

# Development Committee

Wednesday, 14th October, 2009

## MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Humphrey (Chairman); and  
Councillors M. Browne, Convery, Ekin, N. Kelly,  
Kirkpatrick, Kyle, C. Maskey, McCausland,  
Mac Giolla Mhín, Mhic Giolla Mhín, 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;  
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Services Manager; and  
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

### Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Campbell.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 8th and 16th September 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 October, subject to:

- (i) the omission of the minute of the meeting of 16th September under the heading "London 2012 Cultural Olympiad – Live Sites Screen" which, at the request of Councillor Convery, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration;
- (ii) the omission of the minute of the meeting of 16th September under the heading "Community Centres – Conditions of Hire" which, at the request of Councillor Crozier, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration;
- (iii) the omission of that portion of the minute of the meeting of 16th September under the heading "Sister City Nashville" in so far as it related to the outward Civic Visit to Nashville in 2010 which, at the request of Councillor Stalford, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration; and
- (iv) the omission of the minute of the meeting of 16th September under the heading "United Kingdom City of Culture 2013" which, at the request of Councillor Bernie Kelly, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

**Friends of the Earth –**  
**Belfast Cycle City Vision for 2020**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th September, it had agreed to receive from Friends of the Earth a presentation regarding its Belfast Cycle City Vision for 2020. It was reported that Mr. Andrew McMurray, Belfast Friends of the Earth, Mr. Steven Patterson, Sustrans, and Mr. Roy White, Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. McMurray indicated that in the recent years there had been a visible increase in the number of cyclists in Belfast. However, the growth in cycling was being hampered by the limited size and inadequate quality of the cycle network, insufficient promotion and the lack of an agreed strategic vision. Accordingly, Belfast Friends of the Earth, together with Sustrans and the Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative, had produced the Belfast Cycle City Vision for 2020. This aimed to ensure that cycle use in Belfast was equivalent to a number of cities in the United Kingdom, with an ambitious but realisable target of 10% of all trips in the City being undertaken by bicycle, to increase funding for cycling projects and to ensure the production of a comprehensive Cycling Strategy for Belfast.

He reminded the Members of the environmental and health benefits of cycling and pointed out that the Comber Greenway had received international recognition the previous week when it had been awarded first prize in the European Greenway Awards, which promoted routes in Europe which were designed for non-motorised traffic. He pointed out further that in Belfast the quality of cycle routes varied, there was a disjointed cycle infrastructure, cars were permitted to park in cycle routes and the Streets Ahead Project, involving the planned pedestrianisation of more areas within the City centre and the introduction of a number of one-way streets, might make cycling more difficult. He advised the Committee that the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland had indicated that during the period 2005-2007 3% of people had commuted to work by bike, compared to 1% in 2003-2005, and that the high quality National Cycle Network route along the River Lagan had resulted in an increase in usage of 166% since 2000.

Mr. Patterson informed the Committee that Sustrans was operating currently a Bike It Campaign in ten schools in Belfast. This aimed to give children the skills and information which they needed in order to cycle to school and to create a positive cycling culture which would, hopefully, continue for many years. He pointed out that, following the introduction of Bike It Campaigns in other parts of the United Kingdom, there had been an increase in the number of children showing an interest in cycling to school.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. McMurray requested that the Council endorse the Belfast Cycle City Vision for 2020, which set a target of 10% of all trips in the City being undertaken by bicycle, requested that at least £15 per person per year be invested in cycling initiatives and that a Cycle Strategy for Belfast be delivered between 2010 and 2020.

The deputation then answered a wide range of questions from the Members, following which Messrs. McMurray, Patterson and White thanked the Committee for receiving them and retired from the meeting.

Following discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided by the deputation regarding the Belfast Cycle City Vision for 2020.

**Notice of Motion re the Introduction  
of a Cycling Scheme in Belfast**

The Committee was reminded that the Lord Mayor, at the meeting of the Council on 1st October, in accordance with Standing Order 11(e), had referred to the Development Committee the undernoted Notice of Motion which had been proposed by Councillor Attwood and seconded by Councillor Hartley:

**“Belfast City Council notes the introduction recently of the Dublinbikes scheme in Dublin which seeks to encourage cycling and which makes available bicycles for public use at a negligible cost to the user; notes also that this scheme has been developed with a commercial sponsor thereby minimising the cost to the public purse and that similar schemes have been introduced successfully in Blackpool, Copenhagen and Paris.**

**The Council’s recently adopted Transport Policy encourages a shift away from private car use towards more sustainable forms of travel such as walking, cycling and greater use of public transport and includes a provision which commits the Council to use its influence with Statutory Agencies to seek to further these aims. The Council agrees therefore to engage with the Department for Regional Development, and other relevant agencies, in relation to the possibility of the introduction of such a cycling scheme in Belfast.”**

Councillor N. Kelly informed the meeting that Councillor Attwood was unable to attend the meeting and had asked him to address the Committee on his behalf regarding the Notice of Motion. He pointed out that 10,000 persons had registered to use the Dublinbikes Scheme in its first week of operation and, bearing in mind the information which had been provided earlier in the meeting regarding the Belfast Cycle City Vision 2020, he believed that the Council should work with the Department for Regional Development and other relevant agencies to investigate the possibility of introducing a similar scheme in Belfast.

Following discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed that Council officers discuss the matter with Belfast City Centre Management and the Department for Regional Development and submit a report to the Committee in due course.

**London 2012 Cultural Olympiad –  
Live Sites Screen**

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 16th September under the heading “London 2012 Cultural Olympiad - Live Sites Screen” which had been taken back at the Council meeting on 1st October at the request of Councillor Convery. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

*“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."*

Councillor Convery pointed out that the report indicated that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure would be meeting the maintenance costs of the screen for the first three years and enquired as to which organisation would be responsible for maintenance after that period of time. He pointed out further that, from a safety perspective, he would be opposed to the screen being located at the corner of Donegall Squares North and East as they could prove to be a hazard to drivers at that junction.

In response, the Head of City Events and Venues indicated that, following discussions with the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and the Department for Social Development, it had been agreed that, should permission to site the screen in the City Hall grounds be forthcoming, the best location would be at the corner of Donegall Squares North and West, which would reduce its visibility to passing traffic.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that funding for a three-year period be provided towards the costs of the Live Sites Screen in connection with the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and noted that the request for the location of the screen within the City Hall grounds would be discussed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 23rd October.

### **Community Centres – Conditions of Hire**

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 16th September under the heading "Community Centres – Conditions of Hire" which had been taken back at the Council meeting on 1st October at the request of Councillor Crozier. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

*"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."*

During discussion in the matter, the Community Services Manager informed the Committee that religious organisations could and did use community centres but that the standard conditions of hire did not permit the use of such centres for religious purposes. She pointed out also that it was a condition of hire that, on health and safety grounds, a member of staff be present when a centre was in use and as religious organisations would probably wish to use the centres out of normal working hours, it might not be possible for all such requests to be accepted.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Community Services Manager and agreed to affirm its decision of 16th September.

### **United Kingdom City of Culture 2013**

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 16th September under the heading "United Kingdom City of Culture 2013" which had been taken back at the Council meeting on 1st September at the request of Councillor Bernie Kelly. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

*"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."*

During discussion in the matter, the Director indicated that applications had to be submitted by 15th December and, if the Committee agreed to make a submission this would place a considerable burden on staff if a credible bid were to be produced.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to affirm its decision of 16th September and, in addition, agreed that it would consider submitting a bid for the United Kingdom City of Culture in 2017.

### **Sister City Nashville**

The Committee considered further that portion of the minute of 16th September under the heading "Sister City Nashville" in so far as it related to the outward Civic Visit to Nashville in 2010, which had been taken back at the Council meeting on 1st October at the request of Councillor Stalford. An extract of that portion of the minute is set out hereunder:

*"The Committee considered the undernoted report:*

#### **'Relevant Background Information**

##### **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 approve an 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 the outward Civic Visit, an update report in relation to planning and preparation will be brought to Committee.*

*Timeframe: December 2009*

*Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay'*

*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 that two Councillors and three officers be authorised to participate in the visit to Nashville from 11th till 14th March, 2010."*

After discussion, the Committee agreed to affirm its decision of 16th September.

### **Factotum**

The Principal Solicitor reminded the Committee that on 14th June, 2004 two editions of the magazine "The Vacuum" had been published by an arts organisation known as Factotum, which had been awarded a grant by the Council. Those publications had contained offensive material and inappropriate images and, in order that it should not be associated with the publication of such material, the Council, at its meeting on 1st September, 2004, adopted a Committee recommendation that no further funding be provided to Factotum until an apology had been received.

The editor of the publication had instigated a Judicial Review of the Council's decision alleging that the decision had amounted to censorship and was contrary to the Human Rights Act 1998. This application had been dismissed and the Judge had found that there had been no infringements of the editor's rights and that the Council's decision was within the range of appropriate responses open to local authorities. However, the editor had subsequently initiated an appeal to the Court of Appeal in this matter.

The Principal Solicitor informed the Committee that the Court of Appeal had found that the Council was entitled to make its own judgement in respect of the application for funding. In addition, the Council had been entitled to take the view that the publications had been disrespectful of religion and had been further entitled to take that into account in reaching a decision on whether to provide funding. In respect of the human rights arguments, it had been found that, whilst there had been a requirement not to interfere with the Applicant's rights, there had been no requirement to facilitate them. Therefore, a decision not to provide funding had not equated to interference. In connection with the alleged unreasonableness of the decision, the Court had found that, whilst everyone might not have shared the same view as the Council, the decision had not been unintelligible.

He pointed out that the decision reaffirmed the Council's view that, whilst it had a duty to be fair in how it assessed applications for grants, there was no right for an individual or organisation to be funded to produce material which was offensive or with which the Council would otherwise not wish to be associated. In addition, the decision emphasised the extent of the relevant discretion and was important because it had established that a refusal to provide funding for reasons such as those in this case did not equate to interference with the right of freedom of expression or the right to hold and manifest a religious view.

The Principal Solicitor informed the Committee that the Council had incurred costs of £44,641 in connection with the use of Senior and Junior Counsel in respect of both sets of proceedings. However, as Factotum had received legal aid from the Legal Services Commission, these costs were not recoverable.

Noted.

### **Belfast Masterplan Review**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

**The Council commissioned a Masterplan for Belfast in 2003 to provide a framework for the development of Belfast for the period to 2020. The Belfast Masterplan was published in April 2004 and provided a strategic development framework for Belfast, based on the consideration of the economic, social and environmental issues in the City.**

**The adopted Belfast Masterplan provides the Council with a strategic vision for the future regeneration and growth of the City. The Masterplan also provided the basis for Council engagement in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, strategic development sites such as Titanic Quarter and the various regeneration strategies published by the Department for Social Development. The analysis also supported the Council's regeneration initiatives such as 'Renewing the Routes' and has been adopted by a number of external organisations and consultants in the development of strategies and proposals for the continued development of the City.**

### Key Issues

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 exacerbated by the current economic downturn. In addition, the proposed Review of Public Administration and the transfer of responsibilities, including local land use planning and regeneration functions, provide new opportunities for the Council to shape the longer term development of Belfast.

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. These strategic documents have been commissioned to focus on specific initiatives or areas of the City and do not provide the coherence that would harness the potential synergies and contribute to the sustainable development of Belfast. This changing economic context and the emerging competing strategies for different parts 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 to inform ongoing work and provide the critical strategic basis to prepare for the transfer of the new statutory planning functions outlined in the recent Planning Reform consultation.

The review of the current Belfast Masterplan offers the opportunity to establish the strategic vision for the City. This review and updated strategic position would facilitate continued Council engagement with the strategies, such as the proposed Strategic Regeneration Frameworks, and provide a mechanism for influencing the strategic regeneration/development initiatives planned for the City. The development of a robust strategic spatial plan for the future development of the City will be a critical component of both the community planning and statutory land use planning functions that will be required to be developed under the Review of Public Administration processes.

Following the consideration of the proposal by Committee, the approach to the Masterplan Review has been modified to reduce the scope of the originally proposed review and internalise some of the processes. The principal impact of the proposed change in approach will be in the sourcing and management of multi-disciplinary inputs and the consultation arrangements.

The proposal for the review process is for an internal project team to coordinate the detailed development of the Masterplan and commission the appropriate independent specialist consultancy to supplement existing Council resources. This will be carried out through a number of separate individual contracts rather than through the award of a single contract to a multi-disciplinary consultancy. The consultancy support will focus on the areas of economic development, transportation, spatial planning and sustainable regeneration. The emphasis will be placed on addressing the areas of change and the elements of the Masterplan that require clarification or refinement based on the experience since the original adoption.

The proposal will also necessitate a change in the approach to the consultation with a reduction in the level of facilitated consultation and an emphasis on group-based sessions. The proposed review will also take account of existing relevant consultation work, including that carried out by third party organisations, with the formal engagement focussed on key stakeholders and Members. The scope of the consultation will therefore be more limited with internal elements being coordinated by the project team and carried out on a City-wide, and, where appropriate, thematic basis as opposed to the original intention for area specific and focussed consultation.

The change in the approach will change the emphasis and shift the balance of resource allocation to increase the utilisation of reallocated internal resources. This shift in resources combined with the changes proposed for the consultation will reduce the cost of the proposed review in terms of the externally commissioned work. Subject to the completion of the procurement for the individual elements of the specialist support and the reallocation of internal staff resources, it is projected that the cost of the review could be reduced to £37,000.

The review of the current Belfast Masterplan offers the opportunity to revisit the strategic vision for the City. This review and updated strategic position, in addition to facilitating the continued engagement with external strategies, offers the opportunity to initiate work on important elements of the future community planning and reformed planning processes for which the Council will have statutory responsibility.

#### Resource Implications

The review of the Belfast Masterplan will be carried out through the procurement of a range of specialist consultancy support rather than through a single commission, in combination with the reallocation of existing internal staff resources. The current Departmental budgets include provision for the procurement of the external support required for the Masterplan Review.

### **Recommendations**

Members are requested to approve the proposed review of the Belfast Masterplan and the procurement of specialist support up to the value of £37,000.

### **Decision Tracking**

Draft Masterplan review to be reported back to Committee for consideration.

Timeline February 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the proposed review of the Belfast Masterplan and authorised the incurring of expenditure up to a maximum of £37,000 in connection with the procurement of specialist support in connection therewith.

### **Renewing the Routes Variations**

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that, as part of the Falls Road Integrated Development Plan, the Friends of Bog Meadows group had intended to undertake an environmental improvement scheme at the entrance to the Meadows and to erect a sign to highlight the attraction to tourists. Whilst the signage had been erected using Integrated Development Fund resources, the group had been unable to reach agreement with the owners of the land which was needed for the environmental improvement scheme. This would mean that the project could not be implemented within the timescales of the Renewing the Routes Programme.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the sum of £25,155, which had been set aside for the environmental improvement scheme at the entrance to the Bog Meadows, be reallocated in order to supplement the final phase of the improvement work which would be undertaken to shop fronts on the Falls Road in the vicinity of the entrance to the Bog Meadows.

### **Conference Subvention Fund for Belfast and Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board are currently finalising the Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework which identifies the priority areas for tourism investment over the next 5–10 years. Ambitious targets have been set which will require Belfast City Council to focus on areas of highest return; the further development and enhancement of Belfast as a conference destination is one of these areas.

Members will be aware that the key purpose of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau is to attract leisure and business visitors to the City. Of the 1.2 million overnight visitors who stayed in Belfast during 2008, some 432,000 have been identified as business visitors by the Belfast Tourism Monitor. This figure includes the conference market, estimated at almost 81,000 visitors.

Whilst the economic downturn has impacted on business trips in general, the discretionary business visitor continues to spend significantly more than leisure visitors (based on the delegate Expenditure Survey 2006, an international association delegate spends £364 per day) and due to the high volume of delegates that conferences bring to the City, this segment sustains the tourism industry throughout the year, especially during off-peak periods. In 2008, 84% of business visitors to Belfast also stated that they would be interested in returning to the City for a leisure break.

Two studies have recently been undertaken to explore the further development of Belfast as a conference destination. These address the immediate need for Belfast to increase its Conference Subvention Fund to attract conferences to the City and second is the longer term need for a new or extended convention centre with integrated exhibition facilities.

#### Key Issues

The market for conferences and meetings is highly competitive. Belfast is one of 70 destinations within the UK aiming to attract attendees of conferences and events to their town or city. Outside the UK there are new emerging destinations across Asia and Europe as well as existing cities that are enhancing their product offer significantly, such as Dublin with its new Convention Centre opening in the summer of 2010.

All the top cities use subvention to attract not for profit conferences.

<u>City</u>	<u>Subvention</u>	<u>Funder</u>
Birmingham	£650,000 per annum	Advantage West Midlands
Manchester	£6 million over 3 years	Council
Glasgow	Circa £1 million per annum	Council
Edinburgh	£450,000 per annum	Council and Enterprise
<u>Agency</u>		
Brighton	£1 million per annum	Council
Blackpool	£1 million per annum	Council
Liverpool	£ 1 million per annum	Council
Bournemouth	£1 million per annum	Council

At present Belfast City Council has a Conference Subvention Fund of £29,580.

During 2004-2006 NITB provided £561,627 (funded by the International Fund for Ireland) towards conference support across Northern Ireland. Belfast was the main benefactor as this fund allowed BVCB to successfully bid for large scale conferences, such as the Inner Wheel, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the World Toilet Summit and the Annual Rotary Conference. The overall impact of the Fund resulted in a total value of £6.8 million, providing a return on investment of over 12:1. Within this period, the total economic impact of conferences supported by BVCB in 2006/07 was £17.5 million.

Since this programme ended, it has become increasingly difficult for Belfast and Northern Ireland to compete successfully and a number of conferences have been lost due to the lack of conference subvention.

Conference subvention across the UK is supported by city councils and in many instances local enterprise agencies. Belfast City Council is now making a formal approach in partnership with NITB to Invest Northern Ireland (INI) to financially support a new Conference Subvention Fund for Belfast and Northern Ireland. The objective is to develop a Fund of significant levels to compete with other cities. It would be envisaged that each funder would contribute equal amounts with a view to launching in 2010/2011.

Members will also be aware that investigations are underway to improve Belfast's conference and exhibition facilities. Whilst this is a separate issue from conference subvention, it directly relates to Belfast's physical capacity to grow business tourism. A feasibility study on options for new or extended integrated conference and exhibition facilities has been undertaken. It is now timely to consider these findings within the context of the corporate approach to determining capital priorities and the place shaping agenda.

#### Resource Implications

If INI and NITB commit funding to conference subvention, the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit will need to identify funding from 2010/2011 budget.

#### Recommendations

Members are asked to note:

1. The ongoing work to identify a Conference Subvention Fund for Belfast.

2. The options for a new or extended conference centre with integrated exhibition facilities will now be considered within the context of the corporate approach to identifying capital priorities as part of the place shaping agenda.

### **Decision Tracking**

The Committee will be advised of outcome of contributions from NITB and INI.

Time frame: December 2009  
Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

### **Key Abbreviations**

NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board  
BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau  
INI – Invest Northern Ireland”

In answer to a Member’s question regarding the new conference centre referred to within the report, the Head of Economic Initiatives stated that Belfast currently did not have an integrated conference and exhibition centre which could cope with large scale conferences and that, given the importance of business tourism to the City, it would be important for this matter to be investigated. The Head of City Events and Venues pointed out that the Belfast Waterfront Hall did not have sufficient exhibition space for it to attract large conferences, which meant that such business was being lost to other venues.

Following further discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and the comments thereon of the officers.

### **Cycling Tour Series**

After discussion, the Committee agreed to defer for one month consideration of a report regarding Belfast hosting a round of the Cycling Tour Series to enable discussions to be held with various bodies to ascertain whether they could contribute financially towards the costs of the event. It was agreed also that the report to be submitted next month include a detailed financial breakdown of the costs of the event.

### **Departmental Grants Review**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

Members will be aware that a report went to Committee on 10th June 2009, describing the Departmental Grants Review and a proposal for the Department’s grants to be split into three tranches (Community Access Fund, Annual and Multiannual).

The Departmental Grants Review included recommendations on how to streamline and standardise the Departmental grants system by implementing:

- A standard grants administration process and
- Standard grants assessment criteria.

Based on these recommendations, a grants review implementation plan has been developed and a number of Party Briefings took place to present the plan and discuss the main aspects of the grants review implementation process. The grants review implementation plan was welcomed. The recommendations received from Members have been integrated into this report and the wider plan.

A number of workshops were also held with the staff currently involved in the grant making process to discuss the grant review implementation and explore the most effective option of implementation and grant administration process.

This report covers the main aspects of the new grant process.

#### **Key Issues**

This new Departmental grant making system would provide many benefits to the Department and the Council:

- It would improve governance and simplify the process;
- It would also allow the Council to be more transparent with the impact of grants better recorded and reported, this would allow improved contribution to the corporate performance management system;
- Separation between the assessment process and financial monitoring would make the whole process more effective and would allow more time for the current staff to work on community, culture, arts and sports development.

The implementation of this new grants making system would last 18 months and a few issues need highlighted:

- Current year 2009/10 is a transition year when the new grant making process would be finalised and the grant making system set up;

- In the year 2009/10 all grant making units would administer their grants as planned, this means that Community Services, Culture and Arts and Support for Sport Grants will open some of their grants this year using the existing system;
- Grants would be transferred into the new system gradually and in phases over the course of the year 2010/11 and April 2011 would mark the beginning of a unified Departmental grant system.

Departmental grants would be split into three tranches:

- 1) Community Access Fund with a total of £323,000 and individual grants of under £10,000 combines:
  - Community Development Projects – would be combined with a current Community Chest Grant into a single fund with a maximum £750 per grant.
  - Community Festivals Fund
  - Rolling Programme
  - Seasonal Play Scheme and
  - Support for Sport
- 2) Annual Fund totalling £477,000 with individual grants averaging £10,000 consists of:
  - Culture and Arts Core Annual Funding
  - Culture and Arts Development and Outreach Funding and
  - Community Services Revenue
- 3) Multi-annual Funding with a total of £2.6m and individual grants averaging £25,000 for 3 years, combines:
  - Community Service Advice
  - Community Service Capacity Building (this will initially be opened for 1 year as part of the transition process) and
  - Culture and Arts Multi-Annual Funding

No significant change would be made to the grants criteria. A full criteria list is available on request from the Development Department.

All Departmental grants would use a single application form (with different subsections) and guidelines which would be available on the Council's website to ensure transparency and openness.

In order to process, monitor and administer grants, a Central Grants Team would be set up. The Central Grants Team (CGT) would serve as the main point of contact between grant applicants and the Council and would manage the whole grant making process from promotion to application through to post-funding review and evaluation.

Setting up the CGT will be cost neutral and it will improve the grant making process by:

- Improving governance
- Providing greater consistency in systems and processes
- Ensuring separation between assessment, award and monitoring and evaluation
- Acting as a single point of contact and
- Effectively managing the whole grant-making process.

In order to assess the applications, Grant Assessment Panels would be set up for different thematic areas (Advice, Community Development, Culture and Arts, Play and Sport). These Panels would consist of existing staff involved in the grant making process with the expertise and knowledge in each of the thematic areas – again with no cost to set up. CGT would provide a secretariat for the Grant Assessment Panels. The final decision on the grants allocation would depend whether grants are under or over £5,000:

- For all the grants worth over £5,000 the Development Committee and the Council would have final decision as to which organisations should get funding.
- For the grants of under £5,000 it is recommended that the Director of Development have delegated authority in deciding on recipients for all such grants. Currently that authority exists only for some grant streams.

It is proposed to introduce an appeals procedure for all development grants which would follow the best practice model in grant administration.

#### Resource Implications

None:

- The total amount of grant budget would not change;
- The allocation of grants under different streams would stay the same;
- Setting up of Central Grants Unit and Grant Assessment Panels would not have any resource implications.

### **Recommendations**

**Members are asked to:**

- 1. Note the content of this report; and**
- 2. Agree on the proposals outlined in the report, in order for the Department to commence the grant review implementation**

### **Decision Tracking**

**Further to agreement and commencement of the implementation, Members will receive updates on progress. After the first year, a full evaluation will be carried out and Members will be informed of the results.**

**Time line: October 2010**

**Reporting Officer: Director of Development”**

After discussion, the Committee adopted the foregoing recommendations.

### **Committee Agenda Items and Departmental Briefing Document**

The Director pointed out that, normally, there were a large number of items on the agenda for each monthly meeting and that many of those items required no decision since they were being submitted for update or notation purposes only. This meant that, on occasions, Members had less time than was desirable to discuss those important items which required decisions.

She indicated that, in an attempt to rectify this situation and, having discussed the matter with Committee Services, she was recommending that items for notation and those which required no decision be no longer included on the agenda for Committee meetings. Instead, those items would be collated into a Departmental Briefing Document which would be issued by the Director to all Members of Council every two months, commencing in mid-December. Members of the Committee would be able to request, by contacting the Director, that any item contained in the Briefing Document be placed on the agenda for discussion at the following monthly meeting. This change would enable the Members to keep up-to-date with the work which the Department was undertaking whilst, at the same time, allowing time to be made available at Committee meetings to enable issues which required decisions to be discussed more fully.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **Broadway Junction Public Art**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

Members will recall that Belfast City Council had agreed to coordinate the further design of the Broadway Junction Art Piece, including management of the contract and the partnership agreements, as part of the improvement of the M1/Westlink.

The Broadway Junction Art Piece project has been taken forward since 2005 through the Broadway Project Board, a partnership between the Department for Regional Development (Roads Service), Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate (Department for Social Development), the Arts Council for Northern Ireland (ACNI) and Belfast City Council (BCC). The Roads Service is responsible for the ongoing structural work relating to the roundabout/junction, which is part of the M1/Westlink improvement scheme, and the Arts Council and DSD are providing the majority of funding for the project.

The commission was awarded through an international competition and a two stage selection process. The Development (Arts) Sub-Committee was advised on 5 October 2005 that Ed Carpenter's proposal, Trillian, had been selected by the judging panel (which included invited community representatives) to carry out the commission. The artist eventually submitted a financial offer which was significantly in excess of the available budget and the Broadway Project Board regrettably but unanimously agreed to abandon the Trillian proposal and to re-launch the project as a new open competition. Through the selection process a new artist, Wolfgang Buttress, was appointed with his sculpture called Rise. This is a globe shaped white and silver aluminum sculpture – a representation of a new sun rising to celebrate a new chapter in the history of Belfast. Rise will be visible from several miles away when it is constructed.

Consultation with the community has been noted as an important aspect of the programme and has been an ongoing development of the project. A public meeting took place in Spring 2009 in the Greater Village Regeneration Trust, which was attended by a Belfast City Council officer and the artist and members of the general public.

A positive response was received and it is intended to develop a structured programme of events in communities located near the roundabout. In addition, specialised workshops 'Rise up and Write' have been included into the City Hall reopening programme. These are open to all schools in Belfast wishing to take part in poetry and visual art workshops facilitated by Wolfgang Buttress and New Belfast Community Arts Initiative.

#### Projected Budget

The following budget has been agreed as the basis for the project in 2007 - 2009.

<u>Funding Body</u>	<u>In cash</u>	<u>In kind</u>	
ACNI (Lottery)	£50,000		Initial grant agreed Jan 06
ACNI (Lottery)	£30,000		Additional sum agreed Apr 07
ACNI	£20,000		Additional grant funding
DSD	£300,00		Economic Appraisal submitted July 07 and agreed in principle Oct 07
BCC	£20,000		Agreed Feb 07
BCC		£50,000	Project management costs, agreed Feb 07
DRD (Road Service)		As part of M1/Westlink contract	For foundations and structural support
TOTAL	£420,000		

#### Key Issues

##### Project Update

Planning permission was granted for the sculpture to be placed at Broadway Roundabout with a caveat "that the application hereby permitted shall not be commenced until an application for Technical Approval/Certification has been submitted to and approved by Roads Service". In order for Roads Service to be satisfied they require a series of four checks, the costs of which were not considered in the original budget and which have increased the cost of the proposal to £486K. It has also resulted in a delay in the construction of the sculpture which was initially due to be completed by November 2009.

The Broadway Project Board met on 15th September 2009 where it was agreed to continue to support the project and seek additional resources to cover these unforeseen costs. Roads Service are unable to make any financial contribution and DSD have in principle agreed a further £30,000 if other partners were willing to award funding to the remaining shortfall of £36,000. A further application for £36,000 has been made to another ACNI public art funding programme which was due to close on 24th September 2009.

The Broadway Project Board requested that an application be made to Belfast City Council to underpin the remaining £36,000 shortfall if it cannot be sourced elsewhere.

#### **Resource Implications**

Additional funding of £36,000 is being sought by the Broadway Project Board from the Council should funding for the shortfall not be forthcoming from other sources. Members are reminded that no budget allocation is available within current budgets.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee consider the above report and agree to request officers to examine the Development Department's budget to ascertain if the £36,000 shortfall can be found from savings elsewhere.

#### **Decision Tracking**

The full outcome of all funding decisions relating to the shortfall will be reported to the Committee in December.

**Timeframe: December 2009    Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay**

#### **Key to Abbreviations**

**ACNI - Arts Council for Northern Ireland  
DSD – Department of Social Development"**

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed concern that the Committee was being asked to provide further financial assistance for the project. The point was made that, since it appeared that the additional costs were in connection with work which had been the responsibility of the Roads Service, the Department for Regional Development, rather than the Council, should be asked to contribute towards the additional costs referred to in the report. Accordingly, the Committee agreed to request Council officers to endeavour to obtain from other public agencies the shortfall of £36,000 required to ensure the completion of the project and, failing this, to examine the Department's existing budgets to ascertain if that amount could be found and report back to a future meeting.

### **Economic Development Unit - Update**

#### **Council's Local Economic Development Plan**

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 16th September, it had been advised that, in view of the economic downturn and the future transfer of local economic functions to councils following the Review of Public Administration, it would be necessary to update the Council's Local Economic Development Plan. Accordingly, it was proposed that a range of key organisations and individuals, including Councillors, be consulted regarding the updating of the Plan.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided regarding the proposed consultation process for the Council's Local Economic Development Plan and agreed that briefings be held for each of the Political Parties represented on the Council.

#### **Tender for the Management of the Advanced Industrial Materials Savings Programme**

The Committee was advised that, following a public advertisement, three tenders had been received for the management for a two-year period of the Advanced Industrial Materials Savings Programme, an initiative to support process improvements in small manufacturing companies, which was being organised in conjunction with Lisburn City Council.

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that the tenders had been evaluated using the undernoted criteria:

- proposed approach and methodology
- project plan and ability to deliver to schedule
- calibre and experience of project team
- relevant experience of working on similar initiatives
- ability to work in partnership
- quality and environmental management systems

As a result of this process, she recommended that the second lowest tender, that submitted by Ortus Business Development Agency, Northumberland Street, Belfast, in the sum of £112,998, be accepted as it was the most economically advantageous tender and the one which met most closely the set criteria.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation, subject to the completion of an appropriate form of contract to be prepared by the Director of Legal Services.

### **Economic Downturn Steering Group - Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

Members will be aware the Council in February 2009 agreed a number of actions in response to the global economic downturn. The actions were taken across the Council and the Development Committee subsequently agreed to the setting up of a cross-party Economic Downturn Steering Group, which has been meeting monthly since May 2009. This is the update.

#### **Key Issues**

The Economic Downturn Steering Group last met on the 18th September 2009. They received an update in relation to the continuing work of the Department in relation to economic development, job training, employability, business development and tourism events. The general update indicated that, although Belfast had been significantly affected by the downturn, it has not been as affected as many other cities in the UK or in Ireland. The continuing strength of the euro was a particular element in that result. The Group however agreed that, despite a relatively less bleak impact, the situation was still serious and Belfast required a clear path forward if it was to achieve a sustainable long term successful economy.

Members felt in particular that the next phase required serious leadership from the Council to ensure Belfast's future. This led to a discussion on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report which the Committee commissioned in August 2007.

The report was completed in November 2008. In addition, recent research by Oxford Economics for the Council has been added to the information provided by OECD. Both of the reports draw major conclusions about Belfast and its possibilities and make relevant recommendations.

The OECD Report offers the following conclusions:

- **Public sector overbalance** – Belfast and Northern Ireland need to shift the economic dominance of the public sector in favour of a healthy balance between public and private sectors.
- **Coherence and scale** – Belfast has to focus on coherent and comprehensive planning, which emphasises its role as an iconic core location in Northern Ireland as a centre of R&D or of high value functions

- **Investment readiness and investor confidence** – Belfast must be a city that is known as an enterprising location with ‘can-do’ leadership where new ideas and knowledge can be translated into business opportunities and business formation
- **The ingredients for success** – Belfast needs to raise its relative economic competitiveness by enhancing the quality of its workforce, ensuring a good supply of accessible land and premises to accommodate growth and to upgrade key infrastructure to enable good quality access, communication, service delivery and a high standard of public realm. Belfast must also find innovative ways to attract and retain talent and ensure that more people come to live and work in the City. Belfast also needs to find new ways of working that bring together change agents from across Government, business and the community and voluntary sectors.

Given these challenges, the report considered what policy actions and possible delivery mechanism would, in their opinion, be needed to deliver on these recommendations. It recommends several key areas of policy activity that Belfast should address.

**Report Recommendations:**

**Place and inclusion**

- The transfer of functions relating to land use and planning, the public realm (particularly City centre management), urban regeneration and community development under the RPA offers important opportunities to develop a strategic land assembly and investment strategy for the Greater Belfast Area that details the blockages and barriers to land management, its use in a strategic fashion and which can reflect the balance of need and opportunity across the whole of the Greater Belfast Area.
- Belfast should develop an integrated City centre development strategy and a capable vehicle for integrated City centre management.

**Strategic Investment**

- Belfast should prepare and implement a plan for optimising the impact of the ‘Northern Ireland Investment Strategy’, building on and supporting work by the SIB, INI, Government Departments and business partners.

- There should be support for the greater leverage of public sector land assets in Belfast in partnership with SIB and support for facilitating foreign and corporate investment in partnership with INI.

**Enterprise, skills and knowledge**

- There needs to be a Belfast focus to ongoing work on skills, enterprise and knowledge, including work on developing new approaches to labour market attachment and new initiatives to encourage innovation and creativity as well as technology transfer.
- Belfast needs to take opportunities to become a knowledge hub. Knowledge economy activity is still an 'unknown asset' in Belfast which is critical to the transition to a more mixed economy and as a means to stem the continued outflow of highly skilled talent and continue to attract talent from outside.

The report uses international research and expertise to investigate the potential delivery mechanisms that could deliver this economic development agenda. On the basis of this research, the report recommends the establishment of a new Belfast Investment Development Agency (BIDA). It notes that such an agency would provide the necessary catalyst required for the changes described above.

It's mission would be to 'enhance the economic growth of Belfast as a capital city in a way that contributes to the Executive's economic growth targets for Northern Ireland as a whole and which ensures that all of Belfast's residents share in the benefits of its economic growth.' It would have six areas of responsibility: planning, sites and strategic infrastructure; investment facilitation and securing funding for major projects; the knowledge economy (including skills, enterprise, higher education and innovation; economic inclusion; promotion and City centre management.

The Steering Group discussed this and the research undertaken by Oxford Economics and concluded that it was now time for a joint meeting with the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to discuss how both reports and the evidence of the last period could be used to create a plan for Belfast's economic future. Such a meeting had been agreed in February 2009 by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee when the first report on the Economic Downturn was presented to their Committee.

A request for such a meeting has been made to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

### **Resource Implications**

None

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report
- Attend the special meeting on the matter in due course

### **Decision Tracking**

Director of Development to prepare papers for the meeting with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Timeline: December 2009

Reporting Officer: Director of Development

### **Key to Abbreviations**

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation  
and Development

LEED Local Economic and Employment Directorate (OECD).”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

### **Ulster Hall**

The Chairman informed the Committee that the recent refurbishment work to the Ulster Hall had resulted in the building being awarded the Construction Excellence Award by the Federation of Construction Employers at its recent awards ceremony. On behalf of the Committee, he congratulated the staff and outside companies which had been involved in the work to refurbish the Ulster Hall.

### **Ms. M. T. McGivern**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that this would be the last Committee meeting which the Director of Development, Ms. M. T. McGivern, would be attending following her appointment as the Chief Executive and Director of the Belfast Metropolitan College. He and other Members paid tribute to the work which she had undertaken during her ten years in post and wished her well in the future.

Ms. McGivern thanked the Chairman and the Members for their kind remarks and encouraged the Committee to continue its good work to improve the City for the benefit of all its citizens.

Chairman