

Development Committee

Wednesday, 14th May, 2008

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor M. Browne (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly); and
Councillors Attwood, Campbell, Convery, Crozier,
Cunningham, D. Dodds, Hartley, Humphrey, Kyle,
C. 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;
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Services Manager;
Mr. T. Husbands, Managing Director,
the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls; and
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

(The Deputy Chairman in the Chair.)

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Ekin and P. Maskey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th April 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 May, subject to:

- (i) the amendment of the minute under the heading "Rapid Transit Study" to provide that the Roads Service be requested to make a further presentation specifically in relation to proposals to alleviate traffic congestion in the York Street, Dunbar Link and West Link area of the City; and
- (ii) the omission of the minute under the heading "Community Festivals Fund" which, at the request of Councillor Stoker, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Belfast Tourism Monitor

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th March, it had agreed to receive from representatives of Millward Brown Ulster Limited a presentation in respect of the findings of the Belfast Tourism Monitor 2007. It was reported that Ms. C. Toner and Mr. R. McGimpsey were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Deputy Chairman.

Ms. Toner stated that in 2007 6.9 million people had visited the City, an increase of 2% on the previous year, with the number of out-of-state visitors increasing by 24%. She indicated that these visitors had spent £313.3 million in the City. She pointed out that the Great Britain market was still very important to the City, with 68% of the visitors coming from England, Scotland and Wales, whilst visitors from within Northern Ireland had reduced. She indicated that it had been pleasing to note that the ratings regarding the quality of accommodation and restaurants had increased.

Ms. Toner and Mr. McGimpsey responded to several questions from Members following which they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee noted the findings of the Belfast Tourism Monitor for 2007.

(Councillor M. Browne, Chairman, in the Chair.)

West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the above-mentioned matter to enable further information to be obtained.

Community Festivals Fund

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 9th April under the heading "Community Festivals Fund" which had been taken back by the Chairman at the Council meeting on 1st May at the request of Councillor Stoker. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

"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."

The Director informed the Committee that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure had indicated that it would be prepared to provide the Council with approximately £77,000 during the next two financial years towards the Community Festivals Fund. Twenty-two of the Local Authorities in Northern Ireland had accepted the amounts which the Department had offered and it was likely that three further Councils would do so.

In response to a Member's question, the Director indicated that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure would permit the Council to use 10% of the amount offered towards the costs of administering the Fund and that it would be her intention so to do. However, the costs which would be incurred by the Council in administering the scheme would be considerably higher than the £7,730 which the Department would permit.

A Member pointed out that the sum of money which would be available under the proposed scheme for community festivals in Belfast would be less than the amount which had been provided previously by the Northern Ireland Events Company. In addition, it was likely that organisations which had received funding for festivals in the past would either receive no funding or lesser amounts than previously. He therefore suggested that the Council should request the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to increase the amount which it would provide to events in Belfast. He pointed out that the Belfast Festivals Forum would be supportive of the Council making such a request and had indicated that, since it believed that the amount of money being offered by the Department was less than the sum which was required, it had been supportive of the Committee's decision of 9th April not to accept the funding from the Department.

Several Members expressed the view that, since it appeared that Belfast would be the only Council in Northern Ireland not to accept the transfer of the Community Festivals Fund, communities in the City would be unable to receive funding for festivals which had been held for many years. They suggested that the Committee should accept the money which had been offered by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in order to commence the operation of the Fund and then seek additional funding from the Department. They pointed out that because the Committee had declined the offer of funding at its meeting on 9th April, it was likely that a number of festivals which were due to take place in the summer period would not now be able to obtain funding from the Council.

The Director of Development reminded the Committee that her Departmental Budget would not be able to provide the amount of £77,300 to match the amount on offer from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in order to operate the Community Festivals Fund and that it would be necessary therefore for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider if finance were available from elsewhere in the Council's overall budgets.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Humphrey,
Seconded by Councillor McCausland,

That the Committee makes available in the current financial year £120,000 for the Community Festivals Fund, subject to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreeing to provide the additional finance required, accepts the amount of £77,300 from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and requests that it increase the amount which it is providing to the Fund by £42,700 to match the Council's contribution.

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

Branding Belfast

The Director reminded the Committee that a process to re-brand Belfast had commenced in June, 2007 and that, following consideration of a report at its meeting on 21st February, briefings had been held for the various Party Groupings represented on the Council. In addition, all Members of the Council had been invited to a Branding Reference Group meeting on 26th February at which the general concept had been endorsed. However, the Members present had requested that further work be undertaken by the Brand Consultants to sharpen the image. This had delayed the process and had resulted in the original launch date of April having to be postponed. As a result, the Brand Consultants had prepared new designs and a further Reference Group meeting had been held on 8th April at which the amended design had received unanimous approval. She advised the Committee that Mr. Gerry Lennon, Chief Executive of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, was in attendance to make a presentation regarding the new Brand. The Committee agreed to receive Mr. Lennon, who was admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Lennon pointed out that the development of a new Brand would reinforce Belfast's position as a:

- (i) place for companies to locate and grow their business;
- (ii) place which attracted talent and met skills needs;
- (iii) magnet for leading research, education and innovations;
- (iv) location with a high quality of life for its citizens;
- (v) quality tourism and conference destination; and
- (vi) confident and contemporary City.

Accordingly, the Consultants had been asked to develop a Brand image which added value by providing a clear direction for all the marketing products which were produced within the City. He pointed out that it would be essential that the new Brand related to and was accepted by the citizens of Belfast and visitors to the City as well as the media and potential investors. He appraised the Members of the research methodology which had been undertaken by the Consultants.

Mr. Lennon informed the Committee that the design which had been approved by the Brand Reference Group was a heart shaped "B". He pointed out that all the major tourism-based organisations in the City had committed themselves to this Brand.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed unanimously with the proposed Brand and agreed that it be launched in June at the Belfast Waterfront Hall. Mr. Lennon then retired from the meeting.

Departmental Plan 2008/2009

The Director submitted for the Committee's approval the Development Departmental Plan for 2008/2009. She pointed out that the Plan identified the actions, initiatives and events planned for the Department during that period.

Following discussion, the Committee approved the Departmental Plan and noted that a copy was available on Modern.gov.

European Unit Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information"

Members are asked to consider the following progress reports:

- 1. Comet Interreg IVA - Tourism Applications**
- 2. Quartiers En Crise AGM attendance**
- 3. Opportunity Europe**
- 4. INTERREG IIIC Project - BERI (Brownfield European Regeneration Initiative)**
- 5. INTERREG IVC Application B -Team Task Force Group of Experts in Brownfield Regeneration**

Key Issues

1. Comet Interreg IVA Tourism Application

Members will recall their decision on 15 October 2007 to sign off the Comet multi- annual Interreg plan for submission to the SEUPB to try and secure up to £16 million of Interreg IVA funding. This funding would allow Belfast City Council, on behalf of the Comet Partnership, to deliver a suite of cross border projects ranging from enterprise to waste management collaboration. At the time of submission the SEUPB had not yet opened its tourism call for Interreg IVA and the Comet Secretariat had only received one tourism project. Since submission the SEUPB has developed and opened a tourism project call (February 2007) and the Comet Secretariat, the Tourism Development officer and the Regional Tourism Partnership have sought to develop Comet tourism projects to submit under the call.

Three projects have been developed thus far:

Lagan Canal Project

To undertake waterways feasibility studies and appraisals necessary to establish the future validity of cross border capital east west waterway projects

BVCB UK Marketing Project

To attract tourists to Belfast and the border areas

Gaeltacht Quarter Cultural Trails

To establish a cultural tourism network between Belfast and Donegal

All three projects have cross border partners and will be submitted to the SEUPB as an addendum to the Comet multi-annual plan. Members are asked to note this development.

2. Quartiers En Crise AGM attendance

Members agreed at the March 2008 Development Committee to take on the management of the Belfast QEC network from 1 April 2008. This function and responsibility has been transferred from the Belfast Health Trust to Belfast City Council's EU Unit Hereafter. It is Belfast City Council's responsibility to lead the network of partners in Belfast, develop and deliver projects and engage at a trans-national level with other QEC initiatives.

The QEC European AGM is being held in Starogard, Gdansk, Poland from 11-14 June 2008. The attendance of the Chair (or his nominee) and the European Manager will be required. There will be an opportunity for the Chair (or his nominee) to vote on behalf of Belfast and to stand for election to secure the place as Treasurer on the Executive Bureau. Belfast has retained this post since 1989. It is important for Belfast's profile and influence to maintain a place on the Executive Bureau and the Treasurer post has proven to take up a minimal amount of the incumbent's time working alongside the QEC Brussels accountant.

The costs incurred by the attendance of the Chair (or his nominee) at the AGM will be covered by QEC. Approval is sought for the costs incurred by the attendance of the European Manager to be covered by BCC through the EU Unit budget.

3. Opportunity Europe

Members will be aware that the European Unit, in partnership with the European Commission Office in NI, organises an annual flagship event, called 'Opportunity Europe'. The aim of this sub-regional event is to promote the continuation of language learning amongst primarily post primary school students and the general public. Attendance figures have risen from 2 000 when the event was first held in 2004 to 6000 in 2007. Members will also be aware that this project has received a number of accolades – 'Citizenship Prize' conferred by La Federation des Maisons d'Europe and also last year, the National Centre for Language Learning's 'European Award for Languages' Prize.

This year's event will take place on 21 and 22 October 2008 and on offer will be workshops on career opportunities and cultural diversity, quizzes, language taster sessions, international volunteer schemes and workshops using drama and multi-media. A new perspective in 2008 will be a sub-theme looking at how young people can affect climate change in their local area and the announcement of the winners of an all Ireland schools competition. This year's event is being branded as part of the European Commission's 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue' and the Committee of Regions 'Open Days' Programmes.

The Chair, Deputy Chair (or nominees) are requested to attend the official launch of the event on 21 October 2008.

Belfast City Council's contribution to the Opportunity Europe programme amounts to £20,000 and comes from within the EU Unit annual budget.

4. INTERREG IIC Project BERI (Brownfield European Regeneration Initiative)

Belfast City Council acted as Lead Partner of the INTERREG IIC project BERI (Brownfield European Regeneration Initiative) which was completed in April 2008. The practical project received positive feedback from the participating European partners as well as from the INTERREG monitoring bodies and has contributed to an enhanced reputation for the Council as a participant in Structural Fund Programmes.

The reports to the INTERREG Managing/Paying Authorities have been approved and the last payment was received in April 08. The results of the BERI project are published on the website www.berinetwork.org as well as in several publications which are available from the Development Department. The documents have formed the basis for ongoing lobbying for sustainable Brownfield development

5. INTERREG IVC Application B Team – Task Force Group of Experts in Brownfield Regeneration

The Development Committee in October 2007 approved the preparation and submission of a bid for the first call of the INTERREG IVC programme and the application was submitted for the first call on 15 January 2008.

500 applications have been received therefore the selection process will be very competitive.

The formal assessment of the projects is however now underway and a final decision is to be expected in September 2008. The B Team is the only project submitted with a Lead Partner from Northern Ireland and in addition to Belfast City Council, 14 European cities and research institutes have committed themselves to the project.

The project's objective is to create a resource of practitioners and experts which supports local authorities in redeveloping Brownfield sites. B Team will assist the partners of the project in developing solutions and approaches to progress to redevelopment or remediation of problematic or complex Brownfield sites.

The benefits for the Council would be:

- Advice from a resource of international practitioners/experts in Brownfield regeneration
- Establishment of Council as lead agency in Brownfield regeneration on the European stage
- Support in practical solution finding processes
- Possibility to explore or utilise newer unconventional methods
- European wide dissemination of results of work – raising of awareness
- Reduction of resources (finance and time) required to develop such sites
- Redevelopment of complicated Brownfield sites with international assistance

Resource Implications

1. Interreg

If successful, the three tourism Interreg IVA projects will be 100% funded

2. QEC

Cost of travel, subsistence and hotel for EU Manager

3. Opportunity Europe

£20,000 for the fifth annual Opportunity Europe event available from the EU Unit annual budget

Recommendations

Members are asked to -

1. Note the submission of three tourism projects under the Interreg IVA tourism call as an addendum to the Comet multi annual plan
2. Approve the attendance of the Chair (or his nominee) and the EU Manager at the QEC AGM to be held in Starogard, Poland on 11-14 June 2008
3. Approve the standing for election of the Chair (or his nominee) at the QEC Executive Bureau elections for the position of Treasurer
4. Approve expenditure of £20,000 for the fifth Annual Opportunity Europe event and the attendance of the Chair, Deputy Chair or their nominees at the launch event on 21 October 2008
5. Note the successful closure of the INTERREG IIIC project BERI
6. Note the submission of the B Team project application under the INTERREG IVC call

Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special EU Programmes Body
BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
BCC – Belfast City Council
QEC – Quartiers En Crise
EU – European”

The Director informed the Committee that, subsequent to the papers having been issued, the European Unit had been informed that a submission it had made for assistance to the European Union's URBACT Fund, which helped cities to work together on trans-national issues, had resulted in the Council being awarded one million Euros of funding to undertake this programme. The project would examine where migrant workers in Belfast had come from, what jobs they were undertaking and the barriers to employment which they had encountered.

In answer to a Member's question in connection with the Quartiers en Crise Annual General Meeting, the Director explained that the Chairman of the Committee was also the Chairman of the Belfast Quartiers en Crise Network. If he were unable to attend the meeting his nominee would need to also be a member of the Belfast Network in order for that person to be able to vote at the meeting.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Director and adopted the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

Review of the Policy and Research Unit

Following discussion regarding a report concerning the review of the Policy and Research Unit within the Development Department, during which several Members expressed concern at the contents of the report which had been provided by the Business Improvement Section, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter.

Christmas Lights Switch-On

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 9th April, it had agreed that the Christmas Lights Switch-On commence at 7.00 p.m. She informed the Committee that the Events Advisory Panel, having been advised of this decision, had suggested that moving the start to 7.30 p.m. would enable rush-hour traffic to clear the City centre and allow a longer period of time to physically close the site. It had therefore requested the Committee to reconsider the issue.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed with the suggestion of the Events Advisory Panel that the Christmas Lights Switch-On commence at 7.30 p.m., rather than 7.00 p.m. as had been agreed previously.

London 2012 Cultural Olympiad

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that the Council had been asked to contribute to the regional plans for the Cultural Olympiad which would be staged leading up to and during the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. The purpose of the Olympiad was to arrange cultural events which would enable artists from around the world to showcase their work. It was intended to focus on the themes of:

- (i) bringing together culture and sports;
- (ii) encouraging audiences to take part;
- (iii) animating public spaces through street theatre, public art, circus skills and big screens;
- (iv) using culture and sport to raise issues of environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing;
- (v) honouring and sharing the values of the Olympic and Paralympic Games;

- (vi) encouraging collaborations and innovation between communities and cultural sectors; and
- (vii) enhancing the learning, skills and personal development of young people by linking with education programmes.

She pointed out that the events in Belfast would be organised locally but linked to national events focused on London. In addition, it was intended to create “live sites” where large outdoor video screens would link regional performance spaces, thus providing a platform for a wide range of cultural events and performances across the United Kingdom.

In answer to Members’ questions the Head of Economic Initiatives indicated that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure had confirmed that it would be providing limited funding for the Olympiad. She pointed out that, when further information became available from the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and the Department, a further report would be submitted to the Committee.

Noted.

Selection of Multi-Annual Funding Clients

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Multi-Annual Funding for Culture and Arts was implemented in 2004 after extensive consultation to inform the process and criteria for assessment. The second round of Multi-Annual Funding for the period 2008-2011 was initiated in July 2007 when organisations who wished to be considered from Multi-Annual Funding were asked to make an expression of interest. An extensive process of advisory consultations was undertaken with organisations to appraise them of the process and to discuss the eligibility and criteria. Twenty one organisations submitted by the deadline of 7 September 2007. These organisations were evaluated against the criteria and recommendations to select 4 new organisations for Multi-Annual Funding (Belfast Exposed, Cinemagic, Northern Visions and Young at Art) were brought before Development Committee in 14 November 2007. The selected organisations were then required to submit a three year programme for funding.

In approving the selection of Multi-Annual Funding clients the Development Committee discussed the possibility of Multi-Annual Funding being offered on an annual basis. The Director of Development indicated that she would submit a report to a future meeting on the establishment of a policy which would enable new organisations to be admitted to the three year Multi-Annual Funding scheme on an annual basis.

Key Principles in Establishing Multi-Annual Funding

The move to Multi-Annual Funding was undertaken after an extensive review process dating back to 2002 when it was discussed as part of the development of the Culture and Arts Plan for 2003-2006. The aim of Multi-Annual Funding was to develop a more strategic approach to funding which enabled longer term relationships with grant clients and embedded a more proactive approach to programme delivery for larger flagship organisations.

It was considered that £30,000 per annum should be the expected minimum grant awarded to Multi-Annual Funding clients to reflect the additional investment in partnership and as a reflection of the move to a service level agreement.

To allow this to take place it was felt that there needed to be a move away from an overly cumbersome administration process for grant applications and towards an efficient administrative process which facilitated a change of focus towards relationship building and direct liaison over developmental issues, programme and strategic objectives.

Key Issues

There are advantages to providing the flexibility for organisations to apply for funding on a yearly basis as it will respond to rapidly developing organisations and could potentially lead to more Multi-Annual Funding clients being admitted.

In considering this issue, Members should note the balance of funding between Multi-Annual and Annual Funding, whereby currently 63% of financial resources are invested in the existing 14 Multi-Annually Funded organisations.

Grant Review

A review of the Development Department external grant funding process on a Departmental-wide basis has been commissioned and will be making recommendations toward the end of the year. It is therefore recommended that this further review of Multi-Annual funding is considered as an interim measure for this year only, subject to the recommendations arising from the review.

Process

To run a further selection process for Multi-Annual Funding in 2008 it will be necessary to advertise for expressions of interest in early June. Officers generally contact the interested organisations and hold one to one meetings where appropriate to discuss eligibility

and selection criteria. The deadline for completed tenders will be mid-August to allow for programme applications to be received for either Annual or Multi-Annual funding by November 2008.

It is suggested that the term of Multi-Annual Funding will be for 2 years in the first instance, to allow for the Departmental grant funding review to be completed, and any findings to be known. Funding would then be awarded for a 2 year period bringing the end of their funding in line with other Multi-Annually Funded organisations. This would ensure that the bulk of administration of Multi-Annual Funding is streamlined and that all of the Multi-Annual clients could be subjected to external evaluation at the same time thus reducing costs.

