

Development Committee

Wednesday, 9th December, 2009

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Humphrey (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery); and
Councillors M. Browne, Campbell, Convery, Crozier,
Ekin, N. Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Kyle, C. Maskey,
McCausland, Mac Giolla Mhín, Mhic Giolla Mhín,
Mullaghan, O'Reilly, Rodgers, Rodway and Stoker.
- In attendance: Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives and
Acting Director of Development;
Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues and
Acting Director of Development;
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Services Manager;
Mr. S. McCrory, Principal Committee Administrator; and
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 11th and 16th November 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 December, subject to the omission of the minute of 11th November under the heading "Economic Development Unit Update: East Belfast Mission – Request for Funding" which, at the request of Councillor McKenzie, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration. It was reported further that, during discussion of the minutes of the meeting of 11th November, the Council had agreed that a report be presented to the next monthly meeting of the Development Committee concerning the Christmas decorations at the City Hall and in the City centre.

Christmas Decorations

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that, following the comments which had been made at the Council meeting by Councillor Smyth, an investigation had been undertaken which had established that two festive decorations containing the words "Merry Christmas" were on display close to the City Hall. This information had been conveyed to Councillor Smyth and the Chairman, who had agreed that it would not be necessary for a report to be presented to the Committee.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Organisations in Receipt of
Financial Assistance from the European Social Fund**

East Belfast Mission – Request for Funding
North Belfast Partnership - Request for Funding and
Request to Address the Committee

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 11th November under the heading “Economic Development Unit Update: East Belfast Mission – Request for Funding” which had been taken back at the Council meeting on 1st December at the request of Councillor McKenzie. An extract of the minute in this regard is set out hereunder:

“The Committee considered the undernoted report:

‘Relevant Background Information

At the April 2009 Development Committee, Members agreed to provide match funding to four organisations which had been successful in securing financial assistance through the European Social Fund (ESF). These organisations were East Belfast Mission, North Belfast Partnership, Women into Business and Training for Women Network. The approval granted was to provide funding for the 2009/10 financial year only and, as a condition of the funding, the four groups were not to request any further money from the Council in connection with the 2010/2011 aspect of their ESF projects.

Recently, East Belfast Mission has written to the Council seeking match funding of £52,509 to further support the Work 4 U project in the 2010/2011 financial year.

Key Issues

East Belfast Mission, through the Stepping Stone Project, currently delivers the Work 4 U project, funded by ESF and match-funded by the Council. The aim of this programme is to work with unemployed individuals in East Belfast, including those deemed economically inactive, and assist them to find employment.

When Members agreed in April 2009 to co-finance support for all four projects, it was agreed that as a condition of the year two funding, all groups in receipt of match funding must not request further money from the Council in connection with the 2010/2011 aspect of their ESF projects. This condition was written into all four separate Funding Agreements - all of which were signed by the individual parties and returned for the Council’s official seal of approval.

Whilst the Work 4 U project is worthy, it is for the reason noted above, that the Development Department has not made provision in its revenue estimates for 2010/11 for groups participating in European Social Fund Projects.

The Council believes it is imperative there is a more strategic, co-ordinated approach to tackling the skills and employability needs of its residents and is currently taking steps to address this issue. In response to this, Members agreed in December 2008 to a proposal to open discussions with Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and other key skills and employability partners in order to develop an agreed strategy for our City.

Members are advised that the Council convened a Belfast Employability and Skills Board in May 2009, including representatives from Central and Local Government, Universities, Colleges, sector skills councils, trade bodies and the local community. Since this group first formed, regular meetings have taken place and a 'Belfast Employability & Skills Action Plan' is currently in development which will help address current and future needs facing our City. This document is expected to be finalised in January 2010 and is intended to help shape the Council's future role in employability and skills related activity – in particular advancing joint activity with key partners and stakeholders in responding to the economic downturn.

Members are asked to note that if financial assistance is offered to the Work 4 U project it is likely we will be asked to support other ESF projects that we are currently financing, including Local Employment Access Partnership (LEAP), Women into Business and Training for Women Network. Members are also reminded that there are 47 ESF projects in total in the Belfast area and we cannot rule out the possibility that some of these projects would not approach us for year three funding.

Members should also be aware that, given that ESF activity is funded by the EU, any agreement to co-finance these projects will preclude the draw-down of monies from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) (i.e. the money for co-financing will have to come from rates monies only).

Resource Implications

The budget for the Work 4 U project over a 12 month period would be £52,059.

Recommendation

It is recommended this proposal is not funded given the lack of funding within Council and the decision taken by Members in April 2009 – that is, groups in receipt of match funding must not request further money from the Council in connection with the 2010/2011 aspect of their ESF projects. In addition, agreeing to co-finance the Work 4 U project for one further year would adversely affect other activity planned, most notably, that of the Belfast Employability and Skills Board.

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking required if recommendation is accepted.'

The Committee agreed, in view of its decision of 20th April, not to provide funding in the 2010/2011 financial year to the East Belfast Mission in connection with its Work 4 U project."

The Committee was advised that a similar request for funding had been received from the North Belfast Partnership in connection with its European Social Fund supported project, the Local Employment Access Partnership. In addition, a request had been received from the North Belfast Partnership to address the Committee on behalf of the four European Social Fund assisted projects which had received match-funding from the Council in the current financial year, in connection with the implications to their respective communities if the schemes were unable to continue.

During a lengthy discussion in the matter, the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery) and Councillors Convery, C. Maskey, McCausland and Mullaghan declared an interest in that they represented the Council on the Board of the North Belfast Partnership. The Committee stressed that, whilst it accepted that the four organisations undertook worthwhile work in the areas in which they operated, a decision had been taken at the Committee meeting on 20th April that a condition of the award of funding was that the projects would not request any further money from the Council in connection with the 2010/2011 aspect of their European Social Fund projects and, accordingly, no financial provision had been made for such funding within the Department's estimates for next year.

The Committee agreed to adhere to its previous decision not to provide any additional financial assistance to the East Belfast Mission, North Belfast Partnership, Women into Business and Training for Women Network in connection with the 2010/2011 aspect of their European Social Fund projects and would not accede to the request from the North Belfast Partnership to receive a presentation from it regarding the work which the four organisations undertook.

Appointment of the Director of Development

(Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive, and Mrs. J. Minne, Head of Human Resources, attended in connection with this item.)

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that 40 applications had been received for the vacant post of Director of Development and, following shortlisting, preliminary interviews, assessment centre and final interviews, the selection panel had recommended unanimously the appointment of Mr. John McGrillen, the present Chief Executive of Down District Council, on the appropriate point of the salary band £85,133 - £97,283 per annum. The Chief Executive indicated that Mr. McGrillen would be commencing work with the Council on 1st March, 2010 and that, prior to that date, he would be meeting with the Chairman of the Committee and the Party Group Leaders. He pointed out that Members had dedicated considerable time to the selection process and he thanked them for their work in this regard.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided by the Chief Executive.

Belfast City Centre Management Presentation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

At a meeting of the Development Committee on 16 January 2008, Members agreed to core fund Belfast City Centre Management Company (BCCM) £190,000 per year for two years commencing April 2008.

Key Issues

The work of BCCM covers three areas:

- **Delivering BCCM city centre services**
BCCM delivers its own services, which add value to the City centre, examples include - City Centre Representatives, Café Culture Operating Agreements, City Beat Policing, Radio link, City Safe Crimewatch scheme and City Dressing, including the city's Festive Lighting
- **Facilitating and assisting in the delivery of funders' City Centre Initiatives**
BCCM work 'on the street' (when requested and as directed) to assist with initiatives such as the Belfast Business Awards, Evening Economy, Independent Retail Support, City Centre Performance Measurement, Belfast in Bloom, Waste Management, Streets Ahead and the reStore initiative.

- **Direct liaison with City Centre Businesses**
BCCM provide strong communication links between the private sector businesses in the City centre and Central and Local Government, leading to increased private sector funding of city centre initiatives and marketing.

April 2008 to March 2010

The BCCM Board has indicated to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Committee, appreciation of Council's funding of £190,000 per annum during the financial years 2008/2009 and 2009/2010.

BCCM report that these have been two very successful years, with the company's business plans being delivered in full, save only a few projects which are delayed due to circumstances beyond the control of BCCM.

Copies of the BCCM Performance Reports for 2008/2009 and the first three quarters of 2009/2010 are available on Moden.gov. It is particularly noteworthy that during these two years BCCM has been able to use its core funding to leverage increased funding for specific City centre projects from other sources, increasing from £381,000 in 2007/2008 to:

- £710,000 in 2008/2009
- £590,000 in 2009/2010 (budgeted)

The above figures include:

- A substantial rise in funding obtained from retailers towards the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau's (BVCB) marketing campaign for the City, rising from a previous annual high of £15,000, to £50,000 per annum in both of these two years.
- £60,000 investment in new festive lights for the City provided by Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce

Members are also asked to note that during these two funding years BCCM has successfully engaged with issues which were not originally tabled in their business plans, these include:

- Bringing together the three membership organisations for public hire taxi drivers in the City into one forum, and agreeing a 'Taxi Forum Agenda' which is now being progressed with DoE and DRD Roads Service. This has led to a positive working relationship with the drivers. Early benefits included a marshaled and 'agreed fare' taxi service to the Tall Ships event.

- Chairing the work of Orangefest and Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce in respect to delivering shop opening, city dressing and on-street animation. Delivery of the high profile Retail NI 2009 Conference on behalf of Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce, which reinforced Belfast as Northern Ireland's primary shopping destination and successfully highlighted the private sector's strong feelings regarding the 'Town Centre First' lobby with Northern Ireland Executive Ministers.
- Under the Chamber's new President, harnessing some £100,000 each year towards a Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce Promotional Campaign.
- At the Council's request, provision of support to retailers in other areas of the City to deliver local Festive Lighting projects.

Appendix 2 contains a draft Business Plan for the period 2010 to 2013, which includes a detailed action plan for the first year, 2010/2011 and is available on Modern.gov. The BCCM Board wish to consider any recommendations or requests from the Development Committee before finalising and publishing this Business Plan.

The BCCM Board recognise and state within the Business Plan that the Plan may need to be reviewed with core funders after the implementation of the Review of Public Administration.

The Business Plan sets specific performance targets for each of BCCM's 'Activity Groups' of:

1. Urban Management
2. Safer City
3. Character & Style
4. Economic Activity.

The attention of Members is drawn to the strategic objectives set-out in section 6 of the Plan and the specific targets set-out in the 2010/2011 Action Plan. The Business Plan includes financial projections and the BCCM Board is not seeking any rise in funding from Council.

Resource Implications

Belfast City Centre Management Company is seeking confirmation of £190,000 per annum core funding for two years, to be reviewed annually, commencing April 2010.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the details of the BCCM Performance Reports for work to date and the Business Plan for 2010-2013.

It is further recommended that the Committee approves annual funding for BCCM of £190,000 per year for two years, subject to annual review, commencing April 2010 and subject to activities and targets being met.

Decision Tracking

Subject to Committee approval of the recommendation to fund BCCM, an appropriate legal agreement will be drawn up between BCCM and BCC to allow for monitoring and allocation of funding.

Timeline: April 2010

Reporting Officer: Lisa Toland

Key to Abbreviations

BCCM – Belfast City Centre Management
BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
DoE- Department of the Environment
DRD- Department for Regional Development”

The Committee was advised that Messrs. Andrew Irvine, Billy McGivern and Paul McMahan, representing Belfast City Centre Management, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

With the assistance of visual aids, Mr. Irvine informed the Committee that Belfast City Centre Management would deliver additional services into the City centre on behalf of its core funders, which would contribute in a measurable way to a cleaner, safer and more accessible City. It would do so by:

- (i) delivering direct services which would add value to the City centre, facilitate and assist the delivery of its funders' City centre initiatives; and
- (ii) would liaise directly with City centre businesses.

He highlighted a number of the actions which the organisation had delivered in the previous two years, including:

- (i) twelve meetings of City centre area focus groups;
- (ii) the annual Belfast Business Awards;
- (iii) on-going liaison with all of the businesses affected by the Streets Ahead Project;

- (iv) the provision of new festive lighting stock at a cost of £60,000; and
- (v) the appointment of the Cathedral Quarter Steering Group and Manager.

In addition, the Company had resolved issues with public hire taxis, chaired the work which Orangefest and the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce had undertaken regarding "The Twelfth 2009" in the City centre and had delivered, in partnership with the retailers, the festive lighting scheme for the Lisburn Road. Mr. Irvine pointed out that, in undertaking this work, Belfast City Centre Management had increased significantly the amount of funding it had levered from other sources towards specific projects over and above the funding provided by the Council, as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Belfast City Council</u>	<u>Other</u>
2007/2008	£140,000	£381,000
2008/2009	£190,000	£710,000
2009/2010	£190,000	£590,000

Mr. Irvine reported that Belfast City Centre Management and the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau had agreed integrated actions for the 2010/2012 period which would result in Belfast City Centre Management delivering a high quality City product for the Council which the Visitor and Convention Bureau would market. In addition, the Company would endeavour to raise during that period from City centre retailers £50,000 per annum for the Bureau.

Mr. Irvine concluded his presentation by requesting that the Committee agree to provide the sum of £190,000 per annum to Belfast City Centre Management for the two years commencing 1st April, 2010.

The representatives from Belfast City Centre Management then answered various questions which were put to them by the Members, following which the deputation retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to provide the sum of £190,000 per annum to Belfast City Centre Management for the two year period commencing 1st April, 2010, subject to that amount being reviewed on an annual basis.

Gasworks Northern Fringe

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 11th November, it had considered a report and received a presentation from the Consarc Design Group and RPS regarding their proposals for developing the land within the Gasworks Northern Fringe. The Committee had agreed to defer consideration of the recommendations contained within the report to enable a copy of the development proposals to be circulated to Members of the Committee. She pointed out that the plans had been circulated and, accordingly, submitted the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

An integrated design team led by Consarc Design Group has been working since May 2008 on the preparation of an outline planning application for the Northern Fringe site which covers 6.7 acres of gross developable land, the last phase of the Gasworks Estate. Members received a presentation from the Consarc Design Group on 11 November 2009 outlining the development proposals for this significant regeneration site. Members have received a copy of the Gasworks Planning Statement detailing the development proposals.

Key Issues

Land Uses

Through discussions between the design team, the Council, the statutory consultees, and the neighbouring community, a Masterplan has evolved, developed in cognisance of planning, transport, environment and contextual considerations. Five development sub-plot parcels have emerged to be identified in the presentation as sites A, B, C, D and E. A key objective of the plan is to ensure each parcel made a significant and individual contribution to the overall Gasworks complex.

Sites A and B bounded by Cromac Street and Raphael Street are designated as Gateway sites in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, occupying a pivotal landmark site and focal point on an arterial route into the City centre. Urban design guidance and discussions at the Dbmap (draft Belfast Metropolitan Plan) Inquiry indicated acceptable height ranges of between six and nine storeys. The buildings on site will accommodate offices and a carefully designed setback along Raphael Street addresses the relationship with the three existing dwellings.

Site C is at the rear of the existing hotel and will accommodate an extension to the Radisson Hotel. Members agreed at Committee on 16 January 2008 to officers entering into negotiations with Inislyn, the developers of the Radisson SAS Hotel, in a one to one deal in order to maximise the potential of sites C and D. It is envisaged that this development block will evolve in a similar design to the existing hotel. It will accommodate bedrooms, meeting/function rooms and conference facilities. Site D accommodates an office development and multi-storey car-park for 300 plus relocated spaces.

The Estates Management Unit in the Core Improvement Team are leading negotiations with Inislyn. Land and Property Services (LP&S) have confirmed that Inislyn is best placed to realise the fullest potential of sites C and D through greater density of development by building adjacent to the existing hotel. Heads of terms are under negotiation between BCC and Inislyn and LP&S are instructed to confirm that any agreement between the parties brought before Members provides best value to the Council.

Site E is located adjacent to the River Lagan and the Halifax building and has a distinct context. The development opportunity inspired the creation of an iconic river-front building with office use in two distinct structures interlinked into a high quality design. This layout and siting has been carefully designed to respect the existing residential properties on McAuley Street.

The Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) site adjoining the Northern Fringe Lands remains on the market, however, in the current economic climate NIE are in no rush to sell. The Northern Fringe lands have been designed to ensure that in the future BCC may be in a position to influence the development on this site. Contamination-Part III of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, the enactment of which is impending, outlines the regulatory regime under which land and water contamination issues in Northern Ireland are assessed and managed. Discussions with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have triggered a series of actions as a result of the proposed planning submission.

- A preliminary risk assessment of the site's historic usage to highlight potential contaminant sources and potential human health and environmental risks.
- Intrusive site investigation works.
- A quantitative contamination assessment.

Current emerging issues show that the subsoils are heavily impacted with contaminants throughout the soil profile with the most concentrated contaminants located within the top 6.0metres below ground level. Whilst a detailed risk assessment and detailed remedial strategy will be required, direct engagement with NIEA by BCC has begun to ascertain our statutory responsibility under legislation as yet to be enacted and also any retrospective liability for the existing Gasworks Estate.

Community Gain

The Asset Management Group is considering what options if any are available to BCC to provide 'payback' to the local community from completion of the Gasworks Estate. Until the costs

and liabilities of BCC are fully known in relation to the contamination issue no decision can yet be reached. However, if Members are satisfied with the development proposals as outlined by the Consarc Design Group in their presentation, further engagement with the adjoining residents, the Markets Development Association and the Donegall Pass Community Group will take place.

Resource Implications

Financial

A provisional asset valuation for the Gasworks Northern Fringe Lands of £6 million per acre at 1 April 2009.

Recommendations

1. Members are asked to approve the development proposals for the Gasworks Northern Fringe Lands as presented by the Consarc Design Group .
2. Members are asked to approve further engagement with adjoining residents, the Markets Development Association and the Donegall Pass Community Group on the development proposals.
3. Members are also asked to note the contamination issue and that a further report will be brought back to Committee. Legal Services will be meeting with NIEA to discuss the impacts of the yet to be enacted Part III of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 on the development of the Gasworks Northern Fringe Lands.

Decision Tracking

Following approval by Committee of the development proposals and resolution of the contaminated land and community issues, an outline planning application will be submitted to Planning Service for the Gasworks Northern Fringe Lands.

Timeline: April 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

Dbmap - draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan
BCC - Belfast City Council
MDA - Markets Development Association
LP&S – Land & Property Services”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Tall Ships 2009

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

The Committee considered the undernoted post-event report regarding the Tall Ships 2009:

“Relevant Background Information

In September 2007 Members agreed to support the hosting of the Tall Ships Atlantic Challenge Race in Belfast in August 2009 at a cost to the Council of approximately £1.1m. In addition, one fixed term contract member of staff was appointed and the City Council's Events Unit led on the delivery of the project via a Special Purposes Vehicle (SPV) established to oversee the event. Two Members of the Development Committee were nominated to become Directors of 'Belfast Tall Ships 2009 Ltd', a company established by the SPV.

The Tall Ships Races are organised by Sail Training International (STI). The host port, however, is responsible for the public celebratory aspect of the visit and for ensuring that crews are provided with a significant social programme.

It was anticipated that over the four days of the Tall Ships visit, from 13 to 16 August, if the weather conditions proved favourable, as many as 400,000 could be expected to visit Belfast,. In order to deliver the event a new marina was built, this investment has left a lasting legacy for other harbour-based events such as the Council's highly successful Maritime Festival. The cost of hosting the event was significant, £2.4m, however the economic return was expected to be unprecedented for Belfast.

This report will highlight the significant economic and legacy benefits generated by the Tall Ships and summarise the successful delivery of the Tall Ships by the Events Unit.

Key Issues

Governance

The structure and processes put in place to deliver the Tall Ships, the largest event the City has ever hosted, proved successful. The project was overseen by a special Assurance Board comprising the Chief Executives of Belfast City Council and Belfast Harbour Commissioners and risk managed by the Audit, Governance and Risk Services Section of BCC. The Council introduced and established best practice processes within the delivery mechanism. This resulted in the City Events Unit acquiring additional knowledge and demonstrating a high quality service delivery.

Project Delivery

The City Events Unit and its many partners have gained significant skills, industry knowledge and experience through the delivery of the Tall Ships event. The standards established by the City Events Unit have the potential to have a positive influence on any future bids for large scale events such as the World Police and Firefighter Games.

Budget Information

Undoubtedly the biggest challenge of the project management was delivering the event on budget within an economic climate which almost diminished the prospect of commercial sector support.

DCAL, DETI and DSD made a joint contribution of £1m which almost matching Belfast City Council's £1.1m contribution to the project. The division of monies within the project resulted in the majority of Central Government funding being used for the development of a marine infrastructure system within Abercorn Basin. Belfast City Council's contribution was allocated to the delivery and promotion of the event. The final event expenditure budget was in the region of £2.4m.

Event Benefits

- Approximately three quarters of a million people attended some element of the Tall Ships
- Almost half a million people attended the Belfast celebrations.
- Almost a quarter of a million out-of-state visitors attended the event.
- Economic impact to Belfast is in excess of £15 million.
- The economic impact survey available on Modern.gov does not include spend from the audiences around Belfast Lough during the Parade of Sail, nor the many thousands who visited the early arrivals of the ships in other ports around Northern Ireland. If these regional figures are included the figure would be closer to £17 million.
- 94% of visitors rated the event positively
- 89% stated that the event had met or exceeded their expectations
- Half the respondents came in a family units
- Almost all respondents agreed that events such as these encourage people come to Belfast and that there should be more events like Tall Ships in Belfast.
- The event would in actual terms have sustained 902 jobs for Belfast and Northern Ireland.

- A physical legacy in terms of the new marine infrastructure within Abercorn Basin will be used for future marine based events.
- Considering the poor weather conditions, these figures and results are a measure of the overwhelming success of the event.

Resource Implications

The staging of any international event requires a high level of support funding, however, Members are asked to note that, for every £1 invested by the City, an additional £15 was generated for the local economy.

Members are also asked to note that STI has already suggested to Belfast that there will be an opportunity to bid for a North Sea Race in 2015. It is anticipated that a similar level of investment as in 2009 would be required of BCC.

In total the event cost £2.4million, with income streams coming from BCC, NITB, DCAL and DSD. Additional revenue was generated from commercial sponsorship and by concessions such the Continental Market, the fun fairs and exhibition areas. In total the overall incomes were £2.4million, so providing a balanced end of event budget.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the contents of the report and the Tall Ships economic impact report.

Members are also asked to agree in principal, subject to a detailed report and appropriate approvals, that Belfast enters the bidding process to host the Tall Ships Race in the future.

Decision Tracking

Further to agreement in principal for Belfast to enter the bidding process for a future Tall Ships Race, a detailed report is brought to committee to update members on the bid process with regard to Belfast staging this event in 2015.

Time frame: August 2010

Reporting Officer: Tim Husbands

Abbreviations

BCC – Belfast City Council
SPV - Special Purposes Vehicle
NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board
DCAL – Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure
DSD – Department of Social Development”

During discussion in the matter, Members pointed out that considerable work would have to be undertaken by the Council and its partners to ensure that any bid for the 2015 event would be successful and that the Committee would need to be confident that it could raise the necessary funding.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed, in principal, that Belfast submit a bid to host a future Tall Ships Race, subject to a detailed report thereon being submitted for its consideration in due course.

Annual Titanic and Maritime Events for 2010

The Head of City Events and Venues reminded the Committee that, over the past fifteen years, the Council had developed an annual programme of events. In 2009, these events, excluding the Christmas Programme, had attracted approximately 1.3 million people and had generated an economic impact of £17.6 million for Belfast, which represented a return of £6.80 for every £1 which the Council had invested. The Events Programme had also attracted an average of 7% out-of-state visitors, which had added to the vibrancy and cultural activity of the City. He reported that it was intended to organise two of the events in 2010, namely the Titanic Made in Belfast Festival, which had attracted 32,500 persons in 2009, and the Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival, which had not taken place in 2009 due to the Tall Ships event.

He reported that feedback from visitors to the Titanic Made in Belfast Festival indicated that there was a huge interest in the Titanic topic and that people wanted to see more Titanic-related events and information available in Belfast. The estimated economic impact of the 2009 event had been almost £1.2 million, which confirmed the economic rationale for the event to be repeated and developed in the lead-up to the centenary of the loss of the Titanic in 2012. During the three years in which the Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival had been held, it had attracted audiences in excess of 50,000 people annually, a quarter of which had come from outside Northern Ireland and had generated an economic impact of £600,000 to the local economy. It had been estimated that the cost of the Titanic Made in Belfast Festival 2010 would be £100,000 and that the Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival 2010 would cost £300,000. However, the total economic return on this investment would be in the region of £1.8 million, which would equate to £4.50 for every £1.00 invested by the Council.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the Titanic Made in Belfast Festival and the Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival be held in 2010, subject to the Department's Revenue Estimates for 2010/2011 being agreed.

Draft Plan for State of the City

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

Committee will be aware of the successful State of the City series of conferences organised by the Development Department.

After the last conference of the current series, in May 2008, the Policy and Business Development Unit (PBDU) commissioned Lestas Consulting to undertake a review of the initiative.

In summary, the review stated that the State of the City programme has been:

'a very successful way of bringing together key individuals and organisations to reflect on the needs and development of the City'.

Nearly all (94%) of key stakeholders stated that their impression of the SOC events was either excellent or good.

The review also stated that there were some areas for improvement, with the main ones being:

- The business sector could be more presented;
- The State of the City should be an engagement mechanism with two-way stream communication.
- Cost efficiency could be improved;

This report describes a proposal to refresh State of the City as a key BCC product and how recommendations for improvement in the review will be addressed.

Key Issues

1. Purpose of the SOC

PBDU notes that the purpose of the SOC is to:

- Maintain BCC's leadership role in development areas, particularly urban regeneration (economic, physical, social and cultural)
- Share knowledge and propagate intellectual capital
- Influence evidence-based decision making
- Improve internal and external relationships by increasing networking between Members, BCC officers and external stakeholders
- Influence the agenda about issues affecting the future of the City (and community planning) and complex public policy issues
- Serve as a mechanism to initiate action and a catalyst challenge to community planning, leading to joint knowledge/expertise and joint understanding and synergy
- Raise profile of BCC as a dynamic, learning organisation

2. Why we need the State of the City initiative

By refreshing the State of the City initiative, BCC would show strong leadership as there are no other organisations with a sole Belfast focus covering so many cross-cutting issues. BCC needs State of the City to continue to grow capacity, knowledge, understanding, skills and consensus for future joint or synergetic/integrated action subsequent to on-going institutional changes e.g. RPA.

Belfast needs a platform for a high level debate on the future development of the City, covering all the challenging aspects of social, economic, cultural and physical development. The City also needs a regular networking mechanism through which those who work on improving the City can share ideas and knowledge. To achieve its purpose, however, the SOC initiative would need to have more frequent and effective ways of communicating.

BCC and its Development Department are in the best position to offer that for the following reasons:

- Its work is Belfast focused
- Its work covers all key aspects of City development
- It has overarching knowledge and expertise
- It has access to high level speakers and experts
- A dedicated budget

3. State of the City Brand

As State of the City is already a very recognisable initiative and it exists as such in other cities in the UK and USA, it is recommended that the City maintain the name but redesign and refresh the brand. This is a lower cost alternative to developing an entirely new brand.

4. State of the City Products

Different multiple products would be used to reach the stakeholders, achieve the maximum impact and ensure a more value for money approach:

- **8 Seminars over two years:** Over one year BCC would hold four quarterly seasonal seminars that would take place in City Hall as it is the civic centre of Belfast with the best public access. Each event would take place at 5.00 pm and would last for up to an hour and a half. The seminars would have a Member making the opening address and welcome which would bring the initiative into a closer relationship with Members. Speakers would

be balanced between local, national and international figures, covering a series of interwoven topics. The seminars would provide opportunities for debate but also foster networking, enabling connections to be made and future projects and initiatives to be developed.

- **Publications:**

Four Development Briefs: .After every quarterly seminar PDBU would publish a Development Brief on the topic covered, starting with Spring 2010. This Brief would be made available to members, BCC staff and external stakeholders.

One major research paper – PDBU proposes to publish one research paper per year on one of the main topical subjects, e.g. Recovery from Recession in Belfast. This could be done in partnership with one of the think tanks, e.g. The Work Foundation.

Magazines – City Matters and Intercom would be used to communicate the information both internally and externally.

Web Page: The Council's website will be regularly updated to ensure that stakeholders are well informed. A Facebook page would also be set up to serve as an online portal for information on the upcoming events, sharing ideas, documents and feedback on the events.

One-to-ones: Meetings would be organised with some internal officers, Members and external stakeholders to raise the profile of the events, attract co-hosting opportunities and support the development of future projects & initiatives; and

Email: Stakeholders would be notified by email of the upcoming events and the change of direction for SOC. The invites and RSVPs would also be sent by email again a low cost, environmentally friendly option compared to previous conference expenses.

5. Suggested State of the City Theme for 2010

It is proposed to focus the first year of SOC on the how Belfast is recovering from the recession from different development points of view i.e. business, social, cultural, physical and environmental. The seminar series could be entitled 'Belfast Bounces Back'.

This theme would attract the business sector whose presence at SOC has effectively decreased over the years. A business champion could be chair for some of the events.

The (1st) Spring seminar would be opened by a key note speaker with a wide ranging city development and renaissance/growth expertise, such as Daniel M Rooney, US Ambassador to Ireland or Councillor Steven Purcell from Glasgow City Council.

The (2nd) Summer seminar would focus on increased poverty and social exclusion as an impact of the recession. Potential speakers would be Margaret Ledwith, professor of Community Development and Social Justice at the University of Cumbria and Mae Shaw, University of Edinburgh.

The (3rd) Autumn event could focus on Belfast as a Cultural City and the challenges recession has placed on its cultural assets.

The (4th) Winter event could focus more on the physical aspect of the recession in Belfast , the launch of the Belfast Masterplan.

Using this approach the seminars would cover all three important aspects of the City development, economic, social and physical and still remain very topical.

Other topics are proposed for the SOC events during its second year under the auspices of renaissance of the City after the recession:

- Community development (co-hosting with CFNI)
- Community planning (BCC leading the way)
- Skills (co-hosting with Belfast Metropolitan College)
- Transport and connectivity (co-hosting with DOE/DRD)

The Development Department Managers' Team and Unit Managers' Forum would be involved in the selection of topics and speakers – it is proposed that SOC would be a regular agenda item.

6. Actions to progress State of the City:

- Update SOC website
- Update and create SOC master database - pass it around Departmental Sections and Units for additional inputs
- Hire a design company to refresh the brand and produce low cost banners, stands, templates and stationery material which would be used for every seminar/event – in line with agreement with Corporate Communications' protocol and guidelines
- Hire an event management company to organise seminars – this will reduce the administration burden on officers who could focus their effort on production of the development briefs and the research paper

- Book venue and hire speakers
- Set up a Facebook page - in agreement with Corporate Communications

7. Evaluation and monitoring

Regular evaluation sheets would be used to assess the success of each event and publication. There will be a particular focus on the degree to which the events have led to the development of future projects and initiatives. After the first year of operation, in October 2010, PBDU proposes to undertake an evaluation of the initiative in order to gain an insight into the overall success of SOC and whether changes need to be made.

Resource Implications

- The Development Department has already allocated an existing budget of £30,000 to cover one year's spend in 2010, to cover the costs of all events and the production of research documents and development briefs. The second year of the project will require a further £30,000.
- Compared to the last SOC series where £30,000 delivered one annual conference, the new SOC series will (with the same budget) deliver 4 events, 4 Development Briefs and one research paper. Co-hosting will be encouraged to reduce the costs of delivery and organisational burden.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the proposed process for State of the City OC and the allocation of £30,000 for the second year of the project, subject to the 2010/2011 Revenue Estimates being agreed.

Decision Tracking

Further to approval, the first seasonal State of the City Seminar will take place in March 2010.

Time line: March 2010

Reporting Officer: Barbary Cooke

Key Abbreviations

SOC – State of the City’’

During discussion in the matter, a Member suggested that, given the fragile state of the economy, the branding of the series of seminars as “Belfast Bounces Back” should be reconsidered. In response, the Head of Economic initiatives undertook to re-examine this matter.

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the Committee approved the process for the State of the City project and agreed that the sum of £30,000 be allocated towards the costs which would be incurred during the second year of the project, subject to the 2010/2011 revenue estimates being agreed.

Consultation on the Utility Regulator's Forward Action Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

Relevant Background Information

The Utility Regulator has asked the Council to comment on their draft Forward Work Programme for 2010-11. The Regulator protects consumers through regulation and scrutiny of Northern Ireland's gas, electricity and water providers. The Regulator's strategic priorities are:

- Protecting consumers by ensuring utility monopolies act efficiently.
- Environmental sustainability and security of supply.
- Protecting vulnerable consumers.
- Boosting competition in wholesale and retail sectors.
- Harmonising energy markets and use of infrastructure.
- Evolving the regulatory framework.
- Their own organisational development.

The Forward Work Programme sets out how these priorities will be addressed in 2010-11 and also gives an indication of activities into 2013.

The Council's response to the draft FWP has to be submitted by 12.00 noon on 20th January, 2010.

Additional information is available from the Utility Regulator's website:

http://www.niaur.gov.uk/news/view/utility_regulator_publishes_its_draft_forward_work_plan_2010_11_for_consult

Key Issues

The activities outlined in the draft Programme fall under the following strategic themes:

- the protection of consumers through effective regulation of monopoly utility companies by applying their regulatory scrutiny to drive efficiencies and promote enhanced level of services (e.g. through Guaranteed Standards of Service). They propose to enhance their regulatory framework through a broadly based review of price control methodologies;

- promoting sustainability and security through working with utility companies to take account of environmental impact of the services they provide (e.g. requiring NI Water to report on carbon emissions) and assessing options for optimising the existing energy infrastructure;
- protecting vulnerable customers by implementing a Social Action Plan (the Council has already been consulted on this part of the plan) and contributing to wider Governmental initiatives, as appropriate, on fuel poverty;
- advancing retail and wholesale competition by removing barriers to potential entrants and reviewing existing arrangements to promote value for consumers (e.g. by reviewing the long-term contracts of electricity generating units);
- harmonising arrangements to deliver benefits for Northern Ireland consumers (e.g. the potential arising from Common Arrangements for Gas on the island of Ireland);
- a greater focus on the potential for exercising competition powers and the need to take account of the wider European legislative context;
- developing as an organisation by enhancing human resources policies and processes and taking the opportunities to deliver on specific governance areas.

There are specific elements within the draft Programme that may impact on the Council and especially its activities in the North Foreshore Landfill Gas Electricity Generation Scheme. It is proposed that the Council sends the following response.

‘The North Foreshore is generating renewable electricity for export which is eligible for the Levy Exemption Certificate (LEC), the Northern Ireland Renewable Obligation Certificate (NIROC) and the Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO). The Council therefore welcomes the Utility Regulator’s priorities to work with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM) to ensure that the existing schemes NIROC, LEC and REGO continue to operate smoothly alongside the Single Electricity Market (SEM) mechanisms ensuring the efficient administration of the schemes.

The North Foreshore Landfill Gas Electricity Generation Scheme also generates renewable heat. The Council would therefore support the proposal for the Utility Regulator to work with DETI to help develop policies and potential incentives in relation to renewable heat in NI.

The Council notes that the Utility Regulator is proposing to review the regulatory framework with a view to facilitating private network development and connections wherever appropriate. Again the Council supports this, as it may be of some relevance to the North Foreshore site. In particular, there may be an opportunity to sell electricity and heat directly to businesses in the North Foreshore site.

The Council also notes and approves the commitment to deliver the Social Action Plan. We refer you to our previous consultation response to the specific elements of the Social Action Plan.'

Resource Implications

Financial

No immediate financial implications identified. Longer-term there may be implications for selling electricity from the North Foreshore site.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to agree the consultation response proposed in this report.

Decision Tracking

1. Further to approval, the consultation response will be submitted by 12.00 noon on 20th January 2010. No further updates will be submitted to the committee.

Time line: 20 January 2010 Reporting Officer: Barbary Cooke

Key to Abbreviations

DETI - Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
LEC - Levy Exemption Certificate
NIROC - the Northern Ireland Renewable Obligation Certificate
OFGEM - Office of Gas and Electricity Markets
REGO - Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin
SEM - Single Electricity Market"

The Committee agreed that the comments contained within the foregoing report be submitted as the Council's response to the consultation on the Utility Regulator's Forward Action Plan.

Sprucefield Public Inquiry

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Members that, on 26th October, the Planning Appeals Commission had notified objectors to the planning application for a significant regional development at Sprucefield that the applicant, Sprucefield Centre Limited, had not complied with Regulation 15 (2a) of the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993, in that it had not submitted information within a specified timeframe and that it appeared that there was no written agreement between the applicant and the Department to extend the time period for the submission of this information. Accordingly, the Planning Appeals Commission had assumed that this would result in the application being deemed refused in March 2009. Therefore, the Commission would have no statutory authority to consider it at a Public Inquiry.

The Department of the Environment had stated that it was seeking legal advice on the status of the application but, due to the uncertainty, the Planning Appeals Commission had decided to notify objectors of the postponement of the Inquiry and the arrangement for the submission of the rebuttals. In addition, the Commission had stated that, if the Courts were to determine that the application remained alive, the Inquiry process would be reactivated at a later date.

The Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that, on 27th October, Sprucefield Centre Limited had resubmitted the same application and that the Department of the Environment had declared that the application would be subject to Article 31 and had formally written to all the objectors and consultees in relation to the resubmitted application. Consequently, the Council had been required to resubmit its letter of objection prior to the deadline of 1st December and had done so. She pointed out further that the Council's previous letter of objection, statement of case and rebuttal statement remained relevant as the details of the application were unchanged. To date, £6,349 had been spent on employing specialist retail planning expertise in connection with the Sprucefield Public Inquiry.

Noted.

Department for Social Development's Area Advice Centre Locations Consultation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

Department for Social Development:

At the November 2009 meeting, Committee considered a draft response to the DSD consultation which proposes the optimum number and location of Area Advice Centres. This consultation is set within the broader context of DSD preparations to move to a proposed new model for Advice Services in Northern Ireland following the publication of the *Opening Doors Strategy for the Delivery of Voluntary Advice Services* in September 2007.

The current consultation is restricted to the second phase of 2 further pieces of research, where Phase I mapped existing provision.

DSD indicate their proposals take account of issues of accessibility, deprivation and population size and are intended to provide councils with a methodology for determining locations in the commissioning of these services in the future. They further indicate that the Area Advice Centre Model will provide generalist advice support, first line support for specific needs and be a referral point for specialist advice. The consultation also comments on outreach approaches.

Following this consultation process, DSD has advised that Minister Ritchie intends to publish further guidance 'in consultation with councils' before piloting the new advice framework in partnership. DSD has indicated their intention to invite expressions of interest from councils to permit a pilot phase in 2010. Furthermore, implementation of the new framework should take account of and fit the new council areas post RPA. DSD indicated that adoption of the agreed model will coincide with RPA implementation timescales, currently expected to occur in 2011.

Belfast City Council:

BCC is a significant investor in the delivery of independent advice services across the City and has developed a successful model of consortia advice provision based on geographical providers (North, South, East, West and City centre). BCC investment focuses on generalist advice provision to the community at large. Funding is allocated on a pro-rata basis based on a deprivation-weighted population.

In 2008 Deloitte completed an independent review of provision across the City. This review was commissioned in order to identify best practice changes required to the current delivery model and to make recommendations on the delivery approach going forward, particularly in light of the new regional strategy.

The consultants recommended that all future provision in the City should build on the significant investment in the development of capacity and relationships (consortia) to date. They proposed how we might consolidate on and improve practice and suggested opportunities to extend the support role of BBC.

In light of the DSD strategy our recent review of the consortium model and to inform advice provision post 2011, the Community Services Business Plan notes the intention to review and refine the BCC Support Strategy for Advice Services post 2011 and a related

Action Plan. This work will be developed closely with Members and key stake-holders and will commence early next year. A key component of the strategy development will be to agree the appropriate number and location of Advice Centres and related outreach provision across the City.

Consultation:

Given the above, and due to the high level of interest in the consultation topic, Members requested Party Briefings in order to ensure adequate representation of their views within the consultation response.

The attached final draft incorporates responses from all political parties.

The consultation document includes questions directed to advice providers and funders of advice provision. The attached final draft response (Appendix) addresses only those funder specific questions.

Key Issues

Members expressed broad support for the content of the draft response however requested that officers reflect and reinforce the following:

1. BCC welcomes the opportunity to comment on this regional strategy and support the methodology of determining the location of advice services via population, deprivation and accessibility. Members are however cautious of commenting on any particular issue without reference to the overall strategy or process.
2. As a crucial investment partner, Members believe that any future strategy should allow councils the flexibility to define provision based on our own assessment of local need.
3. BCC has an established pattern and system for our advice services investment in the City. An independent review (Deloitte 2008) concluded that the consortia model represents best practice in advice delivery. Any future strategy should note this significant investment to date and the positive evaluation of the consortia model.
4. BCC are committed to this consortia approach and to the different providers within the advice sector. Any strategy and future provision must not unbalance the relationships which characterise this joint, co-ordinated working model and which have taken time and resources to build. Indeed, our future strategy should improve and consolidate relationships.

5. Any future strategy must ensure a whole Belfast approach making sure areas of need, including those outside Neighbourhood Renewal areas, are serviced appropriately by advice providers.
6. There is general agreement on the need for a City centre location advice centre. The most effective resource and management option however needs to be further explored.
7. Consortia should define and propose outreach processes to ensure an effective, comprehensive and accessible service including, for example, the use of temporary advice locations, utilisation of established and new technologies, mobile service delivery, etc.
8. The move to advice services being commissioned via a procurement process could have a detrimental effect on the service model in the City. Further discussion should be initiated with local government to agree the most effective methodology to support advice services in order to ensure a high quality and accessible service. BCC are keen to ensure that the agreed methodology will not have a detrimental impact on our current model and the investment to date in capacity and relationships, both of which are key contributors to its success.
9. No mention is made of an appropriate financial model for the investment. BCC reserves the right to consider and define the most effective financial model in the preparation of our strategy for Advice Services Support next year.
10. Opportunity must be taken to maintain and improve standards of service provision (both within advice centres and via outreach provision). DSD might give consideration to an advice standard and clarify the support roles of the regional advice organisations.
11. There is a need to recognise and identify the role of volunteers in advice service provision.
12. The commitment in Open Doors to a single IT system is not covered in the DSD document. BCC is committed to supporting the advice sector to align its IT systems.
13. The consultation document indicates there are no additional funds available to resource the proposals or the reform process. BCC is concerned that the main focus for any additional financial support may fall to councils. This is likely to be a major barrier to progress in terms of implementation of the strategy.

Resource Implications

There is no recommendation or suggestion of any reduction in services or investment for voluntary advice provision with implementation of the strategy taking place within existing

available budgets. However, it is expected that advice services will be commissioned using a procurement process open to competition and leading to contractual arrangements.

Recommendations

1. Members are asked to consider and agree the attached final draft BCC response to the DSD consultation document on the number and location of Area Advice Centres.
2. Members are further asked to note the contents of the report and endorse the officer proposal to table a further 2 reports in relation to:
 - BCC interim support for advice services in 2010/11 and
 - Arrangements to identify options and agree any future BCC strategy for Advice & Information Services support post 2011.

Decision Tracking

1. Following ratification of the draft consultation response the Community Development Manager will issue to DSD noting this is subject to Council ratification.

Time-frame: 18 December 2009
Reporting Officer: Catherine Taggart

2. Presentation of two future Committee reports by Community Development Manager.

Time frame: January 2010 & March 2010
Reporting Officer: Catherine Taggart

Key Abbreviations

BCC - Belfast City Council
DSD – Department for Social Development
SOA – Super Output Area

Documents Attached

Appendix – BCC Draft response to DSD consultation.

Appendix

AREA ADVICE CENTRE LOCATIONS

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Belfast City Council expressed broad support for the content of the DSD proposals however requested that officers reflect and reinforce the following:

1. BCC welcome the opportunity to comment on this regional strategy and support the methodology of determining the location of advice services via population, deprivation and accessibility. Members are however cautious of commenting on any particular issue without reference to the overall strategy or process.
2. As a crucial investment partner, members believe that any future strategy should allow councils the flexibility to define provision based on our own assessment of local need.
3. BCC have an established pattern and system for our Advice Services investment in the city. An independent review (Deloitte 2008) concluded that the consortia model represents best practice in advice delivery. Any future strategy should note this significant investment to date and the positive evaluation of the consortia model.
4. BCC are committed to this consortia approach and to the different providers within the advice sector. Any strategy and future provision must not unbalance the relationships which characterise this joint, co-ordinated working model and which have taken time and resources to build. Indeed, our future strategy should improve and consolidate relationships.
5. Any future strategy must ensure a whole Belfast approach making sure areas of need, including those outside Neighbourhood Renewal areas, are serviced appropriately by Advice providers.
6. There is general agreement on the need for a city centre location advice centre. The most effective resource and management option however needs to be further explored.
7. Consortia should define and propose outreach processes to ensure an effective, comprehensive and accessible service including, for example, the use of temporary advice locations, utilisation of established and new technologies, mobile service delivery, etc.

8. The move to advice services being commissioned via a procurement process could have a detrimental effect on the service model in the city. Further discussion should be initiated with local government to agree the most effective methodology to support advice services in order to ensure a high quality and accessible service. BCC are keen to ensure that the agreed methodology will not have a detrimental impact on our current model and the investment to date in capacity and relationships, both of which are keys contributors to its success.
9. No mention is made of an appropriate financial model for the investment. BCC reserve the right to consider and define the most effective financial model in the preparation of our strategy for Advice Services Support next year.
10. Opportunity must be taken to maintain and improve standards of service provision (both within Advice Centres and via outreach provision). DSD might give consideration to an Advice standard and clarify the support roles of the regional Advice organisations.
11. There is a need to recognise and identify the role of volunteers in advice service provision.
12. The commitment in Open Doors to a single IT system is not covered in the DSD document. BCC is committed to supporting the advice sector to align its IT systems.
13. The consultation document indicates there are no additional funds available to resource the proposals or the reform process. BCC are concerned that the main focus for any additional financial support may fall to councils. This is likely to be a major barrier to progress in terms of implementation of the strategy.

***ANSWERS TO DSD SPECIFIC QUESTIONS SHOULD
BE READ IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COMMENTS ABOVE.***

Question 1 – (question for all stakeholders)

What is your view of this proposal?

2 – Support proposal

The Opening Doors strategy and in particular a move to specified area advice centres, marks a significant opportunity for both the advice sector and BCC.

It gives the opportunity to implement an advice structure across the city that is replicated across the province, with key advice locations in place that are based on recognized need.

Implementation of the strategy will allow best practice changes to be implemented particularly in the areas of consortia structure and working, targeting need and improving monitoring and evaluation of the service.

BCC however would note the following:

- BCC welcome the opportunity to comment on this regional strategy and support the methodology of determining the location of advice services via population, deprivation and accessibility. Members are however cautious of commenting on any particular issue without reference to the overall strategy or process.*
- As a crucial investment partner, members believe that any future strategy should allow councils the flexibility to define provision based on our own assessment of local need.*
- BCC have an established pattern and system for our Advice Services investment in the city. An independent review (Deloitte 2008) concluded that the consortia model represents best practice in advice delivery. Any future strategy should note this significant investment to date and the positive evaluation of the consortia model.*
- BCC are committed to this consortia approach and to the different providers within the advice sector. Any strategy and future provision must not unbalance the relationships which characterise this joint, co-ordinated working model and which have taken time and resources to build. Indeed, our future strategy should improve and consolidate relationships.*

Question 2 – (question for local councils)

Do you agree with the locations for Area Advice Centres indicated by our research for your new council area?

4 – Disagree

We would wish to make the following observations:

- The proposed locations of the area advice centres align well to the areas of deprivation and are sited on or near the main arterial routes in Belfast.*

- *The emphasis on the delivery of advice services in Neighbourhood Renewal areas is welcomed but we recognise that at varying times many people from across the city, or those across the province who live in rural areas, have the need to make use of advice services. Therefore the promotion of appropriate outreach, telephone and on line access needs to be given high priority.*
- *Any future strategy therefore must ensure a whole Belfast approach making sure areas of need, including those outside Neighbourhood Renewal areas, are serviced appropriately by Advice providers. BCC recognise a strength of the consortia partnership model is their flexibility to respond to advice needs across the whole of the city.*
- *BCC are committed to our current and established consortia approach and to the different providers within the advice sector. Any strategy and future provision must not unbalance the relationships which characterise this joint, co-ordinated working model and which have taken time and resources to build. Indeed, our future strategy should improve and consolidate relationships.*
- *Consortia should define and propose outreach processes to ensure an effective, comprehensive and accessible service including, for example, the use of temporary advice locations, utilisation of established and new technologies, mobile service delivery, etc.*

Question 3 – (question for local councils)

What are the key difference between the locations of Area Advice Centres indicated by our research for your new council area and the locations at which you currently fund voluntary advice provision?

While in Belfast the proposed locations of the Area Advice Centres are in the main already locations for CAB Advice Services, it is potentially very damaging to the progress that has already been made in the city to single out CAB as the main provider of Area Advice Centres. This approach may create competition, status and mistrust as opposed to building relationships and increasing current levels of co-operation between Advice providers.

Proposed sites v actual advice locations:

North:	- Carlisle Circus/ Antrim Road	= Antrim Road CAB
	- Shankill Road	= Shankill Road CAB
South:	- Lisburn Road	= Lisburn Road Bradbury Centre CAB
East:	- Newtownards Road	= Arches Health Centre CAB
West	- Falls Road	= Falls Road CAB
	- Andersonstown Road	= Suffolk and Andersonstown CAB
	- Poleglass/Twinbrook	= currently Lisburn CAB outreach
City Centre -		= No present location as CAB moved from Callender street to Duncairn Gardens. An alternative location for city centre advice will have to be sourced.

This approach could therefore lead to a two tier system of advice services with CAB being seen as the preferred area advice provider and the Independent Advice providers being seen as fulfilling a more local / neighbourhood advice function.

We note that as BCC is committed to the consortia being made up of both CAB and Independent Advice providers, this approach may be problematic. To recognise one organisation as the preferred provider of Area Advice Centres would give them an inappropriate advantage within any consortia structure.

There is general agreement on the need for a city centre location advice centre. The most effective resource and management option however needs to be further explored.

At present the consortia appoint a lead organisation and, in a similar way, it is felt that the consortia should propose the location and organisation of an Area Advice Centres within an agreed framework.

The proposal for the establishment of Area Advice Centres is a step forward in the coordination of Advice services but in addition clarification needs to be given on the role and status of both Outreach and Specialist providers.

Question 6 – (question for funders of generalist advice provision)

What impact will the research findings have on your current and planned funding of voluntary advice services?

1 – Significant impact

The move to advice services being commissioned via a procurement process could have a detrimental effect on the service model in the city. Further discussion should be initiated with local government to agree the most effective methodology to support advice services in order to ensure a high quality and accessible service.

BCC are keen to ensure that the agreed methodology will not have a detrimental impact on our current model and the investment to date in capacity and relationships, both of which are keys contributors to its success. If a procurement process goes ahead, there should be local /BCC flexibility and input into the specification so as to safeguard the level of service that is required in Belfast.

We would also make the following comments

- As already noted, in Belfast the advice consortia way of working is already established along with the concept of outreach from established advice centres. The current consortia model is based on 5 area consortia. The consultation document proposes this will have to be adapted to 4 consortia with attendant implications for current consortia members. BCC reserve the right to further review and comment on the appropriate model for the city.***
- BCC consider that consortia will have to decide and define outreach processes, with the possibility of consortia members making use of temporary advice locations i.e. community centres, doctor's surgeries, home visits and an expansion of the use of telephone and online access and consideration of mobile facilities.***
- BCC believe that the standard of advice given in both Area Advice Centre's and within outreach sites must be of the same standard and as such be resourced adequately.***
- The need for, and levels of, outreach should be written into the contract. This is also applicable to the level of interaction and inclusion of specialist advice providers, i.e. can specialist advice providers be part of the proposed consortia and if so how and at what level will they be funded? Will it be a set amount or will it be dependent upon how they are used?***

- *There is an agreed formula for calculating the percentage level of funding to each group; this would have to be revisited with any potential recalculation influencing the levels of funding individual groups will receive.*
- *The move to advice services being commissioned using a procurement process will also be a major change and could, given the amounts involved, lead to interest from new groups/organisations. This might include interest from the private sector, from outside of Belfast and / or from outside Northern Ireland.*
- *There is a fear that the focus of a tender approach to the commissioning of services is motivated by a potential reduction in investment. While any future provision must include the consideration of VFM factors, the focus should also be on quality service outcomes.*
- *It must be made clear as to whether the 4 Belfast contracts are to be with specific Area Advice centres or with the proposed 4 consortia.*
- *While our current investment model is focused on the provision of generalist advice to the community at large, it should be noted that in many cases this core funding underpins the provision of specialist services in area advice centres. While not a direct investor, any future strategy for the provision of generalist advice services is therefore crucial to future availability localised specialist advice support.”*

During discussion in the matter, a Member pointed out that the observations contained within the Council’s answer to Question 2 would need to be amended in order to make it clear that the advice centres which were operating currently in Belfast were situated on or close to arterial routes and were equally as able to undertake an advice-giving service as the Citizen’s Advice Bureau. In response, the Head of City Events and Venues undertook to have the response amended.

The Committee agreed that the response contained within the appendix to the foregoing report, subject to the amendment to Question 2 outlined above, be submitted as the Council’s response to the Department for Social Development’s Consultation on area advice centre locations.

Advice Services – Debt Relief Volunteer Training Proposal

The Committee agreed to defer until a future meeting consideration of a report regarding a debt relief volunteer training proposal.

Department for Social Development Advice Funding

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The current ongoing economic downturn and resultant uncertainty facing many households has resulted in an increase in the numbers of people accessing the services of advice agencies particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to debt and money advice services. The advice sector is experiencing difficulties in responding to this increased demand.

Following considerable lobbying from both the advice providers and Local Government the Department for Social Development has just announced an additional £500,000 for local advice services across Northern Ireland, of which £167,096.00 is offered to Belfast City Council. The Council has not been asked to provide any match funding support. If the Council accepts the offer of additional resources, this will bring the total financial support for Advice Services in Belfast to £992,727.00.

	<u>DSD Advice Grant</u>	<u>Council Contribution</u>	<u>Combined Total</u>
<u>Original Advice Grant/Contributions</u>	<u>£469,902</u>	<u>£355,729</u>	<u>£825,631</u>
<u>Additional Advice Grant November 2009</u>	<u>£167,096</u>	<u>£0</u>	<u>£167,096</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>£636,998</u>	<u>£355,729</u>	<u>£992,727</u>

The additional funding may be spent to enhance the existing voluntary advice provision in Belfast in order to meet the increased demand on the service at this time of recession.

The additional DSD grant is conditional on the utilisation of the full funds by recipient organisations within the current financial year, ending 31 March, 2010.

Key Issues

Given the limited timeframe in which the additional available funds can be expended (approx 3 months), systems will need to be developed to ensure any funds available are distributed and made available to service providers as soon as possible.

In order to work within the dictated timeframe, while also maintaining adherence to the current BCC model for Advice & Information Services Support, officers would suggest that any agreed take up of DSD funds is administered via the consortia model.

1. Allocation of available additional funds.

The timeframe will not permit any competition for resources outside the model or indeed any significant reallocation of funding ratios between consortia or within the consortium partners. It is therefore proposed to allocate the additional resources to the 5 advice consortia on a pro rata basis against the agreed deprivation-weighted population formulae.

This will ensure consistency with the 2009/10 BCC standard advice grant and the BCC/DSD Advice supplementary grant.

Consortium	% of total	£
North	27.33	45,667.33
South	13.51	22,574.67
East	16.82	28,105.55
West	32.34	54,038.84
City Centre	10.00	16,709.61
Total	100%	£167,096.00

1. Application Process

Officers will invite advice consortia to submit proposals on how they will utilise the potential available additional funding allocation to enhance their current advice services provision. A generic application pro-forma will be developed requesting information on detailed budget, additional provision, performance indicators, targeted additional outcomes, etc. Applicants will be asked to note specific activity to address the increase in demand due to the current economic downturn and increased outreach provision.

Officers will work with Legal Services to design and issue funding contracts within current corporate procedure.

2. Monitoring

As per current arrangements, all successful consortia will submit monitoring returns to report progress against stipulated targets.

Resource Implications

Other than human resources, there are no additional financial implications for BCC.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the extra DSD funding for advice services is accepted and distributed to the advice consortiums/groups in the same way as the existing Advice funding.

Decision Tracking

Following approval by Committee the Community Development Manager will implement to ensure uptake and expenditure of additional funds by 31st March 2010.

Timeframe: April 2010 Reporting Officer: Catherine Taggart

Key Abbreviations

**DSD – Department of Social Development
BCC - Belfast City Council”**

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Community Development Project Grants

The Community Development Manager reminded the Committee that Community Development Project Grants were awarded to organisations which supported and strengthened local efforts to enhance and improve the quality of life within a neighbourhood or area. The maximum amount which could be awarded to any one group under this scheme was £500. She indicated that the maximum amount which could be awarded to a Community Group under the authority delegated currently to the Director of Development in any one financial year was also £500. In previous years, in order to permit applications received under the Christmas Community Chest, which enabled organisations to hold events during the Christmas period for local residents, to be processed using this delegated authority the former Client Services Committee had approved the payment of Community Development Project Grants. This was now the responsibility of the Development Committee and it would be necessary, therefore, for it to approve the payment of grants.

She reported that 46 Project Grant applications had been received, 42 of which had been recommended for grant-aid and it was proposed that a total of £20,714.64 be allocated in this regard.

During discussion in the matter, a Member drew the Committee's attention to an application from Joanmount Open Door Limited which was being recommended for refusal and requested that the application be reconsidered.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that consideration of the application from Joanmount Open Door Limited be deferred pending the outcome of the current review of related eligibility criteria being led by the Director of Legal Services. In addition, the Committee considered the remaining applications which had been received and agreed to adopt the recommendations set out below:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRANT APPROVAL

<u>GROUP NAME</u>	<u>REQUESTED</u>	<u>RECOMMENDED</u>
NORTH		
Ben Madigan Historical Society	£479.64	£479.64
Carrickhill Residents Association	£500.00	£500.00
Donegall Park Avenue Senior C.Club	£500.00	£500.00
Duncairn Senior Citizens Club	£500.00	£500.00
Jennymount Community Association	£500.00	£500.00
Cliftonville Community Centre	£500.00	£500.00
Midland Art Club	£500.00	£500.00
Midland Senior Citizens	£500.00	£500.00
New Lodge Arts	£500.00	£500.00
North Belfast Women's Initiative	£500.00	£500.00
Sailortown Regeneration Group	£500.00	£500.00
Shore Crescent Football Club	£500.00	£500.00
Small Steps Adult Education Group	£500.00	£500.00
Women's Arts & Crafts	£500.00	£500.00
Sub Total	£6,979.64	£6,979.64
SOUTH		
An Droichead Afterschools	£500.00	£500.00
Bellwood Seniors	£500.00	£500.00
Haven Victims Support Group	£600.00	£500.00
Ravenhill Women's Group	£504.00	£500.00
LORAG	£500.00	£500.00
Sandy Row Residents Association	£5,691.00	£500.00
South Belfast Malecare	£600.00	£500.00
Sub Total	£8,895.00	£3,500
EAST		
Ardcarn Residents	£500.00	£500.00
Avoniel Over 50's Club	£500.00	£500.00
Belfast East Seniors Forum	£500.00	£500.00
Belfast Evergreens	£335.00	£335.00
Civil Service Retirement Fellowship	£500.00	£500.00
Hilltop & Glenluce Trust	£500.00	£400.00
Old Belmont School Preservation Trust	£500.00	£500.00
Walkway Community Association	£500.00	£500.00
Wandsworth Community Association	£500.00	£500.00
Sub Total	£4,335.00	£4,235.00

<u>GROUP NAME</u>	<u>REQUESTED</u>	<u>RECOMMENDED</u>
WEST		
An Munia Tober	£500.00	£500.00
Conway Pensioners Group	£500.00	£500.00
Cumnann Chulain Ard	£500.00	£500.00
Glencolin Residents Group	£500.00	£500.00
Habinteg Seniors Group	£500.00	£500.00
Highfield Mother & Toddler	£500.00	£500.00
Lower Shankill Community Association	£500.00	£500.00
Royal Irish Rangers Veterans Club	£500.00	£500.00
Springfield Charitable Association	£500.00	£500.00
St. James Community Forum	£500.00	£500.00
Upper Springfield Safer Neighbourhood P.	£500.00	£500.00
Denmark Street C.C.	£500.00	£500.00
Sub Total	£6,000	£6,000
GRAND TOTAL	£26,209.64	£20,714.64

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRANT REFUSAL

<u>GROUP NAME</u>	<u>REQUEST</u>	<u>REASON FOR REFUSAL</u>
Antrim Road Regeneration	£500	No election of Committee. No evidence of financial systems.
Silver Threads	£500	Application incomplete
Cullingtree Senior Group	£500	Application incomplete

Tourism Update

Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework

The Committee agreed that a special meeting be held to receive a presentation on the Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast.

Belfast Tourism Monitor

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th November, it had agreed that tenders be invited for the provision of tourism and research services for a three-year period commencing in January, 2010. However, it had been subsequently ascertained that the procurement process would take three months to complete. Accordingly, it would be necessary to extend until 31st March, 2010, the existing contract with the current provider, Millward Brown Ulster.

The Committee agreed to extend the current contract for the provision of tourism and research services until 31st March, 2010.

Tourism Innovation Fund

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“At the September Committee meeting, Members were updated on BCC’s applications to NITB’s Tourism Innovation Fund. NITB received 110 applications in total from across Northern Ireland and has shortlisted 37 to the next stage of the process, including four proposals from BCC:

- Music Tourism
- Literary Tourism
- Delight in the Twilight (Food Tourism and City Animation);
and
- Sundays .

BCC has prepared business plans for each project which are now being appraised by NITB. NITB have indicated that, if projects are successful, they will receive letters of offer in December 2009, however full spend and implementation is required by end of March 2010.

The Tourism Innovation Fund will provide financial assistance for non-capital projects such as creative interpretation initiatives and innovative presentation and showcasing of Northern Ireland’s tourism offerings. The Fund aims to enhance the growth, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of tourism in Northern Ireland by stimulating product development and improving the visitor experience.

BCC’s four projects shortlisted under the programme, worth £653,000 are now being appraised by NITB. Members should note that the costs associated with these projects have been revised since the September 2009 report after discussions with NITB on eligibility of activity.

An additional £26,000 has been secured from DARD for the Delight on the Twilight project to support Belfast based catering and restaurant sector to use Northern Ireland produce.

Resource Implications

If BCC is successful in being awarded this funding, BCC’s £191,000 match funding will come from existing Departmental Budgets. This activity had been planned for regardless of NITB support. NITB funding will provide an opportunity to deliver larger scale / greater impact projects.

The Tourism Innovation Fund has slipped a month from initial timelines discussed with NITB. The delivery of the projects by end of the March 2010 is challenging however staff resources will be realigned accordingly.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and agree that the four projects proceed.

Decision Tracking

Further to approval and when NITB Letters of Offers are received, Members will be updated on any changes to the projects.

Timescale: January 2010 Officer: Kerrie Sweeney ext 3586”

The Committee adopted the foregoing recommendation.

City Hall Tourist Information Point

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“At the September Committee, Members 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, the current lease of which expires in July 2010.

Officers have met with Facilities Management regarding the opportunity to establish an information point at the City Hall. At present the most suitable location is the ‘reception hall’ at the front entrance to the City Hall (on right hand side). Working together with Facilities Management, the space can be designed to promote BCC facilities and the wider tourism product and services, including:

- Mainly interactive using 2 x 32" screens
- Limited multi-lingual facility
- Visitor information on the principal BCC attractions e.g. City Hall, Waterfront/Ulster Halls, The Zoo, Belfast Castle/Malone House, Parks
- Services information would include details such as the opening times of leisure centres, recycling centres etc.
- A 'What's On' facility would include details about upcoming events organised by BCC, this facility could be updated electronically by the Events Unit who organise these events

Capital fit out can be funded from existing City Hall refurbishment budget.

It would be important that the facility complements the role of the Belfast Welcome Centre and adds to the experience of the City Hall.

Resource Requirements

This space can either be a manned or unmanned facility. BVCB has looked at the option of the facility being manned for the key summer months (June – September) during City Hall opening times. The cost would be £7,500 per annum for one member of staff reporting to the Belfast Welcome Centre plus staff, equipment and design costs of £5,000. These would be additional costs and would need to be met from the 2010/2011 Development Departmental budget. There may be an opportunity for the Belfast Welcome Centre to be relocated even closer to the City Hall at ground floor premises in the vicinity of Donegall Place/Donegall Square which may reduced the need for a manned facility.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members agree to establishing an all year information point at the ‘reception hall’ at the front entrance the City Hall and that it is staffed on a trial basis between June to September 2010. Once the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre is agreed, the staffing of the information point will be reviewed.

Decision Tracking

Information Point to be opened for summer 2010

Date: May 2010

Contact: Kerrie Sweeney ext 3586”

The Committee agreed:

- (i) that a tourist information point be established all year round at the front entrance of the City Hall;
- (ii) that the point be staffed on a trial basis from June till September, 2010; and
- (iii) that staffing of the point be re-examined when the location of the Belfast Welcome Centre had been agreed.

Sister Cities International Conference 2009

The Committee noted that the above-mentioned event, which had received a conference subvention of £23,000 from the Committee, had generated an economic impact of £1,164,800 for Belfast.

Blue Plaques

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

James Bryce (Viscount Bryce of Dechmount), academic and diplomat;
Sir Joseph Larmour, academic and politician;
Thomas Russell, United Irishman and librarian;
Frances Joseph Bigger, archaeologist and librarian;
Mercy Hunter, calligrapher and designer;
Francis Joy, newspaper proprietor and entrepreneur;
Patrick Neill and James Blow, printers;
William Rodgers, broadcaster and poet;
The Maritime Club, the location of the birth of the Blues in Belfast.

The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Members that the costs associated with the erection of each individual blue plaque would be £700, provision for which had been made within the Department's budget.

The Committee agreed to provide the funding necessary for the erection of the nine blue plaques.

Culture and Arts Update

1613 Symposium

The Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Committee that, in accordance with its decision of 13th May, a Symposium which examined options for commemorating the 400th anniversary of the awarding of Belfast's Charter had been held on 4th November. At this event, a distinguished panel of speakers and contributors had discussed the issue and agreed that:

- the anniversary of the Charter was important;
- people were interested in and wanted to learn more about the period but felt that they should have been made aware of some of the issues around the Charter when they were at school; and
- the Charter was shared history which needed to be examined holistically and in context.

She recommended that a small internal working group be established to examine further how the Anniversary could be commemorated.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Community Festivals Fund

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th September, having been advised that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure had a small surplus in the Community Festivals Fund, it had agreed to provide match-funding.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that a sum of £8,213 had been secured from the Department. This had resulted in an amount of £16,426 being added to the sum of £29,140 which had already been available for the fourth and final tranche of the fund giving a new total of £45,566. She pointed out that the entire amount had been fully committed.

The Committee noted the information provided.

Lyric Theatre

The Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from the Chief Executive of the Lyric Theatre to enable him to bring the Members up-to-date on the plans for the Theatre and how it could assist the Council to deliver its objectives.

Economic Development Unit Update

Collaborative Marketing Campaigns for Trader Groups

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th August, it had agreed to continue to assist the development of Belfast's independent retail sector by offering support to local trader groups to develop collaborative marketing campaigns in order to raise the profile of their retail offerings and to increase footfall in their respective areas.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that the campaigns would be aimed at promoting the clusters of independent retail businesses which existed across Belfast and to improving the recognition of the importance of the independent retail sector in the City. She pointed out that the marketing support for the campaign would depend on the specific needs of the local area. Accordingly, she recommended that, in the current financial year, the support be focused on trader groups in West Belfast, Greater Shankill, Lisburn Road, parts of East Belfast and the City centre.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

South by Southwest 2010 - Creative Industries

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Members will be aware that at the Development Committee on 14 May, 2008 Members agreed to support Council participation at the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference for 2009 and 2010. South by South West (SXSW) remains the key US showcasing, deal striking, networking and media forum for the international media industry and attendance at the event remains a key priority for all of those interested in the business of media and creativity.

Participation at SXSW in 2008 and 2009 generated over \$500,000 of new business for participants and profiled Belfast as a creative city to the global entertainment industry.

Given the contacts built up in the two previous years, it is considered that there is merit in examining the wider support infrastructure for the creative industries in Austin and to look at how this might be transferred to Belfast. In light of this, it is proposed that a civic itinerary be added to the business trip.

In addition to attendance at the Belfast SXSW music showcase and the Belfast/Austin business networking event, meetings will be organised with a range of key contacts in areas of interest, including the following:

- Kevin Johns, Director of Economic Development, City of Austin
- Dave Porter, Senior VP/Economic Development, Austin Chamber of Commerce
- Jim Butler, Music, Film and Technology Industries Development, City of Austin
- Governor Rick Perry, Texas Music Office
- Vincent Kitch, Cultural Arts Programme Manager, City of Austin

In order to maximise the impact of this visit and to raise its profile, it is proposed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of Development Committee (or nominees), Head of Economic Initiatives, Creative Industries Officer, Assistant Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager (or nominees) attend SXSW in 2010.

Resource Implications

No additional resources required. £40,000 approved by Development Committee in May 2008.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members agree to attendance at the event by the Chair and Deputy Chair (or nominees), Head of Economic Initiatives, Creative Industries Officer, Assistant Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager (or nominees).

Decision Tracking

Post event feedback report to be presented to Committee by June 2010

Time line: August 2010

Reporting Officer: Lisa Toland"

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

City of the Isles Conference

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the City of the Isles Partnership was a small network of six City Councils in the United Kingdom and Ireland, namely Belfast, Cardiff, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Liverpool. Since 2000, these Cities had come together annually to share urban regeneration experiences, develop joint projects and establish a co-ordinated approach to issues of strategic importance. In October, representatives from the Council had attended the annual Conference in Edinburgh. At the conference it had been proposed that Belfast act as host city for the 2011 event. She indicated that approximately thirty representatives from the various cities would be attending and the two-day event would include a welcome lunch, tour of Belfast regeneration sites, a dinner at the City Hall, individual Council presentations and the City of the Isles Annual General Meeting. She pointed out that it was anticipated that the costs associated with hosting the event would not exceed £3,000.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that Belfast should host the Cities of the Isles Conference in October, 2010 and agreed that an amount of £3,000 be set aside towards the costs.

Committee Site Visits

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th November, it had agreed, as part of the process of relationship-building with the local business community, that it should undertake a programme of site visits to the Port of Belfast, Stenna Line, George Best Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport and the Northern Ireland Science Park.

The Head of Economic Initiatives recommended, in order to ensure that maximum benefit was achieved from attendance at the visits, that they be held over two days in either February, March or April. She assured the Members that they would be given a minimum of six weeks notice of the date and times of the meetings.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

British Telecom Presentation

The Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from British Telecom regarding the development of its superfast broadband and its potential impact on businesses in the City.

Review of the Local Economic Development Plan

The Committee noted that it would be receiving at a future meeting a draft copy of the new local Economic Development Plan.

European Unit Update

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that, on 27th January, 2010, the European Parliament, in partnership with the Parliament and Urban Intergroup and Eurocities, would be holding an event entitled "Cities 4 Europe". This would provide an important opportunity for elected representatives to engage in direct dialogue with Members of the European Parliament in relation to the already initiated negotiations concerning future funding and urban policy for regions and cities post 2013.

She pointed out that, at the recent Eurocities Annual General Meeting, cities had been encouraged to attend this event in order to mobilise and champion the city agenda, particularly at a time when future European funding would be limited and increasingly focused on central and eastern Europe.

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee further that, on 28th January, 2010, the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau would be hosting a Belfast Tourism Showcase in the new offices of the Northern Ireland Executive Bureau in Brussels. The aim of this event would be to maximise the opportunity of having a high-level gathering in Brussels for the "Cities 4 Europe" event. The Visitor and Convention Bureau has invited the Chairman of the Development Committee to host jointly the showcasing and promotional event.

The Committee approved the attendance of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Committee, the Head of Economic Initiatives and the European Manager (or their nominees) at the "Cities 4 Europe" event and agreed to co-host the Belfast tourism promotional event in Brussels in January at a cost not to exceed £3,000.

Markets Unit Update

Proposal for a Sunday Market at St. George's

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th September, it had agreed that officers should further investigate financing options for the operation of the Sunday Market at St. George's and report back to a future meeting.

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that it had been ascertained that funding might be available from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board under its Tourism Innovation Fund for 2010-2011, which was a competitive process where funding was requested but not guaranteed. She reminded the Members that the cost of operating a Sunday Market would be approximately £1,550 per week as it would have to be covered by staff on overtime payments. However, discussions with the staff at the Market had ascertained that only two of them would be willing to work on a Sunday, which would result in long-term operational issues. She informed the Committee further that the National Market Traders' Federation had been requested to ascertain how many traders would definitely be interested in the Sunday Market so that accurate costings could be calculated. To date, no written list of traders had been received, although there had been 70 verbal indications of interest.

The Committee noted the information received and agreed that the officers investigate further the costs which would be involved in staffing the proposed Sunday Market, confirm the number of interested traders and report back to a future meeting.

Request for a Privately-Operated Sunday Market

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from a local businessman who wished to operate a traditional style market and a mini car boot sale on Sundays on the site of the former Balmoral Fruit Market on Boucher Road. However, given the ongoing discussions within the Council regarding the possibility of a Sunday Market operating in St. George's, he had indicated that he would not, at present, pursue this proposal until the Council had reached a decision in that regard.

Noted.

Smithfield Market Lettings

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd September, 1999, it had granted authority for the Director, in consultation with the Chairman, to approve the terms of future lettings at Smithfield Market, subject to those terms being reported retrospectively to the Committee. The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that Unit 20 had been let to Ms. S. Gorman, 21 Walnut Road, Larne, at a cost of £190 per month for the purposes of operating a travel agency.

Noted.

Request for a Rent-Free Period

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that Mr. Adam Fullerton-Healey, who operated a pharmacy in Unit 6 at St. George's Market, had requested rent-free period for one quarter of the year. She pointed out that this person had benefited from a previous rent reduction which had been applied to all the units at St. George's due to the difficulty in letting the units following the refurbishment of the building. She pointed out further that a considerable number of new office developments in the vicinity of St. George's were now occupied and, if the request were to be acceded to, it would be likely that other tenants of Council property would seek a similar reduction and, since the Council received approximately £5.5 million in rental income per annum, this would have a significant impact on the Council's budget. The person in question had also suggested that the Council should offer all tenants a one-month free period at the end of five years' tenancy.

The Head of Economic Initiatives recommended that the Committee make no changes to the rental charge and that no rent-free period be granted.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Royal Exchange Scheme

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, on two recent occasions, it had requested that a deputation from the Committee meet with the Minister for Social Development to discuss the Royal Exchange scheme. She advised the Committee that the Minister had acceded to this request and that the meeting would be held on 13th January.

Noted.

Ulster Hall

The Head of City Events and Venues referred to recent press articles regarding the damp problem in some of the walls within the Ulster Hall and informed the Members that, following recent investigation works by the Consarc Design Group, it had been ascertained that those walls which had been suffering from dampness were drying out and that, following the refurbishment works, no new water was getting into the building.

Noted.

Chairman