

# Development Committee

Wednesday, 10th September, 2008

## MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor M.Browne (Chairman); and  
Councillors Attwood, Convery, Crozier, D. Dodds, Ekin,  
Humphrey, Kyle, Lavery, C. Maskey, P. Maskey,  
McCarthy, McCausland, Mhic Giolla Mhín and Stoker.

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 of the  
Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls; and  
Mr. J. Heaney, Committee Administrator.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Campbell, Cunningham and B. Kelly.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on the 1st September.

### Presentation by the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th June, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA) in respect of the state of independent retail trade in Belfast. Accordingly, it was reported that Mr. Glyn Roberts, Chief Executive (NIIRTA) was in attendance and he was admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Roberts advised the Committee that the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association had been set up to protect and enhance the local independent retail sector and played a vital role in supporting independent retailers in towns and city centres. He stated that developments by large national and international chain stores could have a negative impact on the local economy and jobs and may contribute to the deterioration of the local character of towns and city centres. Mr. Roberts advised the Committee that 51% of all traders in Northern Ireland operated in the independent retail sector. However, the high streets in many of the cities and towns in Northern Ireland were dominated by the same multi-national chain stores. In contrast to this, the

independent retail sector provided specialist products or services, catered for niche markets and was a major factor in attracting visitors to the City centre. Many of these independent retailers had, in the past, provided much needed employment and investment even during the periods of civil unrest in the City. He pointed out that the continuation of the smaller, independent retailer was now under threat from the growth of large-scale out-of-town developments.

In this regard, Mr. Roberts drew the Committee's attention to the report entitled 'Nightmare on Every Street' which had been commissioned by the NIIRTA and compiled by Mr. Donald McFetridge, Lecture in Retail Studies, University of Ulster and Special Adviser to the Assembly Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development which had set out the case for supporting the local retail sector in towns and city centres. Mr. Roberts reported that his Association wanted to see vibrant and dynamic town centres at the heart of local economic development. As such, the Association had called upon the Minister of the Environment to publish Planning Policy Statement 5, which sought to promote the regional role of Belfast and Londonderry and gave recognition to Sprucefield as Northern Ireland's only out-of-town regional shopping centre, as soon as possible in order to demonstrate that the Northern Ireland Executive supported fully local retailers and family businesses as had been promised in the Programme for Government.

Mr. Roberts expressed the view that out-of-town developments had not only hampered the development of small provincial towns but had had an adverse effect also on the arterial routes within Belfast, many of which were suffering as a result of such developments.

Mr. Roberts stated that he believed the way forward was to create a partnership between the various government departments responsible for town and city centre development, the Council and representatives of the independent retail sector. This partnership would seek to address the needs of the entire community in relation to economic regeneration.

Mr. Roberts answered various questions from the Members in relation to his presentation, thanked the Committee for receiving him and retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Retail Sector Support Plan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Retail Sector Support Plan:

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

**Members will be aware that, at previous meetings of the Development Committee, support for a range of initiatives to assist in the development and promotion of the retail sector (with a focus on Independents) across the city has been approved.**

While there are a number of interventions underway at present, recent research along with specific recent demands from trader groupings, have identified additional potential interventions which could support the further development of the sector. A Retail Sector Support Plan for the current year has been proposed on the basis that further analysis will permit Council to consider a new 2 year plan in the near future.

### Key Issues

Recent research carried out by the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland (ERINI) on behalf of Belfast City Council provides important information on the scale and nature of the sector. The data was gathered from the period 1993-2005. Key statistics include:

- Between 1993 and 2005, total retail employment in Belfast increased from 10,311 to 13,560 – an increase of 31.5%
- The number of individual businesses increased by around 10% from 1145 to 1256
- In single-plant retail businesses (i.e. those with only one store and employing less than 20 people – mainly independents) employment increased from 2,803 to 3,039 jobs
- The number of independent retail outlets increased by 9.6% from 617 to 676
- The independent retail sector represented around 22.4% of total employment and 53% of total outlets in the retail sector in the period 1993-2008
- Independent retailers created 2,151 jobs in this given period: the majority of these were in new openings (1,745) rather than expansions (406)
- Over 2/3 of the existing jobs in 1993 had been destroyed by 2005. The majority of these losses were due to the closure of outlets
- In 2005, around a third of jobs and around a quarter of outlets in the independent retail sector were located in the city centre area. Overall, the independent retail sector in the city centre had an increase in net employment of almost four times that of the rest of the city (17% compared to 4.4%)
- 71% of independent retail jobs in Belfast city centre in 1993 were lost by 2005 (compared to 2/3 of those outside the city centre)
- Since 1999, employment in the independent retail sector has decreased by 1.1% (it grew by over 12% in the previous 6 years).

It should be noted that there has been considerable further increase in retail employment and shop openings in the period from 2005. However, official statistical information is not yet available for this period.

Further to this analysis, additional qualitative research was undertaken to gauge the key issues affecting local independent retailers and to identify a range of potential interventions which Council might undertake to support the sector. This work revealed that the estimated market value for the independent retail sector is £345million.

Having considered the foregoing analysis along with direct demand from the predominantly independent retail sector, a draft action plan has been prepared for Members' consideration and is included in annex to this report (Appendix 1). This report also indicates the significant support mechanisms already in place for the sector within the Development Department and across the wider council services. Proposed actions have been identified within the following themes:

1. Marketing, promotion and branding
2. Capacity building and skills development
3. New product development support

Issues around planning/legislation and place making/ environmental improvements are also important and will be developed further for successive retail sector support plans.

