Accessing services in a divided City' under its Conflict Transformation Project. In relation to developing 'safe space' & 'shared space' it would be useful for the Masterplan to take into account findings from this research which will be available early next year.

5. Environmental

5.1 A lot more needs to be done to improve the health and well being of the people in North Belfast. While the creation of a health centre on the site is very positive, the Council would suggest a detailed Health Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

5.2 A comprehensive Health Impact Assessment of the Lower Shankill was commissioned by the NIHE. The assessment recognises the importance of the Masterplanning process for Crumlin Road Gaol site and recommends that there should be liaison to identify and exploit synergies between various strategies in the area. Although the draft Masterplan does acknowledge the need to consider the impact on the wider regeneration of North Belfast, Lower Oldpark and Lower Shankill, the Council recommends that a detailed HIA of any proposals for the development of the Masterplan area should be carried out, and aligned with others.

5.3 In the era of global warming and climate change, the Council believes that any future regeneration project needs to incorporate renewable energy solutions depending on feasibility. This site could be a great candidate for photovoltaics, solar water heating systems and the use of biomass boilers for heating. We think that considering the ambitious Government targets

- to achieve 12% of electricity to come from renewable energy by 2012 and
- reduce carbon emission by 50% below 1990's level by 2050

DSD needs to consider further these options.

5.4 The Council would strongly advise any developer, planner or architect working on the implementation of the Masterplan proposals to:

- Discuss the need for appropriate waste and recycling storage with the Council; and
- Follows the advice contained in the Council's publication 'Waste and Recycling Storage Requirements, a guide for developers, architects and building contractors'.

6. Social inclusion

6.1 It is vital to address interface issues in North Belfast and reduce the number of people living in deprivation.

6.2 Integration of local communities is paramount in this process particularly given the fractious nature of North Belfast. While the proposals mention the 'Shared Future' at the beginning the draft Masterplan does not really demonstrate how it will integrate the principles of a Shared Future in order to ensure that public space is created that can be accessed by all the community.

6.3 The Council supports the proposals to undertake further consultations about the plans but this should not be a one time deal. On-going consultation will be critical to the development of this site and can help to ensure local community integration into the process.

6.4 This regeneration project needs to take a broader community significance and focus firstly on the needs of local communities and then on the need of Belfast.

6.5 Community safety needs to be considered as anti-social behaviour especially at night may become an issue that can undermine wider promotion and use of the site.

7. Economy

- 7.1 It is essential that local people are linked to the opportunities that will avail from the site's development eg. job opportunities. Having in mind the nature of long term unemployment within the area, Local Employment Initiatives should be provided to connect local people to the jobs on site. This can also link in with the learning and skills proposals that DSD has for the site.
- 7.2 It is very positive that the development will encourage social economy enterprises, but the Council would strongly encourage support of LOCAL social economy enterprises which will not only help economic inclusion on the area but also increased community capacity.
- 7.3 The document includes very limited elaboration on proposals for economic development activity on this site. The Council feels that, given the difficulties of this site, economic development activity would provide an appropriate 'buffer zone' and a neutral use. As Belfast in general lacks quality business facilities, we would suggest a stronger emphasis on developing some on the site, both industry hubs (such as creative or knowledge industries) and incubation to link education facilities and employment opportunities.
- 7.4 We welcome the proposal for creative workplaces and note that this will fill the gap created by proposals for Brookfield Mill which might not proceed.

8. Infrastructure & Physical

- 8.1 We welcome proposals to support sustainability in site development and note that Belfast City Council is developing best practice in such methods through its North Foreshore site and also through its BERI network (Brownfields Europe Regeneration Initiative).

Character

- 8.2 This project poses quite a challenge having in mind design in a sensitive historic environment and difficult community situation. Connection to the local community needs to be achieved through culture connections to the past, as well as connections and use.