Timetable

Advertise for expressions of interest	early June 2008
Deadline for expressions of interest	early July 2008
One to one meetings	July – mid August 2008
Deadline for completed tenders	Mid August 2008
Recommendation of multi-annual funding clients to Development Committee	October 2008
Council approval of multi-annual funding clients	November 2008
Programme applications deadline MAF and AF	November 2008

Staffing Resources

The call for expressions of interest in 2007 resulted in 63 organisations responding by the deadline of 24 July. It is estimated that over three weeks of officer time was required to contact all of the interested organisations and hold one to one meetings to discuss eligibility. A further five weeks of officer time was required to assess the 21 tenders received. Further time for feedback meetings with both successful and unsuccessful organisations is also required.

Financial Resources

At present, each of the Multi-Annual Funding clients receives an expected minimum of £30,000. In the 2008/09 year £612,000 (63%) of the available £960,000 is allocated to the 14 Multi-Annual Funding clients. If further Annual Funded clients are selected for Multi-Annual Funding this will result in some of them receiving a considerable uplift in funding to provide for greater developmental opportunity, although this will also have the effect of focusing more resources in the larger organisations.

Therefore, in order to balance the sector's needs in this regard, it is recommended that a limit of two is put on the further number of current Annual Funding clients that are admitted to the Multi-Annual Funding scheme, who would receive the recommended minimum award of £30,000.

If the recommendation were accepted that the number of new Multi-Annual Funding clients be limited to two, subject to performance against the agreed scheme's entry criteria, and the two organisations who scored over 65% in the previous Multi-Annual Funding selection process be admitted to Multi-Annual Funding, this would require an additional annual contribution in the region of £30,000 being allocated to the two organisations. This would raise the percentage of funding to Multi-Annual Funding clients to 70% (£672,000) of the existing fund, with 30% of funding available to the other 38 Annual Funding organisations.

Resource Implications

Financial

Resources will be identified within the annual revenue estimates for Annual and Multi-Annual Funding for Culture and Arts, However, Members will need to note the financial implications of increasing funding to Multi-Annual organisations.

Human Resources

Prioritisation of staffing resources against the section's operational requirements will be required to implement this process.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members consider the process outlined above for the admission of further Multi-Annual Funding organisations in 2008 and:

1. Approve the promotion of a 2 year Multi-Annual Funding scheme from 2009/10 as outlined above
2. Approval to an admission of a maximum of two further clients into the Multi-Annual Funding scheme, subject to full assessment against the agreed scheme entry criteria .
3. Agree the timetable as shown, for the promotion and processing of the scheme."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Support for Sport

The Committee considered the following requests for assistance which had been received under the Support for Sport Scheme in relation to events and promotions:

<u>Organisation/Event</u>	<u>Summary of Event and Amount Requested</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Queen's v Trinity University Boat Race Funding	Funding in the sum of £8,370 in relation to the holding in June of a series of boat races involving students from both Universities	Offer support of £4,200
Belfast Urban Sport Live	Funding in the sum of £7,000 in relation to the holding in June of an event which will attract 250 skateboarders from Northern Ireland, Great Britain and further afield	Offer support of £2,800
National Balmoral Showjumping Championships	Funding in the sum of £10,000 for the holding in July of a five day National Showjumping Championship for participants from across Ireland	Offer support of £8,000
Legends XI Belfast Cup	Funding in the sum of £10,000 in relation to the holding in July of the Belfast Cup featuring teams from Liverpool, Manchester United, Glentoran and Linfield Legends	Offer support of £9,000 and subject the event to a strict post-event audit
Under 18 North Belfast News Cup	Funding in the sum of £6,250 in relation to the holding in August of an under 18 football competition	Offer support of £4,130
Ultimate Strength Challenge – United Kingdom's Strongest Man	Funding in the sum of £10,000 in relation to the holding in August of the United Kingdom's Strongest Man Competition	Offer support of £9,000

<u>Organisation/Event</u>	<u>Summary of Event and Amount Requested</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Belfast 2008 International Wheelchair Tennis Tournament	Funding in the sum £6,875 in relation to the holding in September of the 11th Annual Belfast International Wheelchair Tennis Tournament involving competitors from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland	Offer support of £4,350
World Dwarf Games	Funding in the sum of £12,500 towards the holding in late July and early August of the 5th Dwarf World Games, which will be hosted at a range of Council facilities and the University of Ulster's sports facilities at Jordanstown	Offer support of £10,000

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Consultation on Historic Buildings Grant-Aid Scheme

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report on proposals to amend the Historic Buildings Grant-Aid Scheme.

Nomadic Trust

The Director reminded the Members that the former Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 23rd March, 2007, had agreed to provide a maximum of £250,000 to the Nomadic Trust under a five-phase funding arrangement. The third payment was dependant upon funding agreements being signed, which had now occurred. Accordingly, she recommended that the third tranche of the funding in the sum of £50,000 be released to the Nomadic Trust.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Nashville and South by Southwest 2008

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that at the Development Committee meeting of 14 November 2007, approval was given to undertake a music event in Nashville, Tennessee and to attend the South by Southwest (SXSW) Media Conference and Showcase in Austin, Texas. The project was a collaboration between the Council's Economic Development and Tourism units.

The connection with Nashville has a special significance because of the very strong links between Ulster and the Tennessee capital which dates from the Scots-Irish settlement of the area in the eighteenth century. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Mayor of Nashville and the Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1994 and this has resulted in many collaborations.

It was proposed that to further develop this relationship, a music showcase in Nashville as part of the Sister Cities meeting would be beneficial and would coincide with the South by Southwest festival thus creating a bigger impact.

Belfast City Council has identified creative industries as a priority sector in relation to economic development and has been successfully supporting the sector strategically since 2004. A key area in supporting the creative sector in Belfast has been internationalisation and export related activity. As part of this ongoing intervention, it was proposed that Belfast City Council help strengthen the City's creative sector in the international marketplace by participating and showcasing at South by Southwest 2008.

Key Issues

In July 2007, Belfast City Council's Tourism Development Unit in partnership with the Northern Ireland Industry Music Commission (NIMIC) planned and delivered a Belfast Nashville showcase concert in Belfast. This event was attended by a significant contingent from Nashville including the Mayor of Nashville.

Through the Council's Sister City relationship with Nashville, the Mayor was keen to look at the possibility of mutual showcasing in Nashville and at South by Southwest. As a result, it was proposed that the Belfast showcasing artists travel to the city of Nashville before participation at South by Southwest. A joint showcase event was organised to celebrate the Sister City relationship in 'Music City' and provide an opportunity for the artists and related businesses to rehearse and consolidate the showcase event at SXSW. A separate report will come to Committee on an action plan for the Nashville/Belfast relationship.

South by Southwest 2008 is the premier global event focusing on the creative side of the music and entertainment business which takes place annually in Austin, Texas in March. It involves a conference and exhibition – attended by more than 10,000 people and a variety of showcases with performances from over 1500 acts on 75 stages throughout the city.

SXSW remains the key US showcasing, deal striking, networking and media forum for the international media industry and attendance at the event remains a key priority for all of those interested in the business of media and creativity. The event mirrors showcases such as MIPIM and MAPIC (Retail Property Exhibition) in its ability to attract participants and outputs.

The aim of attending SXSW was to further enhance Belfast City Council's support for the creative industries by promoting Belfast musicians and music related businesses to an international audience and showcasing the investment and purchasing opportunities offered by Belfast's music industry.

Participation aimed:

- **To appreciate, value and celebrate Belfast's creative sector**
- **To provide networking opportunities for those working in Belfast's music sector and potential buyers and distributors in the world music industry**
- **To attract up to 5 Belfast based musicians to participate**
- **To identify new sales opportunities**
- **To promote Belfast as a city for tourism, business development and inward investment**
- **To identify new investment and partnership opportunities**
- **To increase the profile of Belfast's creative sector in the international marketplace**
- **To increase the number of Belfast companies doing business internationally**

On initial consultation with those participating, the project was deemed one of the most ambitious and successful showcasing events to date in relation to the creative industries. Early indications show that a total of \$450,000 was leveraged for participating artists as a result of their attendance and this figure looks set to increase over the coming months. The only negative feedback received from participants was that of lack of time to prepare for the trip and that a longer lead in time would have provided them with the opportunity to prepare additional marketing material and arrange a greater number of meetings.

A full feedback report detailing outcomes and comments on both the Nashville and South by Southwest visits is available on Modern.gov. This is the evaluation of the Showcase in a short time period but indicates already significant leverage from the process. It is therefore recommended that Committee agree to Belfast participating in South by Southwest for the next two years at a cost of £40,000 per year and that a review is carried out at the end of the three year cycle.

To maximise our outputs it is crucial that planning starts much earlier in the year, this will allow for better resource usage, to lever cash and to potentially include a greater number of partners in the project. There is also the potential to strengthen the linkage between Belfast, Nashville and South by Southwest and this is currently being further explored.

Resource Implications

Financial

£80,000 to be included in Departmental Plan for 09/10 and 10/11 (expenditure for event for 09/10 financial year)

Human Resources

Co-ordinated by the Head of Economic Initiatives and implemented by the Creative Industries Officer and Cultural Tourism Officer.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note the contents of the report
2. Agree to supporting Council participation at the South by Southwest Media Conference and Festival for 2009 and 2010 up to a maximum of £80,000 for both events.

Key to Abbreviations

SXSW – South by Southwest”

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

Civic Visit to Nashville

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that, at a meeting on 12 September 2007, Development Committee approved the acceptance of an invitation for a delegation to visit Nashville in early 2008. A civic visit to Nashville took place on 9 – 11 March 2008 to explore, agree and implement identified areas of cultural, tourism and economic development between the two cities. The connection with Nashville has a special significance because of the very strong links between Ulster and the Tennessee capital which dates from the Scots-Irish settlement of the area in the eighteenth century. A Memorandum of understanding was signed by the Mayor of Nashville and the Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1994 and this has resulted in many

collaborations. The Belfast Nashville Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the leisure and cultural sector, historical groups, genealogy associations, community development, media and educational organisations, worked on an itinerary for the visit and outlined a number of proposed projects.

Key Issues

The purpose of the visit was to work in collaboration to enable the relationship between the two cities to be strengthened and focus on achieving tangible outputs. Meetings with the Mayor of Nashville, Karl Dean, and representatives from the Mayor's Office of Economic Development to discuss sustaining the Sister City Link identified many opportunities to take forward. The new 2008/09 Sister City Action Plan has now been expanded to include not only tourism, but health, education and economic development linkages. The draft action plan was approved by the Belfast Nashville Advisory Group at a meeting on 1 May.

Key outputs:

1. Tourism

- Reception in partnership with Tourism Ireland promoted Belfast as a vibrant European destination and the gateway to Ireland and Europe. Launched and marketed new cultural tourism products and distributed

- 1000 72 Hour Guides to Belfast
- 2000 Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival DVDs
- 1000 Researching Family History Guides
- 1000 Music in Belfast DVDs produced by NIMIC

2. Music Showcase

A Celebration of Belfast Nashville Songwriters

Featured some of Belfast's best musicians, Foy Vance, Eilidh Patterson, Ben Glover and Brian Houston who performed with Nashville musicians Beth-Nielson Chapman, Nanci Griffith, Rodney Crowell and Mary Gauthier.

An invited audience of approx 250 guests included

Mayor of Nashville Karl Dean

Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Sister City Representatives

Travel and music journalists

Music industry figures

Nashville Public Television

Country Music Television

Tourism Ireland, NIMIC, BBC, Belfast Nashville Songwriters

Festival and the Real Music Club

- Created a high profile media event to raise the profile of Belfast
- Showcased Belfast's music talent in the international marketplace
- Provided networking opportunities for those working in Belfast's music sector and potential buyers and distributors in the world music industry
- Increased the number of Belfast musicians doing business internationally by identification of potential new investment and partnerships
- Raised the profile of the Sister City Relationship in Belfast - BBC Radio Ulster were present to broadcasted a two hour programme on the Sister City Relationship on 28 March.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the opportunities available in Nashville for musicians by distributing information to NIMIC database on return
- Promoted the 2009 Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival to new artists music industry figures.

3. Genealogy And Culture

- Visit to Andrew Jackson's Homestead: photocall for the Belfast Nashville Guide and the Belfast Genealogy Guide to Tracing your Family History in order to profile cultural and historical links between the two cities and target the Scots-Irish community in the Southern States as potential holiday visitors.
- Tour of Cheekwood Tour of Botanic Gardens and Park identified opportunity to partner with Belfast Botanic Gardens and joint exhibitions with the Ulster Hall.

4. Youth And Education

Meeting identified the aim to form links with schools and communities in order to establish one educational project and one community exchange visit per year between Belfast and Nashville.

5. Health Care

Created an opportunity to engage with Nashville health care at a high level and discuss securing a Trade Conference in Nashville and Trade Mission in Belfast.

Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival

The visit highlighted the potential to raise the profile of Belfast as a cultural tourism destination by showcasing its music talent in the international marketplace, in partnership with Tourism Ireland. Expanding the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival is a key component of the Nashville Action Plan and will enable:

- The creation of an annual high profile showcase of Belfast's music talent to be delivered in Nashville and result in a live broadcast of the event by BBC and Nashville TV, thereby increasing awareness of the talent and festival to be held back in Belfast
- Further development of programme content and increase in number of events and songwriters taking part and also greater profile of Festival
- Creating greater potential for the Festival to attract high profile artists to Belfast and also high profile local artists
- Opportunity to increase in the number of concerts and workshops and use of a wider range of venues for these
- Establishment of a the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Convention
- Creating potential for higher return on investment and delivering greater quality of audience choice and experience

Resource Implications

£49,663 which has been provided within the Tourism budget for implementation of the action plan.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members

1. Note the contents of this report
2. Commit to developing the Nashville Sister City relationship by approving the contents of the 2008/09 Action Plan and its implementation within budget.
3. Approve support to the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival of £30,000 in order to deliver the Belfast Festival in both Belfast and Nashville."

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations contained within the report and noted that a copy of the Action Plan to develop the Sister City relationship with Nashville was available on Modern.gov.

Responses to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest Northern Ireland Corporate Plans

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

The corporate plans for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Invest NI are currently out to consultation.

Key Issues

DETI Draft Corporate Plan 2008-2011

Consultation on the DETI draft corporate plan for the period 2008-2011 was launched by the economy minister in early March 2008. A draft Belfast City Council response is attached as Appendix 1. The plan identifies how the department intends to meet the key challenges set out in the Programme for Government under the heading of 'growing a dynamic, innovative economy'. DETI has identified three priorities for the period:

- **Productivity growth: objectives under this priority include –**
 - **Promoting a competitive and outward-looking economy.**
 - **Attracting and supporting high quality investment in both foreign and locally-owned businesses.**
 - **Ensuring a modern sustainable economic infrastructure to support business.**
 - **Promoting higher value-added activity through innovation and the commercial exploitation of R&D.**
 - **Developing and sustaining a Higher education research sector that holds a strong position within the UK and beyond and makes a major contribution to economic and social well-being.**
 - **Increasing the level of skills to aid productivity improvements in manufacturing and tradeable services.**
- **Increasing employment: objectives include –**
 - **Increasing employment opportunities by attracting high quality inward investment and supporting domestic investment**
 - **Promoting business growth.**
- **Tourism: objectives include –**
 - **Enhancing Northern Ireland's tourism infrastructure**
 - **Promoting the growth of the tourism sector.**

The Invest NI draft corporate plan 2008-2011 was also launched for consultation. This plan also focuses on three priority actions for economic growth. These are:

- **Realising client potential: focusing on making Invest NI clients become more competitive.**
- **Shifting the sectoral focus: moving towards higher value-added activities. This includes foreign direct investment (FDI) in target sectors (software development, ICT etc.) and niche manufacturing.**

- **Frontier technologies:** this involves intensive investment to deliver commercial outcomes from the innovative technologies.

The draft responses in Appendices 1 and 2 have been forwarded to DETI and INI to comply with the respective deadlines. However it has been noted that these responses are subject to committee approval and Council ratification.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve the attached appendices as the Belfast City Council response to these consultation exercises.

Key to Abbreviations

DETI – Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment
FDI – Foreign Direct Investment

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Response to draft DETI Corporate Plan 2008-2011
Appendix 2: Response to draft Invest NI Corporate Plan

Appendix 1

Draft Belfast City Council response to DETI draft Corporate Plan 2008-2011

1. Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft corporate plan for DETI for the period 2008-2011.
2. Belfast, as the region's capital city, is the engine for regional growth: what is good for Belfast is good for the region. We would like to see this reflected in the resources committed to the city's development through this corporate plan and further government investment in economic development.
3. The plan makes limited reference to role of local authorities in the delivery of economic development activity across the region, despite recent commitments by the Northern Ireland Assembly to give increasing responsibility for this work to local authorities with the Review of Public Administration. The detail on the Economic Development Forum (EDF) makes no reference to the local government representation.

4. The plan makes no reference to the RPA or the wider implications of this for the development and delivery of economic development policy and activities in the region and therefore no consideration appears to be given to resources for indigenous businesses which are not Invest NI client companies. This seems to be at odds with Invest NI's proposals to grow the number of businesses feeding through to them from the Start a Business programme by expanding the offering under this scheme.
5. We welcome the proposal to develop an international strategy that identifies regions and sectors to promote a positive image of Northern Ireland and create opportunities for economic development, education, science and technology benefits and to promote (and sell) Northern Ireland's expertise. Belfast City Council has been actively engaged in this work – with much success – in recent years and welcomes the opportunity to work with DETI on collaborative activity in this regard. We feel that support from the regional economic development and regeneration bodies would further validate efforts to promote a positive image of Northern Ireland on the international stage.
6. We welcome the commitment to stimulate the construction of 13-16 new workspace units and would be keen to collaborate with DETI and INI in identifying and developing additional sites, given Council's legal authority in this regard since 2002. We would also suggest a review of the access to and uptake of the current Invest NI units, given the current difficulties with some existing Invest NI business space. We welcome the commitment for 70% of FDI to locate in areas of economic disadvantage.
7. Belfast City Council agrees with the proposal that resources are to be focused on the higher value added sectors. We have recently commissioned research on skills demand and supply which suggests that over half of net new jobs in Belfast over the next decade will require graduate qualifications while less than 1 in 7 are expected to require no qualifications. We would be happy to share this information with DETI.
8. However we would argue that the other stated objective of increasing employment levels cannot be done by completely ignoring the lower value added sectors as these can potentially provide an avenue through which people can get into employment (or back into employment). There needs to be considerable focus on skills development, with work required on what skills are needed for the current and future employment opportunities

9. With regard to the enterprise framework, Belfast City Council is concerned at the initial feedback from the review of the enterprise strategy which indicates that there will be an increasing role for Invest NI in working with the post-Start a Business programme companies. We are concerned that this will lead to ambiguity on the part of those seeking support. It also appears to be at odds with wider plans to afford additional responsibility to local councils in this arena as part of the Review of Public Administration (RPA). We consider that it is important to consider some transitional arrangements on this in order to avoid duplication or lack of clarity.
10. Regarding the comments about business regulation, we agree that this can provide a major barrier to growth for local businesses. We would be happy to act as a conduit for informing local businesses about plans for changes to the regulatory environment through our range of business development and enterprise support activities.
11. We welcome the commitment to taking forward tourism signature projects. Belfast City Council instigated the original research into an international must-see attraction based around the Titanic and is currently assessing a request for financial support towards the project. As the gateway to the region and the entry point into Northern Ireland for most visitors, we feel that it is important to make significant investment in the city's tourism infrastructure.
12. Belfast City Council also accepts the need to invest in wider tourism development activities. Through our cultural tourism strategy, we have committed significant resources to promoting Belfast as a key visitor attraction. We have also made significant investments in our festival and events programmes and support the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau to identify and attract further business and conference tourism. We feel that, through partnership with NITB, we can tap into the potential of a growing market and we welcome the opportunity for increased collaboration in this regard.

Appendix 2

Draft Belfast City Council response to Invest NI draft Corporate Plan 2008-2011

1. Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft corporate plan for Invest NI for the period 2008-2011. We have engaged in the consultation sessions organised as part of this process and will also be making a response to the draft DETI Corporate Plan for the same period.

2. **We welcome the stated commitment to working with companies from the manufacturing and tradable services sector that have the commitment and ambition to grow and export.**
3. **We also welcome the focus on realising the potential of existing businesses across all sectors. Belfast City Council has committed significant investment in the city's small businesses and we feel that it is important to offer them a seamless continuum to underpin their growth potential.**
4. **We support the focus on allocating resources to higher value-added sectors. Belfast is a natural home for many of these businesses and we welcome the opportunity to work with Invest NI and other partners in order to ensure that their growth potential is maximised. However we would point out that the shift in sectoral mix towards higher value activities can also be achieved without total reliance on FDI support performance measurement of client satisfaction levels. Greater support of the shifting local companies skills and technologies to focus on higher value added activities as well as encouraging start-ups, diversifications and expansions, should be made.**
5. **We understand the definition that Invest NI currently uses in order to determine its client focus. We feel that the services that we – and other local authorities – offer can complement the Invest NI offering and we consider that there is a sufficient market for both parties to work together. We therefore feel that non Invest NI companies should not only be referred to the NIbusinessinfo website, but that the services offered by local council's economic development units should be signposted and promoted.**
6. **The role of local authorities in supporting SMEs is not highlighted in the report which we feel is an omission given the important role we play as a partner on leading business development programmes and promotional activities. Consideration should be given to the formalisation of the relationship between INI and local Councils in supporting businesses so that there is a clear focus identified for each partner.**
7. **We acknowledge the reference made to the possible transfer of powers for enterprise and local economic development as part of the Review of Public Administration (RPA). However we feel that it is prudent to work towards transitional arrangements, given the current commitments to the review within an agreed timeframe as recently presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly.**

8. **We are concerned that, in the absence of any agreement on transitional arrangements, there will be ambiguity over the role played by Invest NI and that played by local councils in the field of enterprise and local economic development. We have actively contributed to the review of the Enterprise Strategy and have some concerns at the emerging proposals for Invest NI to become increasingly involved in the post - Start a Business programme environment. We feel that now is an opportune time to design appropriate interventions with local councils to target businesses in this category, before responsibility passes directly to councils post-2011.**
9. **We agree with the sectoral prioritisation and feel that Belfast offers a significant market for growth within all the priority areas. We strongly welcome inclusion and recognition of niche manufacturing as Belfast City Council has been promoting this sector over the past four years and continues to put in place programmes to upgrade its contribution to the local economy.**
10. **We welcome the commitment to intervene in the commercial property market in locations where there is demonstrable market failure and we feel that there are a number of such locations within the Belfast City Council area. We would appreciate the opportunity to work with Invest NI to identify and bring forward these locations in order to increase the business base in the city. We would also welcome the opportunity to work with Invest NI to maximise the use of their current property portfolio, particularly in areas of need, in order to provide appropriate business location for local, small businesses."**

During discussion in the matter, Members pointed out that the response to Invest Northern Ireland's Corporate Plan made no reference to that organisation's poor performance in West Belfast, particularly given the high incidence of social need in that area. In addition, the response to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's Corporate Plan did not address fully the impact which would result from the ending of the Renewing the Communities Initiative and made no reference to the Council's aspiration to provide a World Trade Centre in Belfast.

The Director indicated that both response documents would be amended to reflect the comments which had been made.

The Committee agreed that the draft responses as amended be submitted to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Invest Northern Ireland as the Council's official response to their respective Corporate Plans.

Tourism Unit Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Conference Subvention

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has a Conference Subvention policy which is utilised to secure and support national and international conferences to Belfast and to build the City's profile as a conference destination. One request has been received and the proposal has been assessed against the funding criteria and it meets the category for financial support as detailed below:

British Association of Critical Care Nurses Annual Conference 14-16 September 2008 - it is anticipated that the economic impact from this conference will be £29,100 and will create 1650 bednights for BVCB members. This is the first time the conference will be held in Belfast and will be attended by both national and international delegates. Funding of £1,000 is recommended towards this conference.

First Thursday Initiative

Members will be aware that the Cultural Tourism Strategy entitled 'Developing Belfast's Opportunity' highlights the aim to support and develop cultural tourism product development and the need to develop communication between the cultural sector and the cultural tourist. A number of cultural tourism initiatives, which are designed to make specific areas of culture more easily accessible to both domestic and out-of-state visitors, have been developed. This includes a comprehensive city-wide Art Guide that not only promoted public art, but visual art by detailing public and private galleries, workshops and historical details of blue plaque artists. At a Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee meeting on 11 April 2007 Members approved working in partnership with galleries in order to establish extended opening hours on Thursdays and walking tours. Successful pilots in 2007 proved that galleries can increase audiences and profile by working in partnership.

Public galleries now have committed to extend their opening hours to 8.30pm on the first Thursday of each month from June – December 2008. This will complement evening economy activity and capitalise on momentum and interest created by the Belfast Art Guide. The initiative will be co-ordinated by culturenorthernireland.com which will dedicate a section of their website to Belfast's public and private galleries and include a

monthly e-bulletin, podcasting, virtual tours, reviews and a self-guided gallery tour to download. A media partner will promote 'First Thursdays' each month to their readers and the initiative will be marketed by BVCB and Belfast Welcome Centre.

Evening Economy Update

Lobbying Retail Sector –

The Evening Economy initiative has successfully secured budget for 2008/09 from the Brighter Belfast Initiative, the all party working group aiming to ensure that Belfast is a vibrant, clean and attractive city for residents and visitors. The Evening Economy has developed significantly since it was launched in April 2006 and the campaign 2008 is to establish late nights of trading to 9pm – Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. CastleCourt, Victoria Square and following a major lobbying campaign, the key multiple retailers including M&S, Bhs, Primark, Next, HMV, Top Shop and many more have now signed up to the campaign. A strong Evening Economy Retail Steering Group meets on a monthly basis to ensure that infrastructure is in place and that 3 late nights are viable for customers and ultimately successful for business.

Marketing –

A wide range of marketing tools will be deployed including radio advertising, extended opening to 9pm leaflets, branded promotional teams, outdoor media and advertising in City Matters. The 6th spring/summer edition of MORETIME will be published in May 08.

Evening Economy Conference –

An Evening Economy Conference is being organised for 23 September 2008 at the Waterfront Hall. The purpose of the conference will be to:

- Showcase successes of the Belfast Evening Economy initiative
- Stimulate debate and further interest in the development of the Evening Economy
- Debate key issues with relation to developing a vibrant evening economy

The conference programme will be designed to attract a high level of interest and participation from a local, regional and national audience. The Belfast Evening Economy Campaign has achieved major benefits for the city and the timing is opportune to host a conference which will highlight and showcase these successes.

Lagan Corridor Navigation Initiative Update

Members will be aware that funding of £1million has been made available by Ulster Garden Villages Limited towards the reopening of the gateway Lock number one at Stranmillis and the resourcing of an officer position on a fixed term contract. An action plan which outlined the proposed activities to be developed in relation to the key aspects of the project, including identifying funding, stakeholder engagement, creating awareness of the Lagan Corridor, sustainability and examining best practice, was approved at the Development Committee meeting held on 12 September 2007. Approval was also given at a meeting of the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub Committee held on 7 February 2007 for an initial two-year funding commitment to the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust.

As part of the work plan and consultation process, discussions have been held with a number of key Lagan Corridor stakeholders including the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL), Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI), Department of Social Development Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate (DSD), Northern Ireland Planning Service, Ulster Waterways Group, Waterways Ireland, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Lagan Valley Regional Park and Scott Wilson Consultants.

As part of the consultation process, a Lagan Corridor Steering Group has been established and a seminar took place in November 2007. It is anticipated that further research and stakeholder consultations will include discussions with Members and other key public, private and community representatives. Further developments include:

- A Scoping Study defining the Lagan Canal Restoration project lock number one at Stranmillis is being finalised and will be available for report to June Committee.
- A new web page has been added to Belfast City Council's website www.belfastcity.gov.uk/lagan which highlights the Lagan Corridor Navigation and the proposed development at Lock 1 at Stranmillis.
- A three dimensional model of the proposed development at Lock 1 Stranmillis has been completed.
- A number of funding applications are being explored and an application for funding to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board Tourism Development Scheme (TDS) for capital funding towards the development of Lock 1 Stranmillis.
- A virtual (computer generated) model has been commissioned which will allow detailed examination of the project through 360 degrees. This interactive 3D

environment will allow a user to navigate around in real-time and assess views from any location. It will be compatible with use on the Council Website and will also be used as a marketing and promotional tool.

- Interpretative signage has been commissioned, which will be sited close to Lock 1 and include interpretation of the Lagan Navigation, the history of the area, the river and canal. It is anticipated that this signage will dovetail with DSD signage that aims to link areas along the Lagan from Belfast Harbour to Stranmillis.
- Ms Cathy Burns has recently been appointed as Lagan Canal Restoration Trust Manager. Ms Burns is based in Craigavon and is currently undertaking familiarisation with the key partners including Belfast City Council and she is exploring options for the establishment of the Trust.

Lagan Weir to Shaw's Bridge Site Visit

Members are advised that the Chairman has agreed that a site visit be held on Wednesday 4 June 2008 departing at 2.00pm from Lagan Lookout to Locks 1, 2 and 3 via the Tow Path and returning by bus from Malone House for approximately 4.15pm. The site visit will be by bicycle and will be led by the Lagan Corridor Officer.

Belfast Tourism Development Analysis

Following on from the successful Renewing Communities initiative, a Belfast Tourism Development Analysis has been commissioned in partnership with NITB to identify gaps in provision and opportunities for community tourism across the city. TTC International has been commissioned to carry out this work and wishes to consult with all Members to seek their input to the study. It is proposed that TTC International set up meetings with the Party Groups at their earliest convenience.

Resource Implications

Conference Subvention

British Association of Critical Care Nurses Annual Conference
14-16 September 2008 £1,000

Evening Economy Conference

£20,000 has been assigned from the Brighter Belfast budget to finance the conference.

Lagan Corridor Navigation Initiative

Cost for bicycle and helmet hire and refreshments will be no more than £250 which has been provided for within the 2008/2009 tourism budget.

Recommendations

Conference Subvention

It is recommended that, given that the economic impact is substantial and that the conference will assist in enhancing the image of Belfast as a conference destination on an international platform, funding of £1,000 is allocated to the British Association of Critical Care Nurses Annual Conference 14-16 September 2008.

Cultural Tourism

It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

Evening Economy

It is recommended that Members note the above update and are invited to attend the conference on 23 September 2008.

Lagan Corridor Navigation Initiative

It is recommended that Members note the update and that the site visit from the Lagan Weir to Shaw's Bridge will be held on Wednesday 4 June 2008, and agree to incur expenditure relating to hire and refreshments.

Belfast Tourism Development Analysis

It is recommended that Members meet with TTC International to provide their input to the Belfast Tourism Development Analysis.

Key to Abbreviations

DCAL - Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
IWAI - Inland Waterways Association of Ireland
DSD - Department of Social Development
TDS - Tourism Development Scheme
NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board”

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

Employability and Skills Research Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which summarised the results of research undertaken into skills demand and supply and employability issues in the City.

Economic Development Update

Co-financing for European Social Fund Applications

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the European Social Fund provided funding for training measures to assist people into employment and to enhance their career prospects. The closing date for applications under this Programme had been November, 2007 and successful projects had been notified in December. She advised the Committee that the Council had been successful in attracting funding for a project to support access to employment in the independent retail and hospitality sectors. It had emerged subsequently that eight projects which had applied for funding had indicated that the Council would be co-financing their schemes. However, at the time of submission, only two projects had advised the Council of this. At its meeting on 21st February, the Committee had agreed to co-fund these two projects, together with a further initiative which had been submitted by Women in Business.

The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Committee that the Council had been requested recently to consider the undernoted additional three projects for co-financing over the next three year period:

- (i) "Advancement of Women Initiative", submitted by the Training for Women Network which had requested co-financing of £54,068 per year;
- (ii) "Women Working for Themselves", submitted by the East Belfast Enterprise which had requested co-financing of £26,237 per year;
- (iii) "Skills for Enterprise", submitted by East Belfast Enterprise which had requested co-financing of £30, 948 per year;

She advised the Members that the other two projects which had named the Council as potential match funders had not yet formally approached the Council.

She informed the Committee that no budget had been set aside for these three new schemes when the Economic Development Unit's Business Plan had been prepared. In addition, these projects could not be co-financed through any other European funding stream. Therefore, the Department was not in a position to provide financial assistance to these projects.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed not to support the three requests which had been received for co-financing under the European Social Fund's, "Helping People Into Employment" scheme.

City of the Isles Conference

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the Cities of the Isles Network involved Belfast, Liverpool, Dublin and Glasgow. The cities engaged in collaborative activity in the fields of economic development and regeneration and a conference on these themes was held each year. She pointed out that the 2008 event was scheduled to be held in Liverpool on 16th and 17th October. Whilst the programme for the event had not yet been finalised, it was likely to focus on showcasing the activities which were being undertaken as part of Liverpool's European Capital of Culture programme.

Following discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with two officers, attend the City of the Isles Conference in Liverpool in October and authorised the payment of the associated travelling and subsistence allowances.

Proposed Children and Young People's Programme

The Director reminded the Committee that during the last twenty years the Council had developed an annual programme of summer events for children and young people. This scheme had been delivered by a variety of Council Departments with each element operating independently from each other, which was not ideal. Accordingly, it was the Development Department's intention to create a co-ordinated approach to and create a single identity for the programme of events for children and young people which would be held during the summer period.

She indicated that it was proposed that single identity marketing material would be produced to highlight all of the Council-run and supported activities which would be taking place from 1st July to 31st August. The programme of activities would include those which were organised by the Council as well as those events which were funded by the Council but delivered by external organisations. In addition, the material would refer to activities undertaken by the major cultural venues in the City, such as the Belfast Waterfront Hall, Belfast Zoo, W5, the Grand Opera House, Black Box and the Old Museum Arts Centre. It was intended also to connect elements of the Council's Play Programme to events being organised by W5.

At the end of the summer period, a full audit of all of the activities organised and supported by the Council would be undertaken. The purpose of the audit would be to plan for summer 2009 to ensure that there was a greater level of synergy and linkage between all the events. She indicated that the cost of developing this phased approach would be in the region of £26,000, including the programming, promotional and marketing costs, and that this amount was contained within the Departmental Revenue Estimates.

Following discussion, the Committee approved the proposal for a co-ordinated children and young people's programme of summer events as outlined.

Review of the Council's Play Service

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report concerning the abovementioned matter to enable further information to be obtained.

Responses to Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans

The Committee was reminded that twelve Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships were operating currently within Belfast and that they were all developing Action Plans for their areas. Each Plan detailed a series of actions and identified the organisations which the Partnership believed could assist them. In a number of cases the Council had been identified as the lead partner.

The Director reported that the Council had replied to six such Plans and that responses had been prepared recently to the Action Plans submitted by the Upper Springfield Whiterock, the Ballysillan/Upper Ardoyne and the Crumlin/Ardoyne Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships, copies of which had been circulated and were available on Modern.gov.

The Committee endorsed the contents of the Council's responses to the Upper Springfield Whiterock, Ballysillan/Upper Ardoyne and Crumlin/Ardoyne Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships' Action Plans.

Strategic Regeneration Frameworks

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, under the Renewing Communities Programme, each Area Partnership Board had been provided with funding and tasked with producing a Strategic Regeneration Framework. Each Partnership Board had engaged a consultancy team to support them in this work which was due for completion during the summer period. Whilst each Board was at a different stage of development, efforts were being made to co-ordinate activity across each area and engagement with Members in each area had been undertaken directly by the Partnership Boards.

The Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that, once completed, the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks would be submitted to the Department for Social Development. She indicated that no specific resources had been committed to enable the proposed actions identified in the Frameworks to be implemented, apart from those monies which had been committed to enable the documents to be prepared. Each Partnership Board would be submitting their final Frameworks to the Council for consideration and endorsement later in the year. However, each Board, together with the Belfast Regeneration Office, had requested an opportunity to appraise the Committee of the key issues which were arising in each area prior to the process being concluded.

The Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that, since it was likely that Community Planning would become the responsibility of the Council following the Review of Public Administration, it would be beneficial for the Council to consider how the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks should be linked to the City-wide planning process. Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee agree to hold a special meeting to receive presentations from the Belfast Regeneration Office and the Area Partnership Boards concerning the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks for their respective areas.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Andersonstown Gateway Project

The Committee was advised that the Department for Social Development would be undertaking a feasibility study regarding the establishment of a commercial gateway for the Andersonstown area and that a steering group would be established to manage and guide the process. The Development Department had requested that an officer from the Department become a member of the steering group.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the Director of Development act as the Council's representative on the Andersonstown Gateway Feasibility Study Steering Group.

Markets Issues

Smithfield Market Letting

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 Unit 1 had been let to Mr. Jim Kyle, 19 Clonbeg Drive, Newtownabbey, at a cost of £153 per month, for the sale of computer parts, computer games and related second hand products.

Noted.

Trader/Customer Vehicle Parking at St. George's Market

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, since the refurbished St. George's Market had re-opened in 1999, discussions had been held on a regular basis with the Roads Service, the Police and the traders regarding car parking issues and that various locations had been used for both traders and customers to park.

She informed the Committee that correspondence, together with a petition, had been received from traders and customers requesting that the Council buy an area of land at the corner of East Bridge Street and Cromac Street which was owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but leased to the Roads Service for the purpose of providing a car park. The site which had operated as a pay and display car park was closed currently due to the major works which were being undertaken in the area in connection with the Belfast Sewer Project.

It had been ascertained that the Roads Service's lease on the site expired in April 2009, part of which had been identified for a road alignment scheme. In addition, since the Northern Ireland Housing Executive only held its evaluations for a six month period, it had not been possible to ascertain the value of the site. She pointed out that a privately-operated car park had opened recently at the corner of East Bridge Street and Stewart Street beside Central Station and that Council officers and the market traders were endeavouring to negotiate a price for the use of space within that car park for traders and customers using St. George's Market.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Head of Economic Initiatives and agreed that the traders be advised that it would not be feasible at present for the Council to purchase the land at the corner of East Bridge Street and Cromac Street.

Smithfield Market

Several Members expressed the view that the Council was concentrating its promotional work on St. George's Market to the detriment of Smithfield Market. In addition, traders in the North Street area believed that the Department for Social Development was ignoring that area of the City.

In reply, the Chairman indicated that he, together with the Market's Development Officer, met with the traders in Smithfield Market on a monthly basis and that the Council's Corporate Communications Section was developing promotional opportunities regarding the Smithfield Market.

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that a report would be submitted to the June meeting regarding the proposals which Westfield Shoppingtowns Limited had to develop the Castlecourt Shopping Centre and its likely effect on Smithfield Market. She pointed out that the report would also outline possible locations for markets across the City.

Noted.

Planning and Transport Issues

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

Rapid Transit Study

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) published details of the Belfast Rapid Transit study and presented a summary of the study to the Development Committee in April 2008. The study carried out further analysis of possible route options and the most appropriate type of technology for the development of the system. There is currently a six week consultation period to respond to the study.

Residents Parking Consultation

The Department for Regional Development previously published a Draft Policy Residents Parking Schemes Consultation document to which the Council responded in February 2007. The Council response whilst welcoming the introduction of this scheme, where it secured the support for a majority of the residents, raised serious concerns over the charging for residential parking schemes in Northern Ireland.

Free Travel for People Aged 60-64

The policy consultation sets out proposals to extend the concessionary fares scheme to include people aged 60–64. Currently free travel is available to people aged 65 and over, those registered as being blind and those in receipt of war disablement pension. Half fares are also available to a number of groups.

Newtownards Road Planning Framework

The Newtownards Road 2012 group as part of the action plan developed to support the regeneration of the area from Bridge End to Holywood Arches are seeking to develop a structure that will help harness the potential developments within the area and address the ongoing blight arising from the BMAP/ BMTP and infrastructure proposals.

Key Issues

The Rapid Transit Study

The DRD presentation to the previous Committee was based on a recent consultant study findings, published on the same day, into the rapid transit option for the city. Consideration of the detail contained in the Rapid Transit study and the DRD presentation identified a number of issues Committee may wish to consider as part of the draft response:

General

- The final form of technology (guided bus or light rail), capacity and the longer term potential in relation to the continued development of the city. The significant difference in Capital Cost Estimates, between Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT), set out in the Study is an important element of the Consultant's recommendation of a bus based system. However, the basis for these cost comparisons are not clear in terms of whether the comparison is like for like and whether or not the system, as suggested can be upgraded at a later stage to tram or light rail. An important difference in the comparative costs for the systems relate to the degree of segregation from other traffic along the route with other variations for infrastructure or vehicle costs. It is not clear from the report whether or not the bus based system will utilise a greater proportion of shared roads space with other traffic.

- The quality offered by bus based rapid transit can vary considerably depending on both the specification of the vehicles and the associated infrastructure (stops, interchanges, ticketing and real time information systems). The level of specification for the quality service is not clear from the study. The benchmark should be set to ensure the system selected for Belfast provides a viable attractive alternative to the car both in terms of service quality and journey time. The quality of provision must be clearly articulated and ensure that the provision includes high quality infrastructure incorporating real time information and full integration with re-aligned public transport provision in the form of an integrated system.
- The proposals do not consider provision for the north and south of the city or address the potential relationships to existing provision within the corridors associated with the study options. The provision should be set within the longer term context of city wide transport and the objectives of securing a modal shift towards public transport. The Council as part of the BMAP processes advocated the development of clear transport corridor plans that provided the context for longer term planning on the basis of an integrated approach.
- The BMTP and RTS outlined timetables for the progression of the different transport options and their implementation. The BMTP stated that commencement of a bus rapid transit network with the implementation of the Eway scheme in the Newtownards Corridor within the 2015 plan. Detailed planning of rapid transit schemes in three other corridors not served by rail infrastructure and/or to support major development was also outlined. As the progression of the EWAY, CITI Route and part of WWAY is now proposed how does this impact on the implementation of other transport initiatives?
- The proposed routes suggest that the Rapid transit scheme will not be segregated from other traffic in major sections of the route particularly close to the city centre. It is not clear how the system will perform or deliver a modal shift in these circumstances. In the absence of route segregation and priority over other city centre traffic it is not clear what frequency or speed can be achieved.
- Significant development proposals such as those for Titanic Quarter offer the opportunity for both private sector contributions and the integration of provision into the design. Previous rapid transit schemes have

indicated the potential for attracting private sector investment is stronger in relation to light rail schemes rather than bus based – it is not clear to what extent the report has considered the potential for private sector contributions or investment.

- In relation to affordability and integration of the schemes it is not clear whether the calculations are based on existing transport fare structures or whether the proposed routes will be integrated within the existing public transport network.

Specific

- There are a number of route options presented in the report Executive Summary that Committee may wish to consider in detail including the potential alignments for the WWAY Rapid Transit scheme beyond the Royal Victoria Hospital; the proposal to divert EWAY and combine the access with Titanic Quarter and the potential to link George Best City Airport by a modern, fast, efficient and frequent public transport service.
- The potential conflict between the EWAY proposal and the Comber Greenway. Whilst the walkway and cycleway were introduced as temporary resources along the protected alignment they have become well utilised. The possibility to examine alternative routes such as the Newtownard Road has also been raised by Sustrans. The EWAY rapid transit link will provide an important element of what could be a modern effective public transport system for the city.
- The continued retention of the Bankmore link as part of the city centre transport solutions by DRD could affect the existing proposals and their future enhancement. The Council has highlighted serious concerns over the impact of the proposed of four lane road link from Cromac St to Sandy Row in relation to community severance, air quality and the adverse implications on the potential for the rapid transit connectivity to the South of the City and the university area.
- The report fails to identify detailed options in relation to the potential routes through the city centre and the level of priority that can be afforded to public transport initiatives. The connection through the city and the ability of the system to provide integrated through routes are critical both in relation to the existing proposal and any potential for a future upgrading of the system. The relationship with the city bus re-routing study and the potential to remove lay-over facilities from the City Hall/ Donegal Square area is a critical element of the study that is not clarified.

Residents Parking

DRD announced the five areas to carry out preliminary consultations on proposed resident's parking schemes in Belfast as: Barrack Street, Donegall Pass, Sandy Row, The Markets (west of Cromac Street) and Brown's Square.

As part of the process DRD intend to conduct parking surveys, initial scheme design, carry out informal consultation with residents, finalisation of scheme designs and commencement of the necessary legislative process. This process is expected to take up to 12 months to complete.

DRD propose the introduction of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ), an area where all on-street parking is controlled. This means that parking is only permitted in designated parking areas or bays and that the remainder of the kerbside space is subject to yellow line restrictions. Two measures are proposed:

Permit Only Parking Areas

These are normally shared surface areas where there are no footways. Only vehicles displaying a valid permit can park in these areas.

Mixed Use Areas

These are normally traditional streets with footways. Only vehicles displaying a valid permit or a valid pay and display ticket can park in these areas.

It is proposed that the scheme will operate between 8.00am and 6.00pm Monday to Saturday. The proposed permit charge remains at £80 per year but is reduced to £40 in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. All the areas proposed are designated as a Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and the Council welcomes this introduction of reduced costs within these areas.

The Council previously raised concerns in relation to the charges on inner city communities which already suffered from the negative effects and disruption associated with commuter traffic. This potential additional charge, although reduced, for the introduction of a system to address external factors beyond their control remains inequitable.

Free travel for people Aged 60-64

A review of the Accessible Transport Strategy 2015 was carried out in December 2007 which stated that a review of the concessionary fare scheme would take place. The Council response welcomed initiatives to make public transport more accessible to the elderly.

The recent consultation document outlined a range of options for the extension of the concessionary fare scheme. The extension of the scheme is currently limited by the availability of resources and the recommendation focuses on the 60-64 age group as an expansion of the existing provision.

This change would increase the mobility options for a significant proportion of the city population utilising the existing public transport. It is therefore recommended that the proposal for the extension of the concessionary fares scheme to include people aged 60 to 64 should be supported by the Council.

Newtownards Road Planning Framework

The Newtownards Road 2012 group developed a multi-faceted action plan to support the regeneration of the Inner East area from Bridge End to Holywood Arches. The plan outlines a range of actions and proposals from direct intervention in the public realm through to major public and private regeneration proposals.

