

Development Committee

Wednesday, 9th April, 2008

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Browne (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly); and
Councillors Attwood, Campbell, Convery, Crozier,
Cunningham, Ekin, Empey, Hartley, Humphrey, Kyle,
C. Maskey, P. Maskey, McCarthy, McCausland,
Mhic Giolla Mhín and Stoker.

Also attended: Councillor Mullaghan.

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
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor D. Dodds.

Minutes

Adoption

The minutes of the meetings of 27th February and 7th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April, subject to:

- (i) the omission of that portion of the minute of 27th February under the heading "Renewing Communities Local Masterplans – West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council" which, at the request of Councillor D. Dodds, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration; and
- (ii) the amendment of the decision of 7th March under the heading "Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's Draft Corporate Plan – Consultation" to provide that the Council's response include a reference to the impact which the first two years of life has on the future wellbeing and mental health of children and that the wellbeing and mental health of children cannot be considered in isolation to the wellbeing of parents.

Variation

The Committee Administrator informed the Committee that an incorrect figure regarding the total amount of grant requested by groups seeking Annual Funding had appeared in the report submitted to the meeting on 7th March and had been replicated in the minutes of that meeting. It would be necessary, therefore, to vary the minute under the heading "Multi-Annual and Annual Funding for Culture and the Arts" to indicate that the total amount requested under Annual Funding had been £1,051,585 and not £306,833.

The Committee agreed to vary the minute as indicated.

Presentation of Awards

The Chairman (Councillor M. Browne), on behalf of the Committee, congratulated Councillor Cunningham and Ms. Laura Leonard, European Manager, on their receipt recently of awards in the Belfast Media Group's "2008 40 Under 40 Awards", which were presented to young achievers in the City.

The Chairman congratulated also the Renewing the Routes Team which had been highly commended in the sustainable environment section of the Local Government Chronicle Awards.

Presentation on Rapid Transit Study

Pursuant to the Committee's decision of 16th January, the Members were advised that representatives from the Department for Regional Development were in attendance to address them regarding the Rapid Transit Study. Accordingly, Mr. Mike Thompson, Director of the Regional Planning and Transportation Division, together with Messrs. Gavin Hamilton, Gregor Kerr and Alan Preston were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Thompson reminded the Committee that the Department had published the previous day the results of the Feasibility Study, which had been undertaken by Atkins Limited and KPMG, into the provision of the rapid transit network in the Greater Belfast Area. He indicated that the Minister for Regional Development was keen to engage with key stakeholders, such as the Council, regarding the various proposals contained within the Study and that no decisions had yet been taken. He pointed out that the intention to provide a rapid transit system in Belfast complemented the Council's promotion of a quality public transport infrastructure as part of its State of the City Initiative. The benefits for Belfast of a rapid transit system included:

- moving people quickly across the City;
- providing the City with an efficient modern transportation system;
- improving the City's image; and
- assisting the City's regeneration.

Mr. Thompson informed the Members that the companies which had been appointed to undertake the Study had been requested to find the best system for Belfast and to examine available technology, preferred routes, customer demand and estimated cost. To this end, light rail and bus systems had been examined and the Study had concluded that approximately six hundred more passengers per hour could use a rail system rather than a bus-based system during the morning peak periods. However, with capital costs of £147m compared to £590m and annual operating costs of £1.44m compared to £6.78m, a bus-based system was the preferred option. The Study had indicated that the system should be designed to ensure that it could allow for migration to light rail, if passenger numbers warranted such a move.

He informed the Members that the Study had concluded that the following three routes should be developed as a pilot operation:

- (i) Dundonald to the City centre, due to the availability of the former Comber railway line;
- (ii) Titanic Quarter to the City centre and onwards to Queen's University, due to the forthcoming developments within the Quarter and the availability of a financial contribution from the developer. The Study had indicated that this route would provide the most economic gain; and
- (iii) City centre to the Royal Victoria Hospital and onwards into West Belfast, since the Royal Group of Hospitals accounted for the greatest volume of traffic movements in terms of vehicles, pedestrians and buses in Belfast.

Mr. Thompson stated that the Government's commitment to the provision of a rapid transit system for Belfast was supported by the fact that it had been included in the Programme for Government. In addition, some £12m had been allocated to it in the current Budget and £99m had been allocated to the scheme in the Investment Strategy. He stated that the next steps involved detailed discussions with the key organisations, including the Council, a Ministerial decision and detailed designs being prepared, with a view to work commencing on the ground by 2011.

In response to Members' questions, Mr. Thompson indicated that:

- (i) the former Comber railway line would be utilised by both the rapid transit system and the Connswater Community Greenway scheme. He accepted that some of the residents of East Belfast might be disappointed with the inclusion of the rapid transit system in what was a green/open space but pointed out that the Department had prevented any development on the route of the disused line for a lengthy period of time with such a transportation scheme in mind;
- (ii) the routes to be included in the pilot exercise had been chosen by the Department of Regional Development;

- (iii) the Department was well aware that the pilot network did not include any routes in the North and South of the City. However, parts of those areas were already served by motorways and railway lines and the Department was attempting to establish additional quality bus corridors. In addition, discussions had already been held with the Department for Social Development regarding the possible provision of a rapid transit system to the Crumlin Road Gaol Site;
- (iv) consideration had been given to extending the Titanic Quarter route to the George Best Belfast City Airport but the Study had indicated that there would be no economic benefit to this;
- (v) discussions would require to be held with various interested organisations, including the Council, regarding the necessity for the rapid transit system to cross the redeveloped Public Realm areas within the City centre. However, he was confident that, since there were a number of four lane roads in the City centre, any difficulties regarding this could be resolved; and
- (vi) the three pilot routes would converge in a yet to be determined location in the City centre to enable people to travel easily across the City.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chairman thanked the representatives from the Department of Regional Development for attending the meeting and for the manner in which they had answered the questions from the Members. The deputation then retired from the meeting.

Following discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the presentation regarding the rapid transit study and the comments thereon of Mr. Thompson.

West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council

A Member indicated that Councillor D. Dodds had requested that this item be referred back to the Committee since elected representatives from the Shankill area had not been briefed by the Enterprise Council regarding the Spatial Regeneration Plan and had been unable to attend the meeting on 27th February at which the presentation had been made. Accordingly, he requested that the matter be deferred for one month to enable Councillors from the Shankill area to meet with the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council regarding the Spatial Regeneration Plan for the area.

The Committee agreed to defer the matter for one month as requested.

European Unit

Northern Ireland Conference on Peace

The Director informed the Committee that the above-mentioned Conference would be held on 28th April at the University of Ulster. The event, which was being organised by two Northern Ireland members of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, would be addressed by high profile speakers, including Jacques Delors and Monika Wolfe Mathis who had been instrumental in the establishment of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme in Northern Ireland. The aim of the Conference was to provide information on and to challenge the success of the Programme in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

She explained that the Council's European Unit, in conjunction with the European Commission's Office in Northern Ireland, had been requested to sponsor a lunch and to provide a tour of Belfast for the 250 delegates who would be attending the Conference. She indicated that the cost of the lunch and tour should not exceed £2,500. The Director pointed out that, although the Conference would be held outside the Council's boundary, the delegates would be staying in hotels within the City, which would result in considerable economic benefit for Belfast.

After discussion, the Committee authorised the incurring of expenditure up to a maximum of £2,500 in connection with the provision of a lunch and tour for the delegates attending the Northern Ireland Conference on Peace and approved the attendance of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) thereat.

Inward Visit from the Nitra Region in Slovakia

The Committee was informed that the European Unit had been requested to assist with an inward visit by a delegation from the Nitra region in Slovakia which was keen to examine projects organised by the Councils in the Comet Region.

The Director indicated that the Comet Region would be hosting a welcome dinner for the delegation at Stormont and recommended that the Chairman, or his nominee, attend the dinner to greet the delegation and deliver a welcome presentation.

The Committee noted the information provided and adopted the recommendation.

Quarterly Media Report

The Committee noted a report which outlined the amount of media coverage and the extent of press and media enquiries received concerning the work of the Committee during the period from December 2007 until March 2008.

Northern Ireland International Horse Show 2008 - 2010

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that in the last ten years, Belfast has built a strong reputation for hosting major events. It began with the World Cross Country Championships in 1999 and gradually bids for major events became more ambitious. The last eight years has seen Belfast host many significant major events such as the World Irish Dancing Championships, the World Amateur Boxing Championships, the Under 19 European Football Championships, the Special Olympics Ireland Games and the Under 19 Rugby World Cup.

Belfast City Council has also supported a number of significant events through the Support for Sport Scheme. Through this scheme, some of these events are now attracting commercial support and are viewed by the public as annual must see events.

One such event is the Northern Ireland International Horse Show. An approach has now been made by the organisers, requesting Belfast City Council support for the event for the next three years, 2008 - 2010.

The inaugural event, held in 2006 was a huge success and in 2007 the audience figures grew by 33% to 20,000 over the 4 day event. The 2007 event welcomed 32 international competitors from 11 nations, 250 national competitors from across Ireland and employed 300 artists and contractors.

Event Specifics

The 2008 event will take place in the Odyssey Arena from Thursday 23 October to Sunday 26 October. The event is organised by the company Event Direct, headed by a board of six directors, all local equestrian enthusiasts who will deliver the event under the governance of the Show Jumping Association of Ireland and overseen by Federal Equest Internationale.

The organisers are keen to continue to develop the event further and have aspirations for international recognition in years to come. There is a 3 year plan in place to take the show to 5 star status by 2010, which is the highest ranking achievable in the equestrian competitive world.

Benefits to the City

- 25,000 visitors are projected for the 2008 event, rising to 30,000 by 2010.
- Bed nights (involving staff, contractors, officials, competitors and spectators) are projected at 3360 for the 2008 event, rising to 4200 by 2010.
- 75% of the £880,000 event budget will be spent in the local economy.
- Achieving the objective of a 5 star show by 2010 will secure Belfast's place on the international show jumping tour, ensuring the promotion of the City through worldwide television coverage.
- The Horse Show will be an inclusive event with an NSPCC Children's Day on the Friday allocating 3000 free spaces for children from across Northern Ireland and the ROI. The Saturday afternoon will include an event with 500-1000 free spaces allocated to disabled children and distributed through the Riding for the Disabled network in Northern Ireland. There is a significant junior element to the competition.

Key Issues

The Business Plan has been submitted by Event Direct. The company is projecting substantial private sector sponsorship of cash or in-kind at over £300,000. Funding from the public sector including the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure and the Irish Sports Council is projected at £150,000.

Resource Implications

The working budget for the event in 2008 currently stands at £880,263. The outline budget is attached within the Business Plan.

In 2008 a financial shortfall is projected at £30,000 and the organisers are hopeful that the success of the event will continue to grow with a diminishing shortfall. They are confident that within a few years, the event will be in a position to financially stand alone. With this forecast, they are requesting support of £30,000 from Belfast City Council in 2008, £20,000 in 2009 and £10,000 in 2010.

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has recently supported the Irish Indoor Athletics Championships in a similar manner gradually reducing funding to encourage the applicant to make the event sustainable.

The request for support equates to £60,000 over a three year period, should the funding be required, clearly higher than anticipated ticket sales will reduce the shortfall. While there is no specific information relating to estimated economic return, 2000 bed nights will be generated, the estimated audience being 20,000 and a significant proportion of the £900K budget will be spent locally.

Recommendations

Members are asked to approve capped shortfall funding of £30,000 towards the hosting of the Northern Ireland International Horse Show in 2008, with additional reduced funding in 2009 of £20,000 and 2010 of £10,000. There are currently sufficient resources within the Events Unit budget to support this event.”

In response to Members’ questions, the Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that the company which proposed to organise the event during the period 2008-2010 was different from the company which had organised the previous Horse Shows at the Odyssey Arena and that it was anticipated that during the three year period the event would not make a profit, which was why the Council was being requested to fund the shortfall.

Following further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the report.

Development and Outreach Initiative 2008 - 2009

(Ms. S. Stevenson, Culture and Arts Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

Councillor Crozier declared an interest in this matter in that an organisation of which he was the Director had been awarded grant-assistance under the Initiative and left the room while the matter was under discussion.

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council’s Development and Outreach grants are intended to build capacity and boost cultural activity in communities with weak cultural and arts infrastructure. The initiative is designed to extend participation and access to culture and arts activity for those most marginalised in society. Project beneficiaries must either have a disability focus or reside within one or more Super Output Areas in Belfast included in the 50% most deprived areas, according to the NISRA Multiple Deprivation Measure in Northern Ireland. The deadline for organisations to submit applications to the Development and Outreach scheme for the 2008/09 financial year was noon on Friday 8th February. The guidelines, application form, and criteria for eligibility and assessment are as previously agreed for the scheme.

Principles of the Reporting Process

Summaries have been compiled by officers from the applications submitted to provide an overview of the programmes detailed in the applications. This is a summary of information received. Applications are checked to ensure that they fulfil the eligibility criteria for the scheme. Assessments are then carried out to establish how well the proposals perform against the agreed assessment criteria for the scheme. A summary is presented to indicate only the areas where the applicant performed particularly well against specific criteria or where there were weaknesses in the application. The comments relate to both the strengths of the proposed programme and the evidence supplied within the application. A summary of each application, and officer assessments, can be viewed in Appendix E. Members are requested to use the assessments in tandem with the scores provided in Appendix D. Grant histories for applicants are also provided for information, at Appendix C. Appendix B to this introduction shows target areas from which applicants state that beneficiaries will be drawn. These appendices are available on Modern.Gov. It is recommended that all offers are made conditional, subject to satisfactory proof that the beneficiaries to be targeted will be drawn from the stated target wards along with clarification about how this will be done.

Level of Applications

Total budget available for The Development and Outreach initiative in 2008/09 is £160,000 which is a 3% increase on last years' allocation.

£10,000 is ring-fenced for projects which promote creative expression and increased opportunities in Art/Heritage among young people. Applications have been received for 28 grants (this is an increase of 7 on the previous year) for funds totalling £446,350.67. This is almost three times the available level of funding.

Members should note that it has been agreed that Officers do not approach organisations for further details relating to their proposal or for clarification of any areas of the application after the submission deadline.

Key Issues

The standard of applications receive under the scheme this year has been exceptionally high. In previous years we have been able to recommend grants to applications which received a score of 60% or higher which is considered an above average level of application. This year, due to the high standard of applications, it is only possible to recommend funding to applications scoring over 70% which is considered a strong level of application.

The minimum amount recommended is £7,500 and the maximum amount recommended is £16,000 which corresponds closely to the level of grants awarded in 2007/8.

Thirteen out of the twenty eight (45%) applications scored over 70% and have been recommended for funding; thirteen organisations also received funding in 2007/08 although this corresponded to a success rate of 65%.

Rationale for funding decisions

Officers have considered budgets on an individual basis and have recommended funding in relation to:

- Strength of the proposed programme as assessed against agreed funding criteria.
- Value for money of the project. Reduction of the amount recommended has been suggested where costs are considered high or where some of the participants are not within the target areas or groupings.
- Viability of the proposed programme within the funding offered.

Applications scoring

Above 80%	Awarded 80% of requested amount*
75-80%	Awarded 75% of requested amount*
70-75	Awarded 70% of requested amount*
Under 70%	Not awarded funding

*All amounts are rounded to the nearest £500

Nine organisations scored between 60 and 70%, however, they are not recommended to receive funding due to a lack of available resources. A further £99,000 would be required to offer these organisations funding at the level of 70% of amount requested.

Six organisations scored below 60% and are not recommended to receive funding.

Resource Implications

A provisional budget of £160,000 has been allocated in the revenue estimates for the Development and Outreach Initiative in the 2008/09 financial year. This represents an uplift of 3% of the budget allocated to Development and Outreach Initiative in 2007/08.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree the scores and recommendations in relation to Development and Outreach Funding.”

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the officers’ recommendations to award the funding set out below:

Scores and Recommendations for Development and Outreach Funding

Applicant	Total Score%	Amount Requested (£)	Recommendation (£)
ArtsEkta	58	13,740	0
Beat Initiative	83	20,000	16,000
Belfast Community Circus School	80.8	9,515	7,500
Belfast Exposed Photography	65.4	11,885	0
Beyond Skin	70.2	16,450	11,500
Cinemagic	64.2	20,000	0
Creative Media Partnership @ Community Visual Images	65.4	20,000	0
Creative Writers' Network	70.2	20,000	14,000
Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich	52	12,000	0
Falls Community Council	63.6	17,200	0
Féile an Phobail	Ineligible	28,800	0
Golden Thread Gallery	66.4	20,000	0
Lower North Belfast Community Council	76	19,566	14,500
Lyric Theatre	62.6	15,000	0
An Munia Tober	Ineligible	15,000	0
New Lodge Arts Forum & Ashton Community Trust	63.6	19,173	0
Northern Visions	72.4	17,225	12,000
Open Arts	61.8	14,485.67	0
Prime Cut Productions	70.2	16,000	11,000
Queen's Film Theatre	73.2	19,595	13,500
Short Strand Community Forum	Ineligible	9,850	0
Sonic Urban Music	70.4	18,000	12,500
Streetwise Community Circus Workshops	74.8	17,950	12,500

Applicant	Total Score%	Amount Requested (£)	Recommendation (£)
Ulster Orchestra Society Ltd	63.4	3,396	0
Vine Centre	52.8	2,700	0
West Belfast Athletic & Cultural Society	77.2	13,000	10,000
Young at Art	71.6	19,400	13,500
Youth Action Northern Ireland	73	16,420	11,500
TOTAL		446,350.67	160,000

Community Festivals Fund

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

A previous report was brought before Committee in January 08 regarding the proposed transfer of Community Festivals Funding from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to Local Authorities. This funding was previously administered through the Northern Ireland Events Company.

The report raised a number of issues with the proposed transfer. A letter indicating the Councils position was sent to Hazel Campbell at DCAL. A Copy of this letter is available on Modern.gov.

Key Issues

A Letter of Offer has been received for the sum of £77,300 for the Community Festivals Fund for the period April 2008 to March 2009, which is available on Modern.gov.

There has not, however, been a specific written response to the points raised in the letter sent to DCAL on 8 February, however, officials from DCAL have met with Council officers and there have been information sessions organised through NILGA.

The following points have emerged in relation to the points outlined in the letter.

Funding

- 1) There will be no alteration to the funding allocation to Belfast at this stage.

- 2) Funding allocated to Local Authorities that cannot be distributed will be redistributed to other Local Authority areas, it is expected that this will be achieved through a quarterly review of the funding distributed.
- 3) Feedback from other Councils indicates that the challenge for some will be to develop sufficient capacity to make use of the funding allocation and for others the match funding required will be an impediment to utilising the funding.
- 4) The level of redistributed funding would then form the basis for future allocation of funds.

Staffing Resources

No additional resources will be made available for administration, however, up to 10% of the grant claimed can be put towards administration

Duration of Funding

The funding for Community Festivals Fund is secure for a three year period. No commitment is given beyond that point.

Transitional Fund

It is anticipated that some additional transitional funding will be made available in the coming financial year, however, this may be restricted in terms of the number of organisations funded and level of funding.

Contact through NILGA

It is expected that communication regarding the funding will be maintained through NILGA

Timescale

DCAL have accepted that due to the short timescale a flexible approach is required towards the processes adopted for the distribution of funds in this financial year. It may therefore be possible to consider distribution in line with existing mechanisms of funding provided they are publicly advertised and within the spirit of the fund.

Members need now to consider how Council wishes to respond to this letter of offer. Clearly the concerns raised by Committee and communicated to DCAL via letter have not been addressed, with the DCAL position remaining as it was in January 2008. To accept the offer requires Council to identify £77,300 to match fund the DCAL offer and to create a 'Community Festivals' fund for Belfast.

This has obvious financial and administrative implications as well as directly impacting on funds we are currently committing to this area. In addition, the amount represents a drop in the total resources available for Belfast in a situation where the announcement by DCAL is likely to have increased demand for such funding.

Resource Implications

Financial

Resources of £77,300 will be required to provide match funding for the Community Festivals Fund.

Human Resources

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

Recommendations

That Members consider whether Belfast City Council wish to accept the offer of funding as outlined in the letter of offer.

Key to Abbreviations

DCAL - Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
NILGA - NI Local Government Association"

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed disappointment that the concerns which the Council had expressed earlier in the year regarding the proposal from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to transfer the funding of community festivals to local authorities had not been addressed by the Department in its recent Letter of Offer.

The Director informed the Committee that when officials had been asked by her staff whether organisations in Belfast would be disadvantaged should the Council decide not to accept the funding from the Department, the officials had declined to answer the question.

Several Members expressed the view that, since the majority of local authorities in Northern Ireland had agreed to accept the transfer of the Community Festivals Fund, it was possible, should the Council decide not to accept the offer, that the sum of money which had been set aside for Belfast would be re-allocated to those Councils, thereby depriving organisations in Belfast of funding for community festivals.

In answer to Members' questions, the Director indicated that, whilst the Council had been offered an amount of £77,300 for the 2008/2009 financial year, she could not confirm the amount which would be provided to the Council in the following two years.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor Paul Maskey,

That the Committee agrees not to accept the Letter of Offer from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding the Community Festivals Fund.

On a vote by show of hands eleven Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Rolling Programme to Support Innovation in Arts and Heritage

(Ms. S. Stevenson, Culture and Arts Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Managing Director of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls reminded the Members that the former Development (Arts) Sub-Committee, and subsequently the Development Committee, had awarded grants under the Rolling Programme to support innovation in arts and heritage. He pointed out that the purpose of the Programme was to assist arts and heritage organisations to avail of the opportunities of grant-aid which arose during the year, including those which became available after the closing date for the Annual Funding and Multi-Annual Funding applications. Grants awarded through the Scheme would range from £250 to £3,000.

He pointed out that under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, where a Committee had established a scheme for the awarding of grants up to a maximum amount of £10,000 and had authorised a Chief Officer to administer the scheme, then the Chief Officer had the delegated authority to approve the allocation of grants in line with the award criteria. He pointed out further that, since grants awarded under the Rolling Programme did not exceed £3,000, they could be dealt with under authority delegated to the Director of Development, if the Committee so agreed. He reminded the Committee that an amount of £28,000 had been included within the Revenue Estimates for the Rolling Programme.

The Managing Director of the Waterfront and Ulster Halls informed the Committee that awarding the grants under delegated authority would have a number of advantages, including a reduction in the current ten-week period it took to process requests and that organisations would be able to present more detailed information closer to the event. He assured the Committee that it would receive, on either a six-monthly or annual basis, a report regarding grants which had been awarded by the Director under this delegated authority.

During discussion in the matter a Member expressed the view that the Department should ensure that money distributed under this scheme was made available to groups throughout the City and, if requests were not being received from certain areas of the City, the Department should endeavour to remedy that situation.

In response, the Culture and Arts Manager indicated that, since most of the organisations which applied for assistance under the Rolling Programme were arts rather than community-based, they tended to be located in the City centre, although they undertook work throughout the City. In addition, she pointed out that advice clinics regarding the Rolling Programme were held throughout the City.

The Director of Development informed the Members that research was being undertaken currently concerning all the grant assistance which was provided by the Development Department to examine if it could be provided in a more streamlined manner and that a report in this regard would be presented to the Committee later in the year.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided by the officers and agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Development to award grants under the Rolling Programme to support innovation in arts and heritage.

Christmas Lights Switch-On

(Mr. G. Copeland, Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In March 08 Members were presented with details regarding the timing of the Christmas Lights Switch-on. After discussion the Committee agreed a number of options should be presented to Council. Members are reminded that last year the audience at this event was estimated at 18,000 and to have generated £367,000 for the Council’s £80,000 investment giving a return on investment of £1:£4.5. The event also attracts substantial positive media coverage for the Council and Belfast.

Key Issues

Popularity of the Christmas Lights Switch-on

The level of interest of this event has developed to the point that the ‘switching-on’ of the Belfast Christmas lights is seen by many locals as the ‘official start’ of the Christmas period. The event is normally staged on a Tuesday in mid-November, one week after Remembrance Sunday. It is designed to coincide with BVCB and BCCM retailer campaigns and the opening of the Christmas Continental Market. It is estimated that in 2007 the Continental Market, along with a series of carol and Christmas musical events, run by the Council, attracted in excess of 500,000 attendees.

Event Management

A number of management issues have developed alongside the Christmas Lights Switch-on's increasing popularity. The main issue is the lack of overall access/egress control into the event due to the mid-week timing of the event. This has resulted in significant numbers of young people attending the event without adult supervision. This issue has resulted in crowd pressure points developing and crowd disruption in areas in and adjacent to the event site.

Traffic and Transport

Additional traffic management concerns have been highlighted by DOE Road Service highlighting major road impacts which occur across the city – significantly due to the timing of the Switch-on event. In 2007 this resulted in the normal rush hour traffic not clearing at some major junctions to after 10.00 pm.

Translink Metro has also highlighted concerns regarding the disruption to their city service. Metro have stated that the staging of the event in 2007 resulted in their timetable, for all Metro services, being significantly interrupted. With the full Metro bus service not returning to the normal timetable until the next day.

2008 Christmas Lights Switch-on

In order to alleviate these issues the following options for the timing of the event are presented to Members for deliberation.

Tuesday evening from 8.00 – 9.00 pm.

This would mean the event is moved one hour later to allow for the evening rush hour traffic to clear, thus negating the issue of disruption on the roads. BCC would also request that stores within the site close by 7.00 pm. This would need to be agreed by retailers. If this can be achieved BCC would then physically close the site to general public access and provide controlled entry points to the concert site. A family friendly area for adults with young children and buggies would also be created. BCC would also encourage Translink Metro to continue their peak bus service operation until after the event has finished and the audience has dispersed. The event would be staged at the same time as the opening of the Christmas Continental Market, along with the Belfast Wheel.

Tuesday evening from 7.00 – 7.30 pm.

This option would see the nature of the event scaled down with a much shorter programme and content reduced. Access/egress controls would also be put in place.

Sunday evening 6.00 – 7.00 pm.

This proposal would see the event being delivered in the current format with a number of major headline acts. The site would be physically closed thus controlling crowd access/egress. This would in turn allow for the creation of a family friendly area for adults with young children and buggies; reduce traffic management and disruption; assist with the operation of the city's Metro bus service and most importantly increase the capacity of BCC to manage the health and safety of the audience at the event. The event would be staged at the same time as the opening of the Christmas Continental Market, along with the Belfast Wheel. Translink would be requested to operate a peak time service to accommodate the audience at the event.

External Advice

Members are asked to note that the request for a Sunday evening has been arrived at after extensive consultation through BCC's Events Advisory Panel (EAP). This body incorporates BCCM, PSNI, NIAS, NIFRS, DOE Road Service, BCC Health & Safety, BCC Security, BCC Corporate Communications and BCC Legal Services.

Resource Implications

Financial

In October 2007 Members agreed to the overall annual BCC programme and its accompanying budgets. This included the Christmas programme budget of £150,000 which covers this event, Christmas carol events and the festive lighting on and around City Hall.

Recommendations

Members are requested to recommend one of the above options.

Abbreviations

BCC - Belfast City Council
BCCM - Belfast City Centre Management
BVCB - Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
PSNI - Police Service of Northern Ireland
NIFRS - Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service
DOE - Department of the Environment"

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed the view that, since the Switch-On was a family-orientated event, the numbers attending would likely be reduced if it were to be held on a Sunday evening, due to the large number of people who attended church services and because of the poor public transport arrangements available on Sundays. The view was expressed also that, since the event attracted such a large number of young people, it should start no later than 7.00 p.m.

Accordingly, it was agreed unanimously that no changes be made to the current arrangements for the Christmas Lights Switch-On and that the event in 2008 be held on a Tuesday evening commencing at 7.00 p.m.

World Transplant Games Bid

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 Director informed the Members that the final stage of the bidding process would involve a presentation to the World Transplant Games Council at a meeting in Brisbane on 4th June. The Local Organising Committee would be meeting the costs of sending one representative of the Council to Brisbane. However, given the requirement to demonstrate a high level of support to the Games Council, the Chairman of the Local Organising Committee for the Belfast bid had requested that a Member attend the final bid presentation. In such circumstances, it would be advisable that an officer also participate in the trip in order to answer any detailed questions which might arise from the presentation. The cost of sending this additional representative, which would be in the region of £5,000, would have to be met by the Council and money for this purpose was available within the Events Section's budget. She pointed out that, in order to arrive in Brisbane in time for the presentation, the Belfast group would be required to depart on 2nd June, which was scheduled to be the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the Chairman of the Committee, or his nominee, together with an officer from the Events Section, attend the presentation to the World Transplant Games Council in Brisbane on 4th June, at a maximum cost to the Council of £5,000.

Smithfield Market Lettings

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd September, 1999, it had granted authority for the Director, in consultation with the Chairman, to approve the terms of future lettings at Smithfield Market, subject to those terms being reported retrospectively to the Committee.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that:

- (i) Unit 1 had been let to Sam Ruscia, 214 Limestone Road, Belfast, at a cost of £200 per month, as a bicycle repair and hire shop;

- (ii) Unit 23 had been let to Peter Gettka, 1 Portland Place, Belfast, at a cost of £200 per month, as an exotic pet shop; and
- (iii) Unit 35 had been let to Michael and Ruth Shanu, 6 Woodburn Drive, Belfast, at a cost of £200 per month, as a Caribbean and African food shop.

Noted.

Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that at the Development Committee of 14th November 2007, approval was given for Belfast City Council to cluster with Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council for the delivery of Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP).

The next stage in the process is to establish a range of bodies which will allow a strategy to be developed and the funding to be allocated to projects on the ground.

Key Issues

Following the formation of the Council cluster, a Local Action Group (LAG) and Strategic Joint Committee (SJC) now need to be established to animate the local area and to develop a Rural Development Strategy before funding can be drawn down.

SJCs are a legislative body set up to strategically overview, monitor and administer NIRDP funding. They comprise solely of elected members. The SJC is responsible for submitting the Rural Development Strategy, managing the funds drawn down from Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD) and approving all funding applications recommended by the LAG.

LAGs are a partnership body comprising 50% from the social partners and 50% from elected members. They must also be reflective of section 75 groups. In conjunction with the SJC, the LAG is responsible for the development of the Rural Development Strategy and its subsequent delivery. The LAG will also promote the availability of funding to potential beneficiaries, issue guidance on the application process, assess funding applications and make recommendations to the SJC.

Elected member representation onto the SJC and LAG will be on a pro rata basis across each of the three Council boroughs based upon the population of the rural community.

Resident population eligible for assistance through the NIRDP is as follows:

- Lisburn: 36,000 residents (88% of total)
- Castlereagh: 4,300 residents (11% of total)
- Belfast: 490 residents (1% of total).

In consideration of the distribution of the rural population, the proposed structure of elected member representation for both the SJC and LAG is:

- Lisburn City Council: 7 representatives
- Castlereagh Borough Council: 3 representatives
- Belfast City Council: 1 representative.

It is proposed that the Chair of the Development Committee (or nominee) be appointed as the Belfast City Council representative on the SJC and that the Deputy Chair of the Development Committee (or nominee) be appointed as the Belfast City Council representative on the LAG.

Once the elected members are nominated to the SJC and LAG, the next stage of this process is to recruit social partners for the LAG. This process will be undertaken by the Council cluster and will require ratification by DARD.

When the LAG and SJC are in place, a Rural Development Strategy must be developed by 31 July 2008. This strategy should address the priorities of Axis 3 of NIRDP, namely:

- Strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas
- Create employment opportunities and conditions for the creation and development of rural micro businesses.
- Optimise the use of natural, human and historic assets through sustainable economic and social development.

The indicative budget for the Axis 3 measures is approximately £100 million across Northern Ireland. Financial allocations to each partnership will be calculated through a two stage process on the basis of both need and the quality of the strategy submission. It is anticipated that the funding available for the cluster in which Belfast City Council is involved may be in the region of £7million.

Resource Implications

Funding will be made available by DARD to establish a secretariat to manage this programme across the three council areas.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The Chair of the Development Committee (or nominee) is appointed as the Belfast City Council representative on the Strategic Joint Committee (SJC).
- The Deputy Chair of the Development Committee (or nominee) is appointed as the Belfast City Council representative on the Local --Action Group (LAG).

Key to Abbreviations

- SJC - Strategic Joint Committee
- LAG - Local Action Group
- DARD - Department of Agriculture & Rural Development"

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Tourism and Development

Conference Subvention

The Committee agreed, under the terms of the Council's Subvention Policy, that £1,000 be allocated to assist with the costs of the International Computer Music Conference.

Lagan Canal Workshop

The Committee was advised that a joint application for Interreg IV Funding had been submitted by the local authorities in the Comet Region and Donegal County Council in connection with a project involving a cross-border tourism product based on the development of the Lagan Canal. To progress the scheme, it was intended to organise a Workshop in Enniskillen later in the year.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman attend the Workshop at a cost not to exceed £600, including the costs associated with the necessary subsistence and motor mileage.

Nashville Sister City

The Committee agreed, in order to further the Sister City relationship with Nashville, to host a visit to Belfast by the current and immediate past Mayors of Nashville at a cost not to exceed £5,000.

Play Resource Centre

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 12th December, 2007, it had agreed to provide a maximum of £30,000 in grant assistance in the 2008-2009 financial year to the Play Resource Centre, subject to an application from the organisation being assessed, the outcome of which would be submitted to a future meeting.

She stated that the application had been assessed and, as a result, a service level agreement between the Council and the Centre had been prepared, a copy of which had previously been circulated to the Committee and was available for inspection on Modern.gov. Officers had been of the view that continuing to fund the Play Resource Centre would enable the organisation, inter alia, to provide:

- a range of training programmes to build the capacity of community organisations to deliver quality projects for children and young people;
- low-cost arts materials and recycled waste materials to community and voluntary organisations; and
- a neutral meeting/training space for groups and volunteers across the City.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information provided and the contents of the service level agreement between the Council and the Play Resource Centre.

Youth Forum Review

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

On 15th June 2005 the Community and Recreation Committee agreed to the establishment of a Youth Forum for Belfast City Council. Since then a Children and Young People Coordinator was appointed on a fixed term contract and the Youth Forum has been established.

The Youth Forum consists of 36 young people from 13-18 years old from across the City. The Forum is split into issue based sub groups as directed by the young people themselves and have looked at issues including mental health, suicide, drugs and alcohol, anti social behaviour, facilities and youth provision.

The Belfast City Council Youth Forum is recognised locally and nationally in both GB and the Republic of Ireland, as a model of best practice and Belfast City Council is regularly commended on this work.

Members will be aware that in June 2005 it was agreed that after the initial two years term in office, a review of the Youth Forum would be carried out. At its meeting of 12 December 2007, Committee agreed to extend the term in office of the current Youth Forum until April 08 in order to facilitate the conclusion of this review and the subsequent report to Committee.

The purpose of this report is to give members details of the review as well as to make recommendations on the future of the BCC Youth Forum.

Key Issues

Members will be aware of the background to the work of the BCC YF from previous committee reports. A short video will be shown which documents some of the work of the Youth Forum.

Youth Forum Review Synopsis

The Youth Forum review was carried out independently by Justice Associates in order to define:

- current role of the Youth Forum in Council.
- resources provided / needed to support the forum.
- governance arrangements
- practice to date
- the future role of the Youth Forum within the Development Department and the Council

The review focused on the following specific objectives

- review the need for the forum and the policy context within which it operates
- review the achievements of the forum to date
- review the effectiveness of the processes and systems used to:
 1. recruit young people to ensure that the forum is representative of young people in Belfast in terms of age, gender, religion, location.
 2. select topics for discussion
 3. engage with other young people who are not on the forum
 4. engage with Councillors, Council officers, Youth champions etc.
 5. support the young people on the forum
 6. conduct meetings

- review of resources needed to support the forum
- identify best practice models for Youth engagement that are being used by other organisations in other cities.
- based on best practice models make recommendations for the Council on the ways of improving the Youth Forum.

Approach

The report offers insight into the policy context & background of the Youth Forum highlighting Section 75 legislation, the UNCRC, Best Value Legislation, and other policy documents which outline the duty to involve young people in decision making and policy development.

The review also details some of the work of the YF and outlines the methodology adopted for data collection which included obtaining feedback from Youth Forum members; the BCC interdepartmental group for children and young people (CHYPs); the Joint Youth Panel (external stakeholders) and the Youth Champions (elected members).

The report finishes with conclusions and recommendations.

Key issues from the report:

The review is generally very positive. It highlights that as a model the Belfast City Council Forum is a good way of involving young people in public decision making. Feedback from respondents overwhelmingly reflects this view.

The review also highlights the continuing development of the Youth Forum, and details how ongoing monitoring and evaluation has led to visible positive improvements in the way the Youth Forum approaches its work.

Representation:

Representation of any such structure is always scrutinised. In the case of the Belfast City Council Youth Forum the report highlights that the method of recruitment is satisfactory and as a result representation is good. The report notes balanced representation in terms of age, gender, geography, religion and section 75 groups. The report points to a perception in some quarters that the Youth Forum is made up of an 'elite' group of young people. Given the contrary evidence, the evaluators suggest there 'might be merit in devising a suitable mechanism for recording the make-up of the membership in order to better combat any impression of exclusiveness or elitism.'

Member turnover:

Young people are a transient group: the pressures of adolescence coupled with factors such as family life, studies, relationships, extra curricular interests or more serious personal issues can impact on levels of drop out in all youth participation structures.

In the case of the BCC Youth Forum, turnover was noted as satisfactory, and the review considered that systems in place to combat this are good.

Impact on policies:

The report also discusses the Forum's impact on policies, and suggests that it can be difficult to recognise the impact young people's views have on policy making, particularly in a large local authority like Belfast City Council as it can be complex and slow-moving process. The consultants however point to evidence which demonstrates how the Youth Forum has engaged with a wide range of Council Departments and Units in the design and delivery of initiatives. They argue such engagement influences the policy at the correct stage, at the time of its development, but note this is difficult to measure.

Furthermore the review recognises that the long term significance of the Youth Forum also relates to organisational culture. It suggests that if it is accepted that young people should be consulted about any policy or action that affects them; and that their views are taken into account in the decision-making process; then the Youth Forum will invariably impact on these outcomes. This therefore highlights the importance that the culture of engaging with young people becomes embedded in the Council's processes.

They commend the plans for further development in relation to this internally, such as training for officers in youth participation, and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate consultations with the Youth Forum in relation to outcomes.

They further welcome the planned development of a communications plan for the Youth Forum in order to better inform elected members, officers, other young people, and the general public on the work of the Youth Forum and vice versa.

Youth Champions:

The review highlights the importance of the Youth Champions and the role they have played in the success of the Youth Forum. The Youth Champions provide a vital link between the work of the young people and that of elected members. Engagement between young people and elected members has been a hugely positive part of the Youth Forum, with meetings involving these groupings being seen as one of the Youth Forum's great strengths.

This aspect of the Youth Forum has helped promote the BCC Youth Forum as a model of good practice and other models have attempted to, or have made plans to follow suit, nationally and internationally.

The review recommends the continuation of the BCC Youth Forum with young people outlining their preferred method for the selection process for a second term in office.

Value for Money:

Justice Associates have highlighted that to assess this properly they would need to carry out a SMART assessment; but have said that for an organisation of BCC's size the budget is satisfactory value for money and note the project is 'well resourced'.

Overall conclusion

The conclusion details how the Belfast City Council Youth Forum is a uniquely valuable contribution to the decision making process of the Belfast City Council. The review also highlights areas for improvement, some of which are already underway.

The review highlights how the first two years of work has provided a solid basis on which to continue to develop the Belfast City Council Youth Forum.

Justice Associates commend Belfast City Council on the Youth Forum and recommend that the Forum continues.

Resource Implications

Financial

There are no additional financial implications outside revenue estimates.

Human Resources

The post of the Children and Young People Coordinator is currently fixed term and runs until August 2008. The post is being considered within the current structural review of the service.

Recommendations

Committee are asked to support the following recommendations from the independent review of the Youth Forum:

1. BCC develop a corporate strategy for Children and Young People and this strategy provides a framework for the Youth Forum and the work of the Joint Youth Panel.
2. The BCC Youth Forum continues to operate for a further term of two years and that re-elections take place during May / June 2008.
3. The proposals on the selection process as outlined by the Youth Forum are adopted.
4. The post of C&YP Co-ordinator is reviewed.
5. Consideration is given to the adoption of the concept of 'senior member' or 'volunteer youth leader' in order to harness the knowledge and experience of young people who have gone through the system and to offer support to the BCC officer.
6. The development of a comprehensive Communications & Engagement strategy.
7. The value of young people's participation in grant assessment to be considered within the context of the department grant review.

Key to Abbreviations

YF: Belfast City Council Youth Forum
UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CHYPs: BCC Interdepartmental Group for Children & Young People"

The Director paid tribute to those Councillors who had acted as Youth Champions and drew the Committee's attention to various aspects of the report.

During discussion in the matter, a Member pointed out that, since the original members of the Youth Forum had been interviewed and appointed rather than elected, recommendation 2 would require to be amended to indicate that the members of the Forum would be elected, rather than re-elected. He pointed out further that it would be necessary to ensure that the Forum was representative of the entire City. Another Member requested that the Department endeavour to ensure that children with disabilities were more involved with the Youth Forum than was the case currently.

In response, the Director undertook to ensure that the Members' comments were taken on board.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations contained within the foregoing report, subject to recommendation 2 being amended to indicate that elections, rather than re-elections, to the Youth Forum would take place during May/June.

Support for Advice and Information Services 2008 - 2009

Councillor Crozier declared an interest in this matter in that an organisation of which he was the Director had been awarded grant-assistance under this scheme and left the room whilst the matter was being discussed.

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council is a major funder of Advice services in the city and established a consortium approach to funding and Advice delivery in 2005/06. Monitoring and evaluation indicates this approach is working well at both a Community Services and Consortia level.

Deloitte MCS were appointed in August 07 to independently review BCC Advice and Information services across the City. The terms of reference were to review the Council's current Advice and Information grant service, identify best practice changes that are needed to the current delivery model and make recommendations on delivery approach going forward particularly in light of the new regional strategy. In particular the review should:

- **Consider the consortium approach for delivering Advice services.**
- **Review the performance and consistency of the Consortia.**
- **Review the Grant Allocation process including the assessment process and criteria.**
- **Identify best practice to maximise support to clients and improve Consortia working.**
- **Monitor and evaluate the quality of the Advice services.**

Deloitte were asked to make recommendations on how

- **The BCC strategy could support the DSD regional strategy**
- **The most appropriate delivery approach for future allocation and delivery**

- How to improve partnership and cooperation between advice providers
- The implications of implementing the DSD's future recommended approach

A report on the recommendations will be brought in due course to Committee.

This approach was outlined by DSD in 'Opening Doors: The Strategy for the Delivery of Voluntary Advice Services to the Community' which was launched in September 2007. DSD outlined their intention to establish pilots to deliver this strategy from April 08. This pilot phase, however, has been delayed and recent communication suggests it will not now take place until April 09.

The level of BCC Advice grant aid in 2007/08 is £320,330.00 Since 2005 BCC and DSD have also provided additional funding to enable the Consortia to extend Advice & Information services in areas of little or no provision.

The level of additional funding provided has been:

DSD match	2005/06 - £152,725	2006/07 - £152,725	2007/08 - £309,725
BCC match	2005/06 - £0	2006/07 - £152,725	2007/08 - £152,725

DSD have indicated that this extra level of Advice support will continue, but despite formal approaches, they have not yet made known the actual amounts or the level of match funding which may be required from BCC to secure their investment.

Key Issues

The delay in initiating the pilot phase of the DSD Opening Doors strategy has resulted in a level of uncertainty both for BCC and the Advice Consortia. The original schedule for implementation of the pilot initiatives would have offered the various partners an opportunity to agree Service Level Agreements for advice provision across the city which would both meet the strategic aims of the regional strategy and be informed by the agreed outcomes of the Deloitte led BCC review.

This delay has been further compounded by the lack of formal notification by DSD in regards to the continuation of their financial support for the 2008/09 period and the level of match funding required.

As current contracts with Advice Consortia expired on 31st March 2008, it is now imperative that BCC considers the merit of extending their core funding for the provision of generalist Advice support so as not to disrupt this vital service to the end user and in order to sustain the qualified staff and volunteer base on which the service is reliant.

An extension of contracts for 1 year, based on last years values uplifted for inflation, would permit the following:

- Necessary planning time to agree how to best incorporate the recommendations of the Deloitte review within the broader context of the Development Department Review of Grant Aid
- Clarity of information from DSD as to the terms of reference of the proposed regional pilots and related funding streams
- An implementation plan for revised generalist advice service provision in the city agreed by all partners, that is, Consortia, regional support organisations, Council and DSD
- An opportunity for the Deloitte review to inform the Community Services structure review

Until such times as formal notification of the DSD advice grant becomes available, officers cannot bring a report seeking continuation of required match/leverage funding for extended service provision.

Resource Implications

Financial

The revenue estimates for grant for 2008/09 includes provision for BCC core Advice grant of £329,940.

Human Resources

Implementation of the Deloitte report may require consideration of additional staff input. This will be considered via the BIS structural review of Community Services.

Recommendations

Based on the positive independent evaluation of BCC grant support, and in advance of formal DSD notification, it is recommended that BCC should continue to support the Advice sector in the City by agreeing to:

- Approve a further 12 months grant support to each of the 5 area Consortia at the same level as 2007/08 uplifted by inflation (3%)
- The current make up of the Consortia continuing.
- Officers working with Consortia to agree an implementation plan so that the Advice sector in Belfast is in a position to fulfil the requirements of the DSD Opening Doors pilot phase and any revised BCC grant support requirements.

Key to Abbreviations

BCC - Belfast City Council
DSD - Department of Social Development

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Alleygating Scheme in Lower Ormeau

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 24th April, 2006, it had agreed to provide a sum of £28,000 in connection with the implementation of an alleygating scheme as part of the Renewing the Routes Initiative on the Ormeau Road. Since that date, significant progress had been made by the Renewing the Routes Team regarding the project, including obtaining the necessary consents to enable Road Traffic Orders to be issued by the Department for Regional Development in order to have the alleyways declared as abandoned. The Department had indicated that the process to issue the relevant Orders would take between six and eight months.

She pointed out that the amount of £28,000 which had been allocated to the alleygating works had resulted from an assessment of the potential needs in the area based on the costs set out in a City-wide alleygating tender. The amount of money provided by the Council would be combined with money provided by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing Associations and a private business. She indicated that it had been estimated that the alleygating scheme would, due to the high level of interest, cost in the region of £60,000, depending on the final results of the Road Traffic Order process. It would therefore be necessary for the Committee to provide a further sum of £10,000, should the Roads Service agree to the full implementation of the project.

She pointed out that, originally, it had been anticipated that the scheme in the Lower Ormeau would be undertaken using the existing City-wide Council contract for the installation of alleygates. However, due to the take-up elsewhere in the City, the existing contract had been fully committed. It would therefore be necessary to seek a separate tender for the works in Lower Ormeau and she sought approval to proceed with this process, indicating that the tenders would be evaluated on the basis of quality and cost in order to ascertain which would be the most economically advantageous.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that tenders for the installation of alleygates in the Lower Ormeau area be invited and agreed further to allocate an additional sum not exceeding £10,000 towards the proposed Lower Ormeau alleygating project.

Renewing the Routes: Integrated Development Fund Plans for the Falls and Crumlin Roads

The Director reminded the Committee that draft plans for the Falls and Crumlin Roads had been submitted for approval to the Department for Social Development in May, 2007. She informed the Members that, following lengthy consideration by both the Departments for Social Development and Finance and Personnel, the Action Plans had been approved recently on the basis of the previous Letter of Offer, which included a completion date of March, 2009.

She pointed out that the delay had raised a number of issues in relation to the implementation of the Action Plans. Firstly, the continuing uncertainty had had a significant adverse impact on the Council's ability to develop projects within the targeted area and, since the Integrated Development Fund was due to end in March, 2009, the Department for Social Development would have to consider extending this deadline in order for the Council to deliver the plans as originally envisaged. In addition, given recent announcements in relation to the delivering of regeneration, it would be vital that the Department for Social Development considered how complementary activity, such as Neighbourhood Renewal, Secondary Arterial Routes, and the work on Renewing Routes, could be most effectively integrated into the Action Plans to ensure maximum benefits.

Accordingly, the Director recommended that the Council seek confirmation from the Department for Social Development that the deadline for delivery of the Integrated Development Fund scheme would be extended until at least March 2010 and that they would make an announcement to mark the initiation of the project.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairman