

Development Committee

Wednesday, 11th August, 2010

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor C. Maskey (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors Campbell, B. Kelly, Kyle, Lavery, Mallon,
Mac Giolla Mhín, Mhic Giolla Mhín, Mullaghan, F.
Rodgers, J. Rodgers and Rodway.

In attendance: Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors McCausland and Stoker.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 9th and 21st June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July, subject to:

- (i) the omission of the minute of 9th June under the heading "Christmas Lights Switch-on 2010" which, at the request of Councillor J. Rodgers, was taken back for further consideration and to enable representatives of the Belfast City Centre Management to address the Committee; and
- (ii) the amendment of the minute of the meeting of 9th June under the heading "Benview Community Centre: Pre-School Provision" to provide that a pilot Play Club be introduced at the Benview Community Centre and the scheme be extended during the same period to the Olympia and Whitrock Play Centres.

Christmas Lights Switch-on 2010

The Committee considered further the undernoted minute of the meeting of 9th June:

"The Committee was reminded that the Council over the previous twenty-five years had developed the annual Christmas Lights Switch-on event. The event had originally involved a number of school choirs and had taken place in the middle of November, with a small audience in attendance. However, it was now an extremely popular event, with last year's audience having been estimated at 8,000, and involved a range of high profile national and local celebrities.

The Head of City Events and Venues reported that correspondence had been received from Belfast City Centre Management, which was supported by the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, requesting that the Council give consideration to moving the day of the event from a Tuesday evening to a Saturday evening in 2010.

After discussion, the Committee agreed, due to the success experienced by holding the event in mid-week and the potential disruption which could be caused by hosting the event on a Saturday, not to accede to the request and accordingly agreed that the event continue to take place on a Tuesday evening."

It was reported the Messrs. A. Irvine, N. Main and P. McMahon were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Main indicated that there were a number of reasons why the City centre traders wished to have the Christmas Lights Switch-on changed to a Saturday. He outlined the current trading trends within the City centre and the effect of the recession, with some businesses experiencing a downturn of up to 25%, which was not being helped by the construction works associated with the Streets Ahead Project.

He explained that, whilst he understood the importance of the switch-on to both the Council and local traders, only a small amount of business was conducted on that evening and that, together with the trouble which had occurred in the City over the previous two years, this had resulted in a number of traders, including Castlecourt, closing on that evening. He indicated that, if the event was moved to a Saturday, some traders, such as the Victoria Square, had offered to provide funding to provide family entertainment in the afternoon and that this, in conjunction with an earlier time for the switch-on, could help create an all-day family event. An earlier switch-on time would also allow those attending, at the conclusion of the event, to visit other venues such as cinemas. He stated that the Police Service of Northern Ireland had indicated that it would be content with the change to a Saturday.

In an answer to a number of questions, Mr. Main stated that both the Belfast Business Forum and the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce Executive Council had discussed the issue and both were in agreement that the event should be switched to a Saturday. Mr. Irvine explained that the Police Service had indicated that a Saturday evening event would provide no greater threat or disruption than a Tuesday and, in fact, due to the Get Home Safe Campaign, it had more resources available to it on Saturdays.

The deputation then thanked the Committee for receiving them and retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to rescind its decision of 9th June and accordingly agreed that, for a one year trial period, the Christmas Lights Switch-on in 2010 be held on a Saturday in November.

**European Social Fund and Department for
Employment and Learning Skills Strategy**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that, since 2008, match funding has been provided by Council for four European Social Fund (ESF) projects. ESF projects have a three year duration and match funding for the projects must be re-confirmed each year. At the December 2009 meeting of Development Committee, Members agreed that funding would not be provided for year 3 of the projects. However the HARTE (Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment) project which was submitted by the Council for ESF funding continues and is still producing positive employment outcomes.

A second call for projects under ESF is expected to take place in late September 2010. In anticipation of this, it is proposed that Members take an agreed approach to match-funding potential projects under this funding stream, in order to maximise the impact of the interventions supported. A proposed approach is outlined below.

Members will also be aware that, in early 2009, approval was given by the Development Committee to work with key partners on the development of an agreed employability and skills agenda for the city in order to maximise the impact of our intervention in this field. Since then, a range of meetings have taken place and a draft Belfast Skills and Employment Strategy was presented to the Development Committee in April 2010. In order to allow more detailed discussion on the content, Members requested that a series of party briefings be undertaken. These briefings were concluded in June 2010.

DEL is a key partner in this process and has remained supportive of developing a collaborative approach to employability and skills in the city. The department has recently produced its skills strategy for consultation – Success through Skills 2: the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. They have indicated the importance is ensuring congruence with the key themes of this strategy for any collaborative projects. A draft Belfast City Council response to this skills strategy is attached for Members' endorsement.

Key Issues

European Social Fund projects

A call for projects under Priority 1 of the European Social Fund (ESF) – Helping people into sustainable employment – will be launched in September 2010 and will close in November. Successful projects will run for a three year period from April 2011.

ESF projects are 40% funded through EU Structural Funds and 25% supported through the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). Project promoters are expected to identify a match funder from the public sector to provide the 35% to complete the project expenditure. At application stage, details of the potential match funder are required, although there is no compulsion on the project promoter to show any evidence of engagement at this stage.

Under the last round of funding, 73 projects were successful in drawing down funding. Of these, 35 were focused on working within the Belfast area. Four of these 35 projects received match-funding from Belfast City Council for two years at an annual cost of around £150,000 per annum to the council.

In addition to match funding these projects, Belfast City Council also developed the HARTE (Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment) programme. This initiative was a response to the growth in the service industries at that time and the desire to increase the opportunities for long-term unemployed people to find jobs within these sectors. To date, around 80 people have gained employment through this project. The match funding contribution from Belfast City Council to the project has been on average £40,000 per annum. Given that two years of the project have been completed, this means that the cost per job to Belfast City Council has been around £1,000. This compares very favourably with mainstream schemes and with other similar pilot initiatives.

As previously noted, the Council has been working with partners across the city on the development of an agreed agenda for skills and employability. A draft strategy and action plan has been developed and party briefings on this were undertaken in the period April-June 2010. Under the strategy, two strategic priorities are identified, namely:

- Connecting people and jobs
- Enhancing the level of skills in our most disadvantaged communities.

A range of actions is also identified in the plan. These actions have met with broad agreement from all partners and there is now a commitment to developing collaborative projects to deliver on the actions.

One of the key partners in this collaborative approach has been DEL, given their statutory responsibility for employability and skills development in the region. DEL is committed to working with the Council on the delivery of these actions. As with all public agencies, they are facing challenging budget cuts and are working hard to identify how they can maximise the impact of their spend.

Initial discussions with DEL have identified a range of key issues on which they would be keen to collaborate with Belfast City Council in order to deliver on the actions in the draft employability and skills plan. The potential availability of funding under the European Social Fund offers an opportunity to combine resources towards agreed objectives which will meet the identified needs.

DEL is currently pursuing funding for a number of schemes which could be enhanced if there was wider engagement and additional investment. While the progress of these schemes is subject to agreement by the Northern Ireland Executive, it is proposed that the Council continues to work with the Department to flesh out the detail of these potential projects.

From the Council's perspective, there are a number of conditions to the development of any future ESF projects in which we are involved. In order to ensure that they meet our agenda, it is proposed that a series of criteria be established. These might include:

- The project aligns with the priorities and actions identified in the Belfast skills and employability strategy and action plan
- The project has a city-wide impact
- The project does not replicate other mainstream or pilot provision
- The project is focused on employment outputs
- The project aligns with those key industry sectors which are accessible to those who are not currently in the labour market. These might include hospitality, retail, creative industries, financial services and the public services
- The project focuses on the long-term unemployed/unemployed graduates
- The project should be subject to performance-related targets to be agreed in advance.

These criteria would be used to guide the development of any potential application for funding under ESF. They would also be used to assess any requests for match funding from potential partners.

The Council match funding for these initiatives will have to be identified as part of the forthcoming business planning process and will be subject to Committee approval.

In order to progress with the further development of potential collaborative projects under the upcoming ESF call, it is recommended that Members approve the above criteria for use in considering any possible application. While it is not recommended that we proactively encourage match-funding requests, it is important to acknowledge that partners will be actively seeking match-funding opportunities at present. It is also recommended that Members agree not to consider requests for match funding once the application process closes in November.

A supplementary paper will be brought to a future meeting of the Committee to update Members on the detail of the discussions with key partners regarding potential ESF schemes for Belfast.

Draft Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: Success through Skills 2

The draft Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: Success through Skills 2 aims to enable people to access and progress up the skills ladder in order to:

- Raise the skills level of the whole workforce
- Raise productivity
- Increase levels of social inclusion by enhancing the employability of those currently excluded from the labour market and
- Secure Northern Ireland's future in the global marketplace.

While some progress has been noted over the last decade, forecasts suggest that a concerted effort is required if the productivity and skills targets set out in the Programme for Government are to be met.

Research carried out by Oxford Economics on behalf of DEL suggests that there will be:

- An increased need for higher level skills
- An increased need for up-skilling of the existing workforce
- A need to reduce sectoral imbalances
- An increased need for management and leadership skills and
- A need to attract skilled labour.

Similar research conducted by Oxford Economics in 2007 at a city council level mirrors these trends. Some of the key findings were:

- 47 out of 51 wards were below the government employment target at that time
- 12 wards were projected to have employment rates of under 50% by 2015 (i.e. more people not working than working)
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) benefit rate was running at 13% compared to unemployment benefit at 4% (although this has now risen to more than 7%) – the long-term sick share of the working age population was forecast to rise to around 13%
- Over half of the change in job stock in the decade ahead was expected to require graduate qualifications while less than 1 in 7 was forecast to require no qualifications
- Despite the creation of 26,000 new jobs in the decade to 2007, the number of residents employed in Belfast (i.e. those living in the city) actually fell by around 6,000 in that period. To compensate, net in-commuting increased significantly in this period
- Research undertaken more recently has shown that there are currently an estimated 108,000 people who work in Belfast but live outside Belfast (in-commuters). This represents approximately 55 per cent of the estimated total number of persons employed in the Belfast economy.

The strategy sets out a number of strategic goals. These reflect the focus on up-skilling and re-skilling, given that over 75% of the 2020 workforce has already completed compulsory school education at this point. The goals are:

1. Increase the proportion of those in employment with NQF (National Qualification Framework) Level 2 skills and above to 84-90% by 2020, from a baseline of 71.2% in 2008
2. Increase the proportion of those people in employment with NQF Level 3 skills and above to 68-76% by 2020, from a baseline of 55.6% in 2008
3. Increase the proportion of those people in employment with NQF Level 4-8 skills and above to 44-52% by 2020, from a baseline of 33.2% in 2008
4. Increase the numbers qualifying from Northern Ireland Higher Education institutions with graduate and post-graduate level courses in STEM subjects (with an emphasis on physical and biological sciences, mathematics and computer science, engineering and technology) by 25-30% in 2020.

DEL has suggested that these goals are only achievable if the economy recovers and if appropriate levels of financial assistance are available to invest in achieving these ambitions.

As part of the consultation exercise, respondents are asked to provide commentary on a number of questions. These include:

1. The strategy sets out where Northern Ireland is now and where it needs to be if we are to compete globally and build a fairer prosperous society. Do you agree with the analysis and aspirations?
2. The strategy builds on actions from Success through Skills 1 recognising that there needs to be a step change in the skills levels of the workforce in Northern Ireland. Do you agree with the range of actions outlined in the document?
3. Given the pressures on public finances, which actions do you believe will make the most difference and should be priority?

Comments on the draft strategy, in response to these questions, are attached to this report as Appendix 1. If endorsed by Members, it is proposed that these will be forwarded to DEL to constitute the Belfast City Council response to the consultation.

Resource Implications

The resource implications of the ESF match-funding are not clear at this stage but are unlikely to exceed current investment in employability initiatives by the Council. Once projects are defined, a report will be brought to Committee to request the approval of appropriate resources.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

- Notes the proposed approach to developing collaborative ESF projects
- Agrees to consider potential collaborative projects for endorsement at a future meeting of committee
- Notes the draft response to Success through Skills 2: the skills strategy for Northern Ireland and agrees that this be forwarded to DEL, once ratified by Council.

Decision Tracking

Proposed ESF project ideas to be brought to September 2010 meeting of the Development Committee.

Time frame: September 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key abbreviations

DEL – Department for Employment and Learning
EU – European Union
ESF – European Social Fund
HARTE – Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment
NQF – National Qualification Framework
STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Draft Belfast City Council response to Success through Skills 2: the skills strategy for Northern Ireland

Appendix 1:

Draft Belfast City Council response to Success through Skills 2: the skills strategy for Northern Ireland

1. General

- 1.1 Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recently published skills strategy for Northern Ireland as this seminal report and its recommendations will make an effective contribution to the future of the Northern Ireland economy.
- 1.2 Belfast City Council is the elected voice of the people – the channel through which the views and best interests of its citizens are represented. Our role as a Council is to improve quality of life across Belfast. We do this by providing strong leadership and direction and by providing the most efficient and effective customer-focused services. Our Corporate Plan for 2008-2011 sets out six main objectives that aim to realise the vision for a better Belfast. The themes are:
- City leadership - strong, fair, together;
 - Better opportunities for success across the city;
 - Better care for Belfast's environment - a clean, green city now and for the future;
 - Better support for people and communities;
 - Better services - listening and delivering;
 - Better value for money - a can-do, accountable, efficient council.

Our Development strategy has been built upon the Council's unique bank of knowledge on how to deliver city development using a wide range of expertise, from support for cultural and the arts, through to planning, economic development, project management, tourism development and through the Belfast: State of the City initiative. Under the 'Belfast: Capital City Strategy', the Council works to drive a competitive Belfast forward as the economic driver of the region.

The Council's role in supporting and promoting economic development within the city is a key priority identified within the Belfast: Capital City development agenda and described in detail by the associated Local Economic Development (LED) Plan – 'Staying Competitive'. The LED plan exemplifies the Council's efforts to make Belfast a better place in which to live, work and do business. It represents a commitment on behalf of the Council to drive economic competitiveness and prosperity while consolidating economic and social cohesion.

Our LED plan has a particular focus on enhancing skills and employability opportunities, and developing innovative ways of addressing the skills and employment challenges facing our city. In particular, City Council wishes to ensure citizens of Belfast are adequately equipped for the labour market.

- 1.3 The newly published skills strategy for consultation and its key recommendations has significant implications for Council's existing support for employability and skills development activities.

Council would stress it is keen to collaborate with DEL on a range of identified actions under two key priorities, namely:

- Connecting people and jobs
- Enhancing the level of skills in our most disadvantaged communities

2. The strategy sets out where Northern Ireland is now and where it needs to be if we are to compete globally and build a fairer prosperous society. Do you agree with the analysis and aspirations?

- 2.1 Council's priority is to create a successful, dynamic city by building sustainable communities and supporting economic growth and this balance between economic and social issues is a clear focus in our current corporate plan.

Council is encouraged to read of the twin goals set in the Skills Strategy, that is, to raise the levels of productivity and social inclusion with Northern Ireland, within the context of the Programme for Government.

- 2.2 Council concurs with the view that the skills of Northern Ireland's workforce have an important role to play in helping Northern Ireland to reach its full economic potential and that focus should be placed upon:

- those entering the labour market for the first time;
- up-skilling the existing workforce; and
- ensuring those currently excluded from the labour market are provided with the skills to compete for jobs, retain jobs and progress up the skills ladder

- 2.3 However Council wishes to highlight the important roles 'cities' play in driving growth and productivity. Belfast, as the region's capital city, is the engine for regional growth and therefore success or failure in Belfast has deep resonating implications not just for its suburbs and metropolitan area, but for the entire economy of Northern Ireland. The importance of increasing economic activity levels amongst the Belfast population through skills enhancement and job creation is therefore central to NI's challenge and must be accounted for in any new skills strategy for the region.

- 2.4 Much has been written with regards Belfast's role as a regional economic driver. This is most recently detailed in a series of reports produced by Oxford Economics for Council on the flow of people, skills, spending and investment in and out of Belfast. Our quarterly economic indicator reports analyse existing economic data on a local and regional level and supplement the key trends with rolling consultations with industry experts. On a quarterly basis this approach continues to produce a worthwhile and relevant profile of the local economic environment, helping Council to adjust its responses and to tailor our support measures accordingly. We would be happy to share this information with DEL.

The analysis provided within the skills strategy mirrors our analysis recently carried out by Oxford Economics including recognition of:

- high levels of economic inactivity – almost 30% of population of working age not in employment;
- high concentrations of deprivation and inactivity;
- over dependence of the economy on the public sector; and
- increasingly high levels of long term unemployed

2.5 Further research conducted by Oxford Economics on behalf of Council (Capital Flows Report 2009) highlights that challenges are magnified in Belfast owing to the bulk of the employment being located within the city. According to this recent research:

Belfast city area is the major employer of persons living in and outside the city. There are currently an estimated 108,000 people who work in Belfast but live outside Belfast (in-commuters), up from 96,000 in the 2001 Census year, with higher levels of in-commuting expected in future. This represents approximately 55 per cent of the estimated total number of persons employed in the Belfast economy. In addition to this, there are daily flows of roughly 12,000 post-primary pupils who are resident outside Belfast, as well as inflows of shoppers, evening economy customers and domestic and international tourists. All of these flows together add to the infrastructure pressures on the city, as well as of course bringing significant economic benefits.

Belfast is a service centre for the whole NI economy - one-third of all NI service sector jobs are located in Belfast. Belfast also has half of all NI's hi-tech manufacturing jobs, 3 in 5 computer and related service jobs and two-thirds of creative media and arts jobs. Belfast is also home to two-thirds of NI's largest 50 companies and one-half of foreign-owned businesses.

The area is a magnet for service sector foreign direct investment (FDI) and attracts the majority of service sector FDI in NI (two-thirds based on Invest NI figures for planned investment by and assistance to foreign-owned client companies). The majority of inward FDI projects to Belfast are from US companies, followed by ROI and Indian companies. The most common activities are design, development and

testing; retail; sales, marketing and support; business services; R&D and manufacturing (though with the exception of transport equipment/aerospace sector, Belfast attracts a very small share of inward manufacturing FDI.). From a productivity 'moving up the value-added chain' perspective, it is positive that several of these activities are high-end.

While Belfast 'imports' food products, construction services and manufactured goods from elsewhere in NI (and outside), in return it 'exports' many of its services to the rest of NI (especially where the same level or quality of services are not available locally) and outside NI. Three-quarters of service exports originated from Belfast in 2006 (the latest year this date is available). Without Belfast's offerings in certain activities (e.g. TV, software, insurance, legal services), other parts of NI would have to import from outside the region. In other words Belfast's economic role is not 'zero-sum' – the regional economy benefits from economic activity in and from Belfast.

Belfast is a Gateway for tourists and a provider of unique retail, cultural, entertainment and visitor opportunities which are not available elsewhere in the region. The area also provides specialist health services and has almost 130,000 annual hospital admissions by non-Belfast residents.

Belfast is a provider of further and higher education. However the Belfast workplace economy is heavily dependent on commuter skills, particularly at the higher end of the skills and occupation spectrum. In the 2001 Census year, 33 per cent (one-third) of in-commuters' highest qualification was graduate level (NVQ 4/5), compared to 15 per cent for persons with no qualifications.

From a more negative perspective Belfast contributes disproportionately to the number of people living regionally in disadvantaged areas. However, delivering economic growth in Belfast, which will be necessary to help to improve economic outcomes for persons living in some of Belfast's most disadvantaged wards (and thereby close employment differentials), will also benefit all residents and commuters.

Looking ahead, in the short-term an abrupt end to Belfast's 'golden era' is predicted with almost 10,000 net job losses between 2008 and 2010 – equivalent to the gains achieved over the longer 4-year period 2004-2008. During the recession, the number of non-employed working age residents is

predicted to rise by almost 6,000 and net commuting is projected to fall (as there are fewer jobs to commute to). Looking to the longer-term, the picture is more positive. Belfast, and urban economies generally, should return to enjoy growth as demand for 'graduate hungry' tradable service workers continues to grow and the national economy rebalances from domestic-led to external export-led growth. Belfast's contribution to total NI net employment growth is forecast to increase from 23 per cent between 1998 and 2008 to 27 per cent in the long-term (2010-2030), although this is not sufficiently strong, and commuters are still assumed to take a high proportion of jobs, to bring Belfast's resident unemployment level back down to its recent low.

2.6 Furthermore, similar research conducted by Oxford Economics in 2007 at a city council level again mirrors the trends as detailed in the Skills Strategy consultation document. Some of the key findings were:

- 47 out of 51 wards were below the government employment target at that time
- 12 wards were projected to have employment rates of under 50% by 2015 (i.e. more people not working than working)
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) benefit rate was running at 13% compared to unemployment benefit at 4% (although this has now risen to more than 7%) – the long-term sick share of the working age population was forecast to rise to around 13%
- Over half of the change in job stock in the decade ahead was expected to require graduate qualifications while less than 1 in 7 was forecast to require no qualifications
- Despite the creation of 26,000 new jobs in the decade to 2007, the number of resident employed in Belfast (i.e. those living in the city) actually fell by around 6,000 in that period. To compensate, net in-commuting increased significantly in this period
- Research undertaken more recently has shown that there are currently an estimated 108,000 people who work in Belfast but live outside Belfast (in-commuters). This represents approximately 55 per cent of the estimated total number of persons employed in the Belfast economy.

- 2.7 Council recognises that skills are at the heart of a modern knowledge economy and agrees with the need for focus on higher end skills. As global competition reduces the ability to compete on price, increasingly quality becomes the key determinant of long-term growth. This is because global economic change requires a workforce that is both highly skilled and flexible to ensure businesses can take advantage of new technologies. Skills improvement is therefore critical to Belfast if we are to position ourselves as an economically competitive city, and region.
- 2.8 However Council would argue that increasing employment levels cannot be done by completely ignoring the lower value added sectors as these can potentially provide an avenue through which people can get into employment (or back into employment). There needs to be considerable focus on skills development, with detailed work required on what skills are needed for the current and future employment opportunities.
- 2.9 Although we recognise the important role of skills in a developing urban economy our research also quantifies and describes the extent of the 'two tailed' skills challenge for Belfast. On the one hand high end, graduates skills are essential to drive growth in high value sectors. On the other hand there is a need to tackle the inactivity problems as many of Belfast's citizens are, and will continue to be passed by future growth.
- 2.10 The persistence of long term unemployment in Belfast remains to be a major challenge for Belfast, particularly given the geographical focus in the north and west of the city. It is therefore imperative that future targeted interventions at community level are put in place in an attempt to break through the long-standing cycle of unemployment that exists.
- 2.11 One of Council's training and development programmes entitled 'Growing a Shared City' focuses on the needs of both council and inter-agency staff when delivering services in an increasingly shared city. An understanding of the political, social and economic benefits of diversity is key to the city's growth and should be reflected in the final skills strategy.
- 2.12 The significant challenge to maintain and improve the skills base suggests also suggests a need to attract skilled people to NI. Council agrees that for the workforce to grow to desired levels, a certain amount of in-migration of suitable skilled people will be required.

- 2.13 However with an outflow of graduates from Belfast universities and FE colleges seeking increased opportunities across the water, efforts must be made to retain and attract back graduates and well-qualified persons into the labour market - aimed at NI students graduating locally, NI students graduating in GB and NI professionals working in GB, ROI and beyond. Such a flow of skilled labour could help to address managerial and diversity of graduate subject weaknesses. Funding options should be explored to make graduate living more likely e.g., incentivising graduate living through stamp duty relief or repayment of student loans.
- 2.14 As well as attracting skilled people to NI, there is also a need to actively attract unskilled people for jobs that cannot be filled locally. This has been and still is an issue for NI.
- 2.15 Council is investing significant resources in attracting people to Belfast and making our city a better place to live. One of our key objectives is to promote Belfast as a place to do business and to help grow a sustainable, forward looking economy supported by a flexible and dynamic workforce. To achieve this we promote business start-up, support business growth, foster innovation and development in key growth sectors, promote the benefits of Belfast as a dynamic business location and help create the right skills to match local business needs. Our key themes include:
1. Starting a business – we offer a business advice and signposting service to anyone thinking of starting a business in Belfast and hold regular enterprise workshops on a wide range of topics for small businesses and for those thinking about becoming an entrepreneur. We also host the Belfast Entrepreneurs' Network (BEN) and a discussion forum for businesses located across the city.
 2. Growing your business - We provide a range of business development programmes to help ambitious businesses in Belfast enhance their own competitiveness and growth potential. Our high quality, practical support offers businesses at any stage of their development with specialist support on issues such as access to public sector, procurement, business improvement, internationalisation, financial management, franchising, product development, sales and marketing development and strategic planning.

3. **Developing your business internationally - We provide a range of services for Belfast companies thinking about entering new markets. Our support is offered via World Trade Centre Belfast and covers all aspects of international trade including global sourcing, finding international business partners and identifying new customers. We also offer a free Investor Gateway service to companies considering establishing a base in Belfast.**

4. **Supporting our key sectors - We support key growth sectors that have the potential to make a significant contribution to Belfast's economy including advanced manufacturing, creative industries, environmental industries and independent retail. For each sector we provide bespoke programmes of support, offer an information and signposting service, act as a broker between the sector and other business support agencies and profile the issues that impact on the competitiveness of the sectors**

5. **Enhancing skills and employability - We develop innovative ways of addressing the skills and employment challenges facing our city. In partnership with others we work actively to remove barriers to employment for Belfast's citizens, improve access to employment and training opportunities, improve skills levels of the workforce and ensure that local residents can share in future successes. Our key skills and employability actions include:**
 - **working in partnership with key agencies within the public, private, voluntary and statutory sectors to maximise impact and promote joint working and better co-ordination of services to workless people, employees and employers**
 - **supporting targeted employability initiatives to help people find employment**
 - **providing active outreach to engage workless people and increase access to services in disadvantaged areas**
 - **providing a mechanism to link local residents to new job opportunities and providing high quality customised training to give them the skills for the jobs**

3. The strategy builds on actions from Success through Skills 1 recognising that there needs to be a step change in the skills levels of the workforce in Northern Ireland. Do you agree with the range of actions outlined in the document?
 - 3.1 Council welcomes the development of a skills strategy based on the needs of employers and better alignment between demand and supply.
 - 3.2 Understanding demand for skills is a key issue for Belfast and Council supports the recommendation to 'simplify the demand side advisory infrastructure' and to articulate employer demand and broker appropriate responses. We welcome the emphasis on incorporating the Sector Skills Councils, the Workforce Development Forums, the Future Skills Action Groups and the new 'Skills Solutions' service in achieving this goal. We would highlight that Council also acts as a broker between sectors and other business support agencies including the advanced manufacturing, creative, environmental and retail sectors.
 - 3.3 One of the themes in the original 'Success through Skills' was 'understanding the demand for skills' with a focus on improving the quality of information available on the current labour market. Council is a member of the current LEMIS Stakeholder Forum and finds the sharing of real-time performance management information to be of significant value. Council would therefore urge DEL to consider the sharing of information on all Department programmes (such as Steps to Work and Pathways to Employment) at a citywide level to ensure a fully responsive approach to changes in the employment market. This intelligence would be an integral element of any future action plans and would allow Council (and others) to set in place a credible monitoring and tracking system so that we can not only identify progress but also look at ways of adapting our services to maximise outputs.
 - 3.4 It is critical that anecdotal information regarding skills gaps, particularly at the high end, need to be continuously addressed as this will have a fundamental affect on future investment to the region. In understanding the demand for skills, Council recommends there should be greater engagement by universities and colleges.
 - 3.5 In our view more focus should also be given to substantially increasing resource management knowledge at all levels of education and training in NI.

- 3.6 The strategy also proposes to improve productivity by increasing the skills levels of the workforce through education/pre-employment training, up-skilling those in the workforce, increasing skills in certain subject areas to reduce sectoral imbalances and increasing management and leadership skills at all levels.
- 3.7 The most effective training programmes are considered to be those tailored to both the business and the employee and therefore any future strategy must allow for flexible provision.
- 3.8 For many, individuals' travelling to another part of the city to undertake training requires two separate bus journeys which has significant cost implications to the individual. Council would emphasise that measures are needed to enable people to take part in training i.e., helping to cover the costs of childcare and travel. Council's Hospitality and Retail Training Employment (HARTE) programme addresses this issue.
- 3.9 Training and skills for migrants in languages should also be encouraged – not only the English language but also the technical language required for specific jobs. For example, Gems and Allstate NI hold classes to integrate migrant workers with staff from NI by training them together on the language for the job and this has yielded positive results in encouraging integration with the workplace.
- 3.10 Training and skills should be offered for migrants who have links in their home country or other countries. Opportunities should be created for these individuals to become ambassadors for NI in these countries or to become entrepreneurs or individuals with the skills to build trade links, thus growing the NI economy.
- 3.11 In the up-skilling of those in the workplace, Council is extremely well placed to serve as a strategic partner in enhancing the skills levels of the city's small businesses, especially with regard to the development of management skills.
- 3.12 With almost three-quarters of companies located in Belfast employing less than 10 people (73.5%) and 87.3% employing fewer than 20, the importance of the SME sector to our local economy cannot be overemphasised. Our economic development plan is heavily skewed towards the development of this sector in the city.

