

Development Committee

Wednesday, 25th August, 2010

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Councillor C. Maskey (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors M. Browne, Crozier, Lavery, Mallon,
A. Maskey, McCausland, Mac Giolla Mhín,
Mullaghan, F. Rodgers, J. Rodgers, Rodway and Stoker.

Also attended: Councillor W. Browne.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors B. Kelly, Campbell and Kyle.

Association for Public Service Excellence Awards

The Director of Development informed the Committee that the Association for Public Service Excellence would be holding its annual seminar in Londonderry during the period from 7th till 9th September. He explained that the theme of this year's conference would be entitled "Armageddon Managed Transformation: Where to Next for Local Government's Frontline?", which would explore how Local Government sustained excellence in service delivery during a period of financial constraints. In addition, the event would incorporate sessions for Elected Representatives.

He pointed out that the Awards dinner, which took place at the seminar, had been held for more than ten years and provided the United Kingdom's Local Government with an opportunity to gain recognition for their work in terms of service delivery. He pointed out that Waterfront and Ulster Halls Service Team had been shortlisted in the "Best Service Team - Sports, Leisure and Culture" category and had been invited to attend the seminar and Awards dinner. Accordingly, he recommended that the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Director of Development and the Head of City Events and Venues (or their nominees) be granted approval to attend the event to enable them to be present at the Service Awards ceremony. The cost per person attending was approximately £190.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010-2014

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The draft Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014 was agreed by Development Committee on 8th February 2010. It was agreed that the framework would go out for a four week consultation process, which began on the 2 March 2010.

Over 700 organisations and individuals were contacted as part of the consultation exercise and signposted to a pro forma on Belfast City Council’s website (with links to Northern Ireland Tourist Board website). Presentations were offered on request.

Twenty five responses were received via the pro forma on the website and three presentations requested. Overall the responses have been positive as a whole with the exception being a number of responses from organisations in West Belfast.

Key Issues

The main changes that will be made to the Framework are as follows:

West Belfast

The Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager met with a wide forum of representatives of West Belfast to discuss concerns and worked with a smaller sub group to review areas of the Framework and agree a way forward.

Belfast Tourism Monitor – 2009 Figures

As part of the Belfast City Council’s Belfast Tourism Monitor, the 2009 figures were presented to Committee in June. This shows a 30% increase in visitor numbers to Belfast in 2009, with a staggering 9.25 million visitor trips undertaken, worth £651 million to the local economy. The Framework must also be updated to reflect these figures.

Maps and Targets

The maps outlining Tourism Place Destinations will be updated so as all places are identified as opposed to arrows pointing off the page. Targets have yet to be aligned to Northern Ireland, however NITB is aware and supportive of this approach. Targets can be revised during the term of the Framework.

Visionary Drivers

The Framework identifies six visionary drivers for tourism growth which are capital projects to be delivered in partnership with government. These are:

- Titanic / Maritime Heritage
- Integrated conference and exhibition facilities
- Belfast Hills and Belfast Zoo
- Lagan Canal
- National Art Gallery
- Crumlin Road Goal

The response from party briefings and from the general feedback has been extremely supportive of the concept of the Belfast Story which was listed as a development lever as opposed to visionary driver. Most consultees felt that this merited significant capital investment and should be upgraded to a visionary driver. Belfast Hills will be strengthened to demonstrate a link to West Belfast and not just the Zoo. A National Art Gallery will be included as a Development Lever as opposed to a Visionary Driver and will include a caveat regarding the funding climate and the likelihood this is a longer term aspiration for DCAL.

Way Forward – 2010 Priorities

NITB, BVCB and BCC have met to agree key projects to progress in short to medium term. These are:

1. Titanic Maritime Belfast and Titanic 2012
2. Belfast Hills/Belfast Zoo
3. Integrated Events Strategy between NITB/BCC
4. Belfast Story
5. Integrated Visitor Servicing /Marketing Plan between BVCB / BCC and NITB
6. NITB and BCC Tourism targets and research aligned
7. City Event Planner launched for sector to plan/optimize opportunities
8. Launch of a new Belfast Pass
9. Solution for integrated exhibition / conference facilities
10. Conference Subvention Scheme
11. Relocation of BWC
12. Local Tourism Destinations - Audits of areas undertaken and partnerships established
13. Lagan Canal – medium term future agreed

A more detailed action plan must be developed against each of these themes and resources allocated, however it is important to note that progress has already been made against many of the areas outlined and each organisation has adopted these in their individual work plans where appropriate. For example:

Titanic Maritime Belfast and Titanic 2012

BCC's Tourism Culture and Arts Unit has taken the lead in commissioning a Maritime Heritage Study for Belfast in partnership with NITB and DSD, leveraging £20,000 to support the study.

Work has commenced on Titanic 2012 and BCC (via Events Unit) is supporting NITB to prepare a Business Plan to bid for central government support towards 2012 activities.

Belfast Hills/Belfast Zoo

TCA is working with Belfast Hills Partnership to submit an application for Rural Development Funds. BCC's Parks and Leisure Department has commissioned a study to review the future of Floral Hall.

Belfast Story

TCA is working closely with Facilities Management and Good Relations to identify the potential of incorporating elements of the Belfast Story into the City Hall. TCA is also working closely with the Titanic Foundation Ltd to ensure that the content within the Titanic Signature Project (Titanic-Belfast) reflects the wider Belfast Story

Integrated Events Strategy between NITB/BCC

BCC's Events Unit is in the process of finalising an Events Strategy for Belfast and NITB has just gone out to consultation with their Events Plan for major event funding. There is a conscious effort to ensure that these two documents are working in harmony.

Integrated Visitor Servicing /Marketing Plan between BVCB / BCC and NITB

NITB has agreed their Service Level Agreement with BVCB for 2010 worth approximately £600,000 BVCB has agreed to a new process in developing plans for 2011 and beyond, which will be based on a more integrated approach for the city as opposed to their corporate approach. This will better align BCC's Events Unit, TCA and Corporate Communications activities and achieve better efficiencies.

NITB and BCC Tourism targets and research aligned

The TCA Unit has tendered for the delivery of the Belfast Tourism Monitor 2010 – 2013 and NITB has been consulted throughout this process to ensure that national statistics feed into the Belfast model and again achieve greater efficiencies.

Solution for integrated exhibition / conference facilities

The need for Belfast to have new facilities is flagged within the NI Tourism Strategy 2020 and NITB are currently putting a case together to bid for £7.5 million under the next CSR. The Waterfront and Ulster Halls are leading on this project and commissioning a business case to identify most appropriate option for investment.

Conference Subvention Scheme

The Development Committee, through TCA, has agreed to ring fence £70,000 per annum over next 3 years towards conference subvention and NITB have agreed to match this with £75,000 per annum. This will create a Belfast and Northern Ireland Conference Subvention Fund worth £435,000 to attract larger conferences to the city.

Relocation of Belfast Welcome Centre

BVCB has prepared a business plan for the relocation and this project is currently being assessed within the context of Belfast City Council's Capital Projects Priorities. A number of premises have been identified and reviewed with the former Northern Bank Building opposite the City Hall being the most favoured. NITB have received an application for capital support, however there is no commitment as yet to financial support. Their most recent Visitor Information Strategy for Northern Ireland highlights how successful the Belfast Welcome Centre is in its gateway role for Northern Ireland.

Local Tourism Destinations - Audits of areas undertaken and partnerships established

Nine Local Tourism Destinations are identified in the Framework. This approach has been developed to support tourism growth across the City and allow a more structured engagement between the Council and neighbourhood areas. Audits and action plans must be developed for all nine areas.

Lagan Canal – medium term future agreed

The Lagan Canal has undergone an economic appraisal and £1 million secured from Ulster Garden Villages. Approaches have been made to SIB, DCAL and DSD to identify possible sources of funding.

Next steps

Once agreed by Council, the following actions will be undertaken:

1. The Framework will be uploaded on the Council's website with consultation responses and the actions taken to address these responses. A shorter summary document will be published.