Activities proposed under each of these themes include:

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Marketing, promotion and branding	- Shopping festival	£28,000
	- Belfast Loves Shopping Guide	£20,000
	- Independent Retail Awards	£9,000
	- What's on Calendar	£4,000
Capacity building and skills development	- Retail Therapy programme	£15,000
	- Trader groups development plans	£10,000
	- Retail master classes	£2,000
New product development support	- Change of focus for Thimble group towards product development	Resources included in Creative Industries budget
	- Craft traders initiative	£12,000

As reported to committee previously, Council corporately and Members individually have been approached by independent retailers and traders groupings seeking Council support and assistance. Currently there are approximately 12 retail groupings in Belfast both within the City Centre and in areas outside the City Centre. Each group is organised differently, has a different set of issues and is seeking various degrees of support from Council and public agencies and each group chooses to use Council support at different times.

Over the past 3 years, Members and staff have been directly engaged with the following groups: Lisburn Road, Castle Street, Ann Street, North Street, North West Quarter, Fountain Street, Wellington Street, West Belfast, Belmont Road. Some of the groups have produced action plans which contain both short and long term proposals connected to environmental improvements, marketing and business development. Staff have been active in attending to a large number of issues identified by groups which have no Council costs attached except staff time and have been particularly effective in securing cooperation of Government Departments on environmental improvements.

Council has also recently received a proposed Action Plan from Belfast Chamber of Commerce as appended, which is designed to generate additional footfall in the city centre. Belfast Chamber is intending to implement this plan in time for the Christmas trading season commencing in the autumn. Council financial support is being sought towards a number of initiatives and following further analysis this will be presented to Committee in due course.

#### Resource Implications

£100,000 already contained in budget.

#### Recommendations

To approve the proposed Retail Sector Support Plan.

#### Key to Abbreviations

ERINI – Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland”

The Head of Economic Initiatives reviewed the various aspects of the report and stated that the draft action plan had been designed as a short-term measure and that a longer-term plan would be presented for the Committee’s consideration at a future meeting. She advised the Committee that the craft traders initiative identified within the report was a pilot scheme which had been developed in conjunction with the Victoria Square shopping complex, whereby a number of craft traders would be permitted to set up stalls and sell their produce on the ground floor of the Victoria Square centre,

providing that all health and safety and quality assurance considerations had been put in place. She pointed out that similar space was not available at present within other shopping centres in the City and that money spent on the craft traders initiative would not involve the direct marketing of the shopping centre itself.

In response to a Member's question with regard to the development of open-air markets in the City, the Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that the Council's Licensing Committee would be considering various locations throughout the City which might be designated as suitable for street trading. A number of these locations had been identified by the Department as having the potential to be used as open-air markets.

After discussion, the Committee approved the undertaking of the various activities proposed under each of the themed areas within the Retail Sector Support Plan and agreed also that a further report, outlining how the Council might work with other statutory agencies to support retail activity in the City, be submitted to a future meeting.

### **Tourism Unit Update**

#### **Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast**

The Committee was advised that the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government had identified that tourism was a priority for development and was a key factor in the local economy. Since Belfast generated 50% of the total Northern Ireland tourism economy, it was important that the City continued to succeed as a tourist destination. Therefore, the Head of Economic Initiatives suggested that it was appropriate that a review of the current tourism strategy be undertaken in order to assist in the development of a plan of action for the next five years.

She reported that there were a number of agencies, government departments and community and voluntary groups, together with the private sector, working to maximise the tourism opportunity and there was a need to formulate a long-term sustainable approach to tourism development within the City. Accordingly, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board had indicated its willingness to work with the Council on the development of an Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast and it was committed to providing 50% of the costs associated with the study, up to a maximum contribution of £40,000. The Framework would deliver an action plan which would establish a clear programme of initiatives and projects, set in a realistic timeframe and with practical budgets and would allocate responsibility to the most appropriate agency.

After discussion, the Committee approved the procurement and development of an Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast, funded jointly with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board at a total cost not to exceed £80,000.

#### **Blue Plaques**

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Ulster History Circle seeking financial support for the installation of blue plaques at various location throughout the City in recognition of the contribution to the development of

Belfast made by: classical scholar Robert Mitchell Henry; artist Wilhemina Geddis; musicologist and writer Sam Hanna Bell; musician Frances McPeake; musician and composer Howard Ferguson; Sir Samuel Kelly, Coal Merchant and Ship Owner; Francis Maginn educationalist and Edward Bunting, musicologist. The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Members that the costs associated with the erection of each individual blue plaque would be £700, provision for which had been made within the appropriate budget.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to provide the funding necessary for the erection of the eight blue plaques.

### **Clare Tourism Conference**

The Committee was informed that the above-mentioned Conference would be held in Ennistymon, Co. Clare, during the period from 27th to 29th November. The theme of the conference would be 'Co-operation and Integration – The Key to Successful Tourism' and it would be structured around a number of plenary sessions and workshops on tourism issues. The Conference would afford the Members the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest with tourism professionals and other elected representatives and the cost per delegate, including travel and accommodation, would be £700.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McCausland,  
Seconded by Councillor D. Dodds,

That the Committee agrees, in keeping with the position which had been adopted in previous years, that it not be represented at the Clare Tourism Conference.

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

### **Further Proposal**

Proposed by Councillor Stoker,  
Seconded by Councillor Lavery and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to be represented at the Clare Tourism Conference to be held in Ennistymon, Co. Clare during the period from 27th till 29th November by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with an appropriate officer.

### **China Development Plan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report and action plan in relation to the City's links with Hefei, China outlining the achievements which derived from the relationship:

### **“Relevant Background Information**

Members will be aware that at the Development Committee of 7th June, 2006, a two year plan for activities to develop and promote the linkages between Belfast and Hefei was agreed.

Work has been progressing on the delivery of the key objectives within this plan and a summary of activities to date is attached as requested by Members. Should Members wish to continue with the sister city relationship, a plan for activities to take place over the next two years has been drafted based on progress to date and with a view to maximising upcoming opportunities for collaboration. Hefei are very keen to continue the relationship and we are awaiting specific proposals from them for new areas of cooperation.