- 3.13 Through a wide range of structured programmes and initiatives to enhance competitiveness, we assist owner/managers of SMEs with the development of their management skills and practices in a bid to stimulate the growth of their business. Given our experience in helping stimulate SME growth, Council can play a fundamental role in encouraging more employers, especially SMEs and micro-businesses, to consider management and leadership training and development.
- 3.14 However for many small businesses, the cost of training, both financial and time-related acts as a barrier to develop and train their current workforce and this is particularly prevalent amongst SMEs. The skills strategy must address how the barriers to providing workplace training can be overcome e.g., offering Government grants for training purposes.
- 3.15 Council welcomes the recommendation to tackle the skills barriers to employment and employability. However with a myriad of schemes, initiatives, qualifications and strategies to address the issues of inactivity and skills development there is evidence of a worrying lack of clarity both in terms of individuals and employers as to skills levels, availability of schemes and points of contact (Belfast Skills Demand and Supply Research, 2008).
- 3.16 There is therefore a need for respective roles and responsibilities of central government, local government, the private sector and social, community and voluntary sector to be clarified and for a single skills contact point to be established providing information on all skills related issues to employers, the unemployed, recruitment agencies and universities.
- 3.17 Council's Belfast Skills Demand and Supply Research, 2008 reports that employers, particularly small businesses, are confused by the plethora of qualifications that are in the marketplace. They find it difficult to understand 'what means what' and to measure the weight of the various types of qualification offered from universities, FE colleges, training organisations, employers and community centres. Those sourcing migrant workers experience difficulties in interpreting and benchmarking international qualifications. There is clearly a need to identify the weighting of courses and their compatibility to sectors.

- 3.18 As well as addressing the lack of clarity with respect to skills in Belfast, steps must also be taken to reduce the duplication of services across the city. For example, in the last round of European Social Funding (ESF) 73 projects across NI were successful in drawing down funding for similar employment and skills related activities. Of these, 35 (48%) were focused on working within the Belfast area.
- 3.19 Careful consideration must be given to all issues holding back or restricting the ability of agencies to improve the skills levels in Belfast's least successful labour markets.
4. Given the pressures on public finances, which actions do you believe will make the most difference and should be priority?
- 4.1 We feel that the most pressing skills issues are to tackle inactivity and to ensure a steady flow of appropriate graduates to both work and live in the city. This is not to say that issues of skills progression, essential skills and management and leadership are not important but graduates and inactivity are in our view key priorities.
- 4.2 Although Belfast ranks in the upper quartile of UK cities in terms of those attaining degree level qualifications, it also has a disproportionately high level of citizens who have no or very low levels of qualifications. The deeper negative impact of the recession on poorer communities may further widen these inequalities and lead to more imbalanced growth, inhibiting the overall economic growth of the region. Steps must therefore be taken to enhance the levels of skills in our most disadvantaged communities e.g., developing learning neighbourhood programmes in the most deprived wards and delivering bespoke training provision to overcome skills disparities experienced by long-term unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities, older workers and ex-offenders.
- 4.3 Council believes their needs to be a balance between graduate high-end skills and low-end skills. Research suggests that Belfast has an 'hourglass economy' – i.e. there is a shortage of skills in the administrative middle management occupations. According to employers, these gaps are harder to fill as more students pursue higher education rather than full-time employment or workplace training.

- 4.4 Skills are also not all about graduate qualifications. So-called 'business readiness' skills such as customer services, literacy, numeracy and professionalism are also important and often sited as key weaknesses in current labour supply.**
- 4.5 As with all public agencies, Council is working hard to identify how we can maximise the impact of our interventions. To this end, in early 2009, Council commenced work with key partners on the development of an agreed employability and skills agenda. Since then, a range of meetings have taken place and a draft Belfast Employability and Skills strategy has been developed. DEL has been a key partner in this process and remains supportive of developing a collaborative approach to employability and skills in the city. We are grateful that DEL has provided a commitment to working with Council on delivery of some of the actions identified in our strategy and action plan, namely around two priorities including connecting people and jobs and enhancing the level of skills in our most disadvantaged communities.**
- 4.6 Skills development activities are extremely complex and can therefore benefit greatly from cross stakeholder intervention. Council believes that working with other agencies and local employers will be a key component to the successful implementation of the new skills strategy as no one single organisation will be able to make the required step change in the skills levels of the workforce in NI.**
- 4.7 The impact of the economic downturn also means all of the public sector needs to find radical new solutions to not only deliver better value for money, but also better local services more tailored to local needs. Council is pleased that the strategy highlights that lessons will be learned from other skills strategies across GB and Ireland.**
- 4.8 We recommend that examples of best practice worth benchmarking against include 'City Strategies' which aim to tackle worklessness in the most disadvantaged communities in GB – many of which are in major cities and other urban areas. City Strategies are based on the idea that local partners can deliver more if they combine and align their efforts behind shared priorities, and are given more freedom to try out new ideas and to tailor services in response to local need. City Strategies have been explored through the work of the Belfast Employment and Skills Board.**

4.9 Total Place is also a new initiative that looks at how a 'whole area' approach to public services can lead to better services at less cost. It seeks to give local providers the incentive to work together in new ways for the benefit of their clients and citizens and to identify and avoid overlap and duplication between organisations – delivering a step change in both service improvement and efficiency at the local level. The Total Place initiative should be considered.

4.10 To maximise the impact of council's interventions in the employability field, Council will join up efforts and work with DEL on an agreed agenda - avoiding duplication and overlap with the services and initiatives of the department and other key partners.

We are currently working on the development of an integrated economic strategy for the city and would hope the department will agree to work with us on this in the coming year. Any agreed skills and employability related activity will become an integral element of this integrated economic strategy for Belfast.

4.11 A final priority for Council is that progress towards actions in the skills strategy must be monitored overtime to assess the ongoing performance towards achieving step changes in the skills levels of the workforce. Results in performance should be shared with key stakeholders to allow for interventions to be adjusted accordingly.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Council is in agreement that NI should aspire to compete globally, building a fairer and more prosperous society and we support the priorities and general principles set out within the draft consultation document. There are, however, a number of general and specific comments that have been outlined within this response document which it would like to see reflected in the final Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland.

5.2 Belfast City Council is grateful for the opportunity to provide a response to this consultation document and would welcome further opportunities to consult on how it can contribute to the implementation of this important strategy."

During discussion, the following points were made:

European Social Fund Projects

- Whilst the projects should have a City-wide impact, extra emphasis should be placed on areas with levels of high unemployment and low skills but within an overall strategic outlook for the City; and
- the key industry sectors which were accessible to those who were not currently in the labour market should not be mutually exclusive but include other sectors such as manufacturing, private industry and entrepreneurship.

Draft Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland

- the strategic goals should put more emphasis on a need to provide those people who required them with essential literacy and numeracy skills.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to the foregoing comments being incorporated and, where appropriate, agreed that these be linked in with the Council's essential skills strategy.

European Union Unit Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report which provided an update of the most recent work of the European Union Unit:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the EU unit provides regular updates in relation to current or future activity. This report comprises an update on two items:

- 1. Attendance at the annual Brussels Open Days event**
- 2. Participation in the Committee of the Regions EU Cohesion Policy Monitoring Platform**

Key Issues

- 1. Attendance at the annual Brussels Open Days event**

2010 marks the eighth year that the European Commission in partnership with the Committee of the Regions and cities across Europe host the EU Open Days event. This event held throughout Brussels from 4 – 7 October is structured around 100 seminars providing emerging EU policies and funding opportunities. Many of

the 200 plus regional offices based in Brussels including the NI Executive Office host thematic workshops and showcase their strengths. The most topical EU policy under development currently is the new cohesion policy which will shape EU structural funds from 2014 onwards. This policy will be presented and discussed along with future opportunities for cities and regions.

For several years Belfast City Council and its stakeholders have participated in the Open Days and also hosted events in the official programme. For 2010 BCC has the opportunity to participate in a number of ways.

Quartiers En Crise Urban Panel:

Although BCC has withdrawn as member of this network since the AGM in June 2010, the city is legally obliged to see out the 2010 work commitments.

Until June of this year, BCC held the role of Treasurer of the QEC network and during our time as Treasurer an application was made to the Committee of the Regions to host an event as part of the Open Days week in October. The application was successful and as Belfast was a named partner we have been asked to fulfil our commitment to the event. The event theme is:

‘Agenda 2020: A New Paradigm For Local Urban Development.’

Our commitment to the event requires a BCC representative taking part in a panel discussion with the mayors of other cities such as Turin, Gothenburg and Prague, senior Commission officials such as Dirk Ahner from DG Regio and MEPs. It is recommended that the Chair of the Development Committee represent the city at this event and take part in the panel discussion.

As such BCC will co-host the event in the NI Executive Office on 7 October 2010 along with the city of Turin and high level representatives from the EU Commission and EU Parliament. ‘Agenda 2020: A New Paradigm For Local Urban Development’, will reflect on the lessons emerging from the last 20 years of EU urban policy and feed into the current debate that DG Regio has launched in relation to the urban dimension and funding opportunities in future cohesion policy.

As Chair of Development, Councillor Conor Maskey has been invited to present Belfast City Council’s experience of urban development and in particular the city’s experience of European funding.

The cost of travel and accommodation will be met by Quartiers En Crise and the EU Commission.

NI Interreg Partnerships:

The five cross border Interreg Partnerships in NI have attended the Open Days each year and traditionally co-host a promotional reception in the NI Executive Office.

BCC's representatives on the Comet Interreg Board will not attend the Open Days as the Board is only funded to send the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board (Alderman Nigel Hamilton of Newtownabbey Borough Council and Councillor Darin Ferguson of Carrickfergus Borough Council respectively) and the BCC Comet Interreg Manager who acts as the Secretariat of the Board.

Resource Implications

All costs including subsistence, travel and accommodation for the Interreg manager will be reimbursed by the Special EU Programmes Body under the Interreg IVA Programme. Travel and accommodation for the Chair will be reimbursed by QEC. Travel, accommodation and subsistence for the European Manager is from the European Unit budget 2010/2011. The cost overall should not exceed £1500.

Recommendations:

Committee are asked to approve:

Attendance and any attached costs, other than those to be reimbursed by SEUPB and QEC for the Chair, the European Manager and the Interreg Manager to attend the annual Brussels Open Days event

Decision tracker

Further to approval the Chair, the European manager and the Interreg Manager will attend the annual Brussels Open Days event in Brussels from 4 – 7 October 2010.

Time line: October 2010
Reporting Officer: Laura Leonard

2. Participation in the Committee of the Regions EU Cohesion Policy Monitoring Platform

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the political assembly that provides the regional and local levels with a voice in EU policy and EU legislation.

The EU Treaties oblige the Commission, Parliament and EU Council to consult the Committee of the Regions whenever new proposals are made in areas that affect the regional or local level. The CoR has 344 members from the 27 EU countries, and its work is organised in six different commissions. The Commission examine proposals, debate and discuss in order to write official opinions on key issues.

All UK members of the CoR are elected politicians representing local authorities or the devolved bodies of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the secretariat to the UK Delegation to the CoR.

Although the UK Delegation is formally nominated by the UK Government, it receives proposals from the following bodies:

- The Local Government Association of England and Wales (in consultation with English regional bodies);
- The Scottish Executive (in consultation with the Scottish Parliament and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities);
- The Welsh Assembly (in consultation with the Welsh Local Government Association); the NI Assembly (in conjunction with the NI Local Government Association).

The secretariat to the UK Delegation is provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) offices in London and Brussels. The secretariat coordinates briefings for members attending meetings; gives feedback to local authorities on CoR developments and opinions; and promotes the work of the Delegation both within the UK and throughout the EU. The national local government associations and devolved bodies are key to determining not only the candidates for UK CoR nominations, but also proposing the policy the UK Delegation should take. The CoR too benefits indirectly from the expertise of the national associations and their member authorities, by drawing on the best practices and expertise they can offer.

The NI Committee of the Region members are nominated by the NI Assembly (2 places) and the NI Local Government Association (2 places). These are Councillor Jonathan Bell (full member UK), Francie Molloy MLA (full member UK), John Dallot MLA (alternative member UK) and Councillor Arnold Hatch (alternative member UK).

In 2010, the Committee of the Regions established the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. It will act as a vehicle for the local and regional authorities throughout Europe to have a say in the policy process of the new Europe 2020 strategy. The EU 2020 strategy developed and accepted by the EU Commission in June 2010, is the successor to the Lisbon Strategy and will focus on initiatives to build Europe's knowledge and innovation and to create a more sustainable economy, high employment and social inclusion. The EU 2020 monitoring Platform will monitor the roll out of EU 2020 and how it will affect cities and regions.

The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform aims to:

- Involve local and regional authorities in order to ensure better implementation of policies linked to Europe 2020 goals
- Examine the evolving relationship between the Europe 2020 strategy and cohesion policy
- Monitor the involvement of the local and regional level in the strategy's governance process
- Identify the obstacles encountered by local and regional authorities in implementing the Europe 2020 strategy
- Stimulate exchange of information, experiences and best practices

Membership of The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform is drawn from 115 regional and local authorities from the 27 EU member states who:

- Contribute to shaping the Committee of the Regions' political positions on Europe 2020 related issues
- Collaborate to the Europe 2020 strategy monitoring process

- Exchange views, experiences, best practices and learn from each other
- Co-operate in Europe 2020 oriented projects
- Participate in Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform events (workshops, political conferences)

The Monitoring Platform will undertake its work through online discussions and promotion policy workshops, questionnaires and surveys, monitoring reports, thematic initiatives and social networking tools. For example, it will hold two specific lobbying events for local and regional authorities during the Brussels Open Days.

As capital city and regional driver for NI, it is critical that Belfast is engaged in the design process and debates that will shape future EU policies and ensure we benefit from future EU funding. Members are asked to approve the BCC's membership of the EU2020 monitoring platform through the representation of the Chair of Development and the EU Manager. There is no direct cost related to membership although BCC's representatives will be invited to various EU events both in the UK and Brussels in the coming years until the EU funding policies and programmes post 2013 are agreed. Committee approval will be sought when such attendance is required.

Resource Implications:

There is no direct cost related to membership of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. Costs relating to attendance of the Chair and European Manager at related events is allocated from the European Unit budget 2010/2011.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to approve membership of and participation in the European 2020 Monitoring Platform through the Chair of Development and the European Manager

Decision tracker:

Further to ratification the European Manager will report to Committee to seek approval for costs related to attendance at European 2020 Monitoring Platform events.

Key Abbreviations

QEC:	Quartiers En Crise – Neighbourhoods in crisis network
EU:	European Union
SEUPB:	Special EU Programmes Body
CoR:	Committee of the Regions
DG Regio:	Directorate General Regio – EU Commission Department dealing with regional policy”

After discussion, the Committee:

- (i) approved the attendance of the Chairman, the European Manager and the Interreg Manager (or their nominees) at the annual Brussels Open Day event from 4th till 7th October, 2010; and
- (ii) agreed that the Council become a member of the European 2020 Monitoring Platform and that it be represented on that Body by the Chairman of the Committee and the European Manager.

Titanic Quarter Memorandum of Understanding

Several Members expressed concern in relation to a number of issues contained within the Memorandum of Understanding, particularly in relation to the perceived lack of consultation with the public. The view was expressed also that representatives of the Titanic Watch and the Titanic Quarter Limited should be invited to a future meeting to address any concerns of the Members.

It was suggested that the aforementioned matters could be incorporated into the bi-annual meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which it had been agreed would be held to discuss the overall Titanic Signature Project, the next meeting of which was due to be held in September.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report and agreed that all the issues outlined should be referred to the special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which would be held in September to discuss issues around the Titanic Signature Project.

Council Appointees – Community and Play Centre Committees

The Community Development Manager reported that the Constitution for Community Centre Committees allowed for appointees of the Council to those groups “from time to time, as appropriate, with at least one of those being a Member of the Development Committee”. She reported that a number of nominations had been received for appointment to several of the Committees.

The Committee approved the nomination of the following Members to Community and Play Centre Committees:

- Councillor Kingston to the Hammer Community Centre Committee;
- Councillor Kyle to the Avoniel Play Centre Committee;
- Councillor L. Patterson to the Duncairn Community Centre Committee;
and
- Councillor F. Rodgers to the Concorde Community Centre Committee.

Belfast Titanic and Maritime Heritage Study

The Committee was reminded that there were a number of exciting Maritime developments underway, including the construction of the Titanic Signature Project, which was scheduled to open by April, 2012, the restoration of the Nomadic and the opening of the barge "Confiance" as an interpretative centre in early September by the charity Lagan Legacy. There were also a number of significant tourism initiatives which were making Belfast's Titanic and wider Maritime heritage more accessible to visitors.

The Head of Economic Initiatives stated that the Council, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the Department for Social Development, had commissioned a study to map current assets and provision in the area of Maritime and Titanic heritage, but to look also at possible future developments and provision. The contract had been awarded to a consortium incorporating CHL Consulting, Colin Stutt Consulting and FM Planning, whose expertise covered a wide range of areas. A draft report had now been received and the suggested measures included:

- ensuring Titanic-related projects provided a coherent visitor experience by 2012;
- the development of a more co-ordinated approach, including possible joint ticketing among attractions;
- small-scale development of certain key locations in order to improve both access and understanding – particularly the Clarendon Dock and Sailortown where earlier and more diverse stories could be told;
- more emphasis on animating the river itself – in order to be recognised as a Maritime heritage destination, Belfast must offer more water-based experiences, including the completion of the SS Nomadic, the barge "Confiance" and possibly the HMS Caroline;

- the development of an integrated signage strategy, with improvements to the Titanic Quarter access, crucially including public transport; and
- longer term actions to include possibly the preservation of shipyard steam cranes, access to the Samson or Goliath cranes, a water taxi service and a footbridge linking the Abercorn Basin with Clarendon Dock.

The consultants had made a presentation of their work to a group which included the commissioning bodies and the permanent secretaries of the Departments of Trade and Industry and of Culture, Arts and Leisure. Both the work itself and the underlying approach had been enthusiastically welcomed.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the HMS Caroline was due to be decommissioned and passed into the ownership of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, the trustees of which would make a decision as to whether the ship should remain in Belfast or be transferred to Portsmouth. In either case, it was intended that the ship would become a heritage asset and a tourist attraction. The HMS Caroline had been in Belfast since 1924 and was of very considerable historical importance being ranked second on the navy's list to HMS Victory. She had fought in the only major naval battle of World War I and, whilst in Belfast, had played a key part in World War II's Battle of the Atlantic. Her centenary and that of the start of World War I would take place in 2014.

She explained that the draft Maritime Heritage Study had recommended that the HMS Caroline remain in Belfast but had acknowledged that there were associated capital and annual revenue costs. The Council had written to the National Museum of the Royal Navy to explain that work had commenced on the Maritime Study and that time was required to reach a decision on whether or not a request would be made to keep the ship in Belfast. The Council had requested until March, 2011 to allow for central government and the Council to consider this in the context of strategic priorities and budget availability. Confirmation was still awaited as to whether or not that would be an acceptable timeframe.

Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee agrees:

- (i) to note the recommendations contained within the draft report and that a final version would be submitted to the Committee for agreement;
- (ii) that officers continue to collaborate in the area of maritime and titanic heritage;

- (iii) that officers, together with a range of stakeholders, continue to investigate the feasibility of retaining the HMS Caroline in Belfast and identify the costs which might be involved, with a view to a report being submitted to the Committee in December; and
- (iv) that a site visit to the Titanic Signature Project be undertaken on a date to be agreed in consultation with the Chairman.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that, if possible, a visit to the Painthall Studies be included within the site visit to the Titanic Signature Project.

Community Festivals Fund – Amendments to Guidance Notes and Application Form

The Committee was reminded that the Council had accepted a commission from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to administer the Community Festivals Fund in the Belfast area. In January, 2010 the Department had announced that £79,000 was to be awarded to the Council, which was an increase of just over 2% on the previous year's award. The Committee, at its meeting on 13th January, had agreed to provide match funding, making an amount of £158,000 available in the Community Festivals Fund. Of that, 10% was ring-fenced for administrative costs.

The Committee was advised that three out of the four rounds of funding had been delivered to date, which represented an investment of £106,650 in twenty-seven community festivals. Applications to the fourth round of funding, which was for festivals taking place between 1st January and 31st March, 2011, would open on 20th September, with a closing date of 22nd October, 2010. The amount of funding available for that round was £35,550.

The Head of Economic Initiatives reported that, of the forty-eight applications which had been received this year, 56% had been awarded funding; 29% had been refused funding; and 15% had been deemed ineligible. Communication with both successful and unsuccessful applicants had indicated that the current guidance notes and application form lacked clarity and might have caused confusion, leading to potentially worthy festivals receiving a low score or being deemed ineligible. Accordingly, it had been agreed to revise the guidance notes and application form.

The Committee approved the amendments to the Community Festivals Fund guidance notes and application form, a copy of which was available for inspection on the Council's website.

Festivals Forum Action Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

As Members are aware, at the Arts Sub-Committee meeting on 6 August 2004, the Committee agreed to the establishment of a Festivals Forum. The Forum was set up in recognition of the contribution festivals can make to Belfast in terms of promoting economic regeneration, driving tourism and enhancing community relations.

In 2009-2010 Belfast City Council invested approximately £750,000 into festivals across the city through the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit (Community Festivals Fund and Annual/Multi-Annual Fund) and Good Relations Unit (Peace III City of Festivals Fund). Festivals and events are identified as a development lever to attract visitors to Belfast within the new draft Belfast integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010–14.

The Festivals Forum provides a mechanism for the Council to engage with festivals in order to grow and develop the city's festival offering.

The Forum currently has over 120 members from a wide range of community, arts and heritage organisations. It meets quarterly to share information and discuss strategic and citywide issues. Achievements of the Festivals Forum to date include the development of a Belfast Festivals Calendar, disseminated throughout Northern Ireland in January and June each year, and the delivery of tailored skills development and training courses, designed to build capacity within festival organisations.

The Festivals Action Plan for 2010 was agreed at the February Forum meeting and is attached at Appendix 1. A £30,000 budget for the Festivals Action Plan has been included in the Departmental budget for 2010–11. An additional £20,000 is to be requested from PEACE III to implement specific actions from the Peace III City of Festivals programme, including the development of a Festivals Charter and cross-border networking.

Key objectives for the Festivals Forum in 2010 include developing a strategy for festivals across the city which will outline how best to: maximise opportunities including the Titanic centenary; work with funders such as Peace III to ensure there is mutual understanding of aims and objectives of funders and festival organisers; and identify more opportunities to work in partnership to ensure better efficiencies.

Key Issues

Neither the Festivals Forum nor individual member organisations have the resources to deliver the Festivals Action Plan. Belfast City Council is not in a position to recruit additional staff. The Forum agreed that in order to ensure the successful implementation of the Festivals Action Plan, they would require additional resources, specifically a Festivals Development Co-ordinator.

The engagement of a co-ordinator would ensure that the full potential of Belfast as a city of festivals is exploited. The co-ordinator would be charged with the strategic development of the Festivals Forum and of festivals within the city in line with the priorities identified in the Action Plan.

It is anticipated that the co-ordinator will be contracted full-time from December 2010 to June 2011 inclusive (based on timescales for Peace III spend). The budget of £50,000 will cover the co-ordinator costs, overheads and include an operational budget to implement the Action Plan.

The co-ordinator will be appointed through open competition, contracted by Belfast City Council on behalf of the Festivals Forum and managed by the Forum's Strategy Subgroup, which consists of representatives from the Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit, ArtsEkta, Culturlann, Festival of Fools and Open House Festival. The co-ordinator will be based in the office of one of the festival providers.

A letter requesting this support from Michele Devlin, Chair of the Festivals Forum and Director of Belfast Film Festival, is included at Appendix 2.

Resource Implications

Financial

£30,000 towards the implementation of the Festivals Action Plan has been included in the Departmental budget for 2010–11.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to the Festivals Action Plan including the appointment of a Festivals Development Co-ordinator.

Decision Tracking

Further to Members' agreement, a report will be prepared and submitted to the Good Relations Partnership in September.

Timeframe: September 2010 Reporting Officer: Kerrie Sweeney

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Festivals Action Plan 2010

Appendix 1

Festivals Forum Action Plan 2010/2011

Core Themes

- Celebration of Culture and Arts
- Community cohesion
- Shared space
- Cultural tourism
- Civic pride
- Internationalism

Priorities for Action	Budget indicative* –	Lead	Timescale
1. Develop and disseminate a short and practical Festivals Strategy (2010–2012) for Belfast that addresses opportunities, removes barriers and leads to action	£1,000	Co-ordinator and Forum	Completed by March 2011
2. Use Festivals Forum to lobby for increased resources and recognition of festivals as integral to arts, culture and tourism in the city		Co-ordinator and Forum	Ongoing
3. Create a coordinated campaign to improve awareness of Belfast as a City of Festivals, including co-ordinated marketing approach through key agencies such as BVCB and NITB	£5,000	TCA team/BVCB/NITB	Ongoing
4. Council to ensure that festival-related plans in and across Council are aligned		TCA	December 2010
5. Involve key stakeholders in an initiative to share, and where possible, integrate festival plans across the city	-	Co-ordinator and Forum	Ongoing

Priorities for Action	Budget indicative* –	Lead	Timescale
<p>6. Hold knowledge-sharing meetings between funders and festivals to improve understanding of needs associated with festivals e.g. funding timelines, flexibility, as well as needs of funders</p>	-	Co-ordinator	<p>2 meetings</p> <p>1 by December 2010</p> <p>1 by March 2011</p>
<p>7. Develop a policy toolkit for measuring the social and economic impact of festivals. This may require a recalibration of target markets to get a better balance between visitor and community targets</p>	£5,000	Co-ordinator and TCA Team	June 2011
<p>8. Coordinate a new, integrated and shared box office/ticketing system for the city</p>	-	ACNI, Audience NI, Culture NI	<p>Ongoing – initial feasibility by June 2011</p>
<p>9. Undertake a series of practical measures to support festival organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a pool of resources such as equipment that can be shared ▪ Run training and mentoring programmes ▪ Encourage clusters and joint marketing campaigns ▪ Create an operational toolkit 	£5,000	Co-ordinator	June 2011
<p>10. Council to investigate access to its properties, spaces and infrastructure as an available resource for festivals</p>	-	TCA Team	<p>Database on website</p> <p>March 2011</p>

Priorities for Action	Budget – indicative*	Lead	Timescale
1. Develop a Belfast Festivals Charter	£5,000	Co-ordinator	June 2011
2. Develop cross border networking opportunities	£5,000	Co-ordinator	June 2011
13. Festival Forum meetings and capacity building	£4,000	TCA Team	Ongoing
14. Festivals co-ordinator, overheads, supplies etc	£20,000	TCA Team	November– June 11
TOTAL	£50,000		

* Indicative budget – revised on appointment of Co-ordinator”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Learning Journey to Bilbao

The Committee was reminded that 2012 offered a significant opportunity for Belfast with the opening of the Titanic Signature Project. The Council was working closely with a range of Government Departments and local stakeholders to ensure that this opportunity was maximised for the entire City. The Head of Economic Initiatives outlined the actions which were being undertaken to ensure that the Titanic’s centenary would be successful. She pointed out that, as part of the focus on 2012, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board had invited representatives from the Council to participate in a Learning Journey to Bilbao which would take place from 21st till 23rd September, 2010. The purpose of the visit was to experience at first hand a successful visitor maritime destination that encouraged return visits, longer stays and recommendations to visit to friends and relatives. The trip would allow key influencers to have a unique insight into Bilbao and draw parallels with Belfast as a City, the maritime heritage theme and the Titanic.

The majority of the trip would be funded by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board but it would be necessary for a contribution of £200 per delegate to be made. The trip was limited to a small number and was subject to the availability of the key stakeholders. The Council had managed to negotiate two places on the visit. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee approve the attendance of the Chairman (or his nominee), together with one officer, at the Learning Journey to Bilbao event in September.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Irish Tour Operators Association – Annual General Meeting

The Committee was advised that the Irish Tour Operators Association would be holding its 2011 Annual General Meeting in Belfast from 4th till 6th February. The Association comprised of thirty-two of Ireland’s most prolific tour operators, professional conference organisers, destination management companies and ground handling agencies. Its members were responsible for handling over 465,000 passengers each year and had relationships with over 400,000 overseas tour operators and others in the incentive, events and conference sectors.

The holding of the event in Belfast provided an excellent opportunity to showcase Belfast and Northern Ireland to a key group which was capable of directing significant business and leisure tourism to the region. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board was seeking support for the Annual General Meeting and had submitted an application to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the use of the City Hall and that would be considered by that Committee at its meeting on 20th August with a recommendation to approve the request. In terms of the budget, the Tourist Board had committed £8,600 and there was currently a deficit of approximately £9,080, which would be met through the support of key stakeholders, including the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, additional commitment from the Tourist Board and through sponsorship. If the Gala Dinner were to take place in the City Hall, there would be a captive audience to showcase the major tourism initiatives which the Council had led. Accordingly, it was recommended that the dinner be supported through the Tourism, Cultural and Arts budget.

The Committee agreed:

- (i) to provide funding up to a maximum value of £5,000 towards the reception and gala dinner event in the City Hall, on the condition that maximum support would be secured from other stakeholders; and
- (ii) that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) be authorised to attend the Gala Dinner on Saturday, 5th February, 2011.

RISE Broadway Roundabout Public Artwork

The Committee was reminded that the Council had agreed to manage the Broadway Roundabout public art project. The project had been taken forward by the RISE Steering Group, membership of which included, amongst others, local Councillors and Council officers. Following an international competition in November, 2008, the commission for the project had been awarded to Wolfgang Buttress for his sculpture entitled RISE. The cost of the project was £486,000 and all the funding for the capital build was now in place.

The Head of Economic Initiatives explained that the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit was now seeking agreement from the Committee to source private sponsorship of the sculpture in order to support the costs associated with its launch, marketing and publicity, which was due to be completed by mid-December. The RISE Steering Group had met on 25th June to discuss the project publicity plan, including the launch event. However, there were no funds left in the project budget to cover those costs, which were estimated at £20,000, and no further public funding would be forthcoming. The Steering Group had agreed that funding should be sought from private sponsors to cover those costs. In the interest of fairness and transparency, it was being recommended also that the funding should be sought via an open call.

The Committee agreed that private sponsorship of the RISE sculpture be sought to support the costs associated with its launch, marketing and publicity.

Belfast City Welcome Banners

The Committee was advised that, in August, 2007, the Red Sky Group Limited had been awarded a four year contract to deliver the Cultural Tourism Visitor Management Plan Phase II to include the design, manufacture, delivery, installation, storage and subsequent maintenance of the Belfast Welcome Banners. The Welcome Banners were themed on a seasonal basis and were placed along the main streets on the way into the City centre to provide a bright welcome to citizens and visitors. There were 100 welcome banner sites currently identified which were two-sided in structure. Additional banner sites were located within the City centre and managed by other stakeholders, including the Department for Social Development Belfast Regeneration Office, the Belfast Waterfront Hall and the Belfast City Centre Management.

The Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that in 2009 the banners were flexible and able to incorporate one additional message on one half of the banners in each of the seasons, for example, to profile the Tall Ships visit to Belfast and the festive Christmas campaign. The proposed next phase of banners would be reusable and a sustainable asset to the City. The sum of £120,000 had been allocated in the City Development Fund and the budget would be used to:

- (i) deliver the banners plan up to 2012 to ensure exposure was built up to the Titanic and other related events and to ensure a co-ordinated approach across all stakeholders;
- (ii) design and manufacture welcome banners at approximately 200 sites during 2010/11; and
- (iii) erect and store banners through the existing contract with Red Sky Limited.

The Committee approved expenditure in the sum of £120,000 for the design, manufacture and erection of new Belfast Welcome Banners.

Cycling Issues

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st October, 2009, had referred to the Development Committee a Notice of Motion in relation to the introduction of a cycling scheme in Belfast. At its meeting on 14th October, the Committee had considered the Motion and agreed that Council officers discuss the matter with the Department for Regional Development with a view to providing a future update.

The Director of Development reported that a number of meetings had taken place between Council representatives, the Department for Regional Development Transportation Unit and the Strategic Investment Board to discuss the opportunities to develop a public bike hire scheme within the Belfast City Council boundary. Presentations had also been made to various organisations on the background to the bike hire scheme which operated currently in Dublin. It had been agreed that consultants would be appointed to explore the feasibility of establishing a public hire scheme in Belfast, including the preparation of a Business case that met the Northern Ireland guide to expenditure appraisal and evaluation standards. The Strategic Investment Board had agreed to draw up a shared Terms of Reference for the feasibility study and fund the Commission.

On 1st June, the Minister for Regional Development, Conor Murphy, had announced at the Belfast Cycle City – Visions for the Future Conference the setting up of a joint project to examine the feasibility and options for introducing a public bike hire scheme in Belfast. It was proposed that the Council participate in the joint project to explore the potential for the introduction of a bike hire scheme. The Department for Regional Development's Transportation Unit had set up recently an Active Travel Forum, which included representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community groups. The Council was represented on the forum by both the Development and Health and Environmental Services Departments. The aim of the Forum would be to seek to identify the opportunities to improve walking and cycling across Northern Ireland and to contribute to the proposed Active Travel Strategy which the Department for Regional Development had committed to developing as part of the broader transportation policy approach. The Forum had met twice and a seminar had taken place also.

The Committee endorsed the proposed joint working on the project to explore the potential for a bike hire scheme in Belfast and noted the ongoing participation in the Active Travel Forum.

Music Television (MTV) European Music Awards

The Committee considered the under noted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members are being asked to support a bid in principle to host the 2011 MTV EMAs. The event would take place on the first or second Sunday in November (Sunday evening is the peak viewing time across the MTV European network) and would be broadcast live across Europe and also be seen by global audiences. The event if staged in Belfast, would involve a series of activities in the week leading up to the awards culminating with the main event, which would be staged in the Odyssey Arena.

In March this year Members agreed to fund and deliver an MTV Music Week in conjunction with MTV Europe. This event will run from 13-20 September and will culminate with a headline concert at the Belfast Waterfront (final concert date to be confirmed). The week long series of events and smaller concerts will showcase the city and also provide a substantial platform to profile the Belfast music industry. The staging of this event is inline with the Council's Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism (2010-2015) as the document identifies high profile events as a development opportunity that will allow the city to continue to build a strong reputation as a vibrant location with unique and exciting experiences that encourage new and repeat tourism visits. In addition music tourism has also been identified as a new product that should be developed, packaged and promoted.

In addition, at the Development Committee in December 2008, Members noted that Visit Britain's research showed that 21% of potential visitors were inspired to choose a destination because of the music or bands of that country, and approved a Music Tourism Action Plan in order to celebrate Belfast's rich musical heritage. Due to the work of the Council and partners over the last number of years Belfast's music has received international praise and the latest generation of Belfast musicians are playing a crucial role in revitalising the city.

Through the work of the Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts and Economic Development Units (along with the Belfast music industry, NITB, ACNI, BBC and Tourism Ireland) a number of music related products have been brought on stream. These include the Belfast Music Coach Tour, the Belfast Music Exhibition at the Oh Yeah Centre, a new music listings website Belfastmusic.org, the first ever i-phone application for music, and international showcasing and marketing of Belfast's musicians in Nashville and South by South West.

Creative Industries – Music Development

The Committee is also reminded that Council's current Local Economic Development Plan includes the following key themes: Business Competitiveness, Talent and Community Economic Regeneration. The new local economic development plan states that in order for Belfast to stay competitive it must nurture those sectors which can create high value-added products and bring new wealth to the city. The Music sector in Belfast has grown significantly over the past three years and now plays a key role in the overall economic development of the city. With a rise in musicians and bands making headlines in the international marketplace and new and innovative music businesses based in Belfast, BCC is playing a significant role for this industry e.g. participation at the prestigious South by Southwest Media Conference and showcase, which has shown returns of over \$500,000 leverage each year for participating artists from the city.

Therefore, taking the integral role that BCC now plays in the development and support of music, Members are now being asked to consider staging the most prestigious music event in Europe – the MTV Europe Music Awards (EMAs).

Key Issues

MTV is the world's largest television network, the leading multimedia brand for youth and are experts at staging international events. It reaches over 213 million households in Europe through 28 different MTV channels and they receive 8 million unique visitors each month to MTV Music websites. 65% of MTV's adult viewers in Europe are aged 15-34.

The MTV EMAs alone attracts a live television audience of up to 22 million viewers across Europe on the night of the awards and up to 500 million viewers via recorded and edited showings. It has been hosted in cities from Berlin to Stockholm, Barcelona to Rome, Dublin to Munich and Copenhagen to Liverpool. The following table highlights some of the outputs for previous host cities:

Host City	Output
Edinburgh 2003	Economic impact £8.9 million Return on investment £1: £11.9 Viewing figures 12-14 million Total airtime coverage 77 hours Media value of coverage £13 million Web visits - No details available
Copenhagen 2006	Economic impact £6.1million Return on investment £1:£8.13 Viewing figures 465 million Total airtime coverage 55 hours Media value of coverage £4 million Web visits 29 million
Liverpool 2008*	Economic impact £2 million Return on investment £1:£6 Viewing figures - No details available Total airtime coverage – No details available Media value of coverage – No details available Web visits - No details available

* This event was one of 25 signature events as part of Liverpool's European City of Culture year and the superficial nature of the outputs may be a reflection that EMAs was one of many events in Liverpool during this year.

If BCC were to agree to host this event it would seek support from NITB as part of its major events funding; ACNI as part of its support for creative industries and DETI.

The aims of the initiative would be:

- To host the world-class music EMAs event in November 2011 in partnership with MTV Europe.
- To attract 7,500 Audience to EMAs with 50% out-of-state visitors
- To gain the equivalent of £9million media coverage for Belfast aimed at actively travelling young adults.
- To showcase and strengthen Belfast's position on the world stage as a primary destination for music, entertainment and culture.
- To increase the profile of Belfast as an exciting weekend break destination to actively travelling young adults across UK, ROI and Europe.

- To establish Belfast on all new media platforms via MTV.
- To increase visitor satisfaction levels of Belfast's cultural offer from 39% to 45%
- To promote and enhance a confident, positive, exciting image of Belfast through delivering world-class events
- To host an additional MTV Music week event 2012
- To bring together all sectors of the community from Belfast and across the region whilst improving community cohesion. This would be achieved via the development of music related initiatives to draw in all aspects of Belfast's citizens.

Satellite gigs would take place in music venues across Belfast leading up to a free ticketed EMAs event in the Odyssey Arena. The key objective is to put Belfast on everyone's destination wish list, ahead of our competitors and provide a significant level of profile for Belfast. The nature of the MTV EMAs will see the best global pop acts descend on the city creating a vibrancy and media coverage that will surpass any previous large-scale music events staged in Belfast or Northern Ireland.

The EMAs event would profile Belfast as a world-class music destination, a place which has a new, modern and exciting future. The week of activities prior to the awards will give a concentrated focus on the promotion of indigenous musicians to show Belfast's rich musical heritage, thriving contemporary musical scene and promote and highlight the city's distinctiveness. These lead events would also involve international music stars which local audiences could attend at no cost.

The prestige associated with the MTV and its EMAs brand would mean that Belfast could reach demographics both internationally and locally that will be tapped into by the 2010 Music Week but, further enhanced and developed. As previously highlighted to Members, in March 2010, the MTV brand would allow Belfast to target the developing global youth market and reach a world market with an event brand of an international standard. Members are asked to note that competition from other European cities is significant with Stockholm, Paris and London bidding for this event.

Resource Implications

Finance

The overall estimated budget required to deliver this project would be £750,000. This figure is based on knowledge gained from previous host city bids that Council has been able to access costs on. It would be recommended that BCC should invest £300,000 into this event, with the proposal that the remaining budget comes from: NITB - £300,000; Tourism Ireland - £50,000; DCAL - £50,000 and £50,000 private sector.

BCC's proposed contribution would not be new money or additional to the current budgets. It would be made up of the City Events Unit's £100,000 events bidding finances 2011-2012 and £200,000 which would be re-profiled from existing Departmental finances. Members should note that usage of these finances would mean that there would be no additional monies available to bid or host other major events in this financial period 2011/12.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees the following:

- Approval in principle to bid for the 2011 MTV EMAs
- BCC to contribute £300,000 to any successful bid
- Officers approaching further partners, including DETI, DCAL, NITB, Tourism Ireland, NI Screen and commercial sponsors, in order to leverage further funding for MTV EMAs bid.

Decision Tracking

Further to any possible BCC ratification, an update will be brought to Committee regarding partner funding and on the outcome of the bid itself.

Time line: October 2010 Reporting Officer: Tim Husbands

Key to Abbreviations

NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board
ACNI – Arts Council of Northern Ireland
DETI – Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DCAL – Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Waterfront and Ulster Halls

Marketing and Audience Development Strategy

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th June, in considering the Departmental Plan 2010/11, it had deferred the approval of the budgets for a number of the key actions to enable detailed reports to be submitted to the Committee. This had included the marketing costs associated with the Waterfront and Ulster Halls.

Accordingly, the Head of City Events and Venues submitted a report in this regard. He explained that, since the reopening of the Ulster Hall in March, 2009, the Belfast Waterfront and the Ulster Halls had been marketed jointly in both the conference centre and the Arts and Entertainments sectors. That approach fitted within the joint management structure for the venues, encompassing programming, box office and operational issues. In order to optimise the available marketing resources for the venues, a thorough review of marketing activity had been conducted which had looked at trends in the market place as well as internal issues affecting the overall 'product', for example, the heritage aspects of the Ulster Hall, which brought a new range of opportunities and audiences. This had identified a number of new opportunities and challenges in relation to the promotion of the venues and accordingly the new marketing audience development strategy aimed to address those issues.

He reported that the following factors had emerged as the key influences on the marketing of the venues: the challenges presented by the ongoing economic crisis; the increased levels of competition; digital technology; opportunities to attract new entertainment audiences; and new market sectors such as education and tourism. Whilst some were outside the direct control of officers, others presented the opportunity to develop and adopt the venues' working activities so as to benefit from those new business areas.

The Head of City Events and Venues outlined the key areas in which the development study had focused, including conferences, exhibitions and meetings, Arts and Entertainment and Community and Education. The strategy had identified also a number of common themes across the markets which the venues served. He reviewed the financial resources available for the implementation of the marketing and audience development strategy, which had been included in the operational budget for the Waterfront and Ulster Halls for 2010/11.

The Committee endorsed the contents of the strategy and approved the budget for 2010/11 of £156,000 associated therewith.

Provision of Maintenance of Mechanical and Electrical Systems and Fabric

In accordance with the decision of the Committee 9th June, the Head of City Events and Venues submitted a report in relation to the provision of maintenance of mechanical and electrical systems and fabric at the Waterfront and Ulster Halls and the associated budget for 2010/11.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and approved the maintenance budget for 2010/11 of £240,000.

B-Team: Interreg IVC Brownfield Network

The Committee considered the under noted report in relation to a visit to Oulu in Finland:

"Relevant Background Information

As outlined in the report to Committee in January 2010 Belfast City Council was confirmed as the Lead Partner in the ERDF funded B -Team INTERREG IVC project.

This European Network project seeks to improve regional policies influencing the regeneration of Brownfield areas through transfer of best practice. The project will provide policy support to the partner cities to assist with the successful development of Brownfield sites in order to contribute to the continued sustainable growth and address the issues of urban dereliction and under used land.

The B-Team will bring together experts in Brownfield regeneration from different countries to exchange knowledge and improve regional policies linked to practical work addressing current development issues. This work will provide dual benefits through the development of skill across the participating organisations as well as through the transfer techniques or alternative approaches to the common problems or challenges for the cities. The exchange of knowledge and cooperation will take place in 'Brownfield Days' which are local engagement events in the partner cities focussed on addressing the local obstacles to successful regeneration. These experiences and lessons will form the basis for dissemination to a broader public in Seminar and Conference events.

The specific policy or development recommendations will be implemented through the planning or development processes in the partner cities through commitments to improve or introduce new approaches. The partners in the project will sign a 'Brownfield Pledge' which commits them to improving their policies or addressing the obstacles to the continued redevelopment of the important city land assets.

Following on from the earlier Committee updates this report seeks to outline the detailed activity for the first partner meeting and approval for participation at the 'Brownfield Days' in Oulu, Finland.

Key Issues

The exchange of knowledge and cooperation is focussed on the 'Brownfield Days' local engagement events in the partner cities. These concentrated efforts will address the local obstacles to successful regeneration and development of Brownfield land. The first of the 'Brownfield Days' will take place in the City of Oulu in Finland on the 13th to 16th September 2010.

The project is based on a minimum of two participants from each partner city attending the local engagement events to contribute their specific skills or experience to the understanding of the challenges and the development of potential solutions or alternative approaches.

The INTERREG funded B-Team project will be developed over the period to December 2012 and will include a similar local engagement event in Belfast. Through the participation as the Lead Partner of this project there will be a number of benefits for the Council including:

- Consultant support and advice from international experts and practitioners in Brownfield regeneration (regeneration experts from other countries will participate in local engagement events and support the Council in enhancing regeneration processes)
- Establishment of Belfast City Council as Lead partner in Brownfield regeneration and regional policy development in Europe
- Support in developing practical solutions for existing urban issues (special case studies in Belfast will be presented to the experts from abroad and generic approaches or solutions will be explored on a collaborative basis utilising academic support from a range of institutions)
- Exploration of the potential for the application of innovative methods or approaches (successful lessons from other countries can be assessed in relation to their potential to contribute to regeneration in Belfast)
- European wide engagement within a partnership, raising the Council profile and enhancing the potential to access further funding (as the Lead Partner the Council will demonstrate the ability to manage and deliver complex EU projects)
- Potential for more effective application of resources to existing challenges (through the improvement of the broader policies and approaches regarding Brownfield regeneration future development processes could become more effective and sustainable)
- Development of existing Brownfield sites through the support of international practitioners and a commitment to change policy at the local level (through improving regeneration approaches with the support of experienced international experts more complex sites could be addressed and the context for development changed)
- Local partnership development (through a local thematic stakeholder group different agencies will work together to explore issues in advance of the partnership with European experts in the Brownfield Days)

The Oulu event draft agenda has already been agreed with the hosting partner and features proposals for a high level of local political participation in the proposed workshops and events forming the three day programme.

This presents the opportunity for the Council to contribute through both officer and political participation at the proposed events. Oulu in seeking to progress the regeneration of their redundant waterfront site want to explore the type of regeneration issues frequently encountered by the Development Committee. It is therefore suggested that one of the participants is a member of the Development Committee.

Resource Implications

There are no additional resource implications

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to approve the attendance of the Chair, or nominee, Project Manager and one Council officer at the Oulu B - Team local engagement event as an approved duty.

Decision Tracking

There is no decision tracking attached to this report

Key to Abbreviations

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund”

After discussion, during which the Head of Economic Initiatives advised the Members that the visit would be 100% funded by Interreg, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Northern Ireland Science Park – Request to Present to Committee

The Committee agreed to receive at a special meeting a presentation from representatives of the Northern Ireland Science Park in relation to the work which was being undertaken.

Creative Industries - Blick Shared Studios

The Committee was reminded that, since 2005, the Council had invested in the Creative Industries as part of its programme of support for the local economy. One of the projects in which the Council had invested previously was Blick Shared Studios, which was a business incubation project for the creative sector. The business was based on the Malone Road in a property which has been let by the private sector at favourable rates. The building currently housed twelve companies across a range of disciplines, including fashion, textiles, graphic/web design, jewellery, television production, photography, game development, motion graphics, magazine production and feature film development. The company had developed a structured programme of business growth for its tenant companies which comprised of a number of elements:

- a year long mentoring programme for tenant companies which linked them with industry experts;

- monthly business growth events - this incorporated networking sessions, workshops and seminars and the topics to be covered were likely to include intellectual property, copyright, patenting, product development and procurement;
- quarterly business growth clinics – those would be full-day/half-day workshops relevant to creative businesses on a range of topics such as public relations, sales and marketing, accessing funding and legal issues.

The Head of Economic Initiatives stated that the aim of the programme was to enhance the business skills of participating companies and subsequently support them in improving their productivity and competitiveness. She advised the Members that Blick Shared Studios had submitted a request for funding of £30,000 to support the work. She pointed out that match funding of £15,000 was available from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment under the European Unions Structural Funds programme.

The Committee agreed to allocate £30,000 for the delivery of the project, of which £15,000 would be made available from the Council's funds and £15,000 of grant-aid which had been secured from the European Unions Structural Funds Programme.

Shopmobility - Request for Support

The Committee was advised that a request for financial support had been received from Shopmobility Belfast. The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Members that, for the last decade, the organisation had received financial support from the Council through its Economic Development Unit for the promotion of accessibility of services within the City. Prior to 2007, that support had been match funded by European Union funds. However, the activity was no longer eligible for match funding from the European Union and therefore the request for support related to Council monies only. The organisation received also some small levels of support from the Parks and Leisure Department for work undertaken in the Parks and Open Spaces.

She advised the Members that Shopmobility Belfast provided motorised scooters and manual wheelchairs, free of charge, to enable those with mobility problems to access the City centre and surrounding areas. The organisation was based at a number of locations in the city and provided also an outreach service at events such as Rose Week and the Balmoral Show. The organisation had placed also a number of scooters at the Belfast Zoo and in Ormeau Park. Shopmobility Belfast had recently carried out a survey which indicated that a typical member using the service brought with them two other shoppers and spent around £50 in the city. There were over 6,400 trips into the city last year and that brought in additional revenue estimated at around £970,000. The organisation's running costs for the year were approximately £260,000 and they had requested the Council to make a contribution of £25,000 towards that budget.

The Head of Economic Initiatives explained that, whilst the service was clearly a valuable resource, the direct approach for financial support to the Economic Development Unit was at odds with the business planning process. No other organisation made a direct approach for financial support in that manner and, because of that, it was proposed, should the request for financial support be approved this financial year, that notification be given to the organisation that that approach would not be considered in future years. Instead, it might be appropriate to consider a corporate view to funding the organisation, possibly in conjunction with the Council's support for the Belfast City Centre Management. Alternatively, the preferred approach might be to maintain the arrangement of paid-for services at specific events, as was the case presently, particularly for Parks and Leisure Services events.

The Committee agreed to accede to the request from Shopmobility Belfast for funding in the sum of £25,000, subject to the stipulations around future funding options as outlined.

Continental Market

The Committee was reminded that the Continental Market had been operating a number of times each year in the grounds of the City Hall for almost six years. The existing contract for the provision of the Continental Market would expire after the conclusion of the Christmas Continental Market 2010. Accordingly, approval was being sought to tender for a suitably qualified and experienced market operator to deliver two Continental Markets per year in the front grounds of the City Hall for a further three years, that is, 2011 till 2013. The Continental Markets would consist of a four-day market on the last Bank Holiday weekend in May and a twenty-day Christmas Continental Market to be delivered in the lead-in to Christmas.

The Committee approved the commencement of a tendering exercise for the provision of Continental Markets as outlined and agreed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to grant the use of the City Hall grounds for the operation of those events.

Proposed Transport Bill for Northern Ireland

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to a proposed Transport Bill for Northern Ireland and approved the draft response:

"Relevant Background Information"

The purpose of the report is to outline the proposed response to the consultation on the draft Transport Bill and consider whether or not the Council would wish to engage with the Regional Development Committee through the presentation of evidence during the Committee consideration.

In February 2010 the Council responded to two public consultations by the Department for Regional Development (DRD) on the Reform of Public Transport and Rapid Transit proposals. The response to the Reform of Public Transport highlighted concerns relating to the proposed creation of a new agency with responsibility for public transport provision within the Department for Regional Development. The concerns related to the proposed level of local accountability and the transparency of decision making within the proposals for the new agency.

In May 2010 DRD published a Final Report on the Public Transport Reform Consultation which recommended the establishment of a new public transport agency, within DRD, for the procurement of public transport services and associated regulatory arrangements.

Recent correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly informed the Council that the consideration of the proposed Transport Bill had moved to the Committee Stage. As part of this process the Committee for Regional Development has invited written submissions from the respondents in respect of the Proposed Transport Bill as a precursor to formal engagement in the Assembly Committee process. A draft Council response to the Transport Bill consultation can be viewed at Appendix 1. The notification of the Committee Stage also highlighted the option for the Council to participate at the Regional development Committee sessions to offer oral evidence in relation to submitted comments on the draft legislation. The final date for receipt of written submissions is 16 August 2010.

Key Issues

As outlined in the previous responses in February of this year there are a number concerns in respect of the proposed reforms to Public Transport outlined in the draft Transport Bill. The appended draft Consultation Responses provides specific detail in respect different clauses set out in the draft Transport Bill. The principle concerns regarding the proposed Transport Bill relate to the future role of local councils, local transport plans and the potential role of the Consumer Council in relation to this important area of service provision and regulation.

It should be noted that initial proposals included the option of transferring responsibility for public transport to the new local councils proposed under the Review of Public Administration. This option was abandoned by DRD on the basis of the revised RPA proposals for the retention of local roads functions within the Department for Regional Development. The Council had requested clarification of the basis for the decision to abandon the council led agency option from detailed consideration and the subsequent failure to clarify the role of local councils in this important local service.

Whilst the Bill states under Clause 6 ('Service Permits') that the Department must have regard to any representations made by a District Council there is consistent lack of clarity in respect of the formal role for local Councils in the future of local public transport. Outside of Clause 6 there is no further reference to Council involvement. There is no mechanism proposed or outline of how the new agency process will work within the draft Bill.

Local public transport networks to support communities should be an important consideration of the commissioning and regulation framework. The specifications for the contracts and permits must be developed through consultation to establish the service requirements for an area including the involvement of the public transport providers. The development of local transport plans between the DRD (agency) and local councils offers the opportunity for the community to influence service provision within the context of strategic and longer term Transport Plans.

The draft Bill explanatory memorandum (Para 18) in considering the regulatory impact refers to the potential benefits to operators from the opportunity to 'participate in the development of local public transport plans'. Public Transport is an important local service and will be an important element of local strategies to progress Community Planning and influence statutory land-use planning. The Council would wish to see the Bill provide for a more integrated approach to public transport on a number of levels. It is essential that the proposed Bill provides for accessible local provision and links plans, resources, partners and service procurement / commitments.

Clauses 23 and 24 ('Consumer Council') of the Transport Bill outline the arrangements for the relationship between the Consumer Council and the Department. The Council is concerned at the lack detail in respect of the provisions for local accountability proposed within this arrangement.

It was previously suggested that the Consumer Council will have formal role in relation to the new public transport agency and that the new agency would have a formal consultative role in the planning system. There are no provisions within the Bill for changes in the relationship between local councils and the Consumer Council or consultation requirements. The Bill does not include any reference to the potential statutory planning role for any new transport agency.

The draft Bill explanatory memorandum (Para 13) in considering the Financial Effects of the Bill outlines potential additional costs from the creation of the new transport agency which are attributed to new work such as 'local planning'.

Whilst appropriately targeted increased public transport funding would be welcomed where it enhances delivery and provides value for money in the absence of details in respect of the agency and the structural relationships it is impossible to gauge the potential value. Greater clarity is also required in relation to funding for local transport plans, which must be developed in conjunction with community planning/ local transport area planning. It is important to ensure the alignment of policy, community requirements and resource prioritisation, focusing on the integration and needs. Local councils should have a meaningful role in the prioritisation of local actions and resources, and should have an input into strategic decisions.

It is suggested that the Committee considerers: the content of the draft response set out in Appendix 1 and the opportunity to attend the Regional Development Committee to outline the concerns in respect of the Transport Bill.

Resource Implications

There are no resource implications attached to this report

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

- consider and if appropriate endorse the content of the suggested response to the draft Transport Bill as set out in Appendix 1; and
- consider the invitation to attend the Regional Development Committee to outline the concerns in respect of the Transport Bill.

Decision Tracking

There is no decision tracking attached to this report

Key Abbreviations

DRD – Department of Social Development

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Draft Council Response to Transport Bill

“Appendix 1 – Draft Council Response to Transport Bill

Draft Council Response to the proposed Transport Bill

Belfast City Council welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Transport Bill. We take this opportunity confirm that there will be Council representation at the oral briefings to the Committee.

As outlined in the response to the previous consultation on Public Transport Reform, Belfast City Council does not support the proposed creation of a new agency with within the Department for Regional Development with responsibility for public transport provision. The main issues relate to the uncertainty in respect of provision to ensure local accountability for the proposed transport agency.

There has been a considerable shift from the 2006 position which included an option of transferring responsibility for public transport to local councils under the Review of Public Administration to the current proposals whereby local council involvement in minimal. After consideration of the Transport Bill the Council’s initial concerns remain.

The Council considers that effective local public transport is a critical for the continued development of the City in terms of community well-being; connectivity; and continuing to attract local enterprise and trade. Integrated public transport will be one of the key facets in the future development of the City; it is therefore essential that direct channels and formal mechanisms are provided for local council involvement in the future of public transport.

Despite the delay in the Review of Public Administration it has been made clear by the Minister of the Environment that local Councils can expect to receive a range of additional functions or responsibilities. Included within this transfer of functions is a Community Planning responsibility for local Councils. A priority for the Council will be to ensure the integration between land use planning, community planning and transportation: a coordinated approach to local service delivery across agencies is a necessity.

It should be noted that the Council, in exercising these functions, would seek to support local residents and communities by ensuring an approach that integrates transportation to enhance connectivity for local neighbourhoods thereby making them safer, healthier and more inclusive.

As stated by the Department in the *Final Rapid Transit Consultation Report* there is considerable overlap of legislative requirement between rapid transit and public transport reform. The Department consistently responded to our concerns in the rapid transit consultation by stating that the Council would be a key stakeholder in taking the project forward. The Council feels that to be fully involved in the future of public transport, particularly the rapid transit proposals, there must be some formal engagement processes proposed between the new agency and the Council.

The detailed comments in relation to the specific clauses contained in the draft Bill are outlined below:

Clause 1 - Provision of public passenger transport services

imposes a duty on the Department to secure the provision of public transport services in NI and provides mechanisms for the Department to do so through service agreements and service permits for public transport services, and agreements for services ancillary to the provision of public transport services. It also allows the Department to determine the general level and structure of fares for these services, to provide vehicles, ticketing machines and systems, and to exploit any commercial opportunities which the Department considers appropriate. This clause also creates an offence to operate unregulated services.

Local public transport networks to support communities should be an important consideration of the commissioning and regulation framework. The specifications for the contracts and permits must be developed through consultation to establish the service requirements for an area including the involvement of the public transport providers. The development of local transport plans between the DRD (agency) and local councils offers the opportunity for the community to influence service provision within the context of strategic and longer term Transport Plans.

The draft Bill explanatory memorandum (Para 18) in considering the regulatory impact refers to the potential benefits to operators from the opportunity to 'participate in the development of local public transport plans'. Public Transport is an important local service and will be an important element of local strategies to progress Community Planning and influence statutory land-use planning. The Council would wish to see the Bill provide for a more integrated approach to public transport on a number of levels. It is essential that the proposed Bill provides for accessible local provision and links plans, resources, partners and service procurement/commitments.

The Council would be supportive of the proposals regarding integrated ticketing, which will allow for better journey planning.

Clause 2 - Service Agreements

deals with service agreements in more detail. It provides the Department with the power to make regulations as to the content of service agreements. It also provides that service agreements can include the award of 'public service contracts' in accordance with EC Regulation 1370/2007 and allows the Department to make provision for the review of decisions made in respect of the award of service agreements.

The potential exists for private sector providers to fill gaps and complement existing service provision and the Council would encourage this approach in the context of a local transport plan providing better liaison and integration between public and private contracts.

Clauses 3 to 12 - Service Permits

deal with the process for granting service permits. These clauses provide for the information that an applicant will have to furnish in the application, the matters to be taken into account by the Department when considering an application, the attachment of conditions to a permit, disqualification of operators from being able to hold a permit, and the revocation, suspension and curtailment of permits for any reasonable cause and other specified grounds outlined. Clause 6 outlines that in deciding whether to issue or refuse a permit or to attach conditions to a permit, the Department should have regard for the sustainability of routes on which the service may be provided and the extent to which the needs of persons likely to use the service to be provided are already adequately and economically served. The Department will also have to take into account any recommendations made by the Consumer Council and any representations by persons already providing public passenger transport services on any road along or near the routes which are the subject of the application, the Chief Constable, district councils, any NI government department and NITB.

The Council is concerned that initial proposals included the option of transferring responsibility for public transport to the new local councils proposed under the Review of Public Administration. This option was abandoned by DRD on the basis of the revised RPA proposals for the retention of local roads functions within the Department for Regional Development. The Council had requested clarification of the basis for the decision to abandon the council led agency option from detailed consideration and the subsequent failure to clarify the role of local councils in this important local service.

'In August 2006 the then Regional Development Minister, David Cairns, announced the Government's intention to develop the bus and rail public transport services around the new three-tier model outlined above. The announcement was made against the backdrop of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and it was envisaged that the new middle-tier body would be under the control of local Councils acting together in the form of a Passenger Transport Authority. Following the recent RPA local government review, however, the Executive has now decided that mainstream local roads functions will no longer be devolved to councils but instead retained within DRD. In light of this decision and the close interrelationship between public transport, roads and traffic management issues, the Executive agreed that the Minister should reconsider the future arrangements for public transport, including mechanisms for ensuring local government input to decision making.'

There is concern with the change in approach attributed to RPA changes in terms of the shift from local authority responsibility to a very limited involvement, and accountability confined to the Minister on the basis of the narrow strategic business case conclusions:

'Although this was the favoured model [local authority control] for the previous administration, and would enable the achievement of many of the reform process objectives, it has been decided not to consider this model further due to recent RPA statements and implementation complexities.'

Whilst the Bill states under Clause 6 ('Service Permits') that the Department must have regard to any representations made by a District Council there is consistent lack of clarity in respect of the formal role for local Councils in the future of local public transport. Outside of Clause 6 there is no further reference to Council involvement. There is no mechanism proposed or outline of how the new agency process will work within the draft Bill.

As outlined above local public transport networks to support communities should be an important consideration of the commissioning and regulation framework. There needs to be strategic linkages between the proposed transport agency, DRD, Translink and local community planning/ local area transport planning structures. Local government working with local communities could more effectively identify the local issues and link to the central government strategic policy. Although there is uncertainty as to the methodology and timeframe for taking community planning forward, it is clear that there is a strong link between the place shaping role of local councils and the provision of public transport.

There should also be a mechanism for democratic approval of local public transport plans that could provide the context for contracts and permits.

The draft Bill explanatory memorandum (Para 13) in considering the Financial Effects of the Bill outlines potential additional costs from the creation of the new transport agency which are attributed to new work such as 'local planning'. Whilst appropriately targeted increased public transport funding would be welcomed where it enhances delivery and provides value for money in the absence of details in respect of the agency and the structural relationships it is impossible to gauge the potential value. Greater clarity is also required in relation to funding for local transport plans, which must be developed in conjunction with community planning/ local transport area planning. It is important to ensure the alignment of policy, community requirements and resource prioritisation, focusing on the integration and needs. Local councils should have a meaningful role in the prioritisation of local actions and resources, and should have an input into strategic decisions.

Clause 13 – Fees

deals with the payment of fees for permit applications and issuing of permits.

The charges and processes should be reasonable and reflective of the direct costs associated with applications.

Clause 14 – Permits not to be transferable

provides that permits are neither transferable nor assignable. It also allows the Department to make directions for the treatment of permit in circumstances where the permit-holder dies or becomes a patient under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986.

Clause 15 – Holding Companies and Subsidiaries

allows the Department to make regulations to provide that service agreements with and service permits held by a company or other body corporate also applies to services provided by any of its subsidiaries.

Clause 16 – Forgery, etc.

creates the offence to forge, alter or use a permit with intent to deceive. It will also be an offence under clause 17 to knowingly make a false statement or produce false or misleading material in relation to an application for a service permit.

Clause 18 to 21 – Buses, Taxis and Trains

amend the function and name of the 'Road Service Licence' in the Transport Act (NI) 1967. Clause 21 deals with amendments to the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 as a result of the changes to the current 'Road Service Licences'.

Clause 22 – Provision of Railway Services

amends the duty of NI Railways under section 55 of the Transport Act (NI) 1967 to reflect that this duty will be exercised in accordance with any agreement under the Transport Act (NI) 2010.

No comments

Clauses 23 and 24 – Consumer Council

provide arrangements for the production by the Consumer Council of a forward work programme in relation to its transport functions and for the production of a memorandum by the Department and the Consumer Council detailing arrangements for co-operation and consistent treatment of matters in relation to the Consumer Council's transport functions.

Clauses 23 and 24 ('Consumer Council') of the Transport Bill outline the arrangements for the relationship between the Consumer Council and the Department. The Council is concerned at the lack detail in respect of the provisions for local accountability proposed within this arrangement.

It was previously suggested that the Consumer Council will have formal role in relation to the new public transport agency and that the new agency would have a formal consultative role in the planning system. There are no provisions within the Bill for changes in the relationship between local councils and the Consumer Council or consultation requirements. The Bill does not include any reference to the potential statutory planning role for any new transport agency.

Whilst the Consumer Council may be considered to provide or represent the wider interests on the Agency this does not ensure local democratic accountability enable effective local integration or implementation of the new proposals.

Clauses 25 to 31 – Enforcement

set out the provisions on the enforcement of the provision of public transport services. The Department will have the power to enter into and inspect certain premises that are being used in connection with the carriage of passengers and their luggage by road and to seize certain documents and obtain certain information. It will be an offence to obstruct and authorised officer in the exercise of functions under the Act. Clause 31 provides for prosecutions for offences under this Act.

Clauses 32 to 37 – Grants

Clauses 32 to 37 deal with the payment of grants by the Department in relation to the provision of public transport services, provision of advice, information or training relating to public transport services and capital expenditure for the purchase of vehicles.

Clauses 38 to 40 – Acquisition and disposal of land

provide for the acquisition and disposal of land, including powers for the Department to obtain information as to ownership of land and to enter onto land.

Clause 41 – Appointment of directors of NI Transport Holding Company

applies section 18(2) of the Interpretation Act (NI) 1954 to appointments to the NI Transport Holding Company made under section 47 of the Transport Act (NI) 1967 to include power to remove or suspend persons from appointments under this section.

Clause 42 – Conduct of persons at bus stations

provides the Department the power to make regulations in respect of the conduct of persons at bus stations.

No comments

Clause 43 – Shared Transport Facilities

Clause 43 gives the Department the power to issue directions in respect of the shared use of facilities used for the provision of services under a service agreement.

It will be important for all transport services to have access to bus stations to ensure integration of service provision, and certainty, alternative private, community or social enterprise providers should be encouraged to utilise facilities through specification and procurement processes.

Clauses 45 to 50 - Miscellaneous and Supplementary

Clauses 45 to 50 contain a number of miscellaneous and supplementary provisions, including powers to make regulations. Clause 45 provides for the Department to make orders, subject to affirmative resolution, for any further provisions in connection with this Act.

No comments

Additional Comments

The Bill does not include any reference to the potential statutory planning role for any new transport agency. The Council would have concerns in relation to the with the proposed role for the new Agency in relation to Planning Applications and Development Plans as outlined in previous consultations. This could introduce additional complexity in relation to the determination of applications and affect the discretionary Council responsibility in respect of any developer contributions.”

Consultation - Barriers to Renewable Energy

The Director of Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment has announced that renewable energy will be the subject of an enquiry. In particular the NIACETI wishes to examine the barriers to renewable energy production and its associated potential contribution to the Northern Ireland economy.

Specific issues the enquiry will consider include:

- the current mechanisms at national, regional and local level to support and assist renewable energy production.
- comparisons between the mechanisms for support and assistance in NI and those in other EU member states that are considered to be at the forefront of renewable energy.
- the support and assistance available to SMEs in the renewable energy sector to develop renewable energy technologies.

- the support and assistance available to SMEs in the renewable energy sector to grow and develop their business.
- the appropriateness of current mechanism to develop and grow both local renewable energy markets and export markets.
- assessing which EU member states are considered to be in the forefront of renewable energy development both overall and for each type of renewable energy.

Unfortunately, the Department was only asked to respond to the consultation on the 29 June 2010 and the closing date for replies was Sunday 8 August 2010. Therefore a provisional response was sent with a note that the response had not been ratified by our Committee due to the short timescales.

Key Issues

The provisional response sent is shown below:

Barriers to Renewable Energy Production – NI Assembly Task Force Consultation

Please find below our comments in response to your invitation to discuss barriers to renewable energy production. Most of the information in this response has come from our North Foreshore Project Manager (who is responsible for the Council's existing renewable electricity facilities) and our Planning team. Reference has also been made to an early consultation response to the Department of Environment Consultation on Permitted Development Rights, which included a section on Microgeneration (e.g. wind turbines, solar panels). That response was informed by our Environmental Services Department and was approved by the Council's Town Planning Committee on 3rd December 2009. It is available online if required.

Please also note that the views expressed in this response are pending ratification by the Development Committee on the 11th August 2010. Unfortunately, the timescales and the timing of this consultation have made it impossible to submit a ratified response.

Provisional Response

Belfast City Council is making a significant contribution to non-wind renewable energy production. The Council developed the Landfill Gas Electricity Power Plant to utilise the methane gas at the North Foreshore Giant's Park, the former Dargan Road Waste Landfill site. Our landfill gas powered generating facility produces 5 megawatts of green electricity per hour sufficient to power 6,000 homes. However landfill gas is not sustainable, as the methane gas supply will progressively decline over a 15 – 20 year period. Alternative sources of renewable energy must be found.

Anaerobic digestion (AD) is the solution but this is new to NI and as yet there are no commercial facilities in operation. The AD process produces methane gas which can be used for the production of renewable energy and heat. Questor and others have carried out extensive research into A.D. technology and this is an opportune time to develop AD facilities in NI.

A major difficulty for potential operators is the identification of suitable sites and obtaining satisfactory planning consent for AD and other forms of renewable energy production, such as Energy from Waste. As shown at the end of this paper, the Council's own planning unit and committee have concerns about the potential noise, vibration and visual impact of renewable technologies when they are sited near domestic areas.

The B9 a private sector company has spent 2/3 years in the planning process to secure planning consent for a proposed AD facility in Dungannon. If the Assembly Committee is to encourage renewable energy generation, planning consent must be made easier to obtain and the planning process speeded up. Delays of 2/3 years are not acceptable or economically attractive to commercial operators or their funders.

Therefore there is a need to change the perception of renewable energy production facilities and educate those involved in the decision making and development process, not least the Planning Service and NIEA. Also there is a need to educate the public about modern renewable energy facilities, and the importance of guaranteeing energy security for NI. We encourage visitors to our North Foreshore facilities to help this education process.

The North Foreshore Giant's Park site is unique as the only site in Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan with a statutory waste management zoning. This should help to make it easier to secure planning consent for AD and EfW Facilities. Currently we are investigating the potential of promoting a site for a commercially operated AD facility at the North Foreshore Giant's Park. The project would have synergies for the Council's Landfill Gas Electricity Generation Power Plant as we have the generation capacity and the electrical infrastructure to export renewable energy from the site.

It is suggested that future statutory local area development plans should designate suitable sites for renewable energy generation. This would help to speed up the development of renewable energy facilities in NI, assisting commercial decision making and investment.

ROCs and LECs are available for AD biogas powered electricity generation and are currently at 2 ROCs per MWhr of electricity generated. The Committee will need to determine if this level of support is sufficient to encourage biogas production for electricity generation.

Connection to the local electricity grid is another major barrier due to the significant set up costs involved. Electrical infrastructure to export the renewable energy at the North Foreshore Giant's Park cost the Council circa £2.5 million. Are there ways in which this could be reduced e.g. capping the NIE connection fee?

It is suggested that clustering renewable energy facilities would maximise the use and efficiency of electrical infrastructure. In particular the new non wind renewable energy facilities such as AD and EfW are clean processes that could be located within settlement areas on brownfield industrial sites.

Electricity generation facilities also usually produce large quantities of heat, which can be captured and used in production processes or for a district heating facility. The Committee should consider the introduction of Renewable Heat Incentives to NI to encourage operators to install heat exchangers and pipe network to make productive use of the waste heat. Again consideration needs to be given to clustering businesses / houses close to renewable energy facilities to minimise the cost of the pipe network.

Summary of our previous Comments regarding planning permission

In terms of planning permission for non-domestic microgeneration facilities they need to be considered in terms of the impacts they may have on adjacent properties, particularly residential properties. The Council views issues around noise, vibration and visual impacts as key considerations.

The Council is concerned that the risk of adverse impacts from renewable energy technologies such as wind turbines is too great, in some instances, to allow for no consideration in the form of a planning application. The Council would encourage increased usage of such technology but a full assessment of impacts is necessary. The baseline taken is that non-domestic microgeneration PD will be at least on a par with the provisions for dwelling houses.

The proposed changes will bring Northern Ireland permitted development rights closer in line with those in other UK jurisdictions.

Resource Implications

There are no resource costs associated with this consultation response.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Approve the basic content and structure of the provisional consultation response and;
- To suggest additional comments or changes to include in the ratified response to the NIACETI.

Decision Tracking

Subject to approval, a ratified response, including any requested amendments will be returned to the NIACETI by the 16 August 2010.

Timeframe: 16 August 2010 Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook”

The Committee approved the draft response to the consultation document.

The Future of Bus Operator Licensing in Northern Ireland

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Department of the Environment (DoE) is currently seeking views on proposals to introduce a new Bus Operator Licensing system in Northern Ireland. Currently the DoE through the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) is responsible under the Transport Act (NI) 1967 for granting a Roads Service License (RSL) to passenger transport operators who wish to carry passengers by road for reward. The RSL applies to a vehicle (buses and minibuses) designed or adapted to carry nine or more passengers for hire or reward.

The Roads Service License is composed of two elements: fitness to operate within the industry and the routes or services operated by approved licence holders. Currently DoE and the Department for Regional Development (DRD) share responsibility for this area of Transport Policy.

The current Transport Act also provides for a permanent exemption from licensing through the 10B permit system. This system was introduced for voluntary groups carrying out a range of activities associated with education, religion, social welfare and other activities that benefit the community whereby permits can be issued by a range of designated bodies. District councils along with Education and Library boards and Health and Social Services Boards are among the designated bodies that are entitled to grant permits in relation to the use of small buses under Section 10B of the Transport Act.

Under the current shared responsibility the DoE has the powers to regulate the bus services industry in terms of the criteria that must be met to enter the industry (i.e. those applicable to the bus operator).

The responsibility for controlling the routes and services that an operator can provide is carried out in consultation with the DRD.

Under public transport reform it is proposed to separate the current powers over operators and the routes or services. The consultation document proposes that the DoE will retain the policy and legislative responsibility to license bus operators, based on their suitability, with the DRD taking over responsibility for the policy and legislation relating to the routes or services. Whilst the DRD intend to bring forward new legislation on services, it should be noted that it does not form part of this consultation.

Key Issues

The consultation outlines proposals by DoE to replace the existing Roads Service License system. The Department aims to create a more modern bus operator licensing regime, which is flexible, transparent and supports fair competition.

The Department has a number of options:

Option 1 – Do nothing

The DRD reform of public transport will remove the responsibility from DoE for the route/service element of bus licensing leaving the operator element and the 10B permit scheme to continue.

Option 2 - A single licensing Regime

Create a single licensing scheme for all. The existing operator licensing regime would be extended to cover all bodies currently operating under 10B.

Option 3 – New 3 Tier Licensing Regime

Tier 1 would be full bus operator licensing and would essentially take the same form and have largely similar requirements as the existing operator element to the roads service license. A full license would cover a bus operator for all potential commercial bus transport services.

Tier 2 would make greater use of restricted operator licenses. An applicant would have to meet the same standards for operator 'repute', vehicle and driver licensing requirements necessary for a full license but less stringent financial and competence requirements. The Tier 2 license would restrict the operator to minibuses (9-16 passenger seats). These operators would be able to pay their drivers and cover their operating costs.

Tier 3 would be a scheme with similar aims and objectives as 10B permits but would take the form of a license rather than an exemption. The applicant would be responsible for ensuring that repute requirements are met. The Department suggests that Groups operating appropriately within the 10B permit would be unlikely to notice any difference. Transport would be an ancillary activity for the group, not the main function.

The Department has in the consultation document indicated that it would consider Option 3 to be the preferred solution.

The consultation documents provide further detail in relation to Tier 3 – Voluntary Groups Operator License

- Repute – an applicant would be responsible for ensuring that repute requirements are met.
- Operating centre – operators must have a suitable operating centre to keep vehicles when they are not in use (vehicles are not permitted to be parked overnight on public roads)

Vehicles requirements must:

- have an appropriate vehicle test certificate
- have a bus vehicle excise duty disc (TAX)
- have appropriate insurance for their type of operation; and
- be properly maintained.

Drivers will also be required to have the appropriate category of driving license. Under the permit/license the voluntary groups can only transport their own members and cover the running costs.

The draft Council response to Bus Operator Licensing is outlined in Appendix 1 and a summary is outlined below:

- The Council welcomes proposals to improve the bus licensing regime in Northern Ireland. This review should form part of a clear process to ensure effective regulation and enforcement of bus operations and services
- The Council has concerns in relation to tour bus operators in Belfast City Centre. Currently there are a number of operators in the city offering tours and the apparently unregulated activity is contributing to a negative impression for city visitors. As part of the review of licensing both the number and operations of these service providers should be reviewed and monitored particularly in relation to parking and drop off and pick up.
- The Council consider that district councils should be consulted on new bus operator licensing, routes and services within their council area
- The Council does not support the proposal for the Department to be the only body with the power to issue permits. Currently designated bodies can issue 10B permits, and District council along with Education and Library boards and Health and Social Services Boards

are among the designated bodies that are entitled to grant permits in relation to the use of small buses under Section 10B of the Transport Act. The Council would request that this flexibility with appropriate guidance and processes remains an element of the system.

- The Council would request clarification on the license cost and competency requirements for the voluntary group licensing permit. The Council would request that measures are in place to ensure that school, church and community groups are not adversely affected by the proposed Tier 3 option.
- The Council would support proposals for enforcement action to be taken where an operator no longer fills the statutory requirements for holding a license; contravenes the conditions of the license; fails to keep any undertakings; uses an unauthorised operating centre; or incurs convictions or prohibitions

Recommendations

Members are requested to consider and if appropriate endorse the content of the suggested response to the proposed bus operator licensing set out in Appendix 1.

Decision Tracking

Further to agreement, that, if appropriate a response be submitted to the Department of Environment.

Timeline: 28 August 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

Department of the Environment (DOE)
Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA)
Roads Service License (RSL)
Department for Regional Development - DRD

Appendix 1

1. Do you find Option 1 to be a feasible option for consideration?

The Council recognises that the current bus licensing system needs improvement particularly in relation to service improvements, routes options and enforcement.

2. Do you find Option 2 to be a feasible option for consideration?

The Council would not support the creation of a single licensing scheme for all. This could adversely affect school, church and community groups who unlikely would be able to meet any increase in financial or competence requirements.

3. Do you find Option 3 to be a feasible option for consideration?

The Council would support a 3 tier system but would request further clarification on the implications of this system for the voluntary bus operator license.

4. Which of the 3 options do you believe to be most viable?

The Council considers Option 3 as the most viable but would require further consideration of the proposals for the voluntary sector to provide assurances that groups and services are not adversely affected.

The Council have concerns in relation the requirement for voluntary bus operators to have suitable operating centres as this may not always be possible. Also the nature of community work often involves collaboration with other groups therefore the restriction that voluntary groups can only transport their own members appears untenable

5. In relation to option 3 – Do you agree with the requirements detailed in relation to Tier 1 applicants?

Yes

6. Do you agree with the requirements detailed in relation to Tier 2 applicants?

Yes

7. Do you agree with the requirements detailed in relation to Tier 3 applicants?

The Council would request further clarification on the financial implications for Tier 3 applicants and provisions, to ensure services offered by voluntary groups are not adversely affected.

8. Do you agree with the proposal of separate carriage of alcohol on buses?

Yes

9. Do you agree that the Department will be the only body with the power to issue permits?

The Council would not support the intention of the Department to bring all tiers of licensing under its control. The Council would suggest that tier 3 license/permit should be retained with a revised number of designated bodies. Designated bodies such as District council along with Education and library boards and Health and Social Services Boards should retain the function to grant permits in relation to the use of small buses for non profit making use.

Currently there are a large number of designated bodies who have authority to issue small bus permits. The Council would support clear guidelines for designated bodies to issue the permit to ensure consistency.

10. Do you agree with the proposed five year review period?

The Council considers that bus licenses should be reviewed regularly to ensure high quality services for the public.

11. Do you agree with the proposal in relation to variation of vehicles on a license, as long as the original authorised number is adhered to?

Yes

12. Do you agree with the Departments proposal to publish notices of license application?

The Council would support the publishing of licenses to inform the public on applications for a full, restricted or variation of the licence. However, the Council would request clarification on whether local councils will continue to be informed of roads service licenses and comments requested. Clarification is also required in relation to the Council's role as a statutory consultee.

13. Do you agree that the listed bodies should have the ability to make objection on the grounds of fitness, finance and the professional competence of an operator, and environmental/general suitability of an operating centre? (Advertising of the application will afford the opportunity to bodies such as: a prescribed trade union or association, the PSNI, a District Council, DoE Planning Service, DoE NIEA, DRD Roads Service to make an objection to the grant of a license.)

Yes

14. Do you agree with owners/ occupiers in the vicinity of an operating centre would have the ability to make representation to the Department on environmental grounds?

Yes

15. Do you agree that any person may complain about the suitability of an operating centre at any time during the license/permit validity?

Yes

16. Do you agree with the factors considered in relation to suitability of an operating centre?

Yes

17. Do you agree with the proposed conditions which may be applied to a license in relation to environmental conditions?

Yes

18. Do you agree with the declaration required with the application form in relation to vehicle maintenance / servicing and compliance with traffic and transport related laws?

The Council would support this undertaking to ensure good quality licensed vehicles. The Council would seek to ensure that mechanism and resources are in place for monitoring and enforcement. Consideration should be given to extending this undertaking to include service offered or conduct of staff – standards, equality etc

19. Do you agree with the public enquiry proposals?

The Council would support powers for the Department to hold a public enquiry into an application for an Operators license and hear objections and representations. Clarification is needed on whether the views of councils will be sought in relation to enquires.

20. Do you agree with the Departments proposal on disciplinary actions, and the powers to revoke, suspend or curtail licenses/permits as a result of this?

The Council would support proposals for disciplinary action to be taken where an operator: no longer fills the statutory requirements for holding a license; contravenes the conditions of the license; fails to keep any undertakings; uses an unauthorised operating centre; or incurs convictions or prohibitions.

21. Do you agree with the Departments proposals on appeal procedures?

Yes, the Council would support new procedures to allow an applicant or a license holder to appeal the decision of the Department.

22. Do you agree with the Departments introduces fees on a cost recovery basis?

The Council has concerns that fees will apply to all the tiers including Voluntary Groups Operator License who operate on a non profit making basis. Clarification will be needed of fee levels and the appropriate level of costs associated with the operation, including appeals. .

23. Do you agree with the proposals in relation to impounding of vehicles?

The Council would support the proposals to impound illegally operated buses.

24. Do you agree with proposals relating to the strengthening of on road enforcement?

The Council would strongly support strengthening of enforcement procedures in particular in relation to contravention of parking restrictions and prohibitions.

25. Do you agree that the Department must change the NI system of Bus Operator Licensing in order to bring it up to date so that it contributes to the provision of a fair and safe passenger transport industry?

The Council would be generally supportive of the measures to improve the bus licensing system in Northern Ireland. However, the Council would recommend a precautionary approach to changes relating to bus services that operate under the current 10B permit. They offer a valuable service to the community and proposals to include small bus permits under the licensing framework should be subject to further consideration and consultation with the affected groups."

During discussion in the matter, several Members expressed the view that there was a need for tighter legislation in relation to bus operators and for the development of a charter to direct the way in which the companies provided their services. In addition, the view was expressed that stringent legislation was required also for those companies offering tours throughout the City centre and the need for these to be regulated by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to ensure consistency in the information which was being provided about the City, and the provision of high service standards, training and professionalism.

Subject to the inclusion of the foregoing comments, the Committee approved the draft response.

**Bus Rapid Transport –
Department for Regional Development**

The Committee considered the undernoted report relating to the Bus Rapid Transport:

“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. A study commissioned in 2007 by DRD considered possible routes and technologies for rapid transit in Belfast. The study concluded that a bus based rapid transit system for Belfast is the viable option 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 has since released a rapid transit public consultation document in November 2009 to which the Development Committee agreed a response in January 2010. The consultation document set out how the Department aims to implement the rapid transit system at the strategic level. The document does not deal with operational details of the system such as route alignment, location and design of halts, vehicle design, or branding. These will be subject of a further consultation exercise.

The Department has subsequently published a Final Report on the consultation document summarising the consultation responses, identifying next steps, and responding to comments from consultees. A summary of the Department’s responses to Belfast City Council’s consultation has been circulated.

Key Issues

In the original consultation DRD proposed a number of powers in order to allow delivery of the rapid transit system in Belfast. The Council’s response can be summarised 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 local accountability
- A key issue for the Council is the integration of the proposed bus rapid 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
- 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.

In the Final Report the Department have made some comments to the Council's consultation response, a copy of which has been circulated.

The Final Report on the consultation also outlines the proposed next steps for development of the rapid transit system. The Department has gained approval from the Executive Committee to instruct the Office of the Legislative Counsel to draft a new Transport Bill. This Bill will include not only Rapid Transit but also Public Transport Reform, which the recent consultations showed an overlap in legislative requirements.

The Department plans to engage further with stakeholders, interested parties and the public in the development of the design and implementation details of the Belfast Rapid Transit system.

Throughout the final report the Department has stressed that the Council is a key stakeholder and as such will be fully involved in taking forward the proposals for the system.

Based on the responses to the public consultation the Department has decided to take forward the following policy proposals:

- An enabling power to establish the necessary legal authority for the provision of the Rapid Transit system;
- The power to acquire land in connections 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 byelaws in relation to passenger conduct in/on premises connected with the Rapid Transit system;
- The power to install, operate and maintain off-board ticketing machines in connection with the Rapid Transit system;

In addition to taking forward the above policy proposals the Department is considering strengthening the existing powers for the enforcement of the public transport corridors on which Rapid Transit operates. This would enable the Department to remove vehicles which are obstructing the corridors and thus allow the Rapid Transit system to operate more efficiently.

The Department has also proposed to take the power to exploit any commercial opportunities which arise as a result of the exercise of its Rapid Transit functions. This will allow the Department to benefit from the advertising opportunities which arise on the Rapid Transit network.

No timescale has been offered by the Department in relation to future Rapid Transit consultations. It may be of benefit to invite representatives from DRD to present further plans and next steps to Committee ahead of public consultation exercises.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee note the policy proposals and next steps relating to rapid transit in Belfast and agree to invite DRD to present the next steps for Rapid Transit to Committee.

Decision Tracking

Further to noting the report that DRD is invited to present the next steps for Rapid Transport to Committee.

Time line: September 2010 Reporting Officer: Keith Sutherland

Key Abbreviations

DRD –Department for Regional Development”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Chairman