Functions

- 8.3 Functions of different spaces and venues need to be rigorously accessed, both day time and night time use, formal and informal and different user groups. It needs to be considered:
- night time space/ public road/interface concerns – there may be risk of creating a ‘dead’ and unsafe place
 - how is the public realm integrated into different uses
 - lack of activity in the central area with no purposeful function could compromise public realm

Leisure

- 8.4 The Masterplan correctly points out that the Council has agreed that the Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Barracks is its preferred location for a Leisure Centre in the North of the City.
- 8.5 The Masterplan outlines the need to ensure that in relation to the proposed leisure and recreational facilities that where possible the emphasis needs to be on developing multi use facilities that will meet the requirements of the Council, St Malachy's College, other local schools and the wider community need and we would fully endorse this thinking.
- 8.6 The Masterplan proposals for the Leisure Centre include concept facilities to be included in the Leisure Centre and surrounding outdoor sports pitches. We would stress that our normal practice in developing new leisure facilities within Council is that we would commission an independent consultation exercise with the local community to identify and get support for the type of facilities they wish to see included in any proposed facilities. At this stage this exercise has not been undertaken and it is only when this has been completed that we will be in a position to specify our exact requirements for the proposed facility.
- 8.7 In addition to this, more recently when developing new leisure facilities the Council has been keen to explore opportunities for partnership working across the public, private and voluntary sectors. The recent Grove Health & Wellbeing facility developed in partnership with Social Services and the Education Board is a prime example of the type of opportunity that the Council wants to explore fully. In developing the Leisure Centre on the Crumlin Road & Girdwood site in addition to the opportunities for partnership working with both the Mater Hospital and St Malachy's School we would also require the flexibility to further explore other potential partnership arrangements before agreeing our final plans for the site.

- 8.8 In relation to the proposals for children's play areas and open space within the site while we welcome the fact that these have been included in the Masterplan, as stated above in relation to providing leisure facilities it will also be important to engage in a wider consultation exercise with the local community before finalising any proposals for play areas and open space within the site.

Design

- 8.9 We would strongly suggest the Crumlin road frontage should be at the forefront of this development – it should provide a sense of continuity for the whole road. Linkages should concentrate on the Gaol's Crumlin Road frontage and Courthouse as a package. Whole project should be phased from this point backwards into adjacent communities.
- 8.10 We understood that the future of the Court House was to be included in the proposals. Historically it was very much associated with the Gaol, including an underground tunnel between the two, and it is difficult to understand why there is no reference to it in the draft plan. It appears on the map of the area in the document which gives the impression that it is part of the Masterplan area.
- 8.11 The suggestion ARC road is a strong structuring element but it seems that its purpose is dominated by vehicular use within the site, will this be well integrated into the community and will it be used as a street or will it look more like an entrance to a business park? Access by other routes should be feasible- ARC not the only option.

Housing development

- 8.12 We recognise that housing development will be very important issue on the site. We feel that any proposals need to be flexible and more work needs to be done with communities in line with the 'Shared Future' agenda.

Public Realm

- 8.13 The area of public realm at the 'heartspace' is large and it seems that no frontage is created along the ARC route. The public realm is weakened by a lack of frontage, where public space lies on both sides on the main pedestrian route and the suggested tree closure/landscaping looks insufficient to produce enclosure.

8.14 The quality of the public realm and landscape is unclear from the document. The mass and scale of the public realm may in reality be hard to fill monotonous areas of deserted space.

8.15 The relationship between spaces and the buildings seems unclear. Little consideration is given to the character of the spaces – we are unconvinced that the proposed public realm is robust enough to support the development of this scale and we have a query over what the main public benefit will be.

9. Social and Cultural

9.1 As this development encompasses combining historic with modern, local community and wider strategic uses, it is essential to build its special Identity combining character and heritage. It would also be beneficial to develop overall branding of the place in order to attract wider city and out of Belfast audience.

9.2 The Crumlin Road Gaol site provides an excellent opportunity for the development of tourism initiatives on the site. We would recommend the tourism benefits could be further enhanced through the provision of a visitor attraction on the site which could be an excellent catalyst for generating new tourism business with associated infrastructure services, e.g. retail and cafe facilities.

9.2 The place could be a cultural capital of North Belfast with a range of events, festivals and, as suggested by the Masterplan, cultural quarters, museum and gallery. Also, the emphasis should be placed on cultural tourism, in which the Council already holds a significant experience. Local pride in the area needs to be nurtured from the outset.”

North Foreshore Landfill Gas Venture Partner

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th April, 2005, it had considered options on how best to convert the landfill gas being generated at the former Dargan Road Landfill Site, located at the North Foreshore, into a sustainable, renewable energy source and had agreed to appoint an experienced operator as a joint venture partner to install, operate and manage the landfill gas generation facility. The Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that the management of the gas field would be retained by the Council to ensure the highest safety standards and that the Committee had agreed previously to the installation of a cable to connect the facility to the national electricity grid.

She reported that, following a procurement process, three potential operators had expressed an interest. These companies had been requested to submit tenders containing operational proposals and financial arrangements. Following a tender evaluation exercise, she recommended that Renewable Power Systems Limited, Mile Road, Bedford, be appointed as the Council's joint venture partner in the scheme to generate electricity from the landfill gas at the North Foreshore. She informed the Committee that it was likely that the Council would receive an income of between £1 million and £1.5 million per annum, although this would diminish over the twenty-year contract period as the level of landfill gas decreased.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Gasworks Northern Fringe

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

A Special Development Committee on 15 May 2007 approved the Gasworks Northern Fringe Masterplan report.

The Masterplan acknowledges the desire of the owners of the Radisson Hotel to extend the hotel and provide additional facilities. The lands acquired for the Radisson Hotel were roughly triangular leaving some additional residual lands to the north indisposed. An agreement dated 21 April 2000 has been made between Inislyn, the developers of the Radisson SAS Hotel and the City Council to rationalise these land shapes to help the process of redevelopment should the road scheme previously proposed through the Northern Fringe Site be abandoned.

Inislyn have now prepared for Committee proposals providing for hotel accommodation, car parking and a speculative office development. These proposals relate to development on sites C and D of the Northern Fringe Masterplan. The NIE site of 1.35 acres at Stewart Street is currently being marketed by Colliers CRE with offers of £8 million. This site has been identified in the NFMP as an important strategic location to deliver improved environmental quality to the neighbouring community. The NFMP has identified the most beneficial uses of the site as either residential (public sector) or small incubator business units. Less intensive development of this site would sit better alongside the character of the existing adjacent residential areas and offer greater living and employment opportunities within the community.

Key Issues

The plans prepared for Inislyn by Consarc provide for the additional hotel accommodation:-

- Ground Floor – Spa, leisure pool, kitchens and plant
- First Floor – 600 seater function room, breakout area, roof top garden
- Second Floor – 5 small meeting rooms and breakout areas
- Third Floor – 30 double bedrooms
- Fourth Floor – 30 double bedrooms

Inislyn have agreed heads of terms for an extended management agreement with Radisson SAS to operate the hotel complex.

The cost of provision of this hotel extension is estimated at approximately £10 million and will result in a doubling of staff from 80 to 160 persons.

Inislyn have indicated that car parking will be required to support the 60 rooms proposed and to service the 600 seater function room. Inislyn's proposal is for a four and a half deck car park with a vehicle capacity for 360 cars. There would also be 64 surface car park spaces giving a total capacity of 424 within the scheme.

The scale of car parking has been based on:-

Visitor car parking	-	120
BCC staff	-	120
Existing office requirements	-	40
Proposed speculative office development, hotel extension and existing hotel requirements	-	184
Total	-	424 spaces

Inislyn have indicated that as with the original hotel development a speculative office development is required for funding purposes. They have included within their plans a stand alone office block comprising 35,000 sq ft net over 5 storeys with a cost of approximately £4 million. Consarc have held preliminary discussions with the Planning Service who have given a favourable reaction to the scheme. Car parking can be negotiated at this stage to provide a visitor provision not catered for in the current Masterplan. Construction of a multi-storey car park could provide flexibility when developing other sites on the Northern Fringe. The financial returns from sites C and D should be maximised as Inislyn are best placed to realise the fullest potential of the sites through greater density of development on site C by building immediately adjacent to the existing hotel.

Resource Implications

Financial Implications

Inislyn are best placed to realise the fullest potential of sites C and D through greater density of development by building immediately adjacent to the existing hotel. The purchase of site F from NIE would result in a cost of approximately £8 million to BCC however potential development of this site alongside the rest of the NFMP may be achieved at no cost to BCC by agreeing appropriate joint venture or land swap arrangements.

Asset Implications

The potential redevelopment of 7.02 acres of land in the city centre and completion of the Gasworks Complex commenced over 10 years ago.

Recommendations

Committee agree to Officers entering into negotiations with Inislyn in a one to one deal in order to maximise the potential of sites C and D. The proposals of Inislyn offer the opportunity to secure more generous car parking for the hotel scheme. Construction of a multi storey car park in the immediate future could provide flexibility when developing the remaining sites on the Northern Fringe. The immediate development proposals for Inislyn would yield an early return from the Northern Fringe.

Key to Abbreviations

NFMP - Northern Fringe Masterplan
BCC - Belfast City Council"

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman