

Development Committee

Wednesday, 13th January, 2010

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Humphrey (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery); and
Councillors M. Browne, Campbell, Convery, Ekin,
N. Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Kyle, C. Maskey, McCausland,
Mac Giolla Mhín, Mhic Giolla Mhín, Mullaghan,
O'Reilly, Rodgers, Rodway and Stoker.
- In attendance: Ms. 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;
Mr. S. McCrory, Principal Committee Administrator; and
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Apology

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 5th January. It was reported further that, during discussion of the minutes, the Council had agreed that the Chief Executive of the Lyric Theatre be advised that the Committee would wish to raise with him during a presentation which he would be making to a future meeting the refusal of the Board of the Theatre to agree to the Council's request that it be represented on the Board and that the Council found this position entirely unacceptable given the level of financial support which it had provided to the Lyric Theatre.

Revenue Estimates 2010/2011

(Mrs. J. Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which had been prepared by the Director of Finance and Resources in respect of the estimates of revenue expenditure for the year 2010/2011. A copy of that section of the report, in so far as it applies specifically to the Development Committee, is set out hereunder:

“A spending limit of £22,743,507 is recommended for the Development Committee, which represents an increase of £269,576 or 1.20% over last year. The main items of expenditure of the Department are outlined at Appendix 1.

Community Services continues to work with community groups, organisations and citizens to build community capacity and to offer front line services and advice to the community sector. Continued alignment of budgets to actual costs incurred and in service efficiencies have meant that the budget for 2010/2011 has been held mainly at the 2009/2010 level.

During the year 2010/11 both the Waterfront and Ulster Halls will continue to provide world-class entertainment and conference facilities that will help to promote the cultural and economic regeneration of Belfast and so contribute to the economic benefit of not only the City but the region as a whole. Operationally, with the unit now operating under a joint remit, together with the City Events Unit, the section is examining ways to create operating efficiencies during 2010/11 in the areas of marketing, technical support services, provision of security and repairs and maintenance. With the initiation of an Education and Cultural Heritage Outreach programme the Ulster Hall will seek to maximise the heritage potential of the building, while also contributing to the 'Sunday in Belfast' product and helping to deliver the other cultural tourism aspirations of the Council.

The City Events budget reflects transfers to Tourism, Culture and Arts, reductions in budget regarding Tall Ships (£200k) and Nomadic (£50k) which are not requirements in 2010/2011 and an increase of £155k regarding the European Pipe Band Championships which will be held in July 2010.

The Tourism, Culture and Arts budget reflects priorities identified through the draft Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework which has been developed in partnership with the NI Tourist Board and through the Integrated Cultural Strategy, which has been developed in partnership with the Arts Council NI. The budgeted increase reflects the transfer of responsibilities from the Events Team to the newly merged Tourism, Culture and Arts Team and includes budgetary provision for the City Carnival and Nomadic.

In order to ensure that the Council maintains the capacity to engage in local regeneration activity through the Renewing the Routes Programme and completes the implementation of ongoing initiatives, it is proposed to increase the budget for Arterial Routes by £329k. The continuation of the current programme on a temporary basis through 2010 /2011 will enable the Council to continue to deliver a valued and successful programme pending the resolution of the detailed statutory transfer of regeneration functions under RPA in 2011/2012. The inclusion of this budget is, of course, dependent on approval of a separate report which will follow on this Committee agenda.

The Strategic Neighbourhood Action Programme (SNAP) was created to develop the necessary tools and procedures to adopt an integrated approach to Local Area Working. The alignment of budget to planned activity in 2010/2011 which includes delivery of the My Neighbourhood Engagement Programme, on-going development of the local intelligence system (citystats information portal), development of area-based programmes and the implementation of the Council's commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal across the City has ensured a reduction of £74k in the prior year budget.

Although additional costs of £178,760 in respect of increased rates and superannuation will have to be borne by the Department, through the Council's mini budget review and the corporate efficiency programme, the Department will be able to deliver overall some £143,745 of savings.

Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and agree the cash limit for the Development Committee for 2010/11 of £22,743,507 and the proposed allocation of the resources therein.

APPENDIX 1

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MAIN ITEMS OF ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2010/11

	<u>Net Expenditure</u> <u>2010/11</u> £
<u>Community Services</u>	6,443,240
<u>City Events and Venues</u>	5,148,310
Waterfront/Ulster Halls	3,439,300
City Events	1,709,010
<u>Economic Initiatives Section</u>	6,901,940
Tourism, Culture and Arts	4,240,730
Economic Development	1,200,170
Planning and Transport	897,780
North Foreshore	336,800
Planning and Development	226,460
<u>Directorate</u>	4,250,017
Development Directorate	2,036,057
City Development	905,000
Policy & Research	595,130
SNAP	421,010
European Unit	292,820
<u>TOTAL</u>	22,743,507"

The Director of Finance and Resources outlined the factors which had been taken into consideration in the preparation of the estimates and highlighted the costs which had contributed to a Departmental increase of 1.20% from the previous year. She informed the Members that on 8th January the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed that the cash limit for the Development Committee should be £22,743, 507 and then answered questions which were put to her by the Members.

During discussion, a Member suggested that in future years it would be beneficial for comparative purposes for the Committee to be provided with figures detailing the budgets which had previously been agreed for the current year as well as those proposed for the incoming year.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed unanimously that its cash limit for the 2010/2011 financial year be £22,743, 507 and approved the allocation of resources as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Presentation by the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

At the November Development Committee Members agreed to receive a presentation from the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau on its draft Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan and to consider the Bureau's application for funding. A copy of the draft Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan 2010-2013 can be found on Modern.gov.

Established in 1999, BVCB is the tourism marketing and visitor servicing organisation for the Belfast City Region, with responsibility for:

- Attracting tourism visitors, bed nights and revenue to the Belfast region;**
- Fulfilling an essential tourism gateway role for the rest of Northern Ireland;**
- Providing a visitor servicing function, through the operation of the Belfast Welcome Centre, Belfast International Airport TIC and George Best Belfast City Airport TIC.**

BVCB is a public/private sector partnership funded by Belfast City Council, Northern Ireland Tourist Board as well as its 490 private sector members.

Tourism in Belfast continues to be a success with BVCB contributing significantly, as highlighted below;

- 7.1 million visitors came to the City in 2008, an increase of 3% on the previous year contributing £437 million to the local economy and helping to support nearly 25,000 full time equivalent jobs.
- While 2009 figures are not yet published, all indications are that the results will remain positive, boosted by 800,000 visitors to the highly successful Tall Ships event and the surge in city breaks and shopping trips from ROI and Europe.
- In 2009, Belfast secured 36 cruise ships, equating to over 57,000 passengers and crew visiting and £15 million to the Belfast and Northern Ireland economy.
- In 2008, BVCB secured 34 conference wins equating to over 10,000 delegates and expected to generate £11.5 million for the local economy (it is estimated that Belfast hosted 63 conferences, generating 34,000 bed nights and £13 million for the economy).
- In 2008 annual hotel occupancy in Belfast was 70% against a Northern Ireland average of 63%.
- Belfast was the only UK/Ireland city featured in Frommer's top 12 Guide, voted as the 3rd most favourite UK City/Short break destination in the 2009 Guardian/Observer Travel Awards, the UK City of the Future in the FDI Magazine, was noted in the Lonely Planet as one of the top ten cities on the rise and Best Conference Destination in the Business Britain Magazine.
- During 2008/09 the three Belfast TICs handles a total of 540,455 enquiries, equating to 57% of all enquiries handled by the Northern Ireland TIC network. Ticket sales at the BWC for tours and events were up 72%.
- Over 300 international press visits were hosted and generated over £4million advert equivalent and almost 600 trade agents were welcomed to the City.

Key Issues

Members are aware that the Council and NITB have been working on an Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast, agreeing in December 2009 to hold a special meeting to be updated on the final draft. BVCB has been part of this process and their three year Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan complements and builds on this work.

The Council's Tourism Strategy overall projections are to increase:

- the number of overnight visitors by 23% to 2,016,696 by 2011;
- total visitors by 12% to 8,178,000 by 2011;
- revenue from overnight visitors by 12% to £314 million by 2011; and
- increase in visitor spend of 11% to £470million by 2011.

BVCB has set a number of key performance indicators which form part of their 2010/2011 operating plan as follows.

<u>2010/2011 Targets</u>	
<p><u>Leisure Tourism</u> Attract cruise ships to Belfast</p> <p>Implement above the line campaigns</p>	<p>39 cruise ships 60,000 passengers and crew £15 million</p> <p>45,000 additional PHV from carrier campaigns generating £8.4million spend</p> <p>50,000 additional ROI city breaks from partner campaigns generating £10.7million spend</p>
<p><u>Business Tourism</u> Maintain the volume and value of conferences secured by BVCB</p>	<p>Win conferences attracting 17,000 delegates £9.9 million spend</p>
<p><u>Communications</u> Implement the communications plans to deliver PR in main NI, ROI, and GB markets</p>	<p>120 trips with 300 press £3.5 million advert equivalent 120 m WOTS</p>
<p><u>Visitor Servicing</u> Maintain current levels of enquiries and throughput at the three TICs</p>	<p>552,841 enquiries 415,606 throughput £27 million</p>

Whilst the recession remains a challenge for tourism, BVCB in response will;

- concentrate on closer to home markets and short breaks;
- promote the benefit of the exchange rates by targeting Euro markets;

- maintain Belfast's share of international conference market; and
- maintain Belfast's profile and success as an emerging cruise destination.

Members will be aware that the Bureau undertakes additional activity including the promotion of the Council's Events Programme through a marketing campaign aimed at the domestic market. Furthermore the 'Whatabout' guide is produced to indicate up to date and accurate information on the events, entertainment and what's on programme for the City.

Financial support is being requested from the Development Committee to support the marketing and visitor servicing activities of the Bureau in 2010/2011:

Marketing and Communications	£1,141,300
Belfast Welcome Centre	£479,465
Airport TIC's	£50,000
Domestic marketing and 'Whatabout' guide	£208,060
TOTAL	£1,878,825

The achievement of the Bureau's objectives will be monitored by the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit through the Belfast Tourism Monitor and the establishment of appropriate performance measurements/indicators measured through regular reporting to be agreed with BVCB's Chief Executive.

Resource Implications

BVCB is seeking £1,865,465 for 2010/2011 which is the same level as 2009/2010 with no % increase.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve:

- BVCB's Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan and
- BCC's contribution at the same level as 2009/2010, £1,865,465.

Decision Tracking

BVCB will produce quarterly reports against performance measures and indicators.

Timeframe: 30th June 2010, 30th September 2010,
31st December 2010, 31st March 2011.

Reporting Officer: Kerrie Sweeney

Key to Abbreviations

BVCB	– Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
PHV	– Pure Holiday Visitors
WOTS	– Weighted Opportunity To See
TICs	– Tourist Information Centres
BWC	– Belfast Welcome Centre
BIA TIC	– Belfast International Airport Tourist Information Centre
GBBCA TIC	– George Best Belfast City Airport Tourist Information Centre
NITB	– Northern Ireland Tourist Board”

The Committee was advised that a deputation from the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau was in attendance to address the Committee regarding its draft Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan for the period 2010-2013. Accordingly, Messrs. Gerry Lennon, Chief Executive, Ciaran Rogan, Chairman, and John Moore and Mark Walker, Board Members, were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Rogan thanked the Committee for receiving the deputation and pointed out that the make up of the deputation demonstrated the involvement of both the public and private sectors in the Bureau, in that he was employed by Translink, Mr. Moore was President of the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce and a shop owner, whilst Mr. Walker represented the Hilton Hotel.

With the assistance of visual aids, Mr. Lennon provided information to the Committee regarding the numbers of visitors to Belfast during 2008 and 2009, the challenges which the Bureau was facing and its plans for the forthcoming three year period. He pointed out that, with 7.1 million visitors and 1.6 million overnight visitors in 2008 who had generated £437 million of revenue, Belfast was the economic driver for Northern Ireland. He informed the Members that there had been considerable growth in both out-of-state day and overnight trips between 2007 and 2008. Most of the increase could be attributed to the favourable exchange rate between the Euro and Sterling, which had meant that Belfast's tourism figures were considerably better than other cities in the United Kingdom. He pointed out further that the three Tourist Information Centres which operated in the City handled 58% of all tourism enquiries in Northern Ireland which proved that Belfast acted as the gateway for tourists to the whole of the Province. Mr. Lennon advised the Committee of the targets which the Bureau had set itself for 2011 and how it planned to achieve them.

Mr. Lennon concluded his presentation by requesting that the Council provide the sum of £1,878,825 to the Bureau in the forthcoming financial year.

The deputation then retired from the meeting.

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed concern that the presentation from the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau had been dealt with at a monthly meeting for which there was already a long agenda and suggested that, in future years, this important issue which involved a considerable financial investment from the Council be considered at a special meeting.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to provide the sum of £1,865,465 to the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau during the 2010/2011 financial year and approved the contents of its Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan for the period 2010-2013.

Date of March Meeting

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that, due to the travel arrangements for those Members and officers who would be participating in the Civic Visit to Nashville and the South by Southwest event in Austin in March, it would be necessary for the March meeting of the Committee to be moved from its scheduled date of Wednesday the 10th.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the meeting be rescheduled for Tuesday, 9th March commencing at 4.30 p.m.

Request to Address the Committee on the Play Review

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from a representative of parents whose children attended the after schools club in Olympia Leisure Centre requesting permission to address the Committee on their concerns in relation to the affect which the Council's Review of Play Centres would have on the club.

The Committee agreed that Council officers, together with the Chairman (or his nominee), meet with the parents prior to the February meeting of the Committee to ascertain if their concerns could be addressed and, if necessary, receive at its next monthly meeting a deputation representing the parents.

Relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

Members agreed at the September 2009 Committee meeting that BCC officers continue to work with Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) in the search for new premises for the Belfast Welcome Centre (BWC).

The BWC has been located on the first floor at 47 Donegall Place since April 2001. In 2009/2010 the annual expenditure for the operation of the Belfast Welcome Centre is £1.7 million; funding for the operation comes from net generated income/trading surplus (35%); BCC (50%); and NITB (15%).

The BWC's primary role is to provide visitor information and orientation as well as acting as a gateway to the Greater Belfast area and rest of Northern Ireland. The Centre deals with over 384,000 enquiries per annum and is staffed by 1 manager, 4 supervisors, 5 full time travel advisors and a range of support and temporary staff. The BWC operates Tourist Information Centres at the George Best Belfast City and Belfast International Airports. The BWC has also successfully run the Crumlin Road Goal tours for the last 2 years as well as the call centre for key events including the Tall Ships in 2009. It will also pilot a tourist information point at the City Hall during the peak visitor period in 2010. It is estimated that a visit to a Tourist Information Centre generates some £65 of spending in the region; using this measure, the BWC Business Plan indicates that the Centre will generate an additional £20 million spend to the region in 2009/2010.

The rationale for reviewing the location of the Belfast Welcome Centre is that the current lease expires in July 2010, the economic climate offers an opportunity to negotiate on prime sites that may not have been as affordable in the past and the preference was always to source a ground floor central location. It is also worth noting that the Belfast Welcome Centre provides one of the most physical opportunities to present the new Belfast Brand to visitors and citizens and a relocation of the Centre would provide an opportunity to capture the brand in the design, layout and services.

Within a strategic context, the vision for tourist information/service provision in Belfast is to continue and strengthen the role of the Belfast Welcome Centre at a central City location, however better connect the BWC to a network of Tourist Information Centres/ points across the City, spreading the impact/benefits of tourism and providing visitors with more experiences. To date there are already information points in South Belfast (Queen's), West Belfast (Cultúrlann) and the Shankill (Spectrum Centre). Further plans are to develop provision in East Belfast at the Titanic Signature Project as well as the possibility of linking to the Connswater Community Greenway project. Within North Belfast, there will be opportunities linked to the development of the Crumlin Road Gaol.

BVCB and BCC appointed Tourism Transport Consult (TTC) in association with Allan Balnaves to assess the rationale for relocating the Belfast Welcome Centre. In summary their report considers three options in detail; Northern Bank 8–10 Donegall Square North, Belfast Central Library and remaining at the current location. The report recommends that the most suitable option is the Northern Bank 8–10 Donegall Square North, however, more detailed information is required on the fit out costs and rental agreement before a final decision can be made.

Key Issues

In summary the main findings of the attached report are as follows:

Case Study Analysis

When compared with nine cities across the UK and Europe, the BWC outperforms almost every comparator Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in its commercial approach and performance. Dublin receives greater numbers and retail spend whilst Birmingham has outstanding ticket sales. The BWC is the only TIC on an upper floor leading to issues in achieving visibility and shop window frontage. Most other TICs are located near train stations, although this does not appear to be a major concern in Belfast.

Customer Survey

During May–June 2009, a survey of 101 customers was carried out to seek their views as they left the BWC. Whilst in general there were high levels of satisfaction with the services provided and 60% had no problem finding the BWC, 11–18% suggested that visibility and location were flaws.

City Development Review

The report examines the new developments that have taken place in the City, such as Victoria Square and the proposed Royal Exchange. The conclusions reached is that the Donegall Square/Donegall Place area will remain a key spot reaching visitors and achieving high footfall in the foreseeable future. The review also looked at probable nodes on the Rapid Transit System. Whilst subject to consultation, it is likely that the loop from Titanic Quarter to the City Centre will pass in front of the City Hall and provide a stop at or near the Donegall Square location.

Site Appraisals

The criteria identified for the appraisal of any possible locations were:

- Space availability – BWC requires 11,500sqft
- Visibility and Distinctiveness
- Accessibility
- Contribution to Belfast and Northern Ireland Brands
- Potential to increase revenue and footfall
- Contribution to Gateway Role and economic benefits
- Rental costs
- Fitting out costs

Initially five locations were identified based on the ability to attract high footfall; the current premises; 11-15 Donegall Place; 51 - 53 Donegall Place; 62 Donegall Place and to these were added Belfast Central Library and Belfast Metropolitan College. During the course of the appraisal, the sites 11-15, 51-53 and 62 Donegall Place became unavailable. Belfast Metropolitan College will be put on sale on open market prior to its move to Titanic Quarter in August 2011 and therefore also not available.

Conclusion

The appraisal examined the three final sites – existing location, Northern Bank 8-10 Donegall Square North and Belfast Central Library.

The Belfast Central Library

Whilst an attractive building in an area with future tourism potential, it would not attract the same levels of footfall as the other two sites and this therefore has an impact on the revenue generated and gateway role. Fewer visitors mean fewer sales and fewer opportunities to provide information on other areas. It is estimated that a move to Belfast Central Library could reduce the economic impact of the BWC to under £7 million (currently £20 million) because of the drastic fall in numbers and sales.

Current Premises

The report concludes that the current premises has issues around visibility and due to size/space constraints, it has more or less reached its potential from this location.

Northern Bank

The recommendation is that the Northern Bank site on Donegall Square North provides the optimum available location for the Belfast Welcome Centre. It ensures;

- A high profile central location exhibiting characteristics of the brand
- An accessible ground floor location
- High footfall of visitors and locals
- Close proximity to City Hall
- Rapid Transit System passing nearby and well connected to other transport hubs
- Good visibility for signage
- Good window display capability
- Box office maximisation of use
- Space for sub letting e.g. café
- Space for promotions
- Space to accommodate both BWC and BVCB administration and marketing.

The costs associated with the Northern Bank building are higher than remaining in the current location.

In order to make an informed decision on the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre to the Northern Bank 8-10 Donegall Square North, more detailed plans and costings must be produced. This will include fit out plans for a new information centre as well as negotiation with the landlord on the rent/lease agreement.

BVCB and BCC officers have discussed this and agreed that this could be progressed fairly quickly through BCC's Projects and Property team.

Resource Implications

If the BWC is relocated to Northern Bank 8 – 10 Donegall Square North, there will be a one off capital investment required to fit out the new premises. Subject to timescales, NITB may provide some funding towards this under its Tourism Development Scheme Fund, however it is currently closed until April 2011. There may also be an increase in rent, subject to income projections based on increased footfall.

In the short term, BVCB has agreed to cover any associated costs in producing detailed plans for the Northern Bank building.

Recommendations

It is recommended that further investigations are undertaken on the preferred option of the former Northern Bank premises, Donegall Square North as proposed by the independent report.

- The Northern Bank option is further explored through the production of detailed and costed layout plans and
- Direct negotiation with the landlord is undertaken on the rent

Decision Tracking

A report on the full costs associated with the Northern Bank option to be prepared by May 2010.

Timeframe: May 2010 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key Abbreviations

- BWC – Belfast Welcome Centre
- BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
- NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board
- TTC – Tourism Transport Consult
- TIC – Tourist Information Centre"

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed the view that it was not necessary to centralise all investment in the Donegall Square area of the City centre and that the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre to the site of the Belfast Central Library would attract tourists to that part of the City.

In response, the Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that, since the Council was requesting the Belfast Welcome Centre to increase its income through ticket sales in order to reduce the amount of financial assistance which it received from the Council, it was vital that the location of the Centre be in an area which currently benefits from the highest level of footfall and that all the viable options has been examined in the Consultant's report.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that site visits to the former Northern Bank building in Donegall Square North and the Central Library be undertaken in order to enable the Members to gain more knowledge of the buildings concerned and that the option to relocate the Belfast Welcome Centre to the former Northern Bank building be further explored through the production of detailed and costed layout plans.

Community Services Unit – Structural Review

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

On 13th June, 2007 the Development Committee considered and gave approval for the change management process for the Development Department, which included support from Business Improvement (BIS) for departmental restructuring activities. Structural reviews were approved in areas of particular need which included Community Services. The main aim of this restructuring process was to recommend a fit for purpose structure for Community Services in order to deliver the Community Support Plan 08-10 and Departmental and Corporate Objectives.

In addition, the proposed structure needs to be flexible enough to enable the Community Services Unit to respond to the implications of the Review of Public Administration and ensure integration with local area working.

On 7th October, 2008 the Development Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations of the structural reviews as the management side position in order to proceed under the Council's agreed policies and processes to move to implementation.

The following report is an update following consultation for notation and approval by the Committee.

Key Issues

With effect from the 18 December 2009 all consultations with staff and trade unions have been completed and following these full and frank discussions the revised management side position was agreed.

Predominantly this results in management accepting the position that the trade unions and staff side have tabled with regards to retaining generic posts at the levels of Community Services Unit Managers and Community Development Officers.

Management side feel that they will be able to accommodate this change and meet the needs of the Service going forward while still affording the level of flexibility required operationally to meet the changing needs of the Unit's business plans.

This new position allows for a minor change to the structure presented to Committee on 7 October 2008 (Appendix 1), in relation to representing the generic nature of these jobs and their associated reporting lines and responsibilities. Management have also agreed to the renaming of a number of posts as part of the consultation feedback and are content that these changes reflect the current key duties and responsibilities. Changes to job descriptions are being currently being carried out following the final consultation session on 18 December 2009. Please see Appendix 2 for a copy of the updated Community Service structure.

As can be seen from the attached organisational chart, in addition to the above minor changes, a new post of Children and Young People Manager was created under delegated authority. This was outside the scope of the original review but reflected the importance placed by the Council on such issues as preparing for RPA in relation to policy, planning and service provision for Children & Young People, reacting to the creation of the Education & Skills Authority and the proposed devolution by OFMDFM of responsibilities in relation to Play.

With the creation of this post it made business and operational sense to move the play strand in its entirety under the remit of this post. The move reflects the importance of this professional discipline for the Community Services unit and the council ratification of the Play Review. A knock-on effect of this change (also requested by the trade unions), is that the Cleaners in the play centres now report to the play team and not the Community Development Officers in facilities, better reflecting their actual day-to-day responsibilities.

The implementation of the new structure is imminent; both operationally and with regards to staff movement through categorisation and other agreed Council procedures.

There are no financial implications associated with any of these changes within the scope of the original review.

Resource Implications

Human Resources

Standard Council procedures will apply in relation to the implementation and categorisation process.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Agree the adoption of the revised organisation structure for Community Services

Decision Tracking

Further to ratification of the recommendation the revised organisation structure will be implemented.

Timeline: 30th June, 2010

Reporting Officer: Tim Husbands/Catherine Taggart

Key to Abbreviations

BIS – Business Improvement Section

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Original management side structure.

Appendix 2 - Proposed revised structure.

**Development Committee,
Wednesday, 13th January, 2010**

**D
1269**

D
1270

Development Committee,
Wednesday, 13th January, 2010

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Summer Play Schemes 2010

The Head of City Events and Venues reminded the Committee that the Council supported a range of community-based Summer Play Schemes which offered, as part of the Council's commitment to improving services to children and young people throughout the City, a wide-range of social, recreational and educational activities for young persons between the ages of five and fourteen. He explained that Summer Schemes in directly-managed Community and Play Centres were funded through the Revenue Budget. In addition, grant-aid assistance was made available to those organisations in the voluntary community sector which met the relevant criteria. He informed the Members that the Policy and the associated criteria had been agreed by the former Community and Leisure Services Sub-Committee.

The Head of City Events and Venues stated that an amount of £183,000 had been included within the Revenue Estimates in respect of grant-aid which would be payable to community groups which organised summer play schemes. Grants in this regard would be based on previously agreed criteria and would be at set amounts of £1,000, £1,800 or £3,000.

After discussion, the Committee noted that a range of Summer Play Schemes would operate in directly-managed Community and Play Centres and granted authority for grants not exceeding the amount set out above to be awarded to qualifying community groups on the understanding that the total amount of funding available in this regard would not exceed £183,000.

Advice Services – Debt Relief Volunteer Training Proposal

The Head of City Events and Venues informed the Committee that, due to the economic downturn, the advice sector was experiencing difficulties in responding to an increased demand in the numbers of people accessing their services, particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to debt and money advice. He reported that the Belfast advice consortia had indicated that their capacity to address this increased demand was restricted due to the limited number of trained volunteers available to deal with these inquiries. The Council had received a request from the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide financial support to it for a scheme to increase the capacity of the Belfast advice consortia by providing a debt training programme for an additional thirty volunteers throughout the City at a cost of approximately of £22,000.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 9th December, 2009 it had deferred consideration of the request to enable him to ascertain from the Bureau whether the consortia had been involved proactively in the development of the scheme.

The Head of City Events and Venues informed the Committee that the Director of the Citizens Advice Bureau had confirmed that all of the groups involved in the consortia had been informed of the proposal and had been involved in discussions regarding the provision of volunteers to undertake the training in order to ensure that participants were selected from both independent advice organisations and from the Bureau. In addition, each of the lead organisations in the Belfast consortia had confirmed to Council staff their involvement in and support for the scheme.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to provide financial support up to a maximum of £20,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau in connection with its scheme to provide training for an additional thirty advice services volunteers from across the five Belfast advice consortia.

Sister City Nashville

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 16th September, 2009, it had agreed that a Civic Visit to Nashville be held in March. She reported that the Belfast Nashville Advisory Group, which included representatives from the leisure and cultural sectors, historical groups, genealogy associations and community development, media and educational organisations, had indicated that it believed, given the significance and high profile nature of the visit and the Council's relationship with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, that it would be appropriate for the Council to invite the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure to join the delegation to Nashville. Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee extend an invitation to the Minister to participate in the civic itinerary aspects of the visit to Nashville in March, on the understanding that this would be at no cost to the Council.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Renewing Communities Local Concept Masterplans

The Committee agreed to defer until its next monthly meeting consideration of a report regarding the Council's response to the Physical Regeneration Concept Masterplans within Belfast which was required to be submitted to the Department for Social Development not later than 17th February.

Renewing the Routes Review

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Background Information

The report provides a summary of the finding from the external review of the current Renewing the Routes activity. On the basis of previous Committee approval dated 12th August, 2009 external consultants (Blueprint Development Consultancy Ltd) were appointed to assess the potential for securing the capacity of the Council to carry out targeted local regeneration activity beyond the current Renewing the Routes activity scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2010.

The Renewing the Routes work has, with Committee approval, continued to evolve in response to challenges identified and funding secured on the basis of the original detail scoping and prioritisation. In response to the pilot objectives the type of activity carried out has been varied, encompassing direct implementation, plan development, consultation and partnership development. It was proposed that the review of the Renewing the Routes consider the future capacity for the Council both in terms of the revenue funding for staff resources and the dedicated capital resources available for local regeneration projects.

Key Issues

The Renewing the Routes Team is regarded as a specialist team which has developed considerable expertise, a notable commitment to its work and the ability to deliver at high level both in local regeneration planning and implementation. Over a relatively short period of time the Unit has raised the profile of the Council and the City and has delivered a range of tangible physical results across the City.

The Team is recognised as a valuable resource for the Council and the City. The contribution of the Team is evident both in terms of the direct delivery of projects and the development of partnership activity, including the sourcing of additional funding. The Team has continued to deliver on plan development, consultation, partnership development, project coordination and direct project implementation.

The changing economic environment and regeneration challenges will require the work of the Team to continue and perhaps expand. The transformation of local environments and the support of local regeneration initiatives will continue to dominate with perhaps a greater role to deliver ongoing coordination across functional areas within the Council, influenced by sustained engagement with key external stakeholders. The Review of Public Administration includes the transfer to local authorities of the responsibility and delivery of Regeneration responsibilities alongside the powers of Wellbeing and Community Planning. Belfast City Council has the opportunity now to build on and improve the current local regeneration resource to be ready to support these enhanced functions through the commitment to the continued delivery of focussed local regeneration activity.

There is a clear need to continue the types of local interventions to support the delivery of a number of Council thematic objectives in addition to the continued delivery of a platform for engagement with community and statutory bodies through effective partnerships. The activity also continues to uniquely demonstrate the Council's commitment to address local regeneration issues through projects developed with a range of key local stakeholders and economic sectors. An element of the activity would be directly related to the wider role for the Council in the regeneration of Belfast and the place shaping agenda, albeit at a distinct and recognisable local level within the different communities. However, this activity cannot be continued successfully without adequate resources and a longer term commitment.

The important and very visible local regeneration activity has been carried out with a limited temporary staff resource which flexibly adapted to the evolution of the project from the pilot activity funded by Brighter Belfast. It is acknowledged that the current ambitious IDF implementation programme has meant that the Team is considerably overstretched and has been unable to focus on the ongoing planning and developmental activity for future focussed activity. Equally, within the context of the pressures facing the Council over the coming period and the drive of internal reforms, it is increasingly important that the Team clearly articulates the value added in delivering the Council agenda and core objectives.

Finally in the context of the Review of Public Administration, the Council has a choice, either to commit to the continuation of a unique and successful local regeneration approach or withdraw to a position of being on the edge, isolated from the potential for direct delivery and the transformation of local environments. Active delivery requires a specialist Team, within the Department, to ensure that the Council has the capacity to develop and deliver action plans that offer the potential to transform local areas and embed the activity through coordinated action with engaged stakeholders. This locally focussed activity would support the Council's strategic leadership role at the City and Regional level.

Impact

Over the period since 2004, the Team has continued to develop its role and remit, internally and externally, working closely with the internal and external partners as well as the private sector.

In a relatively short period of time, the Team has moved from a pilot concept, promoted as part of Brighter Belfast to a fully functioning team, delivering a wide range of visible outputs on behalf of the Council.

As outlined in detail in the review document summary which is available on Modern.gov the Team has developed the capacity for delivery of a range of tangible improvements across the city. The review identified a range of positive aspects inherent in the work of the Team:

These include:

The evaluation has demonstrated that the key partners have bought into the concept and the model of delivering the Renewing the Routes activity.

This partnership has operated successfully at strategic and operational levels and has levered additional funds to the overall programme.

The consultation exercise identified the leadership role provided by the Council as vital to the success of the programme.

The Renewing the Routes programme can be seen to have been and continues to complement the relevant regional and city development strategies and policy drivers, including the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The programme clearly complements the work of the relevant Government Departments and their agencies, in particular the Belfast Regeneration Office and NIHE, reflecting the very positive working relationship evident in the planning and delivery of the programme.

The consultation process clearly highlighted the very positive response to the programme from partners and beneficiaries.

The interviews highlighted the local impact, the planning and implementation, the very positive the role of the Council and the close partnership working on the ground.

The programme was perceived to have been effective, efficiently executed and a 'template' for other such initiatives.

Overall Assessment

In relation to the overall assessment, the Consultants used the evaluation criteria of effectiveness, economy and efficiency to come to conclusions in relation to value for money as outlined in the appended executive summary.

This external assessment of the overall programme demonstrated that the Renewing the Routes programme has made a significant impact on commercial properties, local communities and other property owners along the routes, with the majority taking part in the programme and benefiting from commercial or environments improvements.

The Renewing the Routes programme was recognised as being a catalyst in stimulating activity and investment from partner agencies. The role of Belfast City Council's local regeneration activity in providing leadership was identified as vital in stimulating this co-operation and investment. The Renewing the Routes operating model was considered to be working well, the research and consultation undertaken as part of this review demonstrated the effectiveness and efficiency of this model. Furthermore the partnership with external agencies such as NIHE, DRD Roads Service and DSD was considered to have worked well and have produced tangible results.

This in-house team was identified as an asset for the Council that should be sustained in further phases of Renewing the Routes in recognition of the demonstrated skill and expertise in developing, planning, and implementing a broad range of local regeneration projects.

Finally in terms of the results and impact of the work, it is useful to highlight the six national and local awards gained by the Unit reflecting the Council's contribution and the efforts being made to deliver an effective and recognisable local regeneration function.

The review report also highlights a significant level of achievements in relation to the leverage of additional funding which the Team has secured – in total over £4.5m of capital representing a ratio of 4:1 in terms of the original £1.1m Council investment.

Moving Forward

The challenges for local regeneration will not diminish over the next number of years. The challenges facing communities across the City necessitates the Council refocusing efforts in relation to regeneration at all levels across the City. To do this effectively means maintaining the existing capacity and continuing to develop the unique resource that has already achieved so that the Council can identify and address the challenges that remain.

This review has indicated the level of significant achievements over the past five years and also the need now to put in place a commitment and framework for future action. In relation to this the issues previously identified now need to be resolved. Namely:

- the need to identify and consolidate an appropriate staff team and move from the temporary fixed term posts to a more permanent commitment; and
- the need to identify core funding for local implementation project activity that could support bids for external resources to supplement activity.

In the Executive Summary of the review the Consultants identify five recommendations in relation to the potential for the continuation of the programme and modification or potential areas of future activity that may need to be addressed:

1. we would recommend that Belfast City Council continues with the operational model developed for the Renewing the Routes programme, including the current partnership arrangements and the current delivery mechanisms;

2. the aims and objectives of the Renewing the Routes programme need to be refined to better reflect the outcomes of the programme and to ensure that they are achievable and measurable;
3. as a part of the planning for the next phase of the Renewing the Routes programme there will be a need to measure the impact of the programme, by establishing baselines at the outset of the programme and measuring changes from these baselines as a direct result of the inputs and resources expended on the projects;
4. the broader partnership team of the Renewing the Routes programme should be convened at the concept stage for each of the routes and maintained for the duration of the activity; and
5. the Renewing the Routes programme staff team should work with Belfast City Council's Corporate Communications team to develop a communications strategy which will work alongside the programme to publicise the work both at local community and on a wider level throughout Northern Ireland.

The Department has been able to identify revenue and capital resources from the re-alignment and amalgamation of existing budgets which could potentially support the retention of a local regeneration team. It should be noted that the potential provision would provide a more modest ongoing project implementation budget when compared to the current levels of IDF expenditure. Whilst a significant reduction in terms of available implementation budget the provision of core funding would be more meaningful on the basis of the longer term Council commitment to the activity and cumulative impact as works continued.

This potential for resource provision has been identified within the ongoing estimates process and would be subject to final decisions in relation to the overall Council budgets. In essence the £329,000 implementation project budget identified could be equated to the original level of annual commitment provided as the original catalyst under the Brighter Belfast initiative.

Resource Implications

The additional financial implications arising from the proposed establishment of the Renewing the Routes Team has been included in the Departmental estimates through the re-alignment and amalgamation of existing budgets. The final resource cost for the

staff element will be subject to assessment by the Business Improvement Service. An allocation of £120,000 in addition to the existing Council staff commitment for the Officer posts and £329,000 for project delivery has been identified, subject to budget estimates.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- endorse the recommendation of the external consultants in respect of the operational model developed for the Renewing the Routes programme, including the current partnership arrangements and the current delivery mechanisms;
- note the ongoing work within the Department to provide base resources to continue the activity subject to budget estimates; and
- note the intention for the detailed assessment by Business Improvement Service in respect of the staffing arrangements to be brought back to Committee.

Decision Tracking

Following Committee approval:

The recommendations in respect of the proposed review of existing renewing the routes activity by Business Improvement Service to be brought back to Committee for consideration.

Timeframe: February 2010 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay.

Key to Abbreviations

IDF Integrated Development Fund”

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed the view that the Renewing the Routes Team needed to involve Councillors at an earlier stage in the development of the programme rather than first consulting Area Partnerships and other organisations in local areas. The Committee was reminded that a similar comment had been made at its meeting on 12th August, 2009. Other Members stated that they were satisfied with the level of engagement which Council staff had had with them when Renewing the Routes work was being implemented in their areas.

In response, the Head of Economic Initiatives indicated that the staff in the Renewing the Routes Team endeavoured to work with all Councillors when work was being planned on arterial routes and assured the Committee that Councillors would be involved at an early stage in the next phase of Renewing the Routes work.

Following further discussion, the Committee:

- (i) endorsed the recommendation of the external consultants that the operational model developed for the Renewing the Routes Programme, including the current partnership arrangements and delivery mechanisms be contained within the next phase;
- (ii) noted the work which was ongoing within the Development Department to provide resources to enable the Renewing the Routes activity to continue within the amount laid down in the Revenue Estimates; and
- (iii) noted that the Business Improvement Service would be undertaking a detailed assessment in respect of the staffing arrangements for the Renewing the Routes Team and that a report thereon would be submitted to a future meeting.

Attendance at MIPIM 2010

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the Council had participated in MIPIM, which was Europe's largest property and development event, for the previous 10 years. She pointed out that a partnership approach had always been central to Belfast's attendance at the event and that, generally, every one pound which the Council invested in the Conference levered almost four pounds from other public and private sector partners. Despite the difficulties in the construction and property development market, seven private sector companies, as well as a number of public sector agencies, had been involved with the Council in last year's event. All of these partners had indicated that they wished to take part in MIPIM 2010 which would be held in Cannes.

She advised the Members that, as part of the feedback sessions from the 2009 event, many of the private sector partners had suggested that, since they were working across Northern Ireland and beyond, a collaborative approach would allow them to better promote more of their schemes and develop further partnerships. In addition, Lisburn City Council had attended MIPIM for a number of years and Derry City Council, which had not participated in the past, had expressed an interest in exploring the opportunities presented by the event. Following discussions with senior officers from both Councils, it had been proposed that a collaborative approach to Northern Ireland's participation in the event be undertaken this year. This would involve the three City Councils as well as ILEX, the Urban Regeneration Company in Londonderry, other Government Departments and a range of interested private sector companies.

The Head of Economic Initiatives recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approve a maximum budget of £20,000 for the Council's contribution towards the overall costs of £70,000 to be incurred in the provision of the Northern Ireland stand for the MIPIM 2010 event;
- (ii) agree to participate in the 2010 event in a collaborative manner with other Councils and organisations; and

- (iii) authorise the attendance at the event of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with a maximum of three appropriate officers, at an estimated cost of £1,600 per person.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Markets Unit Update

Stallage and Hire Fees Increase

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Key Issues

1. Stallage and Hire Fees Increase

A) Friday and Saturday Markets:

The present fee of £12.00 per pitch i.e. one x 8ft x 4ft table plus £3.00 for an electricity supply, was agreed by the Development Committee on 22nd March, 2006 and subsequently ratified by Council. Previously, a fee of £10.00 per pitch had been charged after the refurbishment in 2000. The Development Committee also approved in March 2001 a Stall Discount Scheme for the hiring of multiple stalls and, in October 2004, a 25% incentive discount for those paying in advance.

The Markets Development Officer has consulted with representatives of the Belfast Branch of the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) and Saturday Traders Committee (STC) with regard to a rise in stall prices. The NMTF and STC recognise that no price increase has been applied since April 2006 and acknowledge that a rise in fees is due.

NMTF representatives have indicated to Council Officers that a rise from £12.00 to £13.00 per pitch (a rise of £1.00) would be acceptable to traders in both the Friday and Saturday Markets.

Currently electricity is charged at £3.00 per socket regardless of the number of appliances plugged in to the supply. It is recommended that a fairer system would be to keep the charge at £3.00 but to charge per appliance rather than per power supply. This will also enable the Market staff to better control and monitor electricity usage.

B) Multiple Stallage:

It is also recommended that discount rates for hiring multiple pitches remain as previously approved. Traders hiring 4 or more stalls are to continue to be granted the following discounts:

Stalls:	Discount:	Equivalent to:
4	£6.50	half stall
5	£13.00	one stall
6	£19.50	one and half stalls
7	£26.00	two stalls
8	£32.50	two and half
9+	£39.00	three stalls

The Friday Market is full and there are over 67 traders on a waiting list for a pitch. The Saturday Market has grown from 55 stalls, when launched in September 2004, to over 150 stalls today, however, incentives to commit to weekly trading are still required.

It is therefore recommended that the incentive of 25% discount for booking and pre-paying per quarter be continued.

C) Specialist Markets:

The Council currently promotes and operates 3 specialist markets throughout the year at St George's. These specialist markets, such as the Craft Fairs, incur additional promotion costs to the Council. This promotion comprises activities that would not normally fall within the remit of the Market, such as customised advertising, live entertainment, extra staffing and children's entertainment. Based on previous specialist market's costs, it is estimated that these events cost Belfast City Council approximately £45.00 per stall to operate. The current charge per stall at specialist event markets is £50.00.

It is recommended that stallage for these specialist markets is revised to £60.00 per pitch per day and £3.00 for each electrical appliance.

D) Event Hire Fees:

The event hire fees for St George's Market were last reviewed in April 2006 and it is recommended that they be increased by approximately 10% across the board.

Resource Implications

The proposed rise in stallage and hire costs would give additional income to the Council and help cover the Market's operational costs.

Recommendations

- Raise the price of a stall from £12.00 to £13.00 per market day and electricity to be charged per appliance
- Continue with the stall discount rates for hiring multiple pitches as outlined
- By way of incentive to trade every Saturday and for the next financial year to continue with the 25% incentive discount in return for booking and prepaying for a full quarter's Markets (13 weeks).
- To approve the fee of £60.00 per stall for the Craft Fairs and any other specialist niche markets organised in St George's Market by Belfast City Council
- To agree to increase the hire fees for events in St George's Market by 10%
- The Committee is further recommended to agree that the revised stall and hire fees apply from 1 April 2010 and to be reviewed again in 2 years time.

Decision Tracking:

Following approval Markets Management will introduce new rates from 1st April, 2010.

Time Frame: February 2010. Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay"

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Burglaries in Smithfield Market

The Committee was advised that in October and November, 2009 there had been a series of break-ins at Smithfield Market which had resulted in considerable damage being caused, stock stolen and concerns being raised by tenants. The intruders had entered the Market by means of a lower level window roof area and by the clock tower. At a series of meetings involving Council officers, Smithfield tenants, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast City Centre Management and G4 Security various methods of preventing any further break-ins were discussed. As a result, toughened safety glass had been fitted in the clock tower and the lower level window areas and safety doors and glass had been installed at those units which were considered to be most at risk. In addition, a double rota spike along the lower rear level at each gable end and extra security lighting had been installed in an attempt to stop intruders climbing onto the roof. The work had been carried out by the Council's Building Services or recommended contractors at a cost of £35,000.

Noted.

**Bank Square – Proposal from the
Forum for an Alternative Belfast**

The Committee agreed that it would receive at a future meeting a presentation from the Forum for an Alternative Belfast regarding its proposals for the Bank Square area of the City centre.

Rapid Transit – Draft Response

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Bus Rapid Transit is proposed by the Department for Regional Development (DRD) as the preferred option for the rapid transit system in Belfast. In 2007, DRD commissioned transport consultants to undertake a feasibility study looking at possible routes and technologies for rapid transit in Belfast. The study concluded that a bus-based rapid transit system was the viable option for Belfast rather than light rail technology. In addition, the study identified a pilot network of three routes connecting East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter with and through the city centre.

The Department for Regional Development launched a consultation on 23 November on policy proposals for the bus-based rapid transit system. The consultation document sets out how the Department aims to implement the rapid transit system in Belfast at the strategic level. It does not deal with operational details of the system such as route alignment, location and design of halts, vehicle design or branding this will be the subject of a further consultation exercise. The consultation period will end on 19th February 2010.

Key Issues

The Department proposes a number of powers in order to allow them to deliver the rapid transit system in Belfast and have asked for views to be submitted to the Department by the 19th February. They are as follows:

- **an enabling power to establish the necessary legal authority for the provision of the rapid transit system;**
- **the power to acquire land in connection with the rapid transit system;**
- **the power to purchase, lease and dispose of goods and services in connection with the rapid transit system;**

- the power to award a performance based contract for the operation of the rapid transit system;
- the dis-application of current route licensing legislation to rapid transit;
- the power to make bye laws in relation to passenger conduct on vehicles and in/on premises connected with the rapid transit system; and
- the power to install, operate and maintain off board ticketing machines in connection with the rapid transit system.

The Council welcomes progress towards implementing the Belfast rapid transit system and considers that it could be a major element of the delivery of a step change in the quality of public transport in Belfast. The Council agrees that the proposed system could be a driver for regeneration throughout Belfast, providing high quality access to and linkages between jobs, hospitals, schools and colleges in different parts of the City. However, in previous responses the Council has raised a number of concerns mainly in relation to route alignment, network coverage and proposed technology. It is understood that these issues are not being covered in the current consultation but the Council would like to reiterate its concerns on these matters and previous responses in relation to rapid transit are attached in Appendix 2.

In relation to the current consultation issues the Council's response is attached in Appendix 1 and a summary of the issues are as follows:

- the Council would support the Department as the authority to implement the rapid transit proposals in Belfast but would request clarification on the role of local councils. The Council would recommend that the relevant local councils are closely engaged in the planning and implementation of the pilot rapid transit network. In doing so, this will allow for better integration between transport and local land use planning which is proposed to transfer to councils under the review of public administration;
- the Council would request clarification on the role for local councils in development of performance-based contracts to ensure transparency and locally accountability;

- a key issue for the Council is the integration of the proposed rapid bus transit system with the existing public transport service. A sustainable transport corridor approach should be developed along with an integrated ticketing system along the route alignment; and
- current rapid transit proposals do not include plans for the north and south of the City and the Council would request details of measures to ensure an equitable high quality public transport system throughout the City.

Recommendations

Members are requested to consider the content of the proposed draft response to the proposals for rapid transit as set out in Appendix 1, and, if appropriate, endorse this as the formal response for submission to the Department for Regional Development.

Decision Tracking

Further to approval of the draft consultation response to rapid transit proposals, the response will be submitted by the 19th February, 2010.

Time frame: February 2010 Reporting Officer: Keith Sutherland.

Key Abbreviations

DRD - Department for Regional Development
DOE - Department of the Environment

Appendix 1

Draft Response

Question 1

Do you agree that the Department should have the necessary authority to implement the Rapid Transit proposals?

The Council welcomes the initiation of work to progress the development of a rapid public transport system for the city and would support the proposals as the first step towards introducing rapid transit in Belfast but would emphasis the need for a city-wide integrated network. It should be noted that current rapid transit proposals do not include plans for the north and south of the city and the Council would request details of measures to ensure an equitable high quality public transport system throughout the city.

The Council would support the Department as the authority to implement the rapid transit proposals but would request clarification on the role of local councils and their relationship with the new agency proposed under public transport reform.

There should be a role of the Council to engage with the department in the planning and implementation of the pilot rapid transit network and other transport proposals. In doing so this will allow in the future, for better integration between transport and local land use planning which is proposed to transfer to councils under the review of public administration.

The Council would also request clarification on the use of developer's contributions to fund the rapid transit system and if the opportunities for private sector contributions are being considered. Rapid Transit may offer opportunity for a structured approach for the use of developers contribution in recognition of the potential for such transport infrastructure investment to increase the value of development.

A key issue for the Council is the integration of the proposed rapid bus transit system with the existing public transport service. A sustainable transport corridor approach should be developed along with an integrated ticketing system along the route alignment

Question 2

Do you agree that the Department should take land acquisition powers for the implementation of the Rapid Transit system?

The Council would support land acquisition powers for the implementation of the rapid transit system but would call for close engagement and endorsement from the local council on the route alignment and proposed halts of the rapid transit network.

Question 3

Do you agree that the Department should have the power to purchase, lease and dispose of goods, services and facilities for the Rapid Transit system?

The Council would support power for the Department to purchase, lease and dispose of goods, services and facilities for the rapid transit system but would recommend that Council's have a clear role in relation to route alignment and halts.

Question 4

Do you agree that a performance-based contract should be introduced for the operation of the rapid transit system?

The Council would support the introduction of performance based contracts to ensure that the proposed operator is meeting or exceeding certain clearly defined minimum performance indicators. The Council would advocate that there are social benefits in the performance based indicators which will balance against any commercial benefits. The Council would request a role for local councils in developing performance based contracts to ensure they are transparent and locally accountable.

Question 5

Do you agree that the Department should be responsible for:

- *Specifying Rapid Transit service requirements, quality of service and fare levels;*
- *Awarding the Rapid Transit contract; and*
- *Monitoring and reporting on Rapid Transit operator performance?*

The Council would support power for the Department to carry out these activities in relation to the implementation of the Rapid Transit system but request a clear role for local councils in the process.

The Council are concerned that enforcement of the regulations on the operator of rapid transit will remain the responsibility of the Department of Environment. The Council would recommend that the responsibility for monitoring and enforcement are carried out by one department with a clear separation of roles and responsibilities to ensure efficient procurement, monitoring and enforcement.

The Council would also request assurance that the rapid transit vehicles and halts are fully accessible for disabled groups.

Question 6

What are your views on the proposal to offer financial incentives to the Rapid Transit operator to grow the Rapid Transit market, introduce innovation and improve services?

The Council would support setting targets and incentives in order to maintain and improve standards on the rapid transit system. However, it should be recognised that a broader policy approach will have an impact on the attractiveness of rapid transit and the use of demand management to deter commuters travel by private car may have the potential to increase the rapid transit market.

The Council would support initiatives to improve standards and services however a realistic standard must be set for an improvement to service.

Question 8

Do you agree that the dedicated public transport corridors on which Rapid Transit operates should be strictly enforced?

The Council would support robust enforcement on the rapid transit transport corridors to ensure a high quality, reliable and frequent service. The Council would recommend as part of route development there is close engagement with the local businesses along the proposed route to should ensure that servicing issues and parking requirements are addressed. Consideration should also be given to how the pilot network will integrate with other public transport services operating on the route.

The proposed routes suggest that the rapid transit scheme will not be segregated from other traffic in major sections of the route particularly close to the city centre. It is not clear how the system will perform or deliver a modal shift in these circumstances. The Council would request evidence from the Department on their commitment that preference in the use of road space to public transport will be made.

Question 9

Do you agree with the proposed powers for the Department to install, operate and maintain off-board ticketing machines?

The Council would support powers to install, operate and maintain off-board ticketing machines. It is essential that the ticketing is integrated between the different public transport operators.

Other comments

The Council would also like to make the following additional points:

Re-connecting the city of Belfast is critical to its success as a cohesive and competitive city. It is essential that we maximise mobility across the city, so that residents and visitors can easily, safely and affordably access jobs, services and leisure opportunities wherever they are located. The rapid transit system presents an ideal 'blank-sheet' opportunity to re-frame citizen expectations regarding cross-city connections, radically altering

people's mind-maps in the city which have been historically shaped by segregation and conflict. The expansion of the shared spaces has the potential to be the catalyst for unravelling some of the long lasting issues confronting Belfast, and the new rapid transit system has to play a central part in this process. One of the concepts that will assist in addressing these issues and encourage increased travel horizons is to actively develop the notion of the Belfast rapid transit system as a mobile shared space in itself for the whole community ('everybody's RTS'), providing safe passage from one part of the city to another. This notion would extend in branding to the stops and waiting areas themselves.

- There is a clear desire to build a vision of a shared and better future between local communities in the city as we enter the next phase, moving from conflict management to city transformation. Shared spaces provide attractive destinations of common purpose and use and, as drivers for community cohesion, are therefore key to overcoming the problems of segregation in Belfast. Critical to the delivery and sustainability of shared spaces is well-connected, affordable and safe transport links.
- In 2008, the Council commissioned a think-piece of research entitled 'Improving Connectivity and Mobility in Belfast' exploring specifically the contribution that improved connectivity could make to the conflict transformation agenda in Belfast. It highlighted that physical and psychological barriers at the interfaces between the segregated communities, makes travel around parts of the city difficult and resulting in people avoiding certain areas perceived to be unsafe, freezing current land use patterns and making the creation of shared spaces more difficult. Safe, affordable and shared public transport is critical to the continued transformation of the city.

The report highlighted a number of disadvantages, particularly from a social policy perspective including: bus routes perceived to be following the sectarian segmentation of the city and exacerbating segregation; routes easily identifiable with specific communities; a lack of orbital routes, discouraging cross community contacts; and, the need to pay twice when interchanging in the city centre. It is essential that the RTS avoids these pitfalls in its choice of routes but also maximises its transformational impact in those neighbourhoods which are located at the multiple interfaces across the city.

The think-piece highlighted that mental mapping studies, looking at how some communities cognitively perceive their environment, found them to have very limited spatial maps, greatly limiting their access to employment and educational opportunities. It was widely believed by most stakeholders consulted as part of the think-piece research that large parts of the public transport network – by responding to commercial pressures to meet current patterns of demand – exacerbate segregation. Rather than cutting across the communities and linking different parts of the city, the network tends to reproduce and reinforce patterns of segregation, in line with current perceptions of territoriality.

The report proposed that, through modifications to the existing services, public transport can play a major role in helping to change perceptions, enlarge travel horizons, and shape new travel and social patterns in Belfast. The report also proposed a concept to promote Belfast as the 'city on the move', with buses as its mobile shared units and information exchange hubs.

In the discussion paper, authored by Prof. Peter Jones (UCL) and Natalya Boujenko (Colin Buchanan Partners), they suggested that there may be ways in which the public transport could enhance good relations and social inclusion outcomes. The principal concept underlying the recommendations put forward in the document was to start expanding the number and range of the city's shared spaces. It was suggested that this will provide more areas which people can safely travel to and through, thereby expanding their travel horizons and encouraging inter-community and inter-racial tolerance; it will also help to bring wealth into deprived communities. The paper outlined how the expansion of shared spaces has the potential to be the catalyst for unravelling some of the long standing issues confronting Belfast.

- Labour mobility is critical in reinforcing peace in Northern Ireland, promoting it as an attractive global city where its resident talent pool is able to move freely and safely, as well as attract the best to international employers in the Girdwood site. The links to building an attractive, competitive city are clearly outlined in Richard Florida's work on the three central 'prongs' of technology, talent and tolerance; a city ill at ease with difference will neither attract nor retain talent in a globalised, mobile labour and investment market.

Labour mobility in the city is dependent on ease of access and reduction in the perception of risk to personal safety and transport is key to delivering a competitive and cohesive city.

Appendix 2

Belfast Rapid Transit Study:
Draft Belfast City Council Response – May 2008

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

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

General

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

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

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

Specific

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

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

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

BMAP responses

<u>STAGE 1 BMAP PUBLIC INQUIRY</u>			
<u>PAC CODE:</u>	2965/16	<u>BCC REF:</u>	11P
<u>ISSUE RAISED:</u>	BHA12:OBJECTION TO PROPOSAL - RAPID TRANSIT SCHEME – BELFAST HARBOUR		

<u>PARTICIPATION AT INQUIRY:</u>	Informal
---	----------

COMMENTS (1500 WORDS)

1. The CITI-Route rapid transit scheme is intended to serve the city centre, the Odyssey, the Titanic Quarter, Belfast City Airport and the proposed new Tillysburn rail station. The present plan for a single BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) or LRT line fails to serve: the Harland Technology Park, the Airport Road West corridor and the proposed Tillysburn park and ride site. CITI-Route is also likely to fail to compete effectively with taxis, from the Airport, or the existing airport-city centre bus service, despite the latter's relatively poor (20 minute) frequency. Unless its frequency is high, CITI-Route will also fail to provide a satisfactory link between the Airport terminal and the proposed Tillysburn rail station (passengers are unlikely to be prepared to wait 10 or 20 minutes for a bus to take them 600m.) These failings in CITI-Route arise despite, or partly because of a proposed swing bridge across the Musgrave Channel. Swing bridges are

notoriously expensive and this one allows CITI-Route to access the Airport via the East Twin Island but in so doing obliges it to miss the Harland Technology Park altogether. Moreover, when in use, the bridge will close the Musgrave Channel.

2. As with most BMTP public transport proposals, the route to be adopted through the city centre is unspecified, as are potential cross centre connections with other services/corridors. In other words, like EWAY, CITI-Route remains another proposal for a new route rather than a part of the integrated public transport network which Belfast needs. In particular CITI-Route is trying to serve with a single route an area that can only be properly served by a network.
3. The CITI-Route proposal therefore needs a comprehensive reassessment, beginning with a statement of its proposed purposes and its relation to existing airport services (the airport bus and particularly the taxis), The reassessment should consider any bus services planned for the Titanic Quarter and any proposals for putting these and other services together to provide the cross city centre links and the city centre distribution network which Belfast currently lacks.
4. In the absence of clear and tested concepts it is also unwise to specify CITI-Route as needing to be a 'rapid transit route', when what is really required is a network. On the one hand it might operate better as a set of conventional bus services of the sort which were suggested in the Titanic Quarter Master Plan. These could combine to provide an integrated public transport network. Different services might be branded and marketed differently, eg the Airport bus. However, such bus services would be unlikely to compete effectively with the car and the taxi.
5. On the other hand buses hardly have the image for a modern hi-tech development adjacent to a capital city centre. Belfast City Airport might also wish to follow the example of London's Heathrow Airport and employ new Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) technology to provide a new C21 public transport network capable of linking all the different origins and destinations in the area, including the Airport Road West, the whole of the TQ, the Airport, its car parks, the new superstores around the IKEA site and the existing and proposed rail stations with an automated system, able to provide non-stop travel between any pair of 'stations' on the network. Such systems would not require expensive bridges across the Musgrave Channel and could undoubtedly serve the entire area far better and more cost-effectively than BRT or LRT. Passengers wishing to get from the Airport to the city centre could be taken there non-stop, directly and without diversions via East Twin Island.

6. A PRT network would also be likely to attract developer contributions for the track and for stations, many of which would be located within particular developments or buildings. This would allow for the incremental development of a system linked to the overall site development.
7. The Plan should therefore be amended to be much less prescriptive about the solution to a problem which it has not clearly articulated. A completely new approach should be formulated with the first step being an analysis of the travel markets to be served and the potential revenues to be earned, first by competing effectively with services to the Airport, secondly from developer contributions and thirdly from the growth likely to arise as the limitations of the car within the area are increasingly recognised. The TQ Master Plan should also be reviewed with a view to include an innovative public transport system to attract people from their private cars such as the PRT system which is to be implemented at London Heathrow airport. With less reliance on the car usage and a reduced requirement for parking, higher density developments could be facilitated.

<u>STAGE 2 BMAP PUBLIC INQUIRY</u>			
<u>PAC CODE:</u>	BMAP/2965/102	<u>BCC REF:</u>	14P
<u>ISSUE RAISED:</u>	RAPID TRANSIT ROUTE: OBJECTION TO NON DESIGNATION OF A RAPID TRANSIT ROUTE FOR BELFAST NORTH		

<u>PARTICIPATION AT INQUIRY:</u>	Written
----------------------------------	---------

COMMENTS (1500 WORDS)

- 1 *The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland 2025* sets out the following in relation to Rapid Transit provision for Belfast:

'BMA 4.2 Rapid transit, both guided bus and light rail based systems, has a potential longer term role in delivering integrated transport solutions for the BMA: keep rapid transit options under review for addressing future transportation requirements of the BMA. Examine the development of a BMA Rapid Transit Network in order to offer high quality, high capacity, accessible services using a mix of bus priority, guided bus and light rail, operating on-street and utilising existing and new rights of way'. (RDS P.77)

- 2 The BMTP 2025 Strategy outlines proposals to introduce rapid transit services as a major element of the delivery of a step change in the quality of public transport in the BMA.
- 3 The BMTP 2015 Plan proposes the EWAY as the pilot rapid transit route for the city. The 2015 Plan also identifies opportunities to extend the rapid transit network and outlines three other possible routes:
 - WWAY as a rapid transit route from Belfast city centre into West Belfast;
 - CITI-Route a route linking Belfast city centre and Belfast City Airport through Titanic quarter; and
 - Superroute linking the Downpatrick corridor Annadale to the south of the city.
- 4 The Council objects to the exclusion of a Rapid Transit proposal for North Belfast. Consideration should be given to a suite of transport policies for the northern corridor that would encourage transport orientated development and support the regeneration objectives for the north of the city. The Belfast Zoo is also located in the north of the city and should be taken into consideration in any transport proposals for this area. It is one of the main tourism attractions in the City and a modern, fast and convenient public transport option to the Zoo would support its continued development.

Recommendations

- 5 The Council recommends that a full assessment of the northern corridor is carried out to identify an alignment for a rapid transit proposal, possible interchanges and connections and opportunities to link to development opportunities or high density residential development.
- 6 The Council recommends that targets should be set for planning and implementation of the proposed scheme prior to the review of the BMAP for inclusion as an amendment.
- 7 The Council recommends the establishment of the QBC's elements to support alignment and future development."

During discussion in the matter, Members made the following points:

- (i) the paragraph in the draft response regarding the conflict between the EWAY proposal and the Comber Greenway should indicate that such uses were incompatible;

- (ii) the response made no reference to extending the Rapid Transit System to the City Airport which was seen as being vital to the development of the City;
- (iii) since the Rapid Transit System would mostly not be segregated from other traffic, the response should enquire how the Department intended to encourage the public to use the System rather than their current mode of transport; and
- (iv) the response should highlight the fact that the proposals did not cover North and South Belfast and that steps to address this omission were needed urgently.

The Head of Economic Initiatives indicated that the response would be changed in line with the views expressed by the Members.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the response contained within the Appendix to the foregoing report, subject to the amendments outlined above, be submitted as the Council's response to the Department for Regional Development's Consultation on proposals for a Rapid Transit system in Belfast.

Public Transport Reform – Draft Response

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In November 2009, the Department for Regional Development (DRD) published a consultation document on the Reform of the Public Transport System. At present all rail services and the majority of bus services are provided by the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company through Translink and its subsidiary companies Ulsterbus, Metro and Northern Ireland Railways. The public transport system is regulated and all operators providing a fare paying service must apply for a licence from the Department of the Environment.

DRD initiated the public transport reform process in 2002 and identified the need to reform the current structural arrangements. A proposal in August 2006 considered the option of transferring responsibility for public transport to the new local councils proposed under the Review of Public Administration; however this option was not pursued once the decision to retain roads functions within the Department for Regional Development was made.

An outline business case was carried out and published in September 2009 with a preferred option for the reform. The reform also must take account of a new European Union regulation on public transport, EU regulation 1370/2007, which states that all public transport services will be required to be provided through contracts. This provision comes into force in December 2010 and has a 10 year transition period.

The Department for Regional Development have requested all consultation responses on the reform proposals are returned by 5th February, 2010.

Key Issues

The Department is proposing the retention of a regulated public transport system although there will be options for contracted services by private operators. The principle reform proposal is that a public transport agency within DRD will be formed with responsibility for:

- public transport regulation, planning and policy implementation;
- developing local transport plans;
- specifying the public service requirements;
- securing the delivery of public transport services through performance contracts awarded either directly to Translink or in some cases subject to open competition;
- monitoring and evaluation of service delivery performance by operators;
- the granting and enforcement of innovative service permits where gaps in provision are identified; and
- to allow permitted independent operators to use designated bus/rail stations as shared facilities.

The outline business case looked at a number of options and recommended the reform would be best delivered through a three tier structure involving:

- a top government tier responsible for funding policy, legislation and associated regulation; (DRD & DOE)
- a middle tier body responsible for specifying public transport service requirements securing their provision and managing contractual and licensing arrangements (public transport agency); and
- a third tier comprising transport operators responsible for delivering the services (Translink and private operators).

The consultation seeks views on a number of issues including:

- should the public transport system continue to be regulated;
- responsibility for the new departmental agency;
- role of Translink;
- approach to develop local transport plans; and
- the proposal for performance based contracts and innovative service permits.

The Council draft response is attached in Appendix 1 and the main issues are as follows:

- The Council supports the continued regulation of public transport, however, the role of local councils must be clarified and levers to improve efficiency and quality must be put in place.
- The Council would request clarification on the consultation arrangements for the outline business case on public transport reform and the involvement of local councils in the process and the decision to move away from local council involvement in public transport provision.
- The Council welcomes the proposals to improve integration between different transport modes and different service providers and the proposed integrated ticketing system.
- The Council welcomes proposals to allow private operators to deliver licensed services and use bus and rail facilities, however, strict measures to monitor the quality of services should be put in place.
- The outline business case stated that the preferred option is for a new agency within DRD. The Council would request proposed arrangements for local council involvement in the new agency. There is a lack of clarity in the consultation document on the role of councils in the future development of public transport. This is highlighted by a lack of provision for council involvement in the proposed new agency within DRD.

- One of the responsibilities of the proposed new agency will be the creation of local transport plans. The document identifies the involvement of local councils as important but does not offer any further detail on how this involvement will occur. Clarification on this issue will be needed, and on how this new power will integrate with the future responsibilities of local councils post-RPA, for example local development planning and development management.
- The proposed new departmental agency will sit within a three tier hierarchy below central government (Department for Regional Development and Department of Environment) and above the bottom tier which will contain Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC) /Translink and other private providers. The proposed new departmental agency aims to improve the efficiency of public transport but the Council is concerned that key elements of public transport will remain fragmented between central government departments and their agencies.
- The Council would support additional bus services in Belfast, including cross city bus routes and night time bus services to enhance connectivity. The Council would request measures to encourage operators to introduce these services where gaps in provision have been identified but may not initially be commercially attractive for operators.
- The proposal states that funding for public transport will change from capital funding to revenue funding. The Council would request further details on the proposed change and if the move will have implications on the real level of funds available for public transport.

Recommendations

Members are requested to consider the content of the proposed draft response to the proposals for Reform of Public Transport consultation as set out in Appendix 1, and, if appropriate, endorse this as the formal response for submission to the Department for Regional Development.

Decision Tracking

Further to approval of the draft consultation response to DRD, that the response be submitted within required timeframe.

Time frame: February 2010 Reporting Officer: Keith Sutherland

Key Abbreviations

Department for Regional Development – DRD
Department of Environment – DOE

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Draft Council Response

Appendix 1

Draft Council Response Reform of Public Transport

Questions on Detailed Policy Proposals

Question 1

Do you agree that a system of performance-based contracts should be introduced for the public transport network, with a system of innovative service permits for other non-contracted services?

The Council would support the introduction of performance based contracts and innovative service contracts as a lever to improve efficiency and quality of service of public transport. The Department must put measures in place to ensure that the proposed operator is meeting or exceeding certain clearly defined minimum performance indicators. The performance based contracts must include commitments to reliability, punctuality and customer service.

The Council would advocate that there are social benefits in the performance based indicators which will balance against any commercial benefits. The Council would request a clear role for local authorities in developing performance based contracts to ensure they are transparent, locally accountable and address real need.

The proposal states that innovative service contracts may be applied for by private operators where gaps in services occur. The Council would support additional services in Belfast including cross city bus routes and night time services. The Council would request measures to encourage operators to introduce these services where gaps in provision have been identified but may not initially be commercially attractive for operators. The Department should ensure that public transport system enhances connectivity for local neighbourhoods by making them safer, healthier and more inclusive.

Question 2

Do you agree that the public transport system should continue to be regulated?

The Council would support the continued regulation of public transport however levers to improve efficiency and quality must be put in place. There must be a clear role for local councils in the regulation of this important service sector to ensure transparency and local accountability. The proposal to allow Translink to provide the majority of services must contain measures to ensure continual improvement to the service and increased efficiency.

Question 3

Do you agree that the fares levels and fare structure for services on the public transport network should be regulated in future?

The Council agrees with regulation of public transport fares. It is essential that fares are regulated in a manner which encourages use of public transport and contributes to the modal shift from the private car to public transport through a fare system that is attractive and economic to the user.

Public transport plays an important role in the overall economy in terms of access to jobs and services; and it also supports the sustainable development of the metropolitan area.

Question 4

Do you agree that the departmental agency should be responsible for specifying public transport service requirements, awarding contracts and monitoring and reporting on operator performance?

The Council would request proposed arrangements for local council involvement in the new agency and would recommend a role for local councils in the specification of public service requirements. The Council would like to highlight a number of gaps in the current service such as cross city routes and night time services and would also request clarification on the integration of current services with the proposed rapid transit system in Belfast. There should be equality of access to public transport across the city in particular in areas where new infrastructure is not proposed. In this regard it should be noted that public transport enhancement though rapid transit does not include proposals for the north and south of the city.

There is a lack of clarity in the consultation document on the role of councils in the future development of public transport. This is highlighted by a lack of provision for council involvement in the proposed new agency within DRD. The Council would also recommend that the agency is formulated in a manner which reduces fragmentation of responsibilities across different agencies and Departments.

Question 5

Do you agree that Translink should continue to be the lead supplier of public transport services?

The Council would support the proposal to allow Translink to provide the majority of services but measures should be put in place to ensure efficiency and continued improvement of service.

Question 6

What are your views on:

- *the proposed offences and fine levels to support the contracting/permit regime;*
- *the continuing offences and fine levels for operator licensing, railway byelaws and conduct on buses; and*
- *the proposed powers to regulate passenger conduct in bus premises?*

The Council would support the concept of penalties and monitoring of conduct on public transport services. A general level of conduct should be agreed and the level should be matched across all service provision. The Council would like to comment on the decision that enforcement of the regulations on the operator will remain the responsibility of the Department of Environment. It would be preferable that one department is responsible for monitoring and enforcement with an appropriate separation from commissioning of services within that department.

Question 7

What are your views on the best approach to develop local transport plans and who needs to be involved?

The Council welcomes the approach for the creation of local transport plans however the document identifies the involvement of local councils as important but does not offer any further detail on how this involvement will occur. Clarification on this issue will be needed, and on how this new power will integrate with the future responsibilities of local councils post-RPA for example local development planning and development management. Local councils should have the responsibility of articulating the transport needs for their area.

With the proposed transfer of local planning functions to councils, the Council would like to adopt a strong and public city leadership role in the promotion of sustainable development for the city of Belfast and would like to ensure a consistent and integrated approach to land use and transportation planning.

It is proposed that local councils will have a community planning function and in line with this the Council would like to support local people and communities by ensuring a community plan approach that integrates transportation to enhance connectivity for local neighbourhoods by making them safer, healthier and more inclusive.

The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 places a statutory responsibility on local councils to manage air quality within their districts in accordance with the provisions of the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In 2004, Belfast City Council declared four air quality management areas across the city principally associated with road transport and subsequently published an air quality action plan in collaboration with a range of relevant authorities including the Department for Regional Development and Translink. Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 establishes air quality as a material consideration within the planning process. Accordingly, the Council recommends that in developing new proposals the Department for Regional Development should engage with local authorities at the earliest instance in order to take account of the linkages between planning and development control, air quality and transportation.

The Council would also request that the local transport plans consider the following issues in relation to connecting communities:

- There is a clear desire to build a vision of a shared and better future between local communities in the city as we enter the next phase, moving from conflict management to city transformation. Shared spaces provide attractive destinations of common purpose and use and, as drivers for community cohesion, are therefore key to overcoming the problems of segregation in Belfast. Critical to the delivery and sustainability of shared spaces is well-connected, affordable and safe transport links.
- Re-connecting the city of Belfast is critical to its success as a cohesive and competitive city. It is essential that we maximise mobility across the city, so that residents and visitors can easily, safely and affordably access jobs, services and leisure opportunities wherever they are located.

- In 2008, the Council commissioned a think-piece of research entitled 'Improving Connectivity and Mobility in Belfast' exploring specifically the contribution that improved connectivity could make to the conflict transformation agenda in Belfast. It highlighted that physical and psychological barriers at the interfaces between the segregated communities, makes travel around parts of the city difficult and resulting in people avoiding certain areas perceived to be unsafe, freezing current land use patterns and making the creation of shared spaces more difficult. Safe, affordable and shared public transport is critical to the continued transformation of the city.

The report highlighted a number of disadvantages, particularly from a social policy perspective including: bus routes perceived to be following the sectarian segmentation of the city and exacerbating segregation; routes easily identifiable with specific communities; a lack of orbital routes, discouraging cross community contacts; and, the need to pay twice when interchanging in the city centre.

The think-piece highlighted that mental mapping studies, looking at how some communities cognitively perceive their environment, found them to have very limited spatial maps, greatly limiting their access to employment and educational opportunities. It was widely believed by most stakeholders consulted as part of the think-piece research that large parts of the public transport network – by responding to commercial pressures to meet current patterns of demand – exacerbate segregation. Rather than cutting across the communities and linking different parts of the city, the network tends to reproduce and reinforce patterns of segregation, in line with current perceptions of territoriality.

The report proposed that, through modifications to the existing services, public transport can play a major role in helping to change perceptions, enlarge travel horizons, and shape new travel and social patterns in Belfast. The report also proposed a concept to promote Belfast as the 'city on the move', with buses as its mobile shared units and information exchange hubs.

The report suggested that there may be ways in which the public transport could enhance good relations and social inclusion outcomes. The principal concept underlying the recommendations put forward in the document was to start expanding the number and range of the city's shared spaces. It was suggested that this will provide more areas which people can safely travel to and through, thereby expanding their travel horizons and encouraging

inter-community and inter-racial tolerance; it will also help to bring wealth into deprived communities. The paper outlined how the expansion of shared spaces has the potential to be the catalyst for unravelling some of the long standing issues confronting Belfast.

Labour mobility is critical in reinforcing peace in Northern Ireland, promoting it as an attractive global city where its resident talent pool is able to move freely and safely, as well as attract the best to international employers in the Girdwood site. The links to building an attractive, competitive city are clearly outlined in Richard Florida's work on the three central 'prongs' of technology, talent and tolerance; a city ill at ease with difference will neither attract nor retain talent in a globalised, mobile labour and investment market. Labour mobility in the city is dependent on ease of access and reduction in the perception of risk to personal safety and transport is key to delivering a competitive and cohesive city

Question 8

Do you agree that the departmental agency should have statutory powers to designate passenger facilities as 'shared facilities' and to specify the access arrangements and charges for the use of the facilities by other public transport operators?

The Council welcomes proposals to allow private operators to deliver licensed services and use bus and rail facilities, however strict measures to monitor the quality of services should be put in place. This should be linked to greater regulation of private operators on use of halts and road space.

Question 9

Do you agree with the proposed future role of the Consumer Council, which would involve the Council in:

- *advising the Department on the consumer interests in relation to the development of public transport policy and fares;*
- *providing comments on service requirements specifications for public transport contracts and innovative service permit applications;*
- *representing the consumer interest in unresolved complaints about the services provided by the departmental agency and by operators; and*

- *agreeing arrangements for co-operation between the Council and the agency on public transport matters of shared interest.*

The Council welcome the role of the consumer council in advising the Department on consumer needs in the context of a clarified role for local councils in the future provision of public transport.

Question 10

Do you agree with the proposals on the future arrangements for the provision of rail services?

The Council would support the move towards formal contract arrangements with Northern Ireland Railways to ensure the financial and transparency requirements. The Council would request that performance targets are set to ensure continual improvement of services and options to encourage the expansion of the service in the future.

Question 11

Do you agree that there is a need for integrated and off-vehicle ticketing across all forms of public transport?

The Council strongly supports the introduction of an integrated ticketing system that allows travel between the different modes for example bus, rail and proposed rapid transit, also with private operator services. It is the view of the Council that integrated ticketing and off-vehicle ticketing will enhance public transport and contribute to achieving a modal change from private car to public transport.

Question 12

Do you agree that the Department should become a statutory consultee in land use planning decisions, and should be able to secure developer contributions for public transport?

Clarification will be needed on the potential role for the new agency pending the outcome of planning reform and its role as a statutory consultee in relation to the proposed planning hierarchy.

The Council considers that the proposal for developer contributions has a range of implications and was included in the recent Planning Reform proposals for consideration by a wider range of planning professionals and stakeholders. The Council recognise the need for a role in relation to land use planning however the matter of any developer contribution will be an issue of balance of a range of issues on which the local planning authority will be required to make a decision.

Question 13

Do you agree that the Department should formalise and take forward legal arrangements to provide funding to transport advisory-type bodies?

The Council would support specific legislation arrangements to enable it to continue to fund transport advisory boards. It is essential that public transport is accessible to all sections of the community and opportunities for improvement are investigated.

Question 14

Do you believe that service provision and information should be provided in languages other than English by Translink and other operators, where a clear demand is evident?

The Council would support the proposal to provide information in different language where there is a clear demand to ensure all sections of the community have the option to access public transport.

Please make any further comments here, ensuring that you clearly refer to any relevant questions or responses submitted above.

Any other comments:

- (i) The Council would support additional bus services in Belfast including cross city bus routes and night time bus services. The Council would request measures to encourage operators to introduce these services which may not be commercially viable initially but are essential to connecting local neighbourhoods. The Council would advocate robust measures to prevent bus parking or layover in the city centre and strong regulation for private operators.
- (ii) The proposals states that funding for public transport will change from capital funding to revenue funding. The Council would request further details on the level of revenue funding for public transport provision.
- (iii) Within Chapter 3 of the consultation document, the Minister has indicated that he wishes to make public transport people's first choice, not last resort, adding that people's willingness to use public transport is often related to the ease with which it enables them to make a journey and the duration of that journey, including time spent waiting, compared to the alternative means of transport, which is normally the private car. He concludes therefore, that it is essential that bus priority and park and ride measures that give preference in the use of road space to public transport continue to be implemented.

The recently revised Belfast City Council Transportation Policy supports this viewpoint by committing the Council to seek to influence the development of transportation policies and proposals which improve connectivity and encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport.

The Council considers it essential however, that park and ride facilities are located in appropriate locations that maximise the opportunity for modal shift. The draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan has proposed planning protection for a range of transportation schemes under Policy Tran 2, including a proposal to locate a park and ride facility at Kennedy Way. Council has already articulated its opposition to the siting of a park and ride at Kennedy during the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan public enquiry on the basis of its proximity to the city centre and to residential properties and its potential to worsen air quality within an area of existing poor air quality. The park and ride site may also increase ambient noise levels in the vicinity of Kennedy Way.

Accordingly, Council supports the provision of park and ride sites but recommends that they be sited in appropriate locations so as to maximise the opportunity for modal shift whilst minimising adverse environmental and other impacts on the surrounding population and environment.

- (iv) Within section 3.7, it is proposed that in order to encourage the greater use of public transport, it is intended to expand further the use of bus lanes and to improve enforcement so that journeys by public transport are quicker for users than by other means of transport.

The Council supports commitments to increase the number of bus lanes and to improve enforcement in order to speed public transport journeys however, it recommends that bus lanes should where possible be of an uninterrupted design. Presently, on arterial routes such as the Malone Road and the Lisburn Road, bus lanes periodically merge with other road users, particularly at road junctions. Moreover, the failure to sequence traffic lights along arterial routes also lengthen public transport journeys unnecessarily.

- (v) With regard to the decriminalisation of parking enforcement, the Traffic Management (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 enabled the Roads Service to take over from the police, the enforcement of most parking restrictions including yellow lines, urban clearways, bus lanes, limited waiting parking places and pay and display bays. The Road Service has stated

that the objective of the new enforcement regime is to reduce the number of illegally parked vehicles, which will lead to reduced traffic congestion, improved road safety and improved accessibility for all road-users. However, many parking restrictions provide dispensation for loading and unloading of commercial vehicles. It is considered that on arterial routes loading and unloading, particularly during the AM and PM peak travel hours, has the potential to obstruct bus lanes, congest other traffic and significantly lengthen commuter journey times.”

During discussion in the matter, Members made the following points:

- (i) the bus service on orbital routes in the City was poor;
- (ii) since multi-journey tickets were pre-paid, they should not have to be used within a certain period of time;
- (iii) public transport needed to be made more attractive to encourage people to use it;
- (iv) Translink had a social responsibility to provide adequate public transport at night rather than only operating services which were profitable; and
- (v) the creation of another Quango, in the shape of the proposed Public Transport Agency, was unnecessary given the expertise which was available within the Department of the Environment and the Department for Regional Development.

Following further discussion in the matter, the Committee agreed that the response be amended to indicate that the Committee was opposed to the creation of the proposed Public Transport Agency and to reflect the other comments outlined above.

Externally Funded Regeneration Projects Update

Re-Imaging Communities

The Committee was advised that ten of the eleven projects which were being undertaken within areas of the City as part of the Re-Imaging Communities Initiative, which had been funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, had been completed. The remaining scheme, in The Village Area, which was to celebrate the locality's industrial past and working class heritage, would involve the creation of sculptural figures which would be set into the piers of the Tate's Avenue railway bridge, together with additional sculptures of trains, to provide a welcoming feature to people entering the area. In addition, a new mural had been designed and installed to recreate existing imagery and cover graffiti at the underpass of the bridge. A technical survey was being completed currently and would then be submitted to the Roads Service for its approval, following which the completed art work would be installed.

Noted.

Peace III – Arterial Routes

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that under the Peace III Programme a sum of £800,000 had been allocated to enable work to be undertaken as part of the Arterial Routes Scheme at Carlisle Circus, Northumberland Street, Bridge End/Newtownards Road and Ormeau Bridge/Embankment. She indicated that each scheme would involve community consultation, project design, procurement and construction/implementation. At present, the Council was working with key stakeholders in the four areas and focus groups had been established.

The Committee noted the information provided.

Interreg IVC – B-Team

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Interreg IVC – B-Team

At its meeting in Stockholm on 5th November, 2009 the INTERREG IVC Monitoring Committee conditionally approved the B-Team project application. The revised application was re-submitted and approved by the Secretariat in December 2009.

The project’s objective is to improve local/regional policies influencing Brownfield redevelopment through transfer of best practice. The B-Team will offer policy support in the regions that will help to develop Brownfield sites prior to Greenfield land as a principle of continued growth.

Through the involvement of a number of experts within and outside the partnership, B-Team encourages international networking, trans-disciplinary and trans-sectoral cooperation.

The benefits for the Council would be:

- advice from a resource of international practitioners/experts in Brownfield regeneration;**
- establishment of Council as lead organisation at a European level;**
- support in practical solution finding processes for redevelopment proposals;**
- possibility to explore or utilise newer innovative methods and approaches;**
- support in improving local and regional policies;**

- European wide dissemination of results of work – raising of awareness;
- reduction of resources required to develop such sites; and
- redevelopment of complicated sites with international assistance.

B-Team will bring together experts of Brownfield regeneration from different countries to exchange their experience in local and regional policies and jointly improve and transfer them. Beside the exchange that will take place in the 'Brownfield Days' these experiences will be discussed and disseminated to a broader public in European conferences.

The policy recommendations will be implemented in the planning process of the partners in need of changing their policies or introducing new policies. The partners signing up to the 'Brownfield Pledge' commit themselves to improvements regarding their policies. To enhance the cooperation and the learning process every partner organises regional meetings. Relevant policy makers will be informed about the progress of the project and the implementation of the policy recommendations discussed.

The project will last 3 years and has a total budget of EUR 2,046,791.00. Belfast as the lead partner will be responsible for the recruitment and appointment of a project manager and assistant on fixed term contracts to run for the duration of the project. A first meeting with all the partners will take place in the second week of February in Belfast where all the details and procedures will be discussed.

Resource Implications

There are no resource implications for the Council as the staff appointments will be externally funded.

Recommendation

Members are requested to authorise the recruitment of the project manager and assistant on fixed term contracts in relation to the B-Team project under the Inrerreg IVC funding.

Decision Tracking

Following Committee approval a recruitment exercise to fill the posts of project manager and assistant will be undertaken.

Timeframe: April 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay"

Following discussion, the Committee adopted the foregoing recommendations.

Culture and Arts Funding

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that it distributed a range of funding to culture and arts organisations throughout the City and pointed out that, due to the need for organisations to plan their programmes, the Council endeavoured to award funding as early as possible in the financial year. Therefore, both the Community Festivals Fund and the Development and Outreach Programme would open for applications in January and close in February, although no funding applications would be approved prior to the 2010/2011 estimates being agreed.

She reported that the Community Festivals Fund would invite applications from organisations which were planning community festivals due to be held between 1st April and 30th June and that grants would range from £2,500 to £10,000. The Development and Outreach Programme aimed to build capacity and boost cultural activity in communities which had weak cultural infrastructure, was aimed at the top 50% Super Output Areas and would operate from May, 2010 until May, 2011. It was anticipated that approximately thirteen partnerships would receive support.

She pointed out that a sum of £79,000 had been included in the estimates for the Community Festivals Fund, which included 15% towards administration costs, that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's contribution to the Fund would be at least £77,000 and that 2010/2011 would be the final year of the three-year agreement between the Council and the Department regarding the Fund. She pointed out further that a sum of £165,000 had been included in the estimates for the Development and Outreach Programme.

Noted.

Bi-Monthly Departmental Briefing Document

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 14th October, it had agreed that items for notation and those which required no decision be no longer included on the agenda for Committee meetings but rather those items would be collated into a Departmental Briefing Document which would be issued to all Members of Council. This decision had resulted from the large number of items which were being placed on the agenda for each monthly meeting which was providing Members with less time than was desirable to discuss the important items on the agenda which required decisions.

She reported that the Bi-monthly Briefing Document would be produced which would allow the Department to keep Members informed on the progress of initiatives and projects whilst reducing the number of items which appeared on the Committee agenda. She reported that the Policy and Business Development Unit had been working with Corporate Communications and Committee Services to develop a template for the Briefing Document, a copy of which had been circulated with the report and she recommended that the template format be approved.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls

The Head of City Events and Venues informed the Committee that the Royal National Institute of Blind People in Northern Ireland had presented recently the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls with its European Best Model of Excellence Award in recognition of the work which both venues had undertaken towards achieving accessibility for all. He pointed out that the Council had been the first organisation in Northern Ireland to receive this Award. In order to secure it, the Council had demonstrated its commitment to visual awareness training for all staff in both venues, achieved universal accessibility to all the services provided by the venues, committed to the inclusion of blind and partially-sighted persons in the workplace and provided audio described performances in both Halls.

He informed the Committee further that the recent refurbishment scheme at the Ulster Hall had been shortlisted in the "Best Improvement Project" section of the annual Northern Ireland Local Government Association Awards.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated the staff on receiving the prestigious European Best Model of Excellence Award and on being shortlisted for one of the Northern Ireland Local Government Association Awards.

Chairman