The part of the city to be covered by the proposal includes the sections of the identified arterial routes of Albertbridge Road and Newtownards Road and is likely to come under pressure for significant change as a result of major development proposals in or adjacent to the area of study – Titanic Quarter, Sirocco, Connsbank. The action plan developed by the group highlighted the need for a framework to provide a context for the public and private sector proposals for the area.

The 2012 group are seeking to develop a structure that will help harness the potential developments and address the ongoing blight arising from the BMAP/ BMTP and infrastructure proposals through the development of a planning framework. The framework, which will also draw together the findings from the previous work in relation to the neighbourhood renewal, arterial routes and BMAP processes, has been estimated to cost £15,000.

A request has been made for a contribution of £5,000 from the Council towards the cost of the Framework development. The support is being sought on the basis that the balance of the funding will be secured from a combination of public and private sector funding.

The production of the framework offers the unique opportunity for the group to add to the specific thematic work already carried out in the area and address the opportunity to harness the potential for positive change. It is therefore suggested that Committee accede to the request from the Newtownards Road 2012 group for the provision of a £5,000 contribution towards the production of the Planning Framework.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

- Considers the draft response as the basis for a response to DRD Rapid Transit Study;
- Notes the contents of the report in relation to Resident Parking proposal;
- Supports the DRD proposal for the introduction of the concessionary fare scheme for the 60-64 age group; and
- Endorses the recommendation for the provision of a £5,000 contribution towards the production of a Planning Framework for the Newtownards Road area by the 2012 group.

Key to Abbreviations

DRD – Department for Regional Development
CPZ - Controlled Parking Zones
WWAY – West of city proposed rapid transit route
EWAY – East of city proposed rapid transit route
BMAP – Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan”

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed concern at the proposals contained within the proposed Residents Parking Scheme, pointing out that it would penalise residents for difficulties caused by commuters.

In connection with the proposals to provide free travel for people aged 60-64, it was pointed out that, since the majority of the bus services concentrated on the arterial routes, a large number of elderly people were using taxis to travel to Doctors' surgeries or shops which were located on other roads and they would not benefit from the concessionary fares scheme. It was therefore suggested that Translink should improve the service which it provided on main roads other than the arterial routes.

Following further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Humphrey,
Seconded by Councillor D. Dodds and

Resolved – That the Committee respond to the Department for Regional Development indicating that, whilst it is supportive of schemes to prevent commuters from parking in residential areas, it is opposed to this particular scheme since it would adversely affect local residents.

The Committee agreed also to:

- (i) support the proposal to introduce a concessionary fare scheme for the 60-64 age group;
- (ii) provide £5,000 towards the costs of the Newtownards Road 2012 Group producing a planning framework; and

- (iii) endorse the submission of the undernoted document as the Council's response to the Department for Regional Development's consultation on the Rapid Transit Study:

Belfast Rapid Transit Study:
Draft Belfast City Council Response

The Council welcomes the announcement from the Minister for Regional Development and the publication of the Belfast Rapid Transit Study. The Council has supported the initiation of work to progress the development of a rapid public transport system for the city and would welcome the proposals as the first step towards a city-wide integrated network.

Notwithstanding the general support for the development of public transport this Council response is based on the consideration of the published documents by the Department for Regional Development and the presentation to the Development Committee in April 2008. The response covers both general and specific issues in relation to the study and the wider context of public transport for Belfast.

General

- The final form of technology (guided bus or light rail), capacity and the longer term potential in relation to the continued development of the city. The significant difference in Capital Cost Estimates, between Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT), set out in the Study is an important element of the Consultant's recommendation of a bus based system. However, the basis for these cost comparisons are not clear in terms of whether the comparison is like for like and whether or not the system, as suggested can be upgraded at a later stage to tram or light rail. An important difference in the comparative costs for the systems relate to the degree of segregation from other traffic along the route with other variations for infrastructure or vehicle costs. The Council would request clarification on the basis on the costs and whether or not the bus based system will receive the equivalent degree of priority and separation to that anticipated for a LRT form of provision. Clarification is also requested in relation to the viability for the proposed BRT to be upgraded at a later stage, in terms of the potential additional costs and required space to achieve the required physical separation.

- The quality offered by bus based rapid transit can vary considerably depending on both the specification of the vehicles and the associated travel time, infrastructure (stops, interchanges, ticketing and real time information systems). The specification in terms of level of quality for the service is not clear from the study. The Council would request for a benchmark to be set to ensure the system selected for Belfast provides a viable attractive alternative to the car both in terms of service quality and journey time. The quality of provision including targets must be clearly articulated and ensure that the provision includes high quality infrastructure incorporating real time information and full integration with re-aligned public transport provision in the form of an integrated system. The Council would request further details of the specification on the level of service which is sought, including integration with other modes of public transport, and reassurance that a high quality of service is applied to any Rapid Transit System for Belfast.
- The proposals do not consider provision for the north and south of the city or address the potential relationships to existing provision within the corridors associated with the study options. The Council have reservations in relation to the absence of proposals for the wider city or detailed consideration of the potential for an expanded system that builds on the initial proposals.
- It is the Council's view that the provision should be set within the longer term context of city wide transport and the objectives of securing a modal shift towards public transport. The Council as part of the BMAP inquiry processes advocated the development of clear transport corridor plans that provided the context for longer term planning on the basis of an integrated approach (See Attachment 1). The Study should clearly consider the integration of proposed development, in particular housing and employment, with the proposed transport network and provide an indication of the relationship between the implementation of improvements to public transport infrastructure and other transport services or proposals such as the provision of new highway infrastructure such as the proposed A2 widening or Connsbank Link.

- The BMTP and RTS outlined timetables for the progression of the different transport options and their implementation. The BMTP stated that commencement of a bus rapid transit network with the implementation of the Eway scheme in the Newtownards Corridor within the 2015 plan. Detailed planning of rapid transit schemes in three other corridors not served by rail infrastructure and/or to support major development was also outlined. As the progression of the EWAY, CITI Route and part of WWAY is now proposed the Council would request clarification of the implications of the proposed implementation on the development of the other transport initiatives identified for consideration, including the proposed timescales.
- The proposed routes suggest that the Rapid Transit scheme will not be segregated from other traffic in major sections of the route particularly close to the city centre. It is not clear how the system will perform or deliver a modal shift if in these circumstances. The Council is concerned that in the absence of route segregation and priority over other city centre traffic it is not clear what frequency or speed can be achieved and how this will relate to the existing bus based public transport provision.
- Significant development proposals such as those for Titanic Quarter offer the opportunity for both private sector contributions and the integration of provision into the design. Previous rapid transit schemes have indicated the potential for attracting private sector investment is stronger in relation to light rail schemes rather than bus based. Whilst the contextual documentation makes reference to the issue the Council would require clarification of the anticipated value or contribution from the private sector contributions or investment in relation to existing and proposed developments.
- The Council request clarification in relation to the anticipated or projected affordability and integration of the schemes with existing transport.

Specific

There are a number of route options presented in the Executive Summary for the study and the Council has a number of issues in relation to the detail of the proposed or potential alignments.

- The WWAY Rapid Transit scheme beyond the Royal Victoria Hospital has a number of options identified with the alignment of along Falls Rd, Glen Rd and Springfield Rd with a range of terminus options including the routes recommended by the consultants with an endpoint of Glenmona. The further assessment of this connection and routing should in addition to the economic be evaluated in relation to the potential regenerative benefits the proposal could bring to the neighbourhood renewal areas through which it would pass.
- The recommended proposal for EWAY is via a diversion into Titanic Quarter (Odyssey) and a shared link for both EWAY and the Titanic Quarter connection into the city centre. The alignment would follow the Ballymacarrett Walkway, Dee Street and Sydenham Road before joining the Titanic Quarter proposed link at the Odyssey. This represents a significant departure from the proposals in BMAP and does not serve or provide a significant proportion of the inner east population with a new connection to the centre, Titanic Quarter or the wider city. This proposal appears to utilise the existing Dee Street Bridge and would therefore be dependant on the construction of the Sydenham Interchange, Connsbank Link and potentially the Hollywood Arches by-pass. As a counterpoint or balance to this significant departure from the previous alignment there does not appear to have been any consideration of the potential for other alignments that could have reduced the impact on the Hollywood Rd / Newtownards Rd /Albertbridge Rd junction, such as an alignment directly linking Connswater as a link to Albertbridge Road. Clarification is required in relation to the relationship of the proposal to the development of new road infrastructure in the vicinity as the potentially causal relationship reflected in the study. The clarification should also include any funding interrelationships proposed between these potential projects.
- The Council have received representations in relation to the potential conflict between the EWAY proposal and the Comber Greenway. Whilst the walkway and cycleway were introduced as temporary resources along the protected alignment they have become well utilised. The Council would request the development of the route seeks to ensure the minimisation of impacts on the existing environment to integrate the provision or retention of the existing facilities.

- **The continued retention of the Bankmore link as part of the city centre transport solutions by DRD could affect the existing proposals and their future enhancement. The Council has highlighted serious concerns over the impact of the proposed road link from Cromac St to Sandy Row in relation to community severance, air quality and the adverse implications on the potential for the rapid transit connectivity to the South of the City and the university area.**
- **The Council is concerned that the report fails to identify detailed options in relation to the potential routes through the city centre and the level of priority that can be afforded to public transport initiatives. The connection through the city and the ability of the system to provide integrated through routes are critical both in relation to the existing proposal and any potential for a future upgrading of the system. The relationship with the city bus re-routing study and the potential to remove lay-over facilities from the City Hall/ Donegal Square area is a critical element of the study that is not clarified.”**

Chairman