### **Key Issues**

The civic link between the cities of Belfast and Hefei dates back to the late 1990s and the first Belfast delegation visited the Chinese city in 2000. Since then, there have been a number of visits and exchanges between the two cities, focusing on the themes of economic development, education and training and cultural promotion.

An action plan for this work was approved by the Development (Economic Development) Sub-Committee in March 2003. This identified a broad range of activities along with associated actions. The key areas of action were agreed as:

- Business Development and Investment
- Education and training
- Enhancing links with the Chinese community in Belfast
- Cultural awareness
- Information and awareness-raising.

This plan was updated for the period 2006-2008. In that timeframe, a range of key outputs was achieved including:

- Delivery of a business development programme on ‘Doing Business in China’, involving 10 local companies, two of whom participated on Invest NI trade mission to China; 7 companies currently pursuing joint ventures or other linkages.
- Organisation of a ‘Doing Business in China’ seminar attended by 30 local businesses
- Hosting of a visit to Belfast by Central China TV (CCTV) during which a documentary on Belfast was produced. This has since been aired on Chinese television



- Participation by local political representatives in key events with the Chinese Community in Belfast including Chinese New Year
- Participation by local political representatives in events to welcome the Chinese student population to the city
- Involvement in a working group to establish a Confucius Institute (a centre of excellence to promote Chinese language and culture) at Queen's University Belfast
- Participation in an international cultural festival in Hefei by a cultural group from Belfast, including a showcase on economic and cultural development in Belfast
- Participation by the then Lord Mayor in a visit to China/Hefei in 2006, as part of a trade mission coordinated by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Belfast.
- Extensive engagement with Chinese Chamber of Commerce, including support for business linkages between them and contacts in Hefei
- Letters and introduction provided for two local companies to support business linkages with Chinese counterparts
- Presentation at best practice event in London for local authorities involved in UK-China linkages, focusing on business linkages,
- Development work with Invest NI to explore potential for focused activity and visit to Hefei as part of trade mission programme. Economic profile of possible business opportunities produced and agreement by Invest NI to consider inclusion of visit to Hefei as part of upcoming trade missions.

Building on the outputs identified above and the achievements accomplished, a series of activities under these broad areas of work have been identified. This takes into account the opportunities for linkages not only with Hefei but with other locations in China, given the contacts that other partner organisations in the city have with this country. It also takes account of the integration into the Development Department of the Community Development section and the linkages with the local Chinese community that this brings. As such, it represents a broadening of the potential activities and offers an opportunity for further development work in this field.

#### **Resource Implications**

The total funds required to deliver this action plan for the period October 2008-March 2010 are estimated at £65,000.

### Recommendations

Members are asked to review the sister city relationship with Hefei and to consider the content of the draft action plan for linkages with China.

### Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Draft Action Plan for Belfast City Council linkages with China

Appendix 1

### **BELFAST CITY COUNCIL – CHINA ACTION PLAN: 2008-2010**

#### Background

Belfast City Council made its first official visit to China in April 2000. The visit included a three city tour to Shenzhen, Hefei and Beijing. In August that year, a Memorandum of Agreement between Hefei and Belfast was signed. This committed the cities to 'friendly exchange and cooperative activities' on a number of themes including education, technology and culture. A series of subsequent visits led to the signature of a Sister Cities agreement between the two cities in 2005.

A Belfast-China strategy was presented to the Development Committee in May 2003. This identified a broad range of activities along with associated actions. The key areas of action were agreed as:

- Business Development and Investment
- Education and training
- Enhancing links with the Chinese community in Belfast
- Cultural awareness
- Information and awareness-raising.

#### Update

A number of action plans have been developed and delivered since that time. Key outputs include:

- Delivery of two business development programmes on 'Doing Business in China', involving 10 local companies
- Participation of 2 local businesses from these programmes on Invest NI trade missions to China
- Organisation of two 'Doing Business in China' seminars, each attended by 30 local businesses

- Hosting of a visit to Belfast by Central China TV (CCTV) during which a documentary on Belfast was produced. This has since been aired on Chinese television
- Participation by local political representatives in key events with the Chinese Community in Belfast including Chinese New Year
- Participation by local political representatives in events to welcome the Chinese student population to the city
- Involvement in a working group to establish a Confucius Institute (a centre of excellence to promote Chinese language and culture) at Queen's University Belfast
- Participation in an international cultural festival in Hefei by a cultural group from Belfast
- Participation by the then Lord Mayor in a visit to China in 2006, as part of a trade mission coordinated by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Belfast
- Creation of a Belfast-China steering group to agree and promote linkages and joint activities.

#### Focus for future work

While the focus for the links in the coming period will continue to be with the partner city of Hefei, it is acknowledged that our partner organisations have their own linkages in other parts of China. For this reason, it is proposed that this strategy should consider how these linkages can be developed and maximised, alongside the further development of the sister city link with Hefei.

It is proposed that a range of activities for the coming 18 month period (October 2008-March 2010) be undertaken including:

#### Business Development and Investment

- Organise two events on 'Doing Business in China' (in conjunction with Invest NI/NICCI/CCC), showcasing companies already doing business in China and providing information on relevant support schemes. This can be linked to the development of our World Trade Centre activity
- Develop and deliver a business development programme for up to 10 companies on 'Doing Business in China', linking with Invest NI trade mission in December 2009
- Build relationships with the Commercial Attachés in the Chinese Consulates in London, Manchester and Edinburgh with a view to maximising trade linkages
- Work with the local Chinese community in Belfast to identify business and investment opportunities arising from existing contacts and linkages.

### Education and Training

- Identify scope for wider civic and business linkages with those locations which currently have educational linkages with Belfast (particularly Shenzhen, Beijing and Shanghai)
- Host welcome events for Chinese students to Belfast, involving civic representatives
- Support the local educational establishments to create centres of excellence for the Chinese language and culture
- Identify opportunities for further linkages between educational institutes in Belfast and Hefei.

### Enhancing links with the Chinese community in Belfast

- Provide access to council facilities for local groups to host cultural and community activities
- Provide community development support to the Chinese community in Belfast, through our Community Development workers
- Support activities for young people e.g. summer schemes.

### Culture

- Support key events to promote Chinese culture, e.g. Chinese New Year
- Facilitate access to Chinese cultural performances, particularly in Belfast City Council venues e.g. Waterfront Hall, Community Centres.

### Information and Awareness Raising

- Maintain contact with Local Government International Bureau (LGIB) staff for advice and support
- Liaise with UK Eurocities to exchange information on support/resources for links with China in other UK cities
- Promote 'good news stories' of Belfast-China links through e-bulletin and website to ensure that all target groups are aware of the opportunities offered by the link e.g. education, training, business, cultural organisations.

### Resource Implications

The budget required to deliver the activities within this plan will be £65,000. This has been included as part of the international relations work within the Development Department plan for 2008-2009 and activity taking place in the year 2009-2010 will be included in the Development Department plan for that year. An Economic Development Officer will allocate a proportion of his time to working on this and other international relations activity."

A Member inquired, in light of the Committee decision of 13th August to promote the integration of human rights dialogue in its relationship with Hefei and to put human rights issues on the agenda at further meetings with Chinese Officials, as to how the proposals outlined in the report could be achieved.

In response, the Director of Development indicated that a further report on this issue would be submitted for the Members' consideration at a future meeting.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to renew the Sister Cities relationship with Hefei, China and adopted the contents of the draft action plan.

### **Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 14th November, 2007, it had agreed that the Council should join with Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council to form a 'cluster' in order to deliver the 'Axis 3' component of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme.

Following the nomination of Elected Members onto the Strategic Joint Council and the Local Action Group, the process had stated to recruit social partners for the Local Action Group of, which 50% would be comprised of Elected Members with the remaining 50% being drawn from the social partners. A total of eleven social partners had been recruited, one of which was from Belfast. Subsequently, a strategy planning process had commenced and an extensive consultation exercise had been undertaken.

In order to reflect the needs of the existing rural areas across the three Councils, a draft strategy had been developed, which sought to explain how best rural development funding might be used. The aims and objectives of the draft strategy had been based on six measures identified under Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Plan. Accordingly, the Director submitted for the Committee's attention a draft Rural Development Strategy which had been presented to the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development and which would be used to apportion funding allocated to the cluster.

The Director advised the Members that within the Rural Development Strategy there was a requirement for a minimum of 5% of the overall programme funding allocated to each of the clustered areas be spent on transnational and co-operation projects. Accordingly, she recommended that the Council's European Unit facilitate the identification of co-operation and transnational network projects for the cluster. In providing this role the Council's European Unit would be reimbursed for the staff time involved.

After discussion, the Committee approved the transnational facilitation role to be undertaken by the Department's European Unit and noted the contents of the Local Rural Development Strategy document for Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, a copy of which would be available for inspection on the Modern.gov intranet site.

### **Departmental Plan Update**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided information on the current status of projects, initiatives and events being carried out by the Department during the period from 1st April till 31st July, 2008.

Arising from discussion in the aforementioned matter, the Director undertook to provide a further report in relation to the developments at the North Foreshore for the Committee's consideration at a future meeting.

### **Media Coverage**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the amount of media coverage and the extent of press and media enquiries received concerning the work of the Committee during the period from 1st March till 31st August, 2008.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

### **Ulster Hall Operating Strategy**

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of a number of key operational issues required to be put in place in order to enhance the service provision within the Ulster Hall:

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

**The £7.5m refurbishment of the Ulster Hall began in June 2007, and the building is due for completion in December 2008, and to reopen in March 2009. The project includes major rebuilding of the rear section to provide a suite of offices across two new floors to be leased to the Ulster Orchestra, and two floors of multi purpose rooms to be used as dressing rooms, education suites, meeting rooms. Public areas will be decoratively restored, new seating introduced, underfloor heating installed, and hospitality facilities enhanced. The Civic reopening is scheduled for March 6, 2009.**

#### **Key Issues**

**The capital development and refurbishment of the Ulster Hall also provides an opportunity for the Council to review the venue's means of operation. The Hall, with the Ulster Orchestra as its anchor tenant, and its administrative support on site, will be revitalized by the project works, and public interest needs to be maximised, with an emphasis on both the heritage aspect of the physical building, and the opportunity to engage the public in a relationship outside of the events programme at the Hall, so positioning it as one of the key cultural tourism products within the city.**

A structural review to consider the requirements in terms of an appropriate supporting management and staff structure is being completed by BIS as part of the overall Departmental change management process, to ensure the delivery of the project's key objectives, and to take into account the likely increase in joint working opportunities with the Waterfront.

However, outside of the BIS Review there are a number of key operational issues that need to be addressed to help further define the new product within the Ulster Hall, supporting details for which are included as attached appendices.

#### **1. Relationship with Ulster Orchestra**

The Belfast Waterfront Board, after advice from the Council's Legal section, approved in full the terms of a tenancy agreement (attached as Appendix A) between the Council and the Ulster Orchestra, adopted by full Council in November 2006.

The twenty-five year lease agreement is based upon the payment of an annual service charge, covering allowances for rates, rents, and utility costs for the area occupied by the orchestra within the building. This does not include further payment by the orchestra for the use of the main spaces within the Ulster Hall for performances and rehearsals, on the terms and conditions as outlined in the appendices.

The agreement, which was a condition of receiving capital support funding from both DCAL and ACNI, is based on a usage pattern of 99 days during the year, mainly Wednesday to Fridays, supplemented by a further 50 days of BBC related performance work.

#### **2. Ulster Hall Programming Policy**

A programming policy document for the Ulster Hall is attached as Appendix B to provide some historical and current context for the future operation of the venue, whilst identifying opportunities for growth, core programming policy objectives, and strategic and programming themes to proactively develop in relation to its events programme. These opportunities exist in terms of self promoted events, together with those in partnership with core event promoters, and as part of city festival programming and development.

### **3. Ulster Hall – Draft Opening Festival Programme**

In order to re-launch the Ulster Hall as a cultural landmark in the city, planning is underway to create a month long celebration of festival events. The intention and reasoning for this initiative is that given the number of days already utilized by the Ulster Orchestra in the main space at the venue, and in order to create maximum interest and awareness across a wide spectrum of audience, it requires such a span of dates in order to demonstrate the breadth of artist and type of event to create that appeal. It should be noted that the programme remains at the 'draft' stage, with a number of events either unconfirmed or at the negotiation stage.

In recognizing the strategic partnership between the Council and the Ulster Orchestra, the formal Civic Opening of the Hall is Scheduled for Friday, 6 March 2009, and will feature the Orchestra, Belfast Philharmonic Choir and Michael McHale, an award winning young Belfast pianist. It is also the intention that this concert would be broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

### **4. Provision of Catering and Licensing Services**

After detailed consideration of the market, it is proposed to initiate a procurement exercise to secure a single catering provider with responsibility for bar services and provision of a foyer café service.

The provision of food services within the main auditorium is outside the remit of this contract, with the intention being to create a freedom of choice incentive for clients booking gala dinner events into this space, similar in approach to that taken for the City Hall.

The foyer will house a niche café, reflecting the uniqueness of the Ulster Hall and operating at a high level of service for both food and beverage offerings. The intention is to serve Starbucks branded coffee under the 'We proudly brew Starbucks' scheme in order to enhance its appeal to visitors to the building, neighbouring office workers and passers by and to take advantage of the Starbucks commitment to staff training and levels of customer service.

(Full details of the options explored and the rationale behind the recommendation are included at Appendix D.)

### **5. Provision of Cleaning Services**

A combination of in house house-keeping and contracted out event specific deep clean services is proposed.



The proposed delivery of service will utilise the 2 part-time posts already existing within the original staff structure – offering general daytime housekeeping and administrative office cleans, which will include the Ulster Orchestra offices on a service charge basis.

Event specific evening cleaning will be brought in as required and offered either as additional hours to the part-time posts or to a contract cleaner. A dedicated budget will be established for this purpose.

The catering contractor will be required to provide event cleaning of their areas, as part of the contract specification.

A select list of cleaning contractors will be established to facilitate this strategy.

(The full range of options considered is shown at Appendix E.)

#### **6. Provision of Security Services**

Provision of Security Services is proposed on the basis of a minimum security presence covering core operational hours with the option to bring in event specific security from a contracted supplier, when required. This will provide a level of security to support the day to day operation of the venue as a public building, and covers the Council's responsibilities, in effect as landlord of the premises. The provision of additional FOH staff and Duty Managers, who will be brought in to operate standard evening events, will adequately cover the security and evacuation function.

The proposed strategy involves:

- Extending the current BCC security contract provider, to allow for one guard to cover core operational hours 0700 – 1800 Monday – Saturday.

Duties would include:-

Monitoring of CCTV and Fire Management system

Co-ordination of core hours evacuation strategy.

Basic Artiste Liaison function

Daytime security presence for Backstage Door, Café, Box Office, and Exhibition Spaces.

- The security function for standard evening events, will be carried out by the Duty Manager and Front of House Supervisor.

- When required, for exceptionally demanding events additional event security from the existing BCC provider will be allocated. It is envisaged that in most circumstances (e.g. Rock concerts) the cost for this additional security be passed onto the Client.
- specified for this purpose.)
- Key Holding – outside of core and event hours, the responsibility for incident investigation will be carried out by the current BCC key holding contractor.

(A detailed rationale and discussion of all options considered is attached at Appendix F.)

#### **Resource Implications**

The capital development of the Ulster Hall is a £7.5m project, funded by BCC, supported by ACNI, DCAL, HLF, and EHS.

Provision of services are provided for within the section's revenue estimates 2008/09, and 2009/10.

#### **Recommendations**

That members note the contents of the report, and approve the means of provision of services at the Ulster Hall in relation to catering and licensing, cleaning, and security.

#### **Key to Abbreviations**

ACNI – Arts Council of Northern Ireland  
DCAL – Dept. of Culture and Leisure  
UO – Ulster Orchestra”

In considering the provision of catering and licensing services at the refurbished Ulster Hall, several Members questioned the legal aspects of the use of one particular brand of coffee only at the location and expressed concern also that this proposal might be in contravention of the Council's Fairtrade Policy.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the foregoing report, approved the means of provision of services at the Ulster Hall in relation to catering and licensing, cleaning and servicing and, where appropriate, granted authority for the commencement of the necessary tendering exercises, subject to clarification being obtained in relation to the proposal to restrict the Ulster Hall catering outlet to provide only one brand of coffee and whether this would be in contravention of the Council's Policy on the use of Fairtrade tea and coffees.

**Strategic Neighbourhood Action Programme - Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th August, it had agreed that a report be submitted outlining the timetable for the completion of the Action Plan. Accordingly, the Director submitted the undernoted report:

**“Relevant Background Information**

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

Over the past 17 months the SNAP team has undertaken work to design and develop a Local Area Working Framework for the Council. Key achievements include the following:-

- Neighbourhood Geography designed and approved by Council. 21 City Places have been created as a basis for Local Area Working activity.
- Public Consultation held to gain views on Council’s plans for Local Area Working, The over-arching conclusion from this consultation was that the local area working approach generally makes sense as issues/needs vary across the city and that it fits in with community planning.
- Information and Research undertaken to build up local knowledge at smaller geographical areas e.g. development of citystats, area profiles, neighbourhood services knowledge base, internal service delivery audit.
- Undertook significant awareness raising amongst staff and external organisations.
- Neighbourhood Renewal Co-ordination for Council which includes approval for 11 out of 12 Action Plans for the areas through the Council process, examination of implications for BCC, co-ordinating Officer participation and providing a support framework to address issues.
- Developed a corporate local area working framework model which is underpinned by the Academy for Sustainable Communities Wheel.

- Embedded the need to implement Local Area Working within the Council's Corporate Plan which highlights the Council priorities for 2008-2011.

A full analysis of work carried out by the SNAP team was presented at the last meeting of the Development Committee.

### Key Issues

At the last meeting of the Development Committee, several Members had expressed concern at the length of time which it was taking for SNAP to be implemented. In particular the timescale that had been identified for the full delivery of the action programme would mean that the Review of Public Administration would already be in the process of being implemented. To this end, it was agreed that it would be preferable if the Action Plans were to be completed before the RPA was implemented and that a revised timetable for the completion of SNAP would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Members will be aware that Council is already working on a range of area based initiatives which involve almost all of our services e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Safety Partnerships, Renewing the Routes, Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and a number of ad hoc area based projects such as the Upper Springfield Safer Neighbourhoods Forum. However, this is very much carried out on an individual basis due to the absence of a coherent Neighbourhood Support Policy Framework within the Council. The creation and implementation of such a framework is the overarching objective of the SNAP team.

Working effectively at an area level does require corporate co-ordination on planning, resourcing, consultation and engagement, information management and monitoring. These issues are all being examined through the new corporate planning process which will address how the Council delivers services on a functional, thematic and area basis. Work is about to commence which will assess the organisational implications of implementing a local area working model within Council. This will be particularly significant given the development of the new corporate plan and the recognition of the new neighbourhood convening role of the Council after the RPA. The work of SNAP will be fundamental to informing this process.

Given the issues that have been identified above and the fact that the SNAP team has limited staff resources it is recommended that the implementation of SNAP is rolled out in the following way:

- Put in place an ongoing process to best suit Members to inform and engage with them on the development of SNAP.
- Creation of a local area officer working group as part of the corporate planning process. October 2008
- Completion & approval of Area Based Profiles for the 21 Areas: January 2008
- ‘My Neighbourhood Debate’ planning for the 21 Areas which will include the development of a pack of engagement mechanisms. October 2008 – March 2009
- Launch of the ‘My Neighbourhood’ debate process April 2009
- 21 ‘My Neighbourhood’ debates held across the city to determine citizen priorities for their area. These debates will be Chaired and led by Members. May 2009 – October 2009
- Development of priority lists for each Area based on the My Neighbourhood debates. May 2009 – October 2009
- Analysis of priority lists internally to determine what solutions could be provided to address priorities, testing feasibility and determining potential short/medium and long term objectives. November 2009 – March 2010
- Priority lists for Council services drafted up by the SNAP team and presented to Members for consideration and approval. April 2010
- Publication of priority lists to the 21 Areas and commence implementation and co-ordination of activities. May 2010
- Consider the feasibility of developing a ‘challenge fund’ on a North, South, East, West basis which could feed into resource allocation for 2010/11.

The plans that will be prepared for each area will initially be a list of priorities that citizens have identified for their areas and as well as a Council response regarding how we will respond to them.

Given that this is a first attempt at the roll out of the Action Plans it is recommended that the Action Plans will also provide a comprehensive overview the key neighbourhood services that the

Council is currently providing in that particular area as well as their priorities identified. This will also include the integration of the Council's own actions and commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal within the relevant City Place Action plans where relevant.

This process identified above is a similar approach to how Council is responding to the issues and priorities identified by communities in the Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans which is also co-ordinated by the SNAP team.

Council has responded to 11 of the 12 Action Plans which have identified 554 actions specifically relating to Council service delivery at a neighbourhood level. In addition to responding to individual actions we are also using this as an opportunity to inform the Partnerships of the wide range of services and activities that the Council is also delivering within that area.

The recently appointed Neighbourhood Development Officers are now co-ordinating the delivery of the actions within the action plans and working across all departments to ensure delivery.

#### Resource Implications

##### Human Resources

Co-ordinated by the SNAP team

##### Financial Resources

Secured through the SNAP team

#### Recommendations

- To note the report
- To approve the timescale for the implementation of SNAP and the key steps highlighted to make that happen

#### Key to Abbreviations

NRP – Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership  
LAW – Local Area Working  
SNAP – Strategic Neighbourhood Action Plan”

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

**Response to the Greater Falls  
Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan**

The Committee was reminded that twelve of the Department for Social Development's Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships were operating currently within Belfast and that they were each developing action plans for their respective 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, to date, replied to ten such Plans and that a response had been prepared recently to the Action Plan which had been submitted by the Greater Falls Partnership, a copy of which had been circulated and which was available on the Modern.gov intranet site.

After discussion, the Committee endorsed the contents of the Council's response to the Greater Falls Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan.

**Summer Play Schemes Awards 2008**

The Director reminded the Committee that the Council supported a range of community-based Summer Play Schemes which offered a wide range of social, recreational and educational activities for young people between the ages of five and fourteen. She explained that the Summer Schemes in directly-managed Community Centres were funded through the Revenue budget. In addition, grant assistance was made available to those organisations in the voluntary and community sector which met the relevant criteria.

The Director stated that, in addition to the funding available within the revenue estimates for seasonal play schemes, an amount of £175,000 had been included in respect of grant aid to be provided to Community Groups operating a summer play scheme. Grants in this regard were based on previously agreed criteria and had been set at amounts of either £1,000, £1,800 or £3,000. The Committee was advised further that a total of 78 applications had been received and that funding had been awarded to the undernoted 68 groups which had met the criteria.

<b><u>"APPENDIX 1: Successful Applicants SUMMER SCHEME GRANTS 2008/09</u></b>		
<b>NAME OF GROUP</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>AWARD</b>
Ardoyne Fleadh Cheoil	North	£3,000.00
Ashton Community Trust	North	£1,800.00
Basement Youth Club	North	£1,800.00
Bodybuilders Summer Scheme	North	£1,800.00
Cavehill Antrim Rd Regeneration	North	£1,800.00
Club Oige Mhachaire Bothain	North	£1,800.00
Donegall Park Avenue Community Association	North	£1,800.00
Glenbank Community Association	North	£3,000.00
Ligoniel Family Centre	North	£1,800.00

NAME OF GROUP	AREA	AWARD
Loughside Football Club	North	£1,000.00
Lower Oldpark Community Ass.	North	£3,000.00
Marrowbone Community Ass.	North	£3,000.00
Star Neighbourhood Centre	North	£3,000.00
Sunningdale Community Centre	North	£1,000.00
Tar Isteach	North	£1,800.00
The Vine Centre	North	£1,700.00
Whitecity C.D.A.	North	£3,000.00
Wishing Well Family Centre	North	£1,000.00
Sub-total	NORTH	£37,100.00

Ardcarn Residents Association	East	£2,600.00
Ballymac Friendship Trust	East	£3,000.00
Bloomfield Community Association	East	£3,000.00
Clarawood Community Association	East	£2,500.00
KPC Youth Knock	East	£3,000.00
The Bridge Community Association	East	£3,000.00
Oasis Caring In Action	East	£3,000.00
Roslyn Street Youth Club	East	£3,000.00
Short Strand Community Forum	East	£3,000.00
Walkway Community Association	East	£3,000.00
Wandsworth Community Association	East	£3,000.00
Willowfield Parish Community Association	East	£3,000.00
Sub-total	EAST	£35,100.00

An Droichead	South	£3,000.00
Ballynafeigh C.D.A.	South	£3,000.00
Chinese Welfare Association	South	£1,800.00
Empire Residents Association	South	£3,000.00
Greater Village R.Trust	South	£3,000.00
Mornington C.Project	South	£3,000.00
N.I.Community for Refugees	South	£1,800.00
L.O.R.A.G.	South	£2,500.00
Southcity Resource & Dev.	South	£1,800.00
Windsor Womens Centre	South	£3,000.00
Sub-total	SOUTH	£25,900.00

An Munia Tober	West	£3,000.00
Ardmonagh Family & Community Group	West	£1,800.00
The Base	West	£3,000.00
Blackie Community Centre	West	£3,000.00
Cairde Naomh Pol	West	£3,000.00
Conway Youth Centre	West	£1,000.00
Cumann Iarscoile Cairde	West	£1,800.00
Cumann Iarscoile Na Mona	West	£1,000.00
Denmark St Comm Centre	West	£2,500.00



NAME OF GROUP	AREA	AWARD
Falls Residents Association	West	£1,000.00
Falls Womens Centre	West	£1,800.00
Falls Youth Providers	West	£3,000.00
Friends of Careers and Kids	West	£1,800.00
Glen Community/Parent Youth Group	West	£3,000.00
Glencolin Residents	West	£1,800.00
Horn Drive Drop In	West	£1,800.00
Ionad Uibh Eachach	West	£3,000.00
Newhill Youth & Community Association	West	£3,000.00
Roden St C A	West	£2,500.00
Shankill Womens Centre	West	£1,800.00
Sliabh Dubh Residents	West	£1,000.00
St Stephens Afterschools	West	£1,800.00
Tar Anall	West	£3,000.00
Link Young Adults/Youth	West	£3,000.00
The Living Hope	West	£1,800.00
Upp Andersonstown Comm Forum	West	£3,000.00
Westrock Parent /Support Youth Group	West	£1,800.00
Whiterock/Westrock Residents Association	West	£1,800.00
Sub-total	WEST	£61,800.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£159,900.00"</b>

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Belfast City Centre Westside Regeneration Plan**

The Director advised the Committee that the Draft Regeneration Masterplan for the South West Quarter of Belfast City Centre constituted supplementary guidance to the Department for Social Development's Regeneration Policy statement for Belfast City Centre. She stated that the Masterplan set out further guidance on a proposed range of uses for the South West Quarter in order to maximise the physical, social and economic regeneration of the area. The Committee was advised further that the Department for Social Development had established three key themes in order to provide a focus for consultation on the Draft Regeneration Plan. The Council's comments on each of the key themes are set out hereunder.

#### **"Belfast City Council Response to West Side Regeneration District Draft Regeneration Plan**

##### **Introduction**

**A Regeneration Plan for the West Side of the City Centre is to be welcomed as it provides a planning vision and development framework for the area.**

**Belfast City Council supports the high quality development proposed and offers the following comments in the response to the Draft Regeneration Plan.**

### Guiding Development Principles

Belfast City Council accept and support all of the guiding development principles as a method for regeneration of the South West Quarter. The emphasis on smaller scale development schemes and residentially – led mixed use schemes will help to provide consumer variety and an alternative to the retail led regeneration schemes in other parts of the city centre. Belfast City Council will make more detailed comment on how these principles are realised in our comments on the Preferred Concept Masterplan and the benefits of the Masterplan.

### Preferred Concept Masterplan

#### Improved Pedestrian Realm

Belfast City Council fully supports the development of improved pedestrian realm and building upon the 'Belfast: Streets Ahead' initiative including the provision of high quality surfacing, tree planting and street furniture. Belfast City Council would recommend that a comprehensive strategy is put in place for all streets within a plan incorporating simple easily identified signage with better connections to the rest of the city.

#### Improved Linkages

Improved linkages between the South West Quarter and the rest of the city centre are vital. The Masterplan should highlight how the proposals will actually link into the Masterplans for the adjoining quarters. Although Belfast City Council do not have any open spaces within the plan area Belfast City Council manage the City Hall grounds, the premier open space in the city centre and Belfast City Council would support improved connections and linkages between this space and the South West Quarter.

#### Streets and Squares

Belfast City Council supports the development of a new pedestrian street between Chapel Lane and Fountain Lane but would suggest that the provision of suitable public art, lighting and seating rather than a water feature is explored. This is based on Belfast City Council's experience of providing a water feature in Cathedral Gardens and the issues that arose around the maintenance of it. Details regarding future maintenance of the open spaces need early resolution.

### Residential Use

Belfast City Council would propose that the housing provision should contain social housing and not just affordable provision at 20%. Belfast City Council would propose that ground floor car parking is resisted to provide active street frontages. The Courtyard Garden proposed with residential units above will have little light.

### New Street

The opportunity exists at the junction of the proposed new street and Fountain Lane to create a distinctive pedestrian nodal meeting point with an individual identity. This would enhance the experience of shopping and moving around the city centre.

### Promotion of Independent Retail

It would be helpful to include the results of the analysis for independent retail contained within the commercial review. A delivery mechanism for the control of independent retail is required. No controls through planning policy identified to deliver the retention and extension of the provision of smaller retail units within the plan area. Details of the Re Store and any other initiatives would help bring certainty to investors and occupiers. Some consideration needs to be given to the impact of Victoria Square on Donegall Place the displacement effect has led to vacant properties more suited to larger high street multiple retailers. For those areas identified as being most appropriate for independent retail additional branding/marketing to make the area distinct similar to the work within Cathedral Quarter would be essential.

The improved public realm works must support and not restrict or impede access or visibility of units.

The possibility of a market is good but this must complement the existing St George's and Smithfield markets and the proposed open air markets across the city.

### Repair of the Urban Fabric

Active schemes are required to make things happen at the derelict and vacant sites identified. The College Avenue frontage opposite R.B.A.I is particularly in need of animation. Proposals to improve existing occupied buildings such as Progressive House would be welcomed. The poor quality buildings within this area are not necessarily all the private owners fault as the statutory agencies in giving permission for low grade buildings have a responsibility and a future role in ensuring high quality buildings are built. The plan area is part of a conservation area though at present this would not be recognisable. More co-ordinated approach to quality of development and planning gain required.

### Better Transport Management

The plan should make reference to the implications of the City Centre Routing Study as this could have significant impact. Until DRD Roads Service proposals are confirmed better transport management can only be fulfilled in part. The Queen Street/Castle Street junction details of the site acquisition strategy for the bus route should be included in the masterplan. Further information on how the plan will resolve the aspiration for car parking by future residents is required.

### Creation of a More Secure Environment

A strategy for vacant space is required with incentives to see early re-development of those areas which are vandalised and off-putting to pedestrians.

Underground parking and courtyards as public spaces will improve the environment.

A strategy to prevent continuance of temporary car parking permissions would improve the environment. What plans are in place to improve the unsightly multi storey car park ?

Greater detail required on proposals for outward facing frontages onto Fountain Street, Fountain Lane and Castle Street what incentives/schemes will be put in place for owners and occupiers?

### The Core Development Opportunity

Details of land acquisition proposals, actions of Department for Social Development and timeframes required to make this happen need to be included in the Masterplan. It would be useful to have the appropriate tools ie. planning gain, site briefs, incorporated in the Masterplan.

### Further key Development Opportunity Sites

Timescales and identification of Department for Social Development actions to assist in the development of all these sites is required. The wall of the service yard at Castlecourt could be improved with an art piece that could help draw people through from Royal Avenue.

### **Bank Square**

Clear identification of how proposals for the South West Quarter will link to North West Quarter Part I should be shown within this plan.

A detailed list of Department for Social Development actions including incentives will help bring certainty to the market and assist developers as they review the proposals.

### **Benefits**

The benefits outlined are dependent on the plan being accepted by Planning Service and being implemented. It is noted that the Highway Benefits appear to be aspirational with no sense as to whether they would be delivered by the masterplan. There is really no clear indication how the masterplan will be delivered by Department for Social Development and what encouragement, if any, will be given to existing property owners to upgrade their properties.

To achieve the successful refurbishment of key buildings there is a need to have a pro-active approach to help property owners achieve the aims of the Concept Plan. This could involve the following measures:

- 1) LOTS Living Over the Shops Scheme. It would be important to encourage the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to be involved in implementing the LOTS in this area to deliver the reuse of the vacant upper floors for residential use.
- 2) Urban Regeneration Guidelines for the West Side Regeneration District would be a useful next step to encourage the appropriate external upgrading of building facades to preserve and enhance the character of the area.
- 3) Property Improvement Grant for external façade works.

Promotion of Community involvement in all aspects of the regeneration process is vital. Recognition of the community interests of the small number of existing residents together with the business interests of landowners and business tenants at an early stage will ensure ownership and acceptance of the initiatives and developments included in the Masterplan.”

After discussion, during which several Members expressed their support for the regeneration of the area, the Committee endorsed the West Side Regeneration District Draft Regeneration Plan as an appropriate tool to promote the regeneration of the area, subject to the comments contained within the foregoing response document. The Committee agreed also that the Council should actively promote community involvement, at an early stage, to ensure ownership and acceptance of the initiative.

### **Estates Management - Markets**

#### **St. George's Market**

The Committee noted the schedule of cookery and food preparation events which would be held in St. George's Market during September.

### **Council Representation on Selection Panel/An Nasc Art Piece**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th August, it had approved the re-allocation of finance from the Renewing the Routes budget to form part of the funding for a larger landmark art piece to be delivered through An Nasc, subject to a number of caveats, one of which was that the Council, in the form of Members and officers, be represented on the selection panel for the art piece. However, the Committee had not identified which Members should represent the Council.

Accordingly, it was agreed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) represent the Council on the selection panel for the An Nasc art piece.

Chairman