

Development Committee

Wednesday, 16th September, 2009

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Humphrey (Chairman); and the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery); and Councillors Campbell, Convery, Crozier, N. Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Kyle, A. Maskey, C. Maskey, McCausland, Mullaghan, O'Reilly, Rodgers, Rodway and Stoker.

In attendance: Ms. M. T. McGivern, Director of Development; Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives; Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues; and Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor M. Browne.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th 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 1st September, subject to:

- (i) the omission of that portion of the minute under the heading "Planning and Transport Unit Update" in so far as it related to the Belfast Masterplan Review which, at the request of Councillor M. Browne, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration;
- (ii) the omission of parts (ii) and (iv) of the decision in relation to the Christmas Lights Switch-on 2009 which, at the request of Councillor Smyth, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration;
- (iii) the omission of the minute under the heading "Mosconi Cup 2010" which, at the request of Councillor D. Browne, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration; and
- (iv) the amendment of the minute under the heading "Renewing the Routes – Update" to provide that, in future, officers ensure that consultation is undertaken with local Councillors before any proposals under the Renewing the Routes Programme are opened to wider community consultation.

Belfast Masterplan Review

The Committee considered further that portion of the minute of 12th August under the heading "Planning and Transport Unit Update" in so far as it related to the Belfast Masterplan Review which had been taken back at the Council meeting on 1st September at the request of Councillor M. Browne. An extract of the portion of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

"The Committee considered the undernoted report:

'Relevant Background Information

.....

Belfast Masterplan

In the period since the formulation of the Masterplan in 2003/04 there has been considerable change to the economic, social and environmental context for the development of Belfast and the wider region. In addition, the proposed Review of Public Administration and the transfer of responsibilities, including local land use planning and regeneration functions, have altered the administrative context.

The five years since adoption have also seen the development of a number of new strategies, including the City Centre Masterplans and the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks, which the Department for Social Development commissioned for each of the five Partnership Board areas. This changing context and the emerging strategies for areas of the City have highlighted the need for the Council to have a coherent and up to date vision for the future development of Belfast.

The review of the current Belfast Masterplan offers the opportunity to revisit the strategic vision for the City. This review and updated strategic position would facilitate continued Council engagement with strategies such as the proposed Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and assist in influencing regeneration/development initiatives planned for the City.

The current Departmental budgets include provision for the procurement of the Masterplan review. To initiate the project it is suggested that the Committee approves an allocation of £70,000 towards the review and associated stakeholder consultation.

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Resource Implications

Financial

The review of the Belfast Masterplan will exceed the limit on procurement by quotation and will be subject of a competitive tender process with a budget approval of £70,000 recommended. The current Departmental budgets include provisions for.....the procurement of the Masterplan Review.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

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Approve the proposed review of the Belfast Masterplan and the procurement of specialist support through a competitive tender process at a cost of up to £70,000

.....

Decision Tracking

Results of the proposed procurement process for the Masterplan review to be reported back to committee.

**Timeline September 2009
Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay'**

During discussion in the matter, Members made the undernoted comments regarding the proposed review of the Belfast Masterplan referred to within the report:

- (i) it might not be appropriate to undertake the review given that the boundary changes which would come into effect following the Review of Public Administration had not yet been clarified and the economic downturn was continuing;*
- (ii) even if it were considered appropriate for the review to proceed it might not be necessary to employ outside consultants given the internal expertise which existed within the Council; and*
- (iii) no mention had been made within the review of cycling, which was a significant mode of transport within the City.*

In reply, the Director indicated that it might be possible for the review to be undertaken at a cost less than the £70,000 set out in the report. She accepted that there was in-house expertise to undertake such a review but pointed out that it would be necessary to relieve these staff of their current duties in order to permit them to concentrate on such work and, given the existing workload within the Department it was not considered to be a feasible option. She indicated that the Masterplan, which had been first produced in 2004, had helped to shape the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and had been due for review in 2007. In addition, the Council's own Arterial Routes and Renewing the Routes initiatives, which had been a considerable success, owed much to the original Belfast Masterplan. The Director advised the Committee that the proposed review would allow the Council to put forward its own proposals for the future development of the City and that she would seek to ensure that the review incorporated the cycle routes in the City.

Following further discussion, it was

*Moved by Councillor Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Rodway,*

That, given the uncertainty about changes to the City's boundary and the continuing economic downturn, no review be undertaken of the Belfast Masterplan at this time.

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

....."

During discussion in the matter, a Member informed the Committee that he had been advised by the Director of Improvement that, as part of the transfer to the new Council in 2011 of Planning powers, the Council would be required to produce a Planning document which would sit one level lower than the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. Accordingly, he believed it would be important for the current Belfast Masterplan to be reviewed as it could then be used as the basis for the new Planning document. He pointed out that the £70,000 cost referred to in the minute was the amount of money which had been set aside in the budget to have the work undertaken. However, he suggested that, if much of the work was undertaken by Council staff, the cost would be considerably less than £70,000. It was pointed out also that, if the Department of the Environment were to require the Council to produce such a Planning document as part of the transfer of the Planning function, then the Department should be requested to offer funding towards the costs of its production.

In response to Members' questions, the Director indicated that, whilst much of the work which would be involved in reviewing the Masterplan could be undertaken within the Council, a small amount of work would have to be carried out by consultants where the relevant skills were not available within the Council. She was confident, however, that this work would cost less than the £70,000 sum which was available within the current budget.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed to rescind its decision of 12th August regarding the review of the Belfast Masterplan. In addition, the Committee agreed in principle that preparatory work be undertaken in connection with the review of the Belfast Masterplan, subject to a report being submitted to its next monthly meeting setting out details of the associated costs.

Mosconi Cup 2010

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 12th August under the heading "Mosconi Cup 2010" which had been taken back at the Council meeting on 1st September at the request of Councillor D. Browne. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

"The Head of City Events and Venues informed the Committee that the promoters of the Mosconi Cup were seeking bids to host the event in 2010. The Cup was an annual nine-ball pool tournament contested between two teams representing Europe and America. It had previously been held in such cities as London, Rotterdam and Las Vegas. He reported that it had been estimated that approximately £100,000 would be required to host the event. However, in the region of £40,000 of this would be 'in kind' expenditure. Benefits of the event being held in Belfast would be world-wide television coverage, Council branding at press conferences, venue locations and on the players' kit and positive coverage in a multitude of publications and websites across the world.

He indicated that it was intended that the event would be held in the Ulster Hall and that the City Events Unit had the necessary funding within its budget to meet the costs of holding the Mosconi Cup in 2010, a proportion of which would have been previously allocated to the Northern Ireland Snooker Trophy which would not be held in 2010 due to the unavailability of a suitable venue for the dates required. He pointed out that other sources of funding would be sought in order to reduce the amount which the Council would be required to provide.

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed the view that the expenditure which would be involved in bringing the Mosconi Cup to Belfast did not represent good value for money and requested information regarding the costs which had been incurred by the Council in holding the Northern Ireland Snooker Trophy in recent years.

In response, the Events Manager indicated that the Cup was a highly-prized competition and that other cities were intending to submit bids to host the event in 2010. He pointed out that the organisers handled the technical issues involved in organising the Cup and obtained income from selling the television rights. He indicated also that it had been estimated that the Cup would attract 2,000 visitors to Belfast. However, as the game of pool attracted a worldwide audience, whereas snooker did not, it was anticipated that the event would receive considerably more television coverage across the world as it was being covered by Sky TV, compared to the Northern Ireland Snooker Trophy which had been broadcast by Eurosport across Europe only. He informed the Members that the Council had contributed £60,000 towards the costs of hosting the Northern Ireland Snooker Trophy in Belfast and that the Council would pursue funding opportunities, both commercial and within the public sector, in an effort to reduce the £100,000 which would be required to bring the Mosconi Cup to Belfast. He reminded the Members that approximately £40,000 of that amount would be 'expenditure in kind' and would not result in direct costs to the Council.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that the Council officers submit a bid for the Mosconi Cup competition to be held in Belfast in 2010 and authorised them to undertake further negotiations with the promoters of the event to ensure that it was held in Belfast during 2010 on the most advantageous basis possible."

The Head of City Events and Venues informed the Committee that it was anticipated that the television audience for the event would be 140 million people across fifteen countries and that the benefit to the local economy from participants and visitors coming to Belfast would be in the region of £160,000. In answer to a Member's question, he indicated that, as a guideline, the British Broadcasting Corporation would have placed a commercial value of approximately £250,000 per half hour on such television coverage.

Following further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor Rodgers,

That the Committee rescinds its decision of 12th August in connection with the Mosconi Cup, agrees not to pursue the submission of a bid for the Mosconi Cup 2010 and receives a report at a future meeting regarding the submission of a bid for the 2012 event.

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

Christmas Lights Switch-on 2009

The Committee Administrator reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 12th August, it had considered a report regarding arrangements for this year's Christmas Lights Switch-on and had agreed that for this year only:

- (i) the Christmas Lights Switch-on be held on Tuesday, 24th November;
- (ii) the "guest area" be located on the Robinson and Cleaver side of Donegall Square North;
- (iii) only the Lord Mayor be on stage to assist with the actual switch-on;
and
- (iv) the usual post-event function be replaced by a smaller event for guests prior to the switch-on.

However, at the Council meeting on 1st September, the Chairman of the Committee had agreed, at the request of Councillor Smyth, that parts (ii) and (iv) of the decision be taken back to the Committee for further consideration. The Committee Administrator pointed out that the decisions regarding the date of the Christmas Lights Switch-on and the Lord Mayor being the only person on the stage to assist with the actual switch-on had been adopted by the Council. The Committee would therefore have to consider further the location of the "guest area" and whether the usual post-event function be replaced by a smaller event for guests prior to the switch-on.

The Head of City Events and Venues informed the Committee that, taking account of Councillor Smyth's concerns, it would be possible for the "guest area" to be reduced in size which would enable it to be located beside the main stage and that the post-event function could be limited to 200 persons in order to reduce the costs.

Having heard the comments of the Head of City Events and Venues, the Committee agreed to rescind its decisions of 12th August regarding the location of the "guest area" and the post-event function. In addition, the Committee agreed that the "guest area" be reduced in size and located beside the main stage on the City Hall side of Donegall Square North and that a maximum of 200 persons be permitted to attend the post-event function.

Departmental Plan Quarterly Update

During consideration of a quarterly update report providing information on the current status of projects and initiatives which had been carried out by the Department during the period from 1st April till 30th June, the Director answered various questions which were put to her by the Members and undertook to provide directly to Councillors information regarding the matters which they had raised.

Following further discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

Eurocities Annual General Meeting

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Background

At the 12 August Development Committee, Members requested further information regarding the request for approval for representation at the Eurocities AGM in Stockholm from 25 – 28 November 2009 and a breakdown of the related costs.

Key Issues

Belfast City Council has been a member of the Eurocities network since the early 1990's. The network now consists of over 140 large European cities. The headquarters is in Brussels and activity is structured around the following Forums:

- Economic Development
- Social Affairs
- Culture
- Mobility
- Knowledge Society
- Environment

Eurocities allows Belfast City Council to develop and strengthen its role in city leadership, reflecting the values and messages contained in the Corporate Plan. This platform has consistently opened avenues of policy development, funding and legislation dissemination, allowing Belfast a stronger voice both regionally and in Europe.

Every year Belfast City Council attends the Eurocities AGM which is hosted in a city within the member state currently holding the presidency of Europe, this year the host is Sweden. The theme this year is 'Urban Challenges and Sustainable Solutions'.

Belfast City Council requires Member attendance at the AGM to participate in the voting process and election of the Executive Bureau of Cities and the chair and deputy chair posts of the various Forums. Belfast City Council Elected Member attendance is traditionally represented by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee, accompanied by the Director of Development and the European Manager, or their nominees. However, over the last 5 years only one Member has travelled every year to the AGM.

The two BCC officers attend the AGM to ensure the interests of Belfast City Council are represented and promoted at the event. Belfast City Council officers host round table speed networking discussions around relevant topics. This year they will take part in two events with a view to promoting the work of the BCC led OPENCities project and also a workshop dedicated to city responses to the recession. Due to the fact that BCC is active in so many projects two officers are required to undertake parallel meetings with Forum chairs and insure input into the agreement of work programmes for the following year.

Belfast City Council is active in the following Forums:

Economic Development Forum

Chair of economic migration working group
Member of creative clusters working group
Member of entrepreneurship working group
Member of employment working group

Social Affairs Forum

Member of social inclusion working group.
Member of urban security working group
Member of the health and well being working group.

Environment Forum

Chair of the clean cities working group
Member of the noise working group
Member of the greening local economy working group
Member of the waste working group

Culture Forum

Member of the youth culture working group
Member of the resources for culture working group

Resource Implications

Estimated cost for attendance:

Registration Fees per person	£245.96
Hotel x 3 nights (£158.55 per room per night)	£475.65
Flight per person	£352.00
Subsistence per person for 3 full days at £75.00 per day	£225.00
Approximate Total per person	£1298.61
Approximate Total for three people	£3895.83
Approximate total for four people	£5194.44

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the attendance and all associated costs of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Director of Development and the European Manager, or their nominees, at the Eurocities AGM in Stockholm in November 2009 at a cost not exceeding £5194.44.”

During discussion in the matter, Members suggested that, in order to reduce costs, the Council send a smaller delegation to the Eurocities Annual General Meeting.

In response, the Director indicated that it was vital that an Elected Member attend the Annual General Meeting as only political representatives could take part in the various votes and that, due to the amount of work which took place at the Meeting, the Council would require to have two officers present in order to ensure that the Council was adequately represented.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that it be represented at the Eurocities Annual General Meeting by one of its Members and two officers.

Royal Exchange - Update

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 27th October, 2008, it had received representatives from Westfield Shoppingtowns Limited, William Ewart Properties Limited and the Department for Social Development regarding the latter's Retail Sequencing Policy and proposals to extend Castlecourt and to develop a new mixed-use scheme to be known as Royal Exchange in the North East Quarter of the City. Having questioned the deputations and discussed the matter at length, the Committee had agreed that it was opposed to the Retail Sequencing Policy and had requested the Department for Social Development to adopt a position whereby, if Ewarts failed to submit its planning application for the Royal Exchange scheme within nine months, Westfield would be permitted to commence its scheme at Castlecourt.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that, since a period of nine months had elapsed and, to date, no planning application had been submitted by William Ewart Properties Limited, the Council had requested from the Department for Social Development an update of its development agreement with Ewarts. She tabled for the information of the Members the undernoted letter which the Chairman had received:

“Further to your meeting with Alan Shannon and David Ferguson on 9 September 09 to discuss the status of the Royal Exchange Regeneration Project, Alan has asked me to write to you to set out the Department's position on the regeneration of Belfast City Centre and provide an update on the Royal Exchange Project for Belfast City Council's Development Committee.

The Department is continuing to implement its retail-led regeneration policy for the city centre as set out in the 'Belfast City Centre Regeneration Policy Statement' published by the Department in 2004. The overall aim of the Statement is to strengthen Belfast City Centre as Northern Ireland's premier regional shopping destination providing a high quality safe urban environment, attractive to investors, employees, residents and tourists. The Department is implementing the Statement under five key regeneration policy themes: retail; office/business; tourism/leisure; connectivity/public realm; and, reinforcing city communities.

The re-emergence of Belfast City Centre as the premier shopping destination in the province is at the heart of the Department's regeneration policy for the City Centre. In order to achieve quality retail provision, it is the Department's aspiration to attract leading European and international brand retailers to the City, while recognising the need to safeguard Belfast's well-established independent retail market. The implementation of the retail regeneration policy theme will be achieved by increasing the amount of retail floor space available in the city centre at a pace which the retail market can absorb and expands consumer choice.

This policy theme has been delivered by the opening of Victoria Square in March 2008 providing over 600,000 sq ft of additional retail space, the House of Fraser flagship department store and the introduction of a wide range of new retail brands to the city centre. The Department is continuing to implement the retail policy through the selection of the Royal Exchange Project, located in the North East Quarter of the city centre, as the next major retail-led regeneration project for Belfast.

The next milestone will be to finalise the Development Agreement for the project. This will provide the contractual basis for delivering the scheme between the Department and the developer and it will set out the timetable for taking forward the statutory planning approvals required for the project.

As you might expect, it is a detailed and complex document and negotiations on one for a project of this size inevitably take time to complete. Indeed in this instance we are conscious they have been taking longer than we had anticipated and we have been working very hard to bring them to a close. It is important to stress, however, that they are consistent with the timescale within which the city centre is likely to be in a position to further expand the retail floor space to a level which the market will be able to absorb. When they have been completed and we have the necessary internal clearances to execute the Agreement we would be happy to brief the Committee on the way forward with the next stage, which relates to obtaining the necessary statutory planning approvals. We hope this will be soon.

In the meantime, I should be grateful if the Committee would continue to bear with the Department, maintain its support for the Royal Exchange Project and accept our assurance that we are aiming to finalise the negotiations on the Development Agreement as quickly as possible.”

The Chairman informed the Members that, during the meeting referred to in the letter, he had tried to get assurances from Departmental officials regarding a timeframe for the Royal Exchange scheme development agreement and he informed the Committee that it was likely that this would be finalised by the end of the year. However, there was no guarantee that that would be the case. It had also been ascertained during the meeting that, so far as the Department for Social Development was concerned, the Ewatts scheme was, currently, the only development which was of interest to the Department. If the Royal Exchange project did not come to fruition, the Department would seek expressions of interest from other developers for a scheme in the North East Quarter, rather than enable the extension to Castlecourt to commence.

During discussion in the matter, several Members pointed out that the lack of progress associated with the Royal Exchange scheme was resulting in further deterioration in the Donegall Street/Lower Royal Avenue/North Street area and that businesses in that vicinity were concerned at the manner in which the area was becoming run-down. It was pointed out also that, since this area of the City was frequented by tourists walking from the City centre to Cathedral Quarter, it was important that improvement works be carried out as a matter of urgency.

Following a lengthy discussion, during which Members expressed their concern at the content of the letter from the Department for Social Development and the comments of the Chairman regarding the meeting which he had had with representatives from the Department, the Committee agreed to invite representatives from Westfield Shoppingtowns Limited and William Ewart Properties Limited to a special meeting in order to receive updates from both companies regarding their proposals to respectively extend Castlecourt and to construct Royal Exchange. In addition, the Committee agreed to seek a meeting with the Minister for Social Development to discuss the matter and to request from the Minister information as to the engagement which officials within the Department for Social Development had had with Ewatts since the Special Development Committee meeting of 27th October, 2008.

Friends of the Earth –
Belfast Cycle City Vision for 2020

The Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting a deputation from Friends of the Earth regarding its Belfast Cycle City Vision for 2020.

Gasworks Northern Fringe

The Committee was advised that the Consarc Design Group had been appointed by the Council to prepare an outline planning application regarding the development of the Northern Fringe of the Gasworks. Prior to consultation with the local community being undertaken and the application being submitted, it would be necessary for the Committee to approve the development proposals which had been drawn-up by Consarc.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from representatives of the Consarc Design Group regarding its proposals for the Northern Fringe of the Gasworks.

Belfast Welcome Centre Premises

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau had been occupying first floor premises in Donegall Place since August, 2000 as it had not been possible at that time to secure ground floor offices. The lease on these premises, which was sublet from the Council to the Bureau, was due to terminate on 31st July, 2010. Given the importance of providing tourists with first class access to visitor services, especially information, and the need to generate revenue from the sale of goods and services at the Welcome Centre, there were concerns that the full potential of the facility was not being realised at the current first floor location. These concerns had increased recently in light of growing competition in the City centre from other outlets selling souvenirs and gifts. It was anticipated that a ground floor location would result in an increase of 25% in visitors using the facilities offered by the Belfast Welcome Centre, with a corresponding increase in income generated by the sale of tickets and merchandise.

She reported that Council officers and representatives from the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau had viewed a number of suitable vacant properties in the Donegall Place/Donagall Square North area and that the possibility of providing a Tourism Information Point within the City Hall as a satellite of the Centre was being examined. Relocating to a ground floor premises would result in an increase in the amount of rent which would be payable and there would also be initial capital costs to fit out the property. It had been estimated that rent for such accommodation would cost between £275,000 and £300,000 per annum. The cost of fitting out would depend on the state of repair of the premises and the level of finish required. She pointed out that £1 million had been spent on the initial fit out of the existing premises.

During discussion in the matter, Members pointed out that space was available within the Central Library in Royal Avenue and the Belfast Metropolitan College in College Square and that both venues would be suitable locations for the Welcome Centre.

Following further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Head of Economic Initiatives regarding the Belfast Welcome Centre premises. In addition, the Committee agreed that the possibility of locating a Tourism Information Point within the City Hall be pursued and that Council officials continue to assist the staff from the Belfast Visitor and Convention Centre to examine possible ground floor locations for the Belfast Welcome Centre.

London 2012 Cultural Olympiad - Live Sites Screen

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In May, August and December 2008 the Development Committee received details of plans for the Cultural Olympiad to be staged leading up to and during the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. As part of the original ethos, Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, mirrored the classical Greeks in maintaining that the purpose of the Olympic Games was to celebrate mind, body and spirit. From this a Cultural Olympiad was established to include all cultural events of the Olympic Movement. This Olympiad was a period when artists from around the world showcased their work in the lead up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Up until 1948 medals were awarded for sculpture, music, literature and art. The modern Cultural Olympiad, which will be part of the 2012 Games, will focus on the following themes:

- Bringing together culture and sport
- Encouraging audiences to take part
- Animating public spaces – through street theatre, public art, circus skills and live big screen sites
- Using culture and sport to raise issues of environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing
- Honouring and sharing the values of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Encouraging collaborations and innovation between communities and cultural sectors
- Enhancing the learning, skills and personal development of young people by linking with education programmes

The key to this process for the 2012 Games has been the development of a series of ‘live sites’ which involve large LED screens being installed within public performance space across the United Kingdom. In December 2008 the Development Committee received formal details on the costs for such a project. They agreed this information be subsequently referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for formal consideration in January 2009. At this point the report was withdrawn due to a lack of financial resources being made available.

Key Issues

London 2012 Cultural Olympiad - 'Live Sites' Public Screen

In August and December, 2008 the Council received details on the 'Live Sites' public screens from LOCOG 2012. The proposal would see a permanent 25sq m screen, valued by the BBC and LOCOG 2012 at £500,000, positioned in the heart of the City centre. The initial proposal was for the screen to be located in Donegall Place but this has been rejected by LOCOG on the basis that the screen would not be in position until after the 2012 Olympics had been staged. Therefore LOCOG, along with DSD, are proposing that the screen be located within the grounds of City Hall – facing into the lawn from Donegall Square East. The concept would mean that the BBC, LOCOG 2012 and BCC would share broadcasting time on the screen, which would operate approximately twelve and sixteen hours a day, 364 days a year. The screen could also be utilised for major events including a number of London 2012 events. After the Council's rejection of the December 2008 report, due to its indicative costs, LOCOG and DCAL have resubmitted new proposed costs, which are stated below.

- Installation - £50k and planning £6k (DSD) one-off fee
- Screen programmer - £20 k (BCC) per year
- Event programming & management - £30k (NITB's event funding) per year for 3 years
- Maintenance - £20k (DCAL) per year for the first three years

In total BCC would have an estimated annual cost of £20,000 for a screen programmer to ensure the management of BCC's screen content. Should the Council agree to support this initiative, BCC officers have agreement in principle from DSD, as part of their 'Streets Ahead' programme, to meet the installation costs which includes the cost of a 1 m x 1 m control panel in the basement of City Hall. For the four year period leading up to the 2012 Olympics the screen would be the property of LOCOG with a guaranteed link to the BBC's national public screens programme for BCC. After this period the screen would become the property of BCC with a similar link to the BBC's public broadcast network.

The installation of the screen would be subject to approval by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee due to the use of the City Hall grounds before it would go to full Council. If passed by Council the project would also be subject to an economic appraisal by DSD, planning approval by the NI Planning Service and full legal agreement with all the relevant bodies and funders.

Resource Implications

Financial

The Council funding would involve a £20,000 annual fee for content and programming of the proposed screen and would be reallocated from within the annual events budget. Additional funding from DSD (£56k), NITB (£30k) and DCAL (£20k) would be sourced to deliver the project.

Recommendation

Members are requested to consider the issue of funding for the project as stated above, and, if approved, also give:

- Approval for a report to go to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the use of the City Hall grounds for the project

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking with this report as report is for consideration only.

Abbreviations

BCC – Belfast City Council
DCAL – Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
LOCOG 2012 – London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games 2012
DSD – Department of Social Development
NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board”

In answer to Members' questions, the Head of City Events and Venues stated that it was intended that most major cities within the United Kingdom would have such live sites screens and that, although the screen could be erected for a trial period to gauge public reaction, the costs indicated in the report would not be reduced.

During discussion in the matter, several Members indicated that they were supportive of the idea of the screen but not if it were located in the City Hall grounds. It was pointed out that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee was responsible for the City Hall grounds and, therefore, only that Committee could agree as to whether or not the screen could be located therein.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor Rodgers,

That no funding be provided towards the costs of the live sites screen in connection with the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

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

Titanic Centenary Programme 2012

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Over the last ten years BCC has delivered a range of major events, from the World Cross-Country Championships in 1991, the World Amateur Boxing Championships in 1999, the World Amateur Boxing Championships in 2001 and most recently the 2009 Tall Ships Atlantic Challenge. All of the events have brought significant economic benefits to Belfast, with the 2009 Tall Ships event having an estimated £15m return to the City's economy. In parallel with these major events, BCC has been at the forefront in developing the Titanic offering in the City. This has included the development of a highly successful Titanic Made in Belfast event and the instigation of other Titanic related tourism products such as tours, trails and the development of a strategy for a 'must see' visitor attraction based around the Titanic story. All this work has received significant support and input from public, private and voluntary organisations, such as NITB, Titanic Quarter Limited and the Belfast Titanic Society.

The next significant step will be the marking of the centenary of the vessel in 2012. In October 2007 Members approved in principle a centenary programme connected to the 100th anniversary of the RMS Titanic over a twelve month period. The purpose of this report is to request Members final approval for this twelve month programme from the end of May 2011 to end of April 2012.

Key Issues

Programme

The proposed schedule of activity is based around the successful tours, talks, exhibitions and creative arts undertaken by Council as part of the Titanic Made in Belfast festival over the last nine years. In addition to these there would be a re-branding of current BCC events to fit with the Titanic theme and the creation of a programme of one-off concerts, plays and other forms of creative arts for the year long programme.

Key Headline Elements

It is recommended that as part of the overall theme key historical dates in RMS Titanic's story should be marked. The first of these, if the programme is agreed, would be to mark the launch of the ship. This would be followed by the fitting out of the vessel in the Thompson Dock; then the leaving of the vessel from Belfast on 3 April 1912 and, of course, the sinking and subsequent disaster. It would be the intention to mark the latter event with a major outdoor concert with a significant international act as the headline performer. It would be the hope to utilise facilities developed as part of the Council supported Titanic Signature Project for this concept.

Creation of a Titanic Memorial Garden at Belfast City Hall

One of the significant proposals as part of the programme would be the physical bringing together of three memorials, which are currently in the grounds of City Hall into some form of 'Titanic Garden'. The three statues being: Titanic Memorial; Edward Harland's Statue & Lord Pirrie's Plinth.

Dates

The start of the proposed twelve month programme would take place on 31 May 2011, which marks the 100th anniversary of the launch of the RMS Titanic. This would involve special screenings of a number of key Titanic movies and programmes from post World War One to the modern day at various locations around the City. The following months would be interspersed with a series of activities reflecting Belfast elements of the Titanic story culminating with the leaving of the ship from this City to the subsequent disaster of its sinking.

Titanic Cities

As part of the Titanic centenary it would be the recommendation to Members to work with UK, Irish, French and North American locations connected to the story. This arrangement is underpinned with a Memorandum of Understanding (agreed by Council in 2008) between Belfast, Liverpool, Southampton, Cobh, Cherbourg and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Stakeholders and Partners

In order to deliver this project, BCC's City Events Unit will utilise its significant links with local, national and international groups connected to the 'Titanic industry' and within the general events industry. Key to these will be external sources of public funding

which would include HLF, DSD, NITB and DCAL. On the private sector front, the City Events Unit will liaise with TQL and other potential private sector organisations to lever additional resources. The City Events Unit will also strongly link to Belfast Titanic Society, the Nomadic Trust and other voluntary and art groups working in this area.

Resource Implications

Financial

The overall estimated costs required to deliver this twelve month programme of activities would be £600,000.

If the Council agreed to the programme, it would be the intention of the City Events Manager to source match funding from organisations such as HLF, DSD, DCAL and NITB to facilitate the delivery of the project. In addition to these BCC would pursue resources from TQL and other private sector groups for additional finance. The delivery of any programme would be tailored to budgetary requirements with BCC input being evaluated at £150,000.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve, in principle, a draft programme, costed at £600,000, to mark the Titanic's 100th anniversary, with BCC's financial contribution to be capped at £150,000. If agreed by Committee, subsequent update reports for approval would be brought to Members in relation to the planning and preparation of the programme.

Decision Tracking

Further to approval for a draft programme, an update report in relation to planning and preparation will be brought to Committee.

Timeline: December 2009 Reporting Officer: Tim Husbands

Key to Abbreviations

DCAL – Dept of Culture, Arts & Leisure
NITB – Northern Ireland Tourism Board
TQL – Titanic Quarter Limited
BCC – Belfast City Council
HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund
DSD – Department of Social Development”

During discussion in the matter, Members suggested that, since there was a considerable quantity of Titanic-related memorabilia throughout the world, the Council should consider requesting the owners of such artefacts to lend them to the Council for its Titanic Centenary Programme. It was noted that any proposal to relocate existing memorials in the City Hall grounds would require the agreement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Following discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation contained within the foregoing report and requested that it receive at a future meeting an update regarding the Titanic Signature Project.

Community Centres - Conditions of Hire

The Committee noted that the current conditions of hire in respect of directly-managed Community Centres stated that “the facility will only be used for the purposes stated in the application and shall not be used for party political or religious activities” and that this clause appeared to have been based on the prevailing practice in the Leisure Services Department in the mid-1980s. Following a request from an Elected Member as to whether the ban on religious activity use could be removed from the conditions, advice had been sought from Legal Services. Essentially this advice indicated that there was nothing within current legislation to prevent the use of Council property for religious activity, so long as there was no breach of Section 76 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It was pointed out that, if this condition in connection with the hiring of Community Centres were to be removed there might be implications for other Council assets.

The Director informed the Committee that, subsequent to the papers for the meeting having been distributed, the matter had been discussed by the Chief Officers’ Management Team where it had been ascertained that there were inconsistencies across the Council regarding conditions of hire. Accordingly, the Team had agreed that officers from the Development, Parks and Leisure and Legal Services Departments meet as a matter of urgency to discuss the situation and submit a report to a meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. She requested therefore that the Committee defer consideration of the report to enable the group appointed by the Management Team to investigate conditions of hire across the Council and to submit its report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

During discussion in the matter, several Members pointed out that the legal advice indicated clearly that Community Centres could be used for religious purposes and that, therefore, the Committee should agree to amend the conditions of hire for such buildings.

Following further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor McCausland,

That, in view of the advice provided by Legal Services, the Committee agrees to amend the conditions of hire for Community Centres to enable religious groups to use such premises, on the understanding that there would be no breach of Section 76 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

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

Summer Play Scheme Awards 2009

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 11th March, it had agreed that funding for community-organised Summer Play Schemes be allocated to qualifying community groups in the voluntary sector following an assessment based on agreed criteria. She pointed out that such grants were awarded at amounts of either £1,000, £1,800 or £3,000.

The Committee was advised that a total of 91 applications had been received and that funding had been awarded to the undernoted 81 groups which had met the criteria:

"GROUP NAME	AMOUNT REQUESTED	AMOUNT RECOMMENDED
NORTH		
Artillery Young Mothers Group	£2,000.00	£1,000.00
Ardoyne Fleadh Project	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Ashton Community Trust	£5,193.00	£1,800.00
Ashton Community Trust (Kinderkids Day Centre)	£4,064.00	£1,800.00
Ballysillan Youth For Christ	£2,000.00	£1,000.00
Body Builders Summer Scheme	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Carrick Hill Resident Association	£2,500.00	£2,500.00
Corner House Family Centre	£1,500.00	£1,000.00
Club Oige Mhachaire Bothain	£3,900.00	£1,800.00
Donegall Park Avenue Community Association	£2,100.00	£1,800.00
Glenbank Community Association	£4,500.00	£3,000.00
Ligoniel Family Centre	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Loughside Football Club	£4,017.00	£1,800.00
Lower Oldpark Community Association	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Manor Street/Cliftonville Community Group	£6,163.00	£1,800.00
Marrowbone Community Association	£5,500.00	£3,000.00
Mount Vernon Community D. Forum	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Skegoneill Community Group	£2,000.00	£1,800.00
Star Neighbourhood Centre	£5,000.00	£3,000.00
Tar Isteach	£1,926.00	£1,926.00
The Basement Youth Centre	£3,500.00	£1,800.00
Westland Community Group	£2,000.00	£1,800.00
Whitecity Community Development Association	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Sub Total	£75,863.00	£47,026.00
SOUTH		
An Droichead Ltd	£3,675.00	£1,800.00
Ballynafeigh Community Development	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Chinese Welfare Association (Afterschool Club)	£1,800.00	£1,000.00
Empire Residents Association	£4,014.00	£3,000.00
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group	£2,500.00	£2,500.00
N.I. Committee for Refugees and Asylum Seekers	£2,700.00	£1,800.00

GROUP NAME	AMOUNT REQUESTED	AMOUNT RECOMMENDED
Southcity Resource & Development Centre	£4,000.00	£3,000.00
Taughmonagh Community Forum	£6,120.00	£1,000.00
Windsor Womens Centre	£3,300.00	£3,000.00
Sub Total	£31,109.00	£18,900.00
EAST		
Ardcarn Residents	£2,000.00	£1,800.00
Ballymac Centre	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Bloomfield Community Association	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Bridge Community Youth Club	£3,500.00	£3,000.00
Connswater Community and Leisure Services	£2,500.00	£2,500.00
Clarawood Community Association	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Inner East Youth Project	£2,400.00	£1,800.00
KPC Youth Knock	£3,500.00	£1,800.00
Newtownards Road Womens Group	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Oasis Caring In Action	£3,000.00	£1,000.00
Short Strand Community Forum	£5,000.00	£3,000.00
Walkway Community Association	£4,000.00	£3,000.00
Wandsworth Community Association	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Sub Total	£40,900.00	£29,300.00
WEST		
An Munia Tober	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Ardmonagh Family & Community Group	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Blackmountain Action Group	£1,700.00	£1,700.00
Blackie Community Groups Association	£4,500.00	£3,000.00
Cairde Naomh Pol	£3,600.00	£3,000.00
Cairde Cheathru na Gaeltachta	£4,000.00	£1,000.00
Clonard Parent Youth Group	£1,500.00	£1,500.00
Conway Youth Centre	£1,500.00	£1,500.00
Cumann Iarscoile na Mona	£3,200.00	£1,800.00
Denmark Street Community Centre	£2,500.00	£2,500.00
Divis Play Project	£2,000.00	£1,800.00
Falls Residents Association	£2,300.00	£1,800.00
Falls Womens Centre	£2,291.00	£1,800.00
Falls Youth Providers	£2,000.00	£1,800.00
Forthspring Community Groups	£2,200.00	£1,000.00
Friends of Careers 'n' Kids	£3,629.00	£1,800.00
Glencairn Residents Group	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Glencolin Residents Association	£4,409.00	£1,800.00
Glen Parent Youth Group	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Hannahstown Community Association	£2,500.00	£1,000.00
Ionad Uibh Eachach	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Horn Drive Drop In	£3,000.00	£1,800.00

GROUP NAME	AMOUNT REQUESTED	AMOUNT RECOMMENDED
Kids Together West Belfast	£2,000.00	£1,000.00
Link Youth & Young Adults Group	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Living Hope Centre	£2,000.00	£1,800.00
Newhill Youth & Community Centre	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Roden Street Community Development	£2,500.00	£2,500.00
Shankill Womens Centre	£3,925.00	£1,800.00
Society Of St. Vincent De Paul	£2,750.00	£2,750.00
St. James Community Forum	£1,500.00	£1,500.00
St. Stephens Afterschool Club	£3,920.00	£1,800.00
Upper Andersonstown Community Forum	£3,500.00	£3,000.00
Upper Donegall Road Social & R.Committee	£3,500.00	£1,000.00
Upper Springfield Action On Disability Project	£3,630.00	£1,000.00
Westrock Parent/Youth Support Group	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Whiterock/Westrock Residents Association	£3,000.00	£1,800.00
Sub Total	£102,054.00	£68,750.00
TOTAL	£249,926.00	£163,976.00"

In addition, the following ten groups had not received financial assistance as they had not met the criteria:

Newlodge Youth Centre
 Polish Youth Club "Kameleon"
 Belfast Islamic Centre
 St. John Vianney Youth Centre
 East Belfast Mission
 Lower Woodstock Community Association
 Arellian Nursery School
 Cornerstone Community
 Holy Trinity Youth Centre
 Newhill First Steps

Noted.

**Department for Social Development's
 Consultation on Volunteering Strategy**

The Director advised the Committee that the Department for Social Development had issued a consultation document regarding its new Volunteering Strategy entitled "Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future". The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on a series of proposals to support and develop volunteering in Northern Ireland. She reported that staff from the Health and Environmental Services, Parks and Leisure, Corporate Services, Improvement and Development Departments had provided comments which had been included in the undernoted draft response:

“Belfast City Council Response to the DSD consultation on the new Volunteering Strategy, ‘Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future’. August 2009

Belfast City Council is committed to supporting volunteering. We note that volunteering in various services, for example community services, leverages in considerable resources to the Council and enables extensive and needs-based service provision.

The Council notes and welcomes the proposals as outlined in the consultation document. We note that the proposals relate to, in the main, the ways in which DSD can ensure the future support and development for volunteering across Northern Ireland.

No detailed action plan to support the implementation of this strategy has yet been developed and without this, the Council cannot yet respond in detail as to how it might be expected to support and develop volunteering in the future. The Council would be interested in early involvement in the future implementation discussions that will follow the confirmation of the strategy. We welcome the intention to work with local government in terms of implementing the strategy.

The detailed action/implementation plan needs to be properly resourced and oriented to the communities which volunteering supports, for example funding for organisations and groups to set up the appropriate management and quality assurance systems.

There needs to be a strong connection between local organisations and communities and the local and regional volunteering support infrastructure. Information and resources must flow into the communities that need them.

The volunteering strategy needs to reflect the needs, motivation and values of volunteers. This includes maintaining a sensitive balance between these needs and varying levels of formality both in terms of legislative protections, but also, for example, the developing skills agenda around accreditation which may only be relevant to certain kinds of volunteers.

It should be noted that high levels of bureaucratic barriers may discourage and de-motivate volunteers in more marginalised communities.

We would make the following detailed suggestions to a small number of the proposals:

Chapter 1 Key Performance Indicators

The Council would add a key performance indicator to this section. The current KPIs focus on increasing volunteering and improving the infrastructure to support volunteering. We would suggest adding a KPI to measure the degree of positive impact which the volunteering has, not least to ensure that an increase in the quantity of volunteering does not come at the expense of the quality of that volunteering. This would particularly be relevant to Council's service provision to ratepayers.

'An increase in the degree of positive impact which the volunteering has on or for an organisation.'

Chapter 2 Definition

The definition of volunteering is:

the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.

We would suggest the following change:

the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice.

We note that 'the environment' includes the physical environment as it relates to the Council's responsibility for parks and leisure services areas, where there is a current and growing role for volunteers.

Objective 1 Volunteering: Recognising the Value and Promoting the Benefits

In general, with regard to these objectives, we would note the importance of consolidating current levels of volunteering and the quality of that volunteering as well as encouraging the further growth of volunteering.

In addition, it would be positive if the strategy confirmed the benefits of volunteering for those who engage in such activity, in terms of increased self esteem and personal and social development.

5. Encourage young people to become involved in volunteering and help them develop skills and gain experience through their voluntary activity.

The Council would support the engagement of young people early on, for example through the Council's Youth Panel.

7. Support the development of a Northern Ireland wide volunteering database and associated website to support new and existing volunteers and volunteer involving organisations and provide the key information point for volunteering opportunities.

Though the Council supports the promotion of and publicity for volunteering, we think there are serious privacy and data protection issues for volunteers in local communities who may not wish their names or other information about them to be placed on a database.

10. Promote and encourage Employer Supported Volunteering within Government and across the public sector.

We suggest that further engagement with employers is necessary to explore these issues in greater depth.

Objective 2 Volunteering: Enhancing Accessibility and Diversity

17. Review mechanisms to encourage people with disabilities to become involved in volunteering.

Change to 'Review and ensure mechanisms encourage people with disabilities to become involved in volunteering.'

19. Encourage volunteering among older people and other under represented groups.

We think that this objective could be strengthened in order to ensure the effective encouragement of volunteering among older people in particular. We would recommend that DSD consider appropriate marketing and support, varied recruitment methods (different for 50+, 60+, 70+), covering out of pocket expenses, promotion of benefits of volunteering for older people and flexible levels of commitment (given that a reasonable number of older people are carers or child minders). We note that this may be covered later in the detailed action/implementation plan.

20. While ensuring the protection of children and vulnerable adults, explore ways to mitigate any negative impact of policy/legislation on the recruitment of volunteers.

The Council notes that the protection of children and vulnerable adults in and with volunteer involving organisations should include ongoing education and support that explains protection issues and processes. The protection of children and vulnerable adults must be the primary concern. Though we recognise the need to address any potential negative impact of policy/legislation on the recruitment of volunteers the full obligations of the protection processes must be met. In addition, consideration should be given to supporting organisations in terms of the costs of vetting etc.

In addition, the Council has comprehensive equality and good relations policies and practices in place. Any proposals with regard to enhancing accessibility and diversity should be implemented in line with existing equality and good relations practices.

The Strategy should also give thought to including references to those on benefits and how they might be able to volunteer without affecting this, for example people who are long term unemployed, for whom paid work is not a good option.

Objective 3 Volunteering: Improving the Experience

22. Encourage and support volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations to improve their volunteer management practice and gain relevant accreditation.

Change to 'Encourage and support volunteer managers and volunteer involving organisations to improve their volunteer management and support practice.'

Organisations need to improve the ways in which they support volunteers and not only manage them. In addition, the Council notes that a strong focus on accreditation is not relevant to smaller community-based organisations and indeed may cause the future development of a two tier system where organisations that neither want nor can support accreditation would be seen to be providing less good volunteer support than those that wanted to and could, with those without accrediting processes in the lower tier.

24. Support volunteers involved in management committees to enhance their skills and knowledge base and improve their volunteer experience.

26. Support significant regional cultural and sporting events to involve and recognise volunteers.

27. Build volunteer management skills in the faith based sector to increase volunteer recruitment and retention.

The Council notes that volunteers in all volunteer involving organisations should be given, if they wish it, the chance to improve their skills and knowledge base, not only those on management committees. We note that in 24, 26 and 27 particular kinds of volunteers and particular sectors are being highlighted and would suggest that these details would be better addressed in a detailed action/implementation plan, rather than choosing one particular area to highlight in the overall strategy.

34. Encourage funders, where appropriate, to ensure the quality of volunteer involvement and management is of an effective standard when considering funding an organisation or awarding a contract where volunteers play a significant part in delivering services.

The Council notes that this should be seen as a support and developmental process rather than a strict condition of receiving funding, especially with regard to smaller community organisations.

The Council notes that it will be important to emphasise the need to improve the volunteer experience in preparation for the 2012 Olympics. In addition, it may be necessary to reference key issues such as tackling anti-social behaviour where public authorities will rely on greater volunteer input to deliver on key targets.

Objective 4 Volunteering: Supporting and Strengthening the Infrastructure

Include an additional objective: to ensure that there is investment in implementing the strategy directly in local communities and not solely a focus on developing the local and regional infrastructure of volunteer support agencies.”

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the foregoing document be forwarded to the Department for Social Development as the Council's response to the consultation document on the new Volunteering Strategy.

Sister City Nashville

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

At a meeting of the Development Committee on 14 May 2008, Members committed to developing the Nashville Sister City relationship by approving the contents of the 2008/ 09 Action Plan and its implementation within budget. 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 Action Plan was delivered by the Belfast Nashville Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the leisure and cultural sector, historical groups, genealogy associations, community development, media and educational organisations. The aim is to explore, agree and implement identified areas of cultural, tourism and economic development and collaboration between the two cities and to co-ordinate and support the activities taking place between both cities and better maximise our relationship with Nashville

Key Issues

Approval is sought from Committee to develop the Nashville Sister City relationship by approving the contents of the 2010 Action Plan and its implementation (see Appendix). New partnerships have been formed to deliver the Action Plan, which has been greatly expanded to include not only culture and tourism but education, economic development, genealogy, literary tourism, music tourism, international exhibitions, international marketing, creative industries, film and digital media and communications.

Group membership has been expanded to reflect the new Plan and now includes formal partnerships with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Queen's University. The Group will meet on a bi-monthly basis in order to achieve economic benefits from the Sister City relationship.

Since May 2008, the relationship between the two cities has been greatly strengthened with a focus on achieving tangible outputs. Highlights include:

Increased Partnerships

A considerable number of partner organisations contributed both financially and in kind to sustaining the relationship, including Tourism Ireland, US Consulate, BBC, Ulster Historical Foundation, Ulster Scots Heritage Society, Queen's University and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Tourism

BCC worked in partnership with Tourism Ireland to utilise the Sister City Linkage to profile Belfast as a cultural tourism destination in the Southern States and increase tourism revenue from this market. Tourism Ireland worked with their offices across the United States to highlight events on 16 and 17 March and promoted the event to travel and music journalists. They invited the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival to attend their travel trade showcase in Atlanta to profile the Sister City Relationship and linkages. They launched and marketed Belfast City Council's new music products including belfastmusic.org to promote Belfast as a vibrant European destination and the gateway to Ireland and Europe:

- PR and media coverage in the States to send out a positive message of Belfast - TV, radio, web, Tennessee news press, specialist trade music magazines, specialist travel press
- Targeted marketing to the Scots-Irish community in the Southern States to increase cultural tourism visitors
- Launched the St Patrick's Heritage Exhibition at Nashville Airport
- Provided a Travel Trade Showcase with staff and literature from the Tourism Ireland New York Office at the Belcourt Theatre Showcase
- Advertisements place in The Tennessean Travel Section and newspapers from the region, plus Charlotte, Raleigh, Charleston
- Targeted named direct mail of 1500
- 2008 mailing generated above average response
- 1500 Trace your Scots Irish Ancestors offered
- 2000 Northern Ireland CDs distributed
- Prizes / developed tours with tour operators
- Belfast's accreditation by Frommers acknowledged
- Prizes of tour offered
- Tours developed with Tour Operators

Music Tourism

Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival and Songwriting Convention, held on 18–22 February 2009, was increased dramatically in profile and scale and included over 100 songwriters, 30 concerts and 20 seminars. The Festival attracted higher profile artists to Belfast and hence successful local musicians. Visitor numbers increased by 29% in comparison to 2008 and it attracted over 20% of its visitors from outside Northern Ireland, leading to a much greater economic impact. 80% of visitors said they would not have come to Belfast if it had not been for the Festival.

Belfast Nashville Showcases and Concerts - Nashville 16 and 17 March 2009. Delivered by the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival, this featured six of Belfast's best musicians (Ken Haddock, Anthony Toner, Bap Kennedy, Eilidh Patterson, Ben Glover and Foy Vance) who performed alongside multi-million selling Nashville songwriters Guy Clark, Nanci Griffith, Gary Nicholson and Lee Roy Parnell. It was a unique opportunity to launch Belfast's Music Tourism initiatives internationally and was endorsed by Nashville's Mayor Dean.

Arts Council NI committed £15,500 to cover artists and promoters costs for this event. It was compered by Ralph McLean from BBC Northern Ireland and a live recording was broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster. The concert at the Belcourt Theatre was a sell-out success and was attended by Nashville's music industry professionals including publishers, record companies and agents. It was also supported by the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Sister City representatives and travel and music journalists.

Creative Industries

Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Showcases and Concert improved the business networks and partnerships between Belfast and Nashville by showcasing Belfast's music talent in the international marketplace:

- **Provided networking opportunities for those working in Belfast's music sector and potential buyers and distributors by inviting 200 key figures from the music industry to the Belfast Trade Show and Music Concert**
- **Produced and distributed 2000 audio visual resources that highlighted Belfast, its artists and venues to the widest international audience**
- **Arranged and co-ordinated meetings with Belfast and US-based creative companies**
- **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**
- **Six musicians performed live to an invited audience of music industry figures, press, Mayor of Nashville Karl Dean, Sister Cities contacts and members of the public**
- **Promoted the 2009 Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival and Belfast Songwriting Convention to new artists and music industry figures.**

- Increased knowledge and understanding of the opportunities available in Nashville for musicians by face-to-face meetings and distributing information
- Influential in securing sponsorship support from leading songwriter organisations for 2010.

Economic Initiatives

The influential Sister Cities International held its Annual Conference at the Belfast Waterfront from 29 July to 1 August. This was the first time in the organisation's 50 year history that the Conference has been held outside the United States.

In total, there were over 800 visitors to Northern Ireland as a result of the Conference – many spending their 2 week summer vacation here. Over 20 countries were represented and almost 100 accompanying persons attended the social events at the Conference. Over 200 delegates attended the corresponding Youth Conference which took place in Queen's University.

Among the delegates were elected and appointed city officials, senior business executives – including a number of high powered financiers, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs and investors – and representatives from the education, community and voluntary sectors. The Conference generated the equivalent of 4,500 bed nights for hotels in and around Belfast and was worth at least £2.5 million to the local economy.

Genealogy

The Ulster Historical Foundation accompanied the Civic Visit to Nashville in March 2009 to run workshops in order to promote Scots-Irish genealogy and how to trace 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.

Education

A formal relationship was established between Queen's University and Vanderbilt University which will result in international research, collaborations, student and lecturer exchanges and facilitate connections between schools, departments and offices to promote internationalisation. The first exchange student from Queen's School of English started in September 2009 and will sit on the Nashville Steering Committee and a Vanderbilt student will be placed at Queen's from February 2010.

Outward Civic Visit To Nashville 2010

Approval is sought for an inward Civic Visit from Mayor Dean and delegation and an outward Civic Visit by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Committee or their nominees, plus 3 officers on 11–14 March 2010 (no additional financial commitment is required from Committee). Music tourism events are scheduled for Nashville in March 2010. Delivered by the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival and supported by Arts Council NI, this will feature Belfast musicians who will perform with high profile singer-songwriters from Nashville. It is a unique opportunity to launch Belfast's music tourism initiatives internationally and this will be endorsed by the Nashville Mayor's Office of Economic Development and Nashville Sister City representatives.

The Belfast City Council delegation would be accompanied by Tourism Ireland, Ulster Historical Foundation, BBC, Songwriters' Festival and musicians. On 11 and 12 March, the Members would attend a programme of civic meetings scheduled by the Nashville Sister Cities Committee in relation to the 2010 Action Plan and also the:

- Media launch of the Belfast Titanic Exhibition
- Media launch of new Belfast Tourism Products
- Media launch of Genealogy Tourism Workshops

The Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Music Industry Showcases will culminate in a high profile public concert with Nashville and Belfast musicians on Saturday 13 March and broadcast on BBC and Nashville Public Television.

Resource Implications

£51,150 which has been provided within the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit 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 2010 Action Plan (Appendix) and its implementation within budget.

3. Approve an inward Civic Visit from Mayor Dean and outward Civic Visit by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee, or their nominees, plus 3 officers on 11–14 March 2010 (no additional financial commitment is required from Committee)

Decision Tracking

Further to approval of inward and outward civic visits, an update report in relation to planning and preparation will be brought to Committee.

Timeframe: December 2009 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Documents Attached

Appendix: Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010”

D
1062

Development Committee,
Wednesday, 16th September, 2009

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

D
1064

Development Committee,
Wednesday, 16th September, 2009

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

D
1066

Development Committee,
Wednesday, 16th September, 2009

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

D
1068

Development Committee,
Wednesday, 16th September, 2009

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

D
1070

Development Committee,
Wednesday, 16th September, 2009

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

Appendix – Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010 – can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 16 within the Agenda Pack

The Head of Economic Initiatives drew the Committee's attention to various aspects of the report and indicated that, subsequent to the papers having been issued, it had been considered that it would be beneficial for the Lord Mayor to be included in the visit to Nashville in March, 2010.

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed concern at the size of the delegation which it was proposed would visit Nashville next year and suggested that only two officers should attend. Other Members indicated that, given the importance of the visit to the City and Belfast-based musicians and businesses and due to the level of work which would be required, it would be important that three officers be included in the delegation to Nashville. The point was made that the inclusion of the Lord Mayor in the party would demonstrate the importance which Belfast gave to its Sister City relationship with Nashville.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Kirkpatrick,
Seconded by Councillor Rodgers,

That the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, together with two officers, participate in the visit to Nashville in March, 2010.

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

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to note the contents of the report and the comments thereon of the Head of Economic Initiatives;
- (ii) to approve the contents of the 2010 Sister City Nashville Action Plan and its implementation within budget;
- (iii) to meet the costs associated with an inward visit from Mayor Dean of Nashville; and
- (iv) that two Councillors and three officers be authorised to participate in the visit to Nashville from 11th till 14th March, 2010.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board's
Tourism Innovation Fund

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Members that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board had announced that it was creating a Tourism Innovation Fund which aimed to enhance the growth, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of tourism in Northern Ireland by stimulating product development and improving the visitor experience. It would provide financial assistance for non-capital projects such as creative interpretation initiatives and the innovative presentation and showcasing of Northern Ireland's tourism product. The Fund would provide financial assistance to the public sector of up to 75% of eligible project costs, with a minimum grant of £20,000 and a maximum of £150,000. Approximately £2 million was available for funding of revenue projects which could be delivered before the end of March, 2010.

She indicated that the Fund had a two-stage application process which had involved submitting by 14th August applications which would then be assessed against the criteria. Those applications which scored highly would be shortlisted, following which detailed business plans would have to be submitted. The Tourist Board had indicated that it aimed to complete the first stage by the end of September and the second by mid-November. She indicated that the Tourism, Cultural and Arts Unit had submitted applications for the undernoted projects and that any successful application would require 25% match funding from the Council, which could be provided from within the 2009/2010 budget:

Sunday in the City
Evening Economy
Literary Tourism
Music Tourism
The Belfast Story
Research into the Cultural and Creative Product Development Project
on Cultural Tourism

During discussion, a Member expressed surprise that the Department appeared to be in a position to support the provision of events on Sundays within Belfast when, in an item to be considered later in the meeting, no finance could be found to enable St. George's Market to open on Sundays.

The Committee agreed that in order to ensure that the Literary Tourism and the Belfast Story projects covered as broad a spectrum as possible, an advisory group rather than an individual, put together the storyboards for both projects.

Following further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Head of Economic Initiatives and agreed that any applications which were shortlisted by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board proceed to stage two of the process.

Lagan Canal Navigation Project

The Committee considered the undernoted report and adopted the recommendations contained therein:

"Relevant Background Information

Lagan Canal Navigation Project

Members will be aware of the renewed interest in Belfast's marine and river heritage generated from The Tall Ships Atlantic Challenge 2009. The Lagan Boat Rally held over the same weekend, organised by the Lagan Branch of the IWAI and Belfast City Council, also animated the river and raised both the potential of the river and canal as a tourist and recreation attraction and as a potential economic generator for the City.

Members are reminded that funding of £1million has been made available by Ulster Garden Villages Limited towards the reopening of the Lagan Gateway Project Lock 1 at Stranmillis. An action plan which outlined the proposed activities to be developed in relation to the project was approved at the Development Committee meeting held on 12 September 2007 and, as a result of the action plan, the Lagan Gateway Project Scoping Study and Economic Appraisals were undertaken.

The Scoping Report, noted at the Development meeting on 13 August 2008, identified a number of restoration and development works that would facilitate the re-opening of the first phase of 9 km of the Lagan River and Canal from Belfast Harbour upstream to Lock 3 at Shaw's Bridge. These key development sites included Queens Quay (site of the Lagan Weir), Stranmillis (the 'Lagan Gateway'), site of Lock 2 at Moreland's Meadow, river channel works, weir and canoe slalom upstream from Lock 3.

Key Issues

Economic Appraisal

The Economic Appraisal has been completed by FGS McClure Watters Consultants.

The Report states that the project is congruent with key national, regional and local government strategies relating to economic, social and environmental development and has identified the benefits of opening the Lagan Navigation in terms of;

- Tourism – it will enhance the reputation of Belfast City as a tourism destination.
- Economic Development - arising from the creation and development of a unique tourism and recreational product offering and the investment and spending that this will generate. It is envisaged that the common links between the Lagan and Belfast City's other tourist amenities and, in particular, the Titanic Signature Project, will represent the development of a significant maritime and industrial heritage themed tourism product for Belfast.
- Economic and Social - the restoration of inland waterways can potentially generate many economic and social benefits such as an increase in direct visitor spend and the creation of full time jobs.
- Heritage – the restored Lagan will provide the community with a connection with the past and will bring a sense of identity and belonging to the area.

- Recreation - the proposed infrastructural development will encourage a higher rate of participation in local water sports activities.
- Public Realm -the works will greatly enhance the public realm of this lower section of the Lagan and will see increased pressure for the improvement of the water quality due to an increased interest in the river and canal for recreation.
- Complementarities with other waterway developments - a fully restored Lagan and the restoration of the Ulster Canal would see the significant creation of an integrated east-west waterway system, create an all island waterway network and the development of a key source of economic activity for the island.
- Local Investment –the project would serve to increase the attractiveness of the recent and current developments in Belfast City as well as existing properties in the lower Lagan Corridor and will help encourage investment upstream, particularly in recreation/leisure related infrastructure and service.

The report states that the restoration of the Lagan will represent an investment which will drive the City's tourism, recreational and hospitality industries. It will result in increased visitor numbers to Belfast, increased visitor spend and the creation of jobs. It will stimulate further development of water-side properties, particularly in the tourism, recreation, hospitality and leisure sectors. The real economic impact of proposals to restore the Lagan navigation will be realised by Belfast's wider tourism, health and wellbeing activities and its recreational and hospitality industries in terms of increased visitor spend, job creation, increased tourism expenditure and the associated multiplier effects. An example of similar investment is the Huddersfield Narrow Canal which brings in £2.5m from visitors annually and in turn has led to £100m worth of investment and the creation of 800 jobs.

The Economic Appraisal recommended that in terms of the combined risk analysis, a phased full delivery of all proposed restoration works including those at Queens Quay, Lock 1, Lock 2, and river channel works up stream of Lock 3 (Shaw's Bridge) is the 'preferred option' with an estimated total cost of £8,660,949. As a 'next best' option and in the event that Belfast City Council fails to secure (or at least provisionally secure) funding for the phased delivery option, they should proceed with Option 4, which are the works to Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway with an estimated cost of £3,261,860.

Consultation

Members are reminded that discussions and meetings have been held with a number of Lagan corridor stakeholders including the DCAL, IWAI, DSD, DETI, TQL, local developers, Northern Ireland Planning Service, UWG, WI, NITB, LVRP and SBPB. Further consultation is required with the potential new key stakeholders to gain support and funding for the proposed project.

Resource Implications

The estimated total cost for the proposed Lagan Canal Navigation Project from the Lagan Weir to upstream from Lock 3 (Shaw's Bridge) is £8,660,949.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the content of the Economic Appraisal of the proposed Lagan Navigation Project, a copy of the full report is available in the Members Library.
- Agree the development of further work including the assembly of a funding package from a range of sources.

Decision Tracking

An update report on potential financing options will be brought to Committee at a later point.

Timeframe: April 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

IWAI - Inland Waterways Association of Ireland
DCAL - Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
DSD - Department of Social Development
UWG - Ulster Waterways Group
WI - Waterways Ireland
NITB - Northern Ireland Tourist Board
LVRP - Lagan Valley Regional Park
SBPB - South Belfast Partnership Board
DETI – Department of Enterprise Trade and Industry
TQ – Titanic Quarter Ltd”

Culture and Arts Funding

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report which provided an update on the Culture and Arts funding schemes.

Economic Development Unit - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

1. Shopmobility Belfast – request for financial support

Members will be aware that, over the last five years, Shopmobility has received financial assistance from Belfast City Council through the Economic Development Unit. Prior to 2007 this support was match funded by EU funds. However, this activity is no longer eligible for match-funding from the EU and therefore this request for support relates to Council rates monies only. The organisation also receives some small levels of support from the Parks and Leisure Department for work undertaken in the Parks and Open Spaces.

2. Social Economy Enterprise Strategy Consultation

Members are advised that, in early August 2009, DETI launched a consultation exercise on a proposed Social Economy Enterprise Strategy for the period 2009-2011. The closing date for the consultation is 9 October 2009.

3. Proposal from GEMS NI

Members will be aware that, at the April 2009 Development Committee, a number of employability projects were submitted for co-funding. Following some discussion, Committee agreed to match fund these projects for one more year only and not to accept any further requests for match funding of employability initiatives.

Recently GEMS NI has submitted a proposal to Belfast City Council entitled Belfast Job Search Services. The project is not match funded from other sources. The funding request to Belfast City Council is for £40,000 to support this project.

4. Request for change of representation on Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme management structures

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

Members will also be aware that at the Development Committee of 9 April 2008, approval was given for the Chairman of Development to represent Belfast City Council on the Strategic Joint Committee (SJC) and the Deputy Chairman of Development to represent Belfast City Council on the Local Action Group (LAG).

The SJC is made up of Elected Members from the three Council areas. It meets on a quarterly basis and has lead financial responsibility to accept, reject or defer decisions made by the LAG. The LAG is made up of Elected Members from the three Council areas as well as social partners representatives. It is responsible for assessing applications and makes recommendations for acceptance/deferral or rejection to the SJC.

Applications for a number of the measures have now opened and project promoters from Belfast are currently preparing applications for submission to upcoming calls.

5. Cities of the Isles (COTI)

Members will be aware that, along with Dublin, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Cardiff, Belfast is a member of the Cities of the Isles (COTI) network.

The cities engage in collaborative activity in the field of economic development and regeneration and an annual event on these key themes is organised for key elected members and officers. The next meeting is to take place in Edinburgh in October 2009.

6. Update of Council Local Economic Development (LED) Plan

Members will be aware that the current LED plan "Staying Competitive" runs from 2006-2010. It is proposed that preparatory work on the development of a new plan to run from 2010 gets under way in the coming months with a view to developing a City-wide Integrated Economic/ Business Development Strategy from 2011.

Key Issues

1. Shopmobility Belfast – request for financial support

Shopmobility Belfast provides motorised scooters and manual wheelchairs, free of charge, to enable those with mobility problems to access the City centre and surrounding areas.

The organisation is based at a number of locations in the City and it also provides an outreach service at events such as Rose Week and the Balmoral Show. The organisation also has placed a number of scooters at Belfast Zoo and in Ormeau Park.

Shopmobility Belfast has recently carried out a survey which indicates that a typical member using the service brought two other shoppers with them and spent around £50 in the City.

The organisation's running costs for the year are around £280,000. They have asked Belfast City Council for a contribution of £25,000 towards this budget.

Resource Implications

The request from Shopmobility is for £25,000 for this financial year (2009/2010).

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree to the proposed allocation of funding, subject to agreement of a work plan, in conjunction with Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM).

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking required if recommendation is accepted – funding will be allocated, subject to a legal agreement.

2. Social Economy Enterprise Strategy Consultation

The consultation paper issued by the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) in August 2009 has three key objectives. These are:

- To increase the awareness of the sector and establish its value to the local economy
- To develop the sector and increase its business strength
- To create a supportive and enabling environment.

Members are reminded that, as part of the Review of Public Administration (RPA), responsibility for a range of initiatives – including the Social Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) will transfer to local authorities. DETI will, however, retain policy responsibility through the social economy strategy.

The draft Belfast City Council response to this consultation is attached as Appendix 1. The key elements of Council's response include:

- Endorsement of further, targeted support for the sector with confirmation of the Council's own direct commitment to pre-enterprise support for the social economy (in conjunction with the Local Enterprise Agency (LEA) network)

- Proposal for an increase in the targets of the Social Entrepreneurship Programme in the Belfast City Council area
- Suggestion that Councils (including Belfast City Council) need to be part of the proposed Social Economy Policy Group (SEPG) given our responsibility for delivering actions in this field, particularly post-2011
- Councils should also be involved in the strategy monitoring process, in order to ensure that initiatives undertaken are being targeted at the most appropriate groups.

Resource Implications

No specific resource implications associated with this strategy.

Recommendations

It is proposed that Members note and agree the proposed Belfast City Council response to the consultation on the Social Economy Enterprise Strategy 2009-2011.

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking required if recommendation is accepted – response to be submitted to DETI in advance of the 9 October 2009 deadline.

3. Proposal from GEMS NI

The proposal incorporates a range of support measures for people in the Greater Belfast area who have lost their jobs or are facing redundancy as a result of the economic downturn. In essence the proposal includes 4 key services:

- A marketing campaign to raise awareness of the service
- A dedicated telephone helpline/web portal/community friendly access points and a Job Ops Shop – the latter to be held in GEMS twice a week – all elements of which are aimed at engaging with the newly unemployed
- A menu of employment access support e.g., help with CVs/application forms/interview skills/skills and training opportunities and referrals to other support services
- Engagement with employers/sector skills bodies/SMEs on market needs and opportunities for the newly unemployed.

The duration of the project is 9 months at a cost of £40,000 (£8,000 of which is to cover central admin costs, including the helpline).

In discussion with GEMS NI, they indicated that they were aware that the Council has not set aside resources to support this activity. It was therefore suggested that officers would discuss the proposal with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in order to see whether they might support this proposal.

DEL staff expressed concern that there would be duplication with the services already on offer through the Department and noted that they would therefore not be in a position to financially support this proposal in partnership with Council.

Resource Implications

The budget for this work over a 9 month period would be £40,000.

Recommendations

It is recommended that, given the lack of funding within Council, this proposal is not funded. However it may be pertinent to open discussions with DEL about future activity in this area, in order to ensure a coordinated support plan across the City.

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking required if recommendation is accepted.

4. Request for change of representation on Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme management structures

The political representation on the Strategic Joint Committee and the Local Action Group is weighted across the three Council areas to ensure an appropriate balance.

Given the change of Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Belfast City Council's Development Committee in June this year, this will create an imbalance in the political structures on the two bodies. None of the political affiliations from any of the other Councils have changed.

In light of this situation, a request has been received from the programme secretariat that the Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee be represented on the Strategic Joint Committee and that the Chairman of the Development Committee be represented on the Local Action Group.

Resource Implications

No resource commitments.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree to the proposal that that the Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee be represented on the Strategic Joint Committee and that the Chairman of the Development Committee be represented on the Local Action Group.

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking applicable – decision to be actioned if agreed.

5. Cities of the Isles (COTI)

The 2009 summit event for the Cities of the Isles network will take place in Edinburgh on 8-9 October 2009. The programme for the event is currently being finalised but the theme is the economic downturn and the challenges for funding infrastructure, maintaining investment flows and developing plans for economic resilience at a city level. It will consist of a range of presentations by city representatives as well as site visits across the city.

Resource Implications

The city of Edinburgh has invited four representatives for each city to attend. It is likely that the travel, accommodation and subsistence costs will not exceed £300 per person.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve the attendance at this event of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or nominees) along with up to two officers, at a maximum total cost of £1,200.

Decision Tracking

Following approval, that arrangements be put in place for the attendance of the delegation at the COTI Summit:

Time frame: December 2009 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

6. Update of Council Local Economic Development (LED) Plan

Economic conditions have changed significantly since the development of the current LED plan. Similarly, the funding structure for Council-led local economic development activity has changed with a new Structural Funds programme. In light of these developments, it is proposed that the current LED plan be updated to reflect this situation and in preparation for 2011 when a range of additional LED functions will transfer to councils.

Resource Implications

No specific resources required for the review of the LED plan – work to be carried out by staff resources. Resource commitments for proposed activities within the plan will be met from existing Council and external funding sources. As part of the process, a review of the current staffing structure within the Economic Development Unit may be necessary.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the proposal to update the current LED plan in the coming months and that they agree to a review of the staffing structure required to deliver this activity, with a further report to be brought back to a future meeting for approval.

Decision Tracking

Following approval, work will commence on the revision of the plan. A draft of the plan – along with a review of the resources required for delivery, will be brought back to a future committee meeting.

Time frame: January 2010 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

DETI – Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
NIRDP – Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme
LAG – Local Action Group
SJC – Strategic Joint Committee
COTI – Cities of the Isles
LED – Local Economic Development
SEPG – Social Economy Policy Group
SEE – Social Economy Enterprise

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Draft Belfast City Council response to Social Economic Enterprise consultation

Appendix 1

Social Economy Enterprise Strategy 2009-2011 Draft Belfast City Council response

1. Belfast City Council is pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the consultation on the draft Social Economy Enterprise (SEE) Strategy.

2. **Belfast City Council has identified the development and growth of the social economy as a key element of its enterprise support plan for the period 2009-2011 and we are delighted that the potential of the sector has been recognised at regional level, through the current consultation.**
3. **We note that the SEE strategy is a three year transition strategy in preparation for the 'enhanced role envisaged under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) for district councils in the delivery of social economy policy and programmes'.**
4. **We are somewhat concerned that the strategy is unlikely to be approved and operational until 2010. This limits the amount of time in which activities undertaken within the framework of the new strategy can be implemented. Equally, it lessens the amount of time available for discussion with local authorities with regard to the future management and funding of the social economy, post-2011.**
5. **In this regard, we are disappointed that no consideration has been given to the involvement of local authorities in the proposed Social Economy Policy Group (SEPG). We would strongly recommend that consideration be given to the representation of local authorities on this group. The rationale for district council engagement is two-fold. Councils are currently engaged in a range of support mechanisms for the social economy sector in their respective areas. In order to maximise the impact of this work and to avoid duplication, it is important that this information is shared with an appropriate grouping of other support agencies.**
6. **The second reason for justifying local authority input into this SEPG is that, as the document notes, responsibility for this policy area will transfer to councils post-2011. If this is the case, it will be important that councils are involved in shaping the future direction of policy rather than sitting on the sidelines while policy is made by other bodies.**
7. **The degree of local awareness which councils possess is critical if future policymaking is to be focused on the appropriate areas where there is most need. The nature of this sector is that it is still very much in its infancy and needs significant hands-on support. A centrally-managed, controlled and developed policy will not achieve those objectives.**
8. **In addition to involvement in the SEPG, we would suggest that local authorities may be involved in the monitoring process to ensure that actions are impacting effectively at a local level. With the responsibility of SEE transferring to councils under RPA it is preferable that local authorities are included in the management and monitoring structure at an early stage in order to engender ownership and ensure consistency of approach.**

9. **We broadly agree with the proposed approach set out in section 4 of the draft strategy, outlining the key strategic objectives. We have identified a range of direct interventions which we will undertake to improve the quality of business starts in the social economy sector. This is to be delivered by the Local Enterprise Agency (LEA) network in the Belfast City Council area.**
10. **We agree that there should be a focus on enhancing the business viability of the social economy sector. To that end, we have opened our range of business support initiatives to businesses from the social economy sector and endeavoured to ensure that at least one social economy business participates in each of our business development programmes.”**

In answer to Members' questions regarding the Cities of the Isles meeting in Edinburgh, the Director indicated that the event would require one night's accommodation and that, having seen the agenda, she was content that it would be beneficial for the Council to be represented at the meeting which would have as its theme the Economic Downturn and the challenges for funding infrastructure, maintaining investment flows and developing plans for economic resilience at a city level. In addition, she indicated that, following the attendance of the Council's delegation at the meeting in Edinburgh, a report would be submitted to a future meeting regarding the Council's membership of the Cities of the Isles organisation.

Following further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Director and agreed:

- (i) to provide a sum of £25,000 to Shopmobility Belfast;
- (ii) that the document outlined in Appendix 1 above be submitted to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment as the Council's response to the consultation concerning the Social Economy Enterprise Strategy 2009-2011;
- (iii) to provide no funding to GEMS Northern Ireland. The Committee agreed further that it would be useful for Council officers to hold discussions with representatives of the Department for Employment and Learning in order to ensure that there was in place a co-ordinated support plan across the City for persons who had lost their jobs or who were facing redundancy as a result of the economic downturn;
- (iv) that the Chairman of the Committee represent the Council on the Local Action Group of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme and that the Deputy Chairman represent the Council on the Programme's Strategic Joint Committee;

- (v) to authorise the attendance of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with two officers, at the Cities of the Isles meeting in Edinburgh on 8th and 9th October; and
- (vi) to note the information provided in the report regarding proposals to update the Council's Local Economic Development Plan in view of the economic downturn and the transfer of local economic functions to councils following the Review of Public Administration. In addition, the Committee agreed further that a review of the staffing structure within the Economic Development Unit be undertaken, if necessary, to ensure that this work could be completed.

World Trade Centre Belfast Update

The Committee noted the contents of the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that, in January 2009, an update on the proposed business plan for World Trade Centre Belfast (WTCB) was presented to Committee for endorsement. This business plan identified a range of activities under six headings:

1. Global Gateway Service
2. Global business skills
3. Business development programmes
4. Trade Missions
5. Local networking events
6. Inward investment

Key Issues

Outputs against target for each of the business areas to date are as follows:

1. Global Gateway Service

The Global Gateway Service was set up to connect companies to business opportunities and contacts through the WTC network, as well as offer international trade advice to inexperienced companies.

Target:

Establish WTC Belfast website
Assist 200 companies (to period March 2011)

Outputs:

WTC Belfast website has been established with a mailing list of 1,300 companies that receive information on WTC Belfast activities.

To date 17 companies have availed of the Global Gateway Service, with numbers increasing as awareness of this service develops. Enquiries have ranged from identifying new global suppliers, business partners and customers to advising early stage companies on international trade issues. Advantage NI is also using the services of WTC Atlantic Canada to plan a trade mission to Nova Scotia in September 2009. Two local companies have employed WTCs on a consultancy basis to develop business in the US.

2. Global Skills Workshops

These workshops are targeted at companies and individuals who are inexperienced at international trade. The workshop themes are on topics not delivered by other organisations in Northern Ireland, specifically on global supply chain management.

Target:

4 workshops per year
10 participants per workshop

Outputs:

To date 2 workshops have been hosted by WTC Belfast. 10 participants attended one and 8 the other. The feedback from both workshops has been very positive and participants have expressed interested in attending further workshops.

Financial implications

Participants are charged to attend these workshops. A one day workshop is £75 per person and half day workshop is £35 per person. This means that the cost implications to Council are generally very limited.

3. Business Development Programmes

These programmes are targeted at micro and SME companies inexperienced in international trade.

Target:

1 Business Improvement Programme per year: 10 participants
1 Channel Development Clinic per year: 10 participants

Outputs:

A 'Buy/Make/Sell Global' programme will be delivered from October 2009. This programme will help inexperienced companies develop their capacity to trade internationally and find new global business opportunities or partners. The Channel Development Clinic will help companies establish export sales channel strategies and find new sales partners.

Financial implications:

These programmes will be subsidised by Belfast City Council and DETI similar to other Business Improvement Programmes delivered by the Economic Development Unit. The cost for delivery of two programmes will be approximately £50,000.

A registration cost of £150 per company will be charged to participants on the Buy/Make/Sell Programme. Participants will be charged £75 to attend the Channel Development Clinic.

4. Trade Mission

WTC Belfast hosted a trade mission to Futurallia, an SME international matchmaking event which took place in Qatar. Invest NI co-funded this trade mission.

Target:

1 trade mission per year
10 companies to participate

Outputs:

11 companies participated in this trade mission. As a result of this trade mission, one healthcare diagnostics company has now established a new sales distributor agreement in Qatar, one environmental waste bins manufacturer has had requests for sample products from Qatar, Burkina Faso, Turkey and Iran with a view to purchasing goods. One recruitment company has received two new NI clients because of their contacts and experience in Qatar. Two other companies now plan to visit Qatar again in September to pursue business opportunities.

Financial Implications:

Invest NI co-funded this trade mission and companies also paid for 50% of the trade mission costs. DETI match funded the Belfast City Council costs.

The actual cost to Belfast City Council after income from partners and companies was approximately £2,650.

5. Local Networking Events

Target:

4 local events per year
Target 40 companies attend each event

Outputs:

To date WTC Belfast has hosted 4 networking events.

WTC Qatar and WTC Dulles in Washington have attended two events. 80 companies attended the Qatar event and approximately 40 companies attended the Dulles event. WTC Belfast also organised discussion groups during the WTC Dulles visit with the universities, venture capital companies, trade associations, Invest NI and local companies which were all very well attended. One company is now employing WTC Dulles on a retainer basis to develop business in the US.

Financial implications:

Delivery cost for this year's activities is approximately £10,000, half of which is being funded by DETI.

These events are hosted at no costs to companies.

6. Inward Investment - Investor Gateway Service

WTC Belfast provides this service to potential investors in the City. Companies can receive information on Belfast as well as introductions to key individuals and a property search service.

Target:

40 enquiries per year

Outcomes:

There have been 8 enquiries to date this year. This is not unexpected given the difficult global trading environment. One enquiry presents potential investment opportunities in Belfast with regards to establishing Belfast as a strategic data hub providing outsourced services to larger clients such as financial institutions. WTC Belfast organised meetings for the company's visit to Belfast, including meetings with private companies, developers and Invest NI. The investor is following up on a possible location and plans another visit to Belfast to explore this further.

Financial implications:

The service is offered free to potential investors and there are no direct costs for delivering this service to date, apart from staff time.

Future Opportunities

Since the completion of the business plan, a number of additional opportunities have arisen. These include:

- **WTC Association Certification:** This is the quality standard of the Association, around one third of WTCs have been through the accreditation process. It is considered that this provides a useful benchmark by which the quality of services can be judged. It also provides a template for considering how the services complement the wider business support offering in an area. WTC Belfast will seek to successfully certify its services in 2010.
- **Hosting a WTC Regional meeting:** The WTC Association holds a regional meeting for Europe, Middle East and Africa on an annual basis. This event is generally attended by over 100 representatives from World Trade Centres in this region. It offers an opportunity to discuss possible collaborative activities and to share information on upcoming events and initiatives. It may be pertinent to propose Belfast as a location for an upcoming event, within the next three years.
- **WTC Partnership:** WTC Dublin has expressed an interest in partnering WTC Belfast on activities. WTC Dublin has ambitious plans to establish services as well as an online trade portal. They would like to involve Belfast companies in the roll out of the pilot operation for the trade portal. The license for WTC Dublin is held by WTC Boston, which also manages WTC Washington. WTC Dublin has suggested that it would be open to further collaboration with WTC Belfast.
- **WTC Belfast Facility:** While the focus of the work to date has been on developing the services side of WTC Belfast, Members are reminded that there is also an opportunity to consider the establishment of a World Trade Centre in Belfast. There is now the opportunity to further explore a number of channels including private developments or as part of the debate on Belfast City Council's assets. The WTC proposal is currently being examined as part of the discussion on the future of the Maysfield site.

Resource Implications

£100,000 has been agreed by Council to deliver WTC Belfast services from January 2009 – March 2010. This has been match funded by DETI under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme 2007 – 2013. Proposals for future resourcing of WTC services will be incorporated in the Departmental Plan from April 2010.

Recommendation

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

Decision Tracker

No decision tracking applicable as report is for notation only.

Key to Abbreviations

WTC - World Trade Centre
SME- Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
DETI- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment”

United Kingdom City of Culture 2013

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has launched a UK-wide contest for areas to be designated as UK City of Culture 2013. Thereafter the competition will be staged every four years.

The overall aim is to encourage the use of culture as a catalyst for a ‘step change’.

The successful city will need to:

- Deliver a high quality cultural programme (similar standard to that delivered by Liverpool Capital of Culture) that spans the course of the year and reaches a wide variety of audiences
- Deliver a programme that uses culture to lead to lasting social regeneration
- Demonstrate economic impact from the programme
- Maximise the legacy of UK City of Culture

Bids must be distinctive, ambitious, demonstrate cultural and artistic excellence, reflect a broad partnership, reach out to wide range of audiences and participants (especially under representative groups), be realistic and achievable. The assessment criteria have been published as part of the guidance notes.

Key Issues

Outline proposals for 2013 can be submitted by 15 October 2009 for initial feedback from expert assessors. This part of the process is optional. An initial bid must then be submitted by 11 December 2009 and, if shortlisted, areas will be asked to submit a second full and final bid by the 28 May 2010.

Belfast has the opportunity to bid for UK City of Culture 2013 either on behalf of the City or a wider area. There has been some discussion that there could be a regional bid from Northern Ireland incorporating Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. Both cities have registered an initial expression of interest. The guidance notes state that the location bidding should have a clear identity for visitors; a city and its hinterland; or a closely linked set of urban areas; or be a cohesive area capable of sustaining a concentrated programme of cultural activities.

Officers have met with the regional and city stakeholders, including Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Department of Culture Arts and Leisure, Department of Social Development, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Belfast Chamber of Commerce, Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and Belfast City Centre Management. The purpose of the meeting was to update stakeholders on the UK City of Culture initiative and gauge support. The initiative was met with a positive response; the general view is that the timing is right for Belfast to submit a bid given the level of investment in culture related infrastructure including the opening of the Titanic Signature Building in 2012.

Regional agencies expressed the desire to see the strongest bid coming from Northern Ireland which may be one collective bid based on a regional approach, including both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. However, if competition arises between areas regional agencies will not support any one bid over another during the competitive process. Belfast based agencies including BVCB and BCCM expressed a desire to submit a bid for Belfast.

On balance, and in order to maximise the benefits that would be returned to Belfast from attaining this title, it is considered that the optimum way forward is for Belfast to participate in a regional bid. Central Government is stressing the benefits of a single bid from the region and without the support of DCAL and ACNI it would not be possible to undertake a successful bidding process. A full assessment of the resource implications along with an analysis of how a regional bid would be constructed will be brought back to the next Development Committee should Members agree to adopt this route.

Resource Implications

There is no Government budget allocated to the bidding process. The two stage process has been designed to keep the costs to bidding areas reasonable, as only those areas that are shortlisted will be required to prepare the detailed elements of the full and final bid.

At a UK level a number of funders, including Arts Council England, HLF, English Heritage and Visit Britain, have indicated their desire to support the process and winning bidder but cannot make firm or exclusive commitment to any one bidder during the process.

Belfast City Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit alongside the Events Unit would have to allocate resources to prepare the outline proposal followed by an initial bid. However, due to the national significance of this potential accolade, it will be important to engage with a range of partners to secure buy-in and maximise resources from other agencies.

If successful, there will be substantial costs involved in delivering a high quality programme of events during 2013. Obvious benefits for the UK City of Culture 2013 will be the economic and social benefits derived from programme delivery. The guidance notes also flag the significant media impact and promotional value of hosting a large scale programme of cultural activities as well as commitment from BBC and Channel 4 to support the winning project to similar level of coverage given to Liverpool Capital of Culture.

Recommendations

It is recommended that

- Members note the contents of the above report and agree that Belfast should further explore participation in the UK City of Culture Competition as part of a wider regional bid.

Decision Tracking

If the Committee agree to submit a bid, details of the outline proposal along with resource implications will be presented at the October Committee.

Timeframe: October 2009 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

DCMS - Department of Culture, Media and Sport

HLF - Heritage Lottery Fund

BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau

BCCM – Belfast City Centre Management”

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that 29 Cities had expressed an interest in being considered as the United Kingdom City of Culture in 2013. She pointed out that, subsequent to the papers having been issued for the meeting, it had been ascertained from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport that it was unlikely that a regional bid from Northern Ireland would be successful.

During discussion in the matter, Members pointed out that, before any decision could be taken with regard to the submission of a bid, the Committee would need to receive a report on how the entire process would be funded. Other Members expressed the view that, at present, Belfast was not in a position to be successful with a bid since its arts infrastructure, whilst improving, was not yet fully operational. It was pointed out further that one of the reasons why the bid which the Council had submitted for the European Capital of Culture had not succeeded had been the lack of involvement of sporting organisations and that the report before the Committee gave no indication that sport would be included in the 2013 bid. It was also suggested that the City would need to develop its shared future agenda more fully before a bid was submitted.

Following further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Crozier,
Seconded by Councillor Rodway,

That the Committee further explore Belfast's participation in the 2013 United Kingdom City of Culture competition.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the Council not submit a bid for the 2013 United Kingdom City of Culture competition.

Markets Unit - Update

Proposal for a Sunday Market at St. George's

The Committee was advised that market traders at St. George's had requested that the Committee consider the possibility of a weekly market being held on Sundays, in addition to those held on Fridays and Saturdays.

The Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that, whilst this would be a positive addition to the attractions which were available to visitors within the City on a Sunday, there were two issues which would require to be addressed. Firstly, since no additional monies were available, the Sunday market would need to be self-financing, which would require an average occupation rate of 130 stalls at the present rent, or 175 stalls if the discounted rent which was offered currently to Saturday market pre-paying traders was applied. Since work patterns for staff within the Markets Unit did not include Sunday working, a Sunday market would have to be covered on overtime, which would result in operational and staff costs of £1,550 per week, which were not included in the current budgets. Secondly, the Market was used for a variety of cultural and other events, a number of which were held on Sundays and the proposal from the market traders would impact on these events. However, it had been suggested by the traders that they would forego Sunday markets on the dates of such events.

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed concern at the costs to the Council of operating the Sunday market and indicated that it would require to be self-financed. Another Member reiterated the point he had made earlier in the meeting that the Department had indicated that it would be able to fund the provision of events to be held in Belfast on Sunday but did not have sufficient finances to operate a Sunday market at St. George's.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that officers should further investigate financing options for the operation of a Sunday market at St. George's and report back to a future meeting.

Entertainment Licensing Hours for St. George's Market

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that, following a planned monitoring visit by the Council's Environmental Protection Unit during a concert which had been held at St. George's Market on 22nd June, it had been ascertained that loud music was audible in the nearest residential properties. The Unit had accordingly suggested that the Market was not suitable for concert-type events after 11.00 p.m. She pointed out that the Council's Market Unit, Environmental Protection Unit and Building Control Section, together with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, had received complaints from residents regarding noise from events being held late at night at St. George's.

She reported that most promoters would be content with an 11.00 p.m. music curfew, although a small number of promoters, who were aware that the current Entertainments Licence was operational until 1.00 a.m., did request that their events be allowed to operate until that time. Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee agree that an application be submitted to the Licensing Committee requesting a variation in the existing Entertainments Licence to reduce the hours of operation for the from 1.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. for weekly events and from 3.00 a.m. to 1.00 a.m. on New Year's Eve.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Categorisation of Goods for the Saturday Market

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that the Friday variety market at St. George's operated a categorisation system for traders to ensure a fair and equitable range of goods were sold. This categorisation had been established by the Council in 2001, partly as a result of the introduction of the Duplication of Goods Act 1999 which protected traders and ensured that a wide range of goods and services were available. She reported that, given the continued success of the Saturday market, and, following lengthy discussions between the Markets Unit staff, traders and their representatives, it was proposed that a similar categorisation system be introduced for the Saturday market.

The Committee agreed to the introduction of the categorisation of goods for the Saturday market at St. George's.

Retail Sector Support Plan – Continental Market

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, as part of the Retail Sector Support Plan 2009/2010, independent traders had been given the opportunity to showcase and sell their products and services at prime locations, open spaces and on Council land, including the Christmas Continental Market in the City Hall grounds. She reported that, following discussion with the company responsible for providing the Continental Market, it was proposed to let stalls at cost price to small and local independent retailers. This would provide opportunities for such retailers to offer a wider range of products at the Market. Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee approve the letting of additional stalls by the organisers of the Christmas Continental Market for use by small local and independent retailers.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Quarterly Media Report

The Committee noted the contents of 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 March till August.

Ulster Hall Capital Works Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The second phase of refurbishment of the Ulster Hall began in June 2007 with the Grand Hall reopening on 6 March 2009 followed by a month long festival of performances, including a Civic Gala performance with the Ulster Orchestra. Since the opening concert and up to the end of June the Grand Hall has hosted over eighty concerts and other events. The café and other areas of the building have also been heavily used. The Ulster Orchestra moved into their new administration offices on 1st June and has expressed satisfaction with the new accommodation. The key stakeholders in the project have also intimated that they are very pleased with the use made of the building since it opened, including the education and community access programme.

Subsequent to this report first being considered by the Development Committee on 12 August 2009, it was agreed that a site visit for Members be made to the Ulster Hall to inspect and assess the key issues first hand and to hear from Mr Dawson Stelfox of Consarc, the consultant architect to the project. The site visit took place on Tuesday, 8 September 2009.

Building Work

Building works, particularly in refurbishment and conservation projects, carry the risk of unforeseen but necessary works arising during construction. While contingency allowances are made in the programme for such eventualities this can only be notional and the Ulster Hall building works were actually completed later than programmed.

The original expected date for practical completion was set for the end of December 2008. This allowed a two month period for finishing and completing other elements of work and enabled a scheduled move back into the building, so that the management team could become familiar with the new systems in the building.

Some unforeseen work became necessary and practical completion of the auditorium and front of house areas did not take place until 6 March 2009 (the actual day for re-opening to the public) and the new five storey administration office block at the rear of the building was not formally handed over until 23 May 2009. The delay was caused by the following main issues:

- Problems with piled foundations for the new build areas resulted in the cracking of the old walls and work scheduled had to be stopped while remedial repairs were carried out. Additional structural work was also required at high level to strengthen walls;
- When the old roof was removed wet rot was discovered in some of the timber trusses and the rotten timber had to be replaced, with additional temporary supports;
- An issue arose around the design of the ventilation and grilles for the main auditorium. This work was subcontracted to a specialist supplier, and it took some time for the ductwork and grilles to be designed, manufactured and tested to ensure that not only the correct room temperatures were achievable but also that the noise levels created by air flowing through the grilles conformed to strict criteria – necessary for both recording purposes and the enjoyment of the music. This caused delays in the work in the roof space and on the heating and ventilation system.

The overall result of the delays in these works was that the building was handed over later than scheduled which had a major knock on impact on remaining completion work. The management team worked closely with the main contractor over the last few months of the project in order to ensure the opening date was achieved. However, the item which suffered most as a result of the project delays and restricted access was the Mulholland Organ, with the result that the dates scheduled for testing and commissioning the Organ were lost and have been subsequently planned for a later date.

Key Issues

Issues Arising

A number of issues have been raised by Committee

Dampness:

Prior to the recent refurbishment works some of the walls of the building were historically extremely damp for the following reasons:

- The previous use of inappropriate cement pointing on the external face trapped moisture in the walls, leading to deterioration of the brickwork and further damp penetration
- Defective roof coverings and guttering lead to significant water ingress at high level

As part of the current works, the external walls were repaired. Brick replacement was carried out as necessary and all the walls were re-pointed using an appropriate lime mortar.

In addition, the roof was re-configured to provide an accessible working platform for maintenance from the flat parapet gutter and the roof covering was renewed. The rainwater goods have been replaced and the new rainwater drainage system is working well.

Having completed the above repairs, all of the inherent design and maintenance problems have now been addressed. However, as the walls of the building have been absorbing water for many years, they will require considerable time to dry out, possibly up to a year in some areas due to their thickness. In the meantime the dampness will exhibit as patches. The building team has made allowances for periodic minor redecoration as required, until the final decoration takes place when the walls have fully dried out. In addition, a number of notices have now been installed throughout the building explaining the the situation to members of the public.

Side Aisles/Length of rows

In relation to the removal of the side aisles at ground floor level of the Main Hall. The previous seating layout in this space did incorporate a very narrow, unapproved access space at each side of the room. The space was not technically an aisle and existed only because the previous seats had traditional legs which could not be placed on top of the existing floor grilles at the edge of the hall. The new seating arrangement consists of a removable, stackable 'Matrix' system comprising groups of 2 or 3 seating banks on detachable legs. This provides great flexibility for the wide variety of events held within this space. The option to remove a bank of 2 seats on each row at each side of the Hall to provide side aisles would result in a total loss of 108 seats on the ground floor, thereby reducing the capacity at this level from 786 to 678 – which would in turn cause a significant reduction in potential revenue, a concern which has been voiced by the orchestra and other commercial promoters.

In addition, the row widths and lengths of the new seating arrangement are designed to comply with current legislative standards and best practice guidelines and have all been approved by Building Control.

The Mulholland Organ

During the almost two year phase of building work, the Mulholland Organ remained in the building, protected by two layers of polythene sheet and a horizontal timber screen to prevent damage. A maintenance contract, separate from the main building contract, was entered into with an independent specialist organ contractor who carried out some repair work deemed necessary following an earlier inspection. The building contract required the main works contractor to employ the specialist organ contractor to protect the Organ and to allow him to be on site when any electrical work was undertaken inside the Organ. This procedure appeared to work satisfactorily until near completion of the project, when the organ maintenance contractor discovered water lying in some sections of the Organ. It has not been possible to establish the source of the water but in order to allay fears of any permanent damage to the instrument, a further independent inspection was commissioned. This inspection was carried out by an independent specialist organ adviser from England, recommended by Mr Colm Carey, the City Organist. The adviser concluded that while some minor damage had been incurred it could easily be remedied at minor expense. He did however highlight that it has been over 30 years since the Organ has had a major overhaul and so made a further recommendation that such works should be considered for the near future, as it would take time to plan and execute.

The current position is that the remedial work required, as identified by the adviser, to reinstate the Organ to its pre-building work condition and concert performance standard, will be scheduled in the months ahead. It is estimated that it will take a minimum of five consecutive days to fine tune the instrument and the Ulster Hall management team are presently trying to create diary space to allow this to take place. The additional cost is expected to be minimal and will be funded from the existing capital contingency budget allocated to the project.

Site Visit

A site visit for Committee to inspect the work was held on Tuesday, 8 September 2009. The Committee was given a tour of the key areas affected by damp and viewed the Grand Hall's seating configuration and the Mulholland Organ. The tour was hosted by Mr Dawson Stelfox of Consarc, the consultant architect to the project, supported by relevant Council officers from the Waterfront and Ulster Halls, and the Director of Improvement representing the Project Management Unit. Also present to provide technical information in relation to the Mulholland Organ was Mr Colm Carey, the City Organist.

Members received further supporting technical information from Mr Stelfox in relation to the dampness, and heard that the drying out process, although estimated at twelve months, depending on the inherent environmental conditions, could take up to twenty-four months. However, Members were reassured that evidence of the drying out process were already being seen in various areas of the Hall. Members were also assured that any costs in relation to the future making good and redecoration of the areas affected were included within the overall capital cost of the project and were contractual obligations of the project contractor.

In relation to the Mulholland Organ, Mr Colm Carey, the City Organist, informed Members that with the necessary minor remedial works due to be scheduled for completion in March of next year (due to the limited nature of available dates with the Ulster Hall's events diary), the Organ would be ready for concert performances from April 2010. Members were also assured by the Consultant Architect that any costs in relation to returning the instrument back to the original concert performance quality would be met as part of the overall project capital cost. It was agreed by Members that any further discussion in relation to the Organ should be deferred until these works had been completed, and the organ ready for concert performances.

Awards

To date the Ulster Hall project has been nominated for the following awards:

1. The Construction News Quality Awards 2009 – achieved a top seven position but did not win overall.
2. CEF Construction Excellence Awards 2009 – to be assessed on 28 July 2009.

Resource Implications

Financial

The project is currently within the amount approved in the Capital Programme as follows:

FUNDER	AMOUNT RECEIVED TO DATE	AMOUNT OUTSTANDING	TOTAL EXPECTED
DCAL	£2,000,000.00	NIL	£2,000,000
ACNI	£ 666,747.93	£ 20,621.07	£ 687,369
EHS	£ 192,998.00	£ 44,372.00	£ 237,370
HLF	£ 486,621.53	£508,378.47	£ 995,000
BCC Contribution			£4,655,261
TOTALS	£3,346,367.46	£573,371.54	£8,575,000
		Total project cost	£8,575,000

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision Tracking

There is no decision tracking as this report is for notation only

Key to Abbreviations

DCAL	Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
ACNI	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency”

Following discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the foregoing report.

Community Festivals Fund

The Director advised the Committee that, due to a number of Councils in Northern Ireland accepting less funding than had originally been offered in the current financial year, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure had a small surplus in the Community Festivals Fund to reallocate and had requested local authorities to submit expressions of interest before 17th September.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to seek a maximum of £40,000 from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to support festivals taking place between January and March 2010 and to match fund the amount received from within the current year's budget.

Chairman