2. A Belfast Tourism Forum will be established (Autumn 2010), chaired by the Lord Mayor and will include key private and public sector stakeholders to play a key role in overseeing the delivery of the Framework. The first meeting will be an opportunity to launch the document to the wider industry and demonstrate the achievements identified above. A key output of the forum will be to agree a four year action plan.
3. Workshop(s) will be organised to progress the Local Tourism Destination concept across the City. A number of smaller initiatives will be identified for support across the Local Tourism Destinations to ensure buy-in from local stakeholders.

Resource Implications

£20,000 to publish and launch the Framework
£40,000 to progress the Local Tourism Destinations

All from existing Tourism, Culture and Arts Budget as agreed in Departmental Plan 2010 /2011.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree:-

1. To the changes proposed via consultation, to the Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014
2. To publish and launch a summarised version of the Framework, with the full report available on line
3. That a Belfast Tourism Forum be established to oversee implementation of the Framework, chaired by Lord Mayor
4. That workshops are organised to further progress the Tourism Place Destinations and a number of local initiatives identified for support.

Decision Tracking

1. First Meeting of Belfast Tourism Forum
Time line: October 2010 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay
2. Published Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010–2014
Time line: October 2010 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay
3. Local Tourism Destination workshop(s)
Time line: March 2011 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key Abbreviations

BCC	Belfast City Council
TCA	Tourism Culture and Arts
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
BVCB	Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
DCAL	Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
DSD	Department of Social Development"

A Member pointed out that the Framework needed to focus more on local community tourism, particularly in North Belfast. Whilst recognising that the Zoo provided a tourist attraction in that area, people tended to visit that site only and not visit other areas as there was no linkage to other destinations. The North Foreshore development would only provide such a linkage in the longer term but nothing was in place currently. He suggested that there was an opportunity to develop the Jennymount Mill, off the York Road, and its connection to the Linen Industry as a place destination for tourists. That would help provide a link to the Cathedral Quarter and to the North Foreshore. In addition, Council officers had been involved previously in developing a local tourism product in the York Road area and it was suggested that that be revisited, with a view to it being incorporated into the Framework.

A further Member made the point that there was a need to enhance the City's industrial heritage and the Framework needed to be revised to include greater recognition of that heritage.

In response, the Director indicated that the suggestion in relation to the Jennymount Mill could be investigated to ascertain whether or not it was a feasible project. With regard to the industrial heritage, he pointed out that there was no dedicated provision to better develop that tourism product. However, he pointed out that the Titanic Signature Project was developing a story around the City's wider industrial heritage and not just its maritime history.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McCausland,
Seconded by Councillor F. Rodgers,

That the Committee agrees to defer until its next monthly meeting consideration of the Belfast Integrated Strategic Framework to enable further Party Group Briefings to be undertaken.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor M. Browne,
Seconded by Councillor A. Maskey,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations but that the publication of the Framework be delayed for a period of one month to enable the comments which had been made by the Members to be taken into consideration.

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

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor McCausland and seconded by Councillor F. Rodgers was thereupon put to the meeting when nine Members voted for and five against and it was accordingly declared carried.

**Local Economic Development Plan 2011/11 and
Preparation for Integrated Economic Strategy 2011/15**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the most recent LED Plan ‘Sustaining Competitive Advantage’ ran from 2006-2010. It focused on a range of business start-up and growth, employability and economic regeneration initiatives which were match-funded by EU Structural Funds. A review of the Plan has concluded that there were significant achievements from the work undertaken and has suggested some recommendations for future activity.

Based on these recommendations, and following consultation with partner organisations and relevant businesses, a revised plan has been drafted. It is proposed that this plan will last for one year and that one of the key development areas in the course of that year will be to work towards an integrated economic strategy for the city. This approach was endorsed by Members at the Development Committee meeting on 16 October 2009.

Key Issues

Review of Sustaining Competitive Advantage Plan: 2006-2010

In reviewing the effectiveness of the current plan, the following outputs were recorded:

- 4300 companies participating in our business programmes and events
- 449 direct jobs created
- Long-term unemployed acquired 600 accredited qualifications
- Average 10% improvement in turnover for companies participating in business growth initiatives
- Every £1 invested has levered £5 additional resources
- 80 business development programmes delivered
- 120 workshops, seminars and events undertaken.

This work equates to a total GVA of approximately £450million in the economy annually.

Development of current LED plan: 2010/2011

Since late 2009, discussions have been undertaken with a range of partner organisations and key business contacts on the future approach to Council-led LED activity and priorities for the new plan.

The proposal to work on a one year plan is based on feedback from partners that there is a need for greater synergy, particularly in the business start-up and growth arena. Similarly, the efficiency agenda is driving further collaboration and encouraging new approaches to project development and resourcing.

The targets for this year, to be reported through the Council's performance management system CorVu, include:

- Delivery of 44 business development programmes and events
- 850 businesses participating in business development programmes and events
- 135 new jobs to be created as a direct result of activities delivered.

The key messages within the plan are:

- The need for focused, measured intervention around business start-up and growth
- The need to develop key sectors that will sustain Belfast's economic future
- The need to ensure greater dialogue between universities, colleges and the private sector
- The need for the council to harness its own resources better to support the growth of the city's economy
- The need to develop inclusive regeneration support initiatives
- The need to agree a 'Belfast proposition' – where and how the city needs to grow
- The value of a collaborative approach to economic development in a city and possible ways in which this can be achieved.

These messages are entirely in line with the views expressed by recent guests to the City, including Paul O'Connor and Declan Kelly. Both reinforced the need to grow the private sector for the benefit of the entire city and suggested that there was a need for greater collaboration between organisations responsible for the city's development.

The individual activities identified within this plan have been approved under the auspices of the wider Development Department plan which was endorsed by the 9 June 2010 meeting of this Committee. However this plan provides a focused framework for the economic development aspect of the department's work and allows the Committee to receive reports on the specific impact of the initiatives undertaken as part of this Plan.

Initial discussions have already been underway with Invest NI as part of the transfer of functions discussion and they have acknowledged that, despite the lack of progress on this front, they are keen to engage with councils to debate how collaborative support programmes for business start-up and growth might be developed. In parallel, there have been meetings with DEL as well and the international trade side of Invest NI with a view to identifying potential Belfast-based initiatives which will address our current growth challenges and help the city achieve its economic potential.

There has also been increasing engagement in area-based regeneration efforts, focusing initially on Titanic Quarter, where efforts being made to build a template as to how to support sustainable, successful regeneration initiatives that are integrated into and accessible to local communities while maximising the economic impact of the development across the city.

Crucially, it is considered that there is much that can be done to maximise the economic impact of the Council as a whole. For example, with an overall procurement budget estimated to be in excess of £80million annually, there is an opportunity to encourage more local and small companies to avail of the opportunities emerging.

This plan is also intended to capitalise on the growing ambition of Council as a civic leader, taking seriously its role in shaping the regional economic future, in conjunction with its partners. In this regard, we have identified the importance of developing close working relationships with the private sector as a step towards the possible introduction of community planning.

Structure of the 2010/2011 plan

A series of five strategic drivers for action have been identified within the draft plan. These are:

- **Improving business performance:** focusing on supporting more business starts and enhancing the productivity of existing businesses.

- **Supporting priority sectors:** there are a number of key sectors that represent future growth opportunities in Belfast and we are recommending specific investment initiatives to support for companies in these sectors.
- **Raising skills and reducing worklessness:** focusing on addressing the disparities across the city in terms of skills and access to employment, taking account of specific target groups eg young people.
- **Maximising connectivity:** maximising the development potential of the city for all citizens and ensuring equality of access.
- **Stimulating investment:** collaboration with partner agencies to maximise the profile of the City as a smart investment location.

Under each of these drivers, we have identified priority areas of focus with specific actions and targets for each.

It is clear that the economy is facing significant challenges at the present time and that these initiatives alone will not address all of these. However, our research and consultations have shown that there is a distinct role for the council to play in the delivery of targeted initiatives. Equally, in collaborating with other partners, it can address some of the wider challenges facing the city's economy in the short and longer-term.

Development of an Integrated Economic Strategy for the city

Previous work carried out by OECD and Michael Parkinson has identified the need for a common vision and strategy in order to maximise the economic competitiveness of the city. Now, more than ever before, there is a need to channel resources towards sustainable economic regeneration activity that will make Belfast a strong player in new growth industries and will provide a framework to allow local people to access employment opportunities.

Given the reduction in public finances, government departments and agencies are being forced to re-visit previous commitments and to re-negotiate budgets on a range of revenue and capital schemes. However this presents an opportunity to pool resources in order to maximise the impact of investment. In doing so, it creates a common agenda towards which all partners are working.

Despite the current challenges, the economic growth of the city must remain at the forefront of our agenda, as it does at regional level through the Programme for Government. By developing an integrated economic strategy, the council and its partners will send a strong signal that there is an agreed commitment to a series of measurable actions that will move the city forward both socially and economically. This will dovetail with the regional economic strategy which is currently being developed by the DETI and which is scheduled to be completed by the end of this calendar year.

In order to progress the work on the Integrated Economic Strategy, it is proposed that resources already approved from the Development Department's budget be allocated towards analysis and engagement work. The outcome of this work will be to develop a medium-term economic strategy for Belfast that will:

- Create a vision for the economy alongside key priorities that will deliver on this vision, identifying key partners for engagement
- Identify key sectors in which the city can compete and become world-class, focusing on investment required to make this happen
- Consider the role of the education system in creating a dynamic, flexible, highly-skilled workforce
- Consider social mobility issues and look at how the most deprived neighbourhoods can engage with and benefit from the city's development
- Consider how development can happen in a sustainable manner and how commercial opportunities arising from the current environmental challenges can be exploited.

The work will involve a programme of structured engagement to gain buy-in and to ensure that the process is cohesive and holistic.

At present, budgetary approval is in place to carry out two separate pieces of work. These approvals are:

- £20,000 to carry out research on new business sectors to ensure that activities are relevant
- £25,000 to carry out research on post-recession economic growth models to support the new integrated economic strategy.

In order to ensure consistency and focus, it is proposed that Members agree to pooling these two budgetary amounts to allow one commission to be undertaken. If this recommendation is approved, Members are asked to delegate authority to the Director of Development, in association with the Chairman of Development Committee, to approve the most economically advantageous tender, subject to a form of contract being drawn up by Legal Services. This will expedite the process and ensure that the Plan is in place for the new financial year in April 2011.

Resource Implications

Budgetary approvals for the individual activities within the current (2010/2011) LED Plan have been endorsed by the Development Committee of June 2010.

The development work on the new integrated strategy will require a budget of up to a maximum of £45,000. This budget has already been approved by the Development Committee in June 2010.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the current one year LED Plan that will be operational from April 2010 to March 2011
- Note the proposed approach for the development of the Integrated Economic Development Strategy from April 2011 and approve the pooling of research resources of up to a maximum of £45,000 towards the research, analysis and forecasting work required
- Subject to endorsement of the above recommendation, approve the proposal to appoint the most economically advantageous tender for the work following a competitive tendering process and subject to an appropriate legal contract.

Decision Tracking

If recommendation is accepted, updates will be presented at future meetings of this Committee.

Time frame: November 2010 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key Abbreviations

LED	Local Economic Development
GVA	Gross Value Added
DEL	Department of Employment & Learning
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

In response to a number of questions, the Director indicated that the Department was aware of the lack of community infrastructure in some areas in the City and the need to enhance that capacity to enable the communities to engage in social economic programmes and that the Department's Community Services Section would be investigating what might be able to be achieved in this regard in due course. With regard to the use of consultants, he stated that there was a need for the Plan to have an element of independence to ensure that all the key players, Departments and Statutory Bodies were able to accept the outcomes. He indicated that the research would include the production by the consultants of a draft strategy which would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairman