

Development Committee

Wednesday, 10th November, 2010

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor C. Maskey (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors M. Browne, Bostock, Campbell, Crozier,
Ekin, B. Kelly, Kyle, Lavery, Mallon, Mac Giolla Mhín,
McKee, Mullaghan, J. Rodgers, Rodway and Stoker.

Also attended: Councillor McKenzie.

In attendance: Mr. C. Quigley, Town Solicitor;
Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development;
Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Development Manager;
Mr. J. Walsh, Legal Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Kirkpatrick, A. Maskey and Mhic Giolla Mhín.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 13th and 26th October 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 November.

Relocation of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and Belfast Welcome Centre

The Committee was reminded that the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and the Council had appointed Tourism Transport Consult, in association with Allan Balnaves, to assess the rationale for relocating the Belfast Welcome Centre. The report had examined three options, that is, the move to the former Northern Bank, 8-10 Donegall Square North or to the Belfast Central Library or to remain at the current location in Donegall Place.

The potential for a relocation of the Welcome Centre had undergone a Strategic Review Starting Gate, which the Council applied to the procurement of infrastructure, information technology, property and goods and services. Through that process, it aimed to improve procurement discipline and outcomes by encouraging better performance in project planning, development and execution. The Strategic Outline Case had received an overall rating of Green for the project suggesting that the successful delivery of the project to time and cost quality appeared highly likely, subject to more detailed assessment and Council approval. The detailed assessment required an economic appraisal to be undertaken for each of the options. ASM Horwath Consultants had been tasked with undertaking the economic appraisal and had been invited to attend to present the draft report to the Committee. Each of the three options had been appraised against a range of financial factors, including floor area, rental costs, income, increased footfall, income opportunities, fit-out costs, partnership opportunities and opportunities to purchase. The sites had been assessed also against non-monetary factors, including the gateway role of a Welcome Centre, acceptability, timelines, accessibility, minimum disruption and flexibility.

It was reported that Messrs. M. Williamson and J. Parker, representing the Consultants, were in attendance and they were welcomed by the Chairman.

With the assistance of visual aids, Mr. Williamson reviewed the role of the Belfast Welcome Centre and the background to its establishment. He then proceeded to outline the number of enquiries received at the centre during its opening period, the targets for the next two financial years and the income which had been generated at the centre. He referred to each of the options which had been considered and the pros and cons associated with each of the sites, the cost of fit-out, the operating costs and revenues, the wider economic benefit and the cost to benefit ratio. He indicated that each of these options had been ranked in the following order:

- (1) relocate to Donegall Square North (the former Northern Bank Building);
- (2) remain at Donegall Place and refurbish;
- (3) remain at Donegall Place and do nothing; and
- (4) relocate to Belfast Central Library.

He stated that the next steps for the Council were to decide on its preferred location, firm up any capital costs and agree any capital spend, decide on the future funding model for the Centre and, if required, set a date for the move.

The deputation then answered a number of questions from the Members in relation to the costs of the fit-out of each of the venues, the estimated number of enquiries and whether the regeneration of surrounding areas had been taken into account in the economic appraisal.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the deputation for attending and they retired meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that a further report in relation to the findings of the economic appraisal would be submitted to the Committee for consideration in due course.

Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010/14

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the draft Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010/14 to enable it to be considered at a special meeting which had been arranged to be held later in the month.

Renewing the Routes Update

The Committee agreed that Party Group briefings be held to enable the Members to receive an update on the Renewing the Routes prioritisation process, with a final report thereon being submitted to the Committee for consideration in December.

Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre: Review of Management Arrangements

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In April 2009, the Committee considered a request from Connswater Community and Leisure Services to extend their lease on the Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre. Committee agreed to a time limited extension during which officers would review the centre’s performance and management capacity. If the review was successful, a further lease extension might be offered.

The purpose of this report is to present to committee the outcome of the review and to present recommendations for the future management arrangements of the centre and the related grant aid support.

Pending the outcome of the review, and in light of the group’s failure to meet the monitoring requirements in relation to their previous grant aid, Members are asked to note that no grant has been released for the 2010/11 year to date.

Context

Council is committed to the provision of venues for people to gather, meet, participate, share information and celebrate in recognition that Community Centres promote social inclusion, participation and engagement and as such they are often the first point of contact between the individual and wider community involvement. The Council currently support this commitment via 3 delivery models:

- Council owned and managed facilities
- Community owned and managed facilities.
- Council owned and community managed facilities

The latter is a less cohesive category but is generally where council continues to own a building or site but has entered into lease arrangements with local community organisations for the management of the facility. These agreements have evolved over a period of time and appear to have been reactive and usually either as a Council initiative to address under usage of centres via working in partnership with the local geographical community or have developed in direct response to community requests.

While the traditional focus of these centres is on sports and recreation activities, input from Community Services staff has supported the development of broader programmes to address community needs. The range of broad based community programmes varies across each of the independently managed centres. Council currently support 6 such centres through a range of interventions including grants and waiver of rental income, capital charges and maintenance costs.

In March 2004 a report was submitted to a special meeting of the Community and Leisure Services Sub-Committee: the *Strategic Review of Council Owned Indoor Leisure Facilities*. This report provided the committee with information to facilitate strategic decisions regarding Council-owned indoor leisure facilities. One of the recommendations in the report was that the Ballymacarrett Recreational Centre be transferred to the community sector subject to satisfying management arrangements and agreement on the detailed terms.

In January 2005, the committee agreed to handover management of this facility to Connswater Community and Leisure Services Ltd (CCLL). This company was formed by Mersey Street Area Residents Association (MARA) and other local interests in order to facilitate the transfer of the management of the Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre from BCC to the control of the local community. The decision was implemented in February 2006, following refurbishment of the centre and on a basis of a 3 year lease.

CCLL is a not for profit organisation and has charitable tax exemption. The Board of Directors is the key decision making body for CCLL. The Board has 8 directors which include the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. There are 9 volunteers who work at the centre and include the Centre Manager, Assistant Manager/Administrator and Assistant Administrator. There are also a number of paid cleaning staff.

To facilitate the transfer, Community Services provided regular officer support to the group to ease/enable the management process. During the lease period, reviews have found a number of management issues. The business focus /community need balance became a quarrelsome issue for the board of Directors resulting in some resignations including the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer. This further eroded the management capacity of the group: the issue that had been questioned at the start of the lease. One of the group's strengths however was that they had a highly committed and motivated manager who had around him a strong team of volunteers. Sadly, in December 2008 the centre manager unexpectedly died. The organisation, coordination and vision for the centre was largely led by him and the Connswater group had significant adjustments to make if they were to continue to develop the capacity that Mr Cochrane had contributed to the organisation.

CCLL requested an extension to their lease arrangement. Advice was requested from Legal Services who indicated that the Lease allowed for a further extension to the Lease term provided that there is 'no breach or subsisting breach of covenant and there are notice provisions within the Lease for exercising the option to extend by the Lessee'. This was interpreted by Legal Services that any request by CCLL to extend the Lease agreement should be considered favourably by BCC unless they were in breach of the terms of the original Lease agreement.

In considering the extension request, Members discussed a number of considerations including ongoing community need, wider environmental changes, the balance of service delivery and the capacity of the management team. Members also took account of advice from Legal Services which noted that '*under the terms of the original lease the Lessee has the option to extend the lease for a further period of three years, insofar as there is no breach or subsisting breach of covenant*'. Legal Services further commented that the terms of the lease note that this option to renew should be formally requested by the lessee '*not less than 2 nor more than 6 months prior to the expiry of the Term hereby granted*'.

The lessee missed this time period for service notice on the initial lease, however, given the extenuating circumstances, Council used its discretion to extend under a Heads of Terms agreement to allow for a further 12 month period. This extension would allow for a review of performance (to take place after 6 months) in order to assess the ongoing need for provision and the capacity of the lessee to manage the contract.

To meet the committee approved need for a review of performance, Community Services sought the support of officers in

- Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) in relation to financial management
- Legal Services in relation to compliance with the terms of the Lease, Heads of Terms and Funding Agreements
- Property & Projects staff in the form of a formal Gate 5 review which examines arrangements in relation to service delivery, contract management, operational management, benefit realization, value for money and performance.

Key Issues

The findings, recommendations and planned actions were considered under the following headings:

- Management Structure & Governance Arrangements
- Performance Management
- Financial Performance
- Current Policy & Procedure
- Current & Potential Usage
- Alternative Local Service Provision
- Programme of Development in East Belfast
- Options for Future Management

These findings, which have been outlined to local elected Members, can be summarised as follows.

1. Surplus in accounts:

At year end 2008/09 the CCLS Audited Accounts indicate a balance of £34,113.02. The Board response is that community programmes are now well established and that the associated costs are being supplemented from income generated via service provision. The surplus level for 2009/10 cannot yet be confirmed as Audited Accounts are not yet available.

While this level of ongoing income generation related to service provision is welcomed, Members may wish to review the level of BCC grant subvention required to support local service provision. All of the income generated is via programme fees: charges have been reviewed and are in line with those of BCC leisure centres.

Given the withholding of the 2010/11 grant support pending the receipt of outstanding monitoring returns, the organisation has been using the accumulated reserve to resource operational overhead costs. This reserve has now been exhausted. The group were not in a position to meet their electricity costs and Airtricity the supplier, gave notice that supply would be discontinued. Pending committee decision on the 2010/11 grant allocation, the Director approved the direct payment of £2.385 to Airtricity on the basis that Ballymacarrett is a BCC asset and as such the integrity and security of the building must be maintained and to ensure that BCC can honour current booking agreements pending committee decision.

The group has not demonstrated any potential to lever other income to develop the site.

2. Ineligible use of revenue grant

Monitoring returns have demonstrated the group's ineligible use of their revenue grant on a number of levels. The annual accounts indicate that grant has been used for capital investment without BCC permission: The funding agreement between BCC and CCLS stipulates that funding is provided 'in respect of its revenue (operating) costs', and as such is restricted. The financial statements for years ending for 2008/09 and 2009/10 detail capital expenditure from BCC's restricted funding.

The Board have outlined the detail of the expenditure and this is attached as Appendix 1. They accept this is a breach of the conditions of BCC grant support however the current volunteer centre manager and the re-established Board state they were unaware of the terms of support.

In response to a final demand for information returns, it is now apparent that CCLS have spent a total of £26,015 on volunteer expenses. Officer investigation of this high level of expenditure has found that it relates to volunteer training and development and to volunteer allowances in respect of childcare, travel and subsistence costs. Officers have advised the Board that elements of this expenditure do not reflect legislative or best practice approaches. The Board have been advised to amend practice immediately and that BCC may pursue remedies to recoup related expenditure.

3. Inability to verify 2008/09 accounts by auditors:

The financial statements prepared by the company's accountants (Cunningham, Wilkinson, Maxwell & Co) and reviewed by AGRS were unaudited. It is therefore difficult to complete an authoritative review of the financial information in the accounts due to the unaudited nature of the data. The Accountants' Report as part of the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2009 refers to the death of the Centre Manager, and the subsequent loss of information held on his computer, restricting the accountants' ability to verify all entries. According to their report, they have sought confirmation from the remaining staff in the completion of the report. This raises concerns regarding the completeness, accuracy and robustness of the financial information presented.

The Board have submitted draft accounts for 2009/10 and indicate that unqualified accounts will be forwarded to BCC by November 2010.

4. Current Policy & Procedure:

Business continuity has been a major issue for the centre. While a new structure has been introduced which is developing processes and procedures as well as management information systems, there is still a heavy reliance on the volunteer manager of the centre who deals with all of the issues and problems of the running of the centre. Some improvement is demonstrable in the development and management of centre programme activities however officers believe that the group have still not achieved the necessary level of management competency in order to ensure compliance particularly around financial management.

From inception, and despite repeated periods of intensive officer support, our monitoring has identified ongoing capability issues. This assessment has prompted requests to extend officer assistance and, while Members were concerned at the resource implications of this, they agreed a further extension when the CCLL committee difficulties again arose in May 2008. To inform the request to extend the lease, BCC completed a Gate 5 review. The findings reinforce an ongoing officer assessment that, without the additional and consistent BCC officer involvement over and above that provided to other independent community organisations, this group demonstrate ongoing capability limitations which have contributed to some serious management mistakes.

If the BCC grant support is extended, there is therefore continuing evidence of a need for further officer involvement to help build more robust processes and procedures. Furthermore, the group will need to extend the Board Membership in order to address this skills gap.

5. Current & Potential Usage:

The Gate 5 review assessed the current usage of the centre in respect of leisure activities (84%), community activities (15%) and other (1%). It might be extrapolated that, given the significant weighting towards leisure activity at 84%, this activity type forms the balance of the programme on offer. BCC Parks & Leisure have conducted a recent research exercise as part of the Strategic Review of Leisure which is to be used to inform the direction which BCC will take in providing leisure services. The research which is wide ranging but also covers aspects such as current leisure centre provision, including location and costs. Given the sport and leisure aspects of centres such as Ballymacarrett, this review might assist the council in determining the future for the centre. The review would also assist in the setting of objectives and outcomes which best suit the delivery capabilities of the centre.

6. Alternative Local Service Provision:

The Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre is situated within the Ballymacarrett Ward which is classed as being within the top ten wards in relation to high levels of deprivation. Within one kilometre of the centre there are also two BCC owned and managed facilities: Dee Street Community Centre and Avoniel Leisure Centre. There are also several community groups in the area who receive BCC funding.

While many of those interviewed indicated an acceptable level of satisfaction with the services provided at Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre, particularly commenting upon the high level of volunteer commitment, there appeared to be limited awareness of the centre and its activity programme outside of the immediate catchment area. Also, a number of the interviewees felt there is duplication in some of the services being provided. From those interviewed, there are therefore varying views in relation to Value For Money in continuing to finance provision at this location given the availability of other BCC assets locally.

In partnership with Leisure Services, officers have conducted an analysis of the scale and type of activity currently provided at Ballymacarrett against an assessment of local need and the programme capacity within BCC centres and other partner providers. This assessment indicated that the majority of current user groups could be accommodated at either of the 2 BCC local centres or within other local community facilities supported via BCC Grant. While further detailed work would need to be undertaken in advance of any plan to transfer provision to other local venues to ensure proper service coverage in East Belfast, this examination might also identify efficiencies and ensure that the services BCC are responsible for are providing value for money for the ratepayers of Belfast.

7. Programme of Development in East Belfast:

Under the auspices of City Investment, Members have been considering the type of development necessary to improve quality of life across various parts of Belfast. In regards to Inner East Belfast there has been strong political direction that rebuilding the local population base is fundamental to regenerating the whole area. To this end Members are keen to encourage the building of social and affordable housing where suitable sites can be made available. The Council has made a limited start on this by making a small site in Templemore Avenue available for housing. However, Members are more ambitious and a number of sites have been considered including potential school closure sites and the possibility of the Ballymacarrett site, if the centre is no longer viable.

8. Development activities

The review took on board development activities in relation to other projects which are under consideration: Tommy Patten park area as a leisure hub: the Connswater Community Greenway project, a £40m+ scheme that will be on site by the end of 2010/11; the Rapid Transit project: the Skainos Project which is a £20m flagship redevelopment scheme due for completion in 2013: and community led plans for a partnership project to redevelop the old Templemore Avenue School into an East Belfast Network Centre with an official opening planned for June 2012.

Options for Future Management

As part of the review, officers conducted an initial analysis of the options for future management of the site. The options are not necessarily mutually exclusive but rather there may be a possibility of using some of the options together as a stepping stone to achieve the best value for money and realization of tangible social benefits while minimizing risk exposure.

1. Do Nothing – continue funding and extend lease to February 2012

Officers recommend this option is discounted given the concerns raised by the Gate 5 Review and the continued late provision of insufficient monitoring returns both of which point to persistent concerns regarding the capacity of the Board to compliantly manage Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre.

2. Continue funding CCLL and extend lease.

Any proposal to continue to fund CCLL would need to review the level of grant required to maintain service provision and include conditions to address the capacity issues highlighted:

- Extend Membership of the Board to increase capacity and improve social connectivity beyond the immediate locality.
- BCC officer support to revise systems and provide Board and volunteer training to improve governance
- Identify and incorporate best practice lessons from other independently managed BCC centres.

3. Withdraw grant funding and allow continuation of lease until February 2012.

Legal Services indicate there is sufficient evidence to terminate grant funding. Pending the outcome of this review and, given that the group have only recently submitted outstanding monitoring returns, the agreed grant for 2010/11 has not been released. The group have now expended all of the surplus revenue in the running of the centre and indicate they could not proceed without access to BCC revenue support.

The annual rental was reviewed from £11,000 to £17,000 per annum upon extending the term of the lease (May 2009). Given that the rent is considered as part of the gross grant award, if the Council allows continuation of lease / occupation until February 2012 but withdraws grant funding, consideration needs to be given as to whether the group will be liable for the Council rent.

4. Interim measure (Combination of options 1, 2 and 3):

In order to manage an effective withdrawal which will ensure local service provision while proactively engaging with key stakeholders, Members consider an amended grant contract with CCLL:

- Agreed a defined contract end-date (either to calendar or financial year end)
- Based on the agreed end date above, reassess the level of required financial support;
- Put in place increased financial management procedures to ensure compliance, for example, BCC officer to pre-approve all payments which must be agreed and recorded by the Board
- Plan for the scheduled relocation of current service provision and agreed bookings and
- Immediately identify and extend the Board Membership in order to address this skills gap.

During this exit time-frame, the CSUM will work with the group to determine current financial status including liabilities. This would include finalising receipt of the 2009/10 unqualified accounts and determining the need for any grant claw back.

5. Research options for alternative stakeholder management of the facility

Officers have continued to liaise with other local providers to determine interest in the local asset. Given the high level of need associated with local youth, BELB Youth Service has recently expressed an interest in relation to their youth provision. Officers are continuing to explore this option.

If this centre is to be occupied by another external body there will need to be clarity from the outset as to the terms of any occupation by them. There is currently a rental assessment of £17,000 p.a in respect of these premises but this is a discounted rent (i.e. as compared to a full commercial rent) to reflect the community type usage. Based on committee decision in respect of all independently managed centres, the service does not invoice this rent but consider it as part of the gross grant award. There is also exemption from rates due to the nature of its use.

Whilst the Recreation & Youth Services (NI) Order 1986 provides that Councils can assist, by financial contribution, or otherwise any person to establish maintain and manage any facilities for recreational social and physical and cultural facilities, the Council would need to be assured that the future use and occupation of these premises by any other body falls within the scope of this Order if a discounted rent is to continue. If Youth Service provision or use by BELB is not something that falls within the Council's remit or can be covered by the Recreation & Youth Services Order then care needs to be taken as to the terms under which the Council would (if it so decided) to transfer this asset to BELB.

6. Close centre and sell asset

If Members are minded to progress this option, officers will work internally and with external providers to develop a phased exit strategy to allow for a managed withdrawal from the site. This would include:

- a proactive communications strategy to key stakeholders including local residents, user groups, community sector, other service providers and councillors;
- the identification and planned relocation of some local service provision;
- work with Asset Management Group to progress development plans for site;
- work with the Community Safety team to mitigate against any potential anti social behaviour.

Each of the options carry levels of associated benefit and risk.

Within the Connswater Community Greenway proposals the Recreation Centre site is located adjacent to the proposed 'Main Civic Square' and a proposed Public Realm link from this Square along the Ballymacarret Walkway to the 'Library Square' facing onto Hollywood Road. It is important that any future use options for the Recreation Centre takes cognisance of these CCG proposals to ensure the most effective integration and complementary use of these adjoining land uses.

In planning terms, the majority of the site is shown in dBMAP as open space, although the existing built leisure/community use of the recreation centre as well as the provision of alternative open space as part of the CCG should be a factor in any future redevelopment options. The proposed route of the EWAY Rapid Transit Scheme directly adjoins the centre; and the proposed Connsbank Link & Hollywood Arches Bypass is also located to the east of the centre. The majority of the overall site comprising the Recreation Centre and adjoining lands are held on terms which restrict its use to open space and recreational use. However, a portion of the Recreation Centre site is held on title with no restrictions.

Following a recent officer and Member review meeting regarding the Recreation Centre it was agreed that a planning assessment/options appraisal be undertaken in respect of both the Recreation Centre site and surrounding lands. The Planning Assessment is due for completion on 29 October and a title report has been provided by Legal Services although there remain some further areas for clarification in terms of the Council's ability to have the restrictions lifted or modified. The planning and title information will be used to prepare an Options Report in terms of future use options for these lands on the assumption that the current management arrangements for the centre do not continue.

Conclusion

The review notes a number of major issues in respect of the centre and the capabilities needed to drive the centre forward as a community based resource. The management capabilities have been questioned and, whilst users have been complimentary about the services / facilities provided, there needs to be more evidence in respect of their successes.

Some stakeholders have raised concerns in respect of the inclusion of the whole community and the VFM aspects of this facility, especially given the financial climate and the potential duplication of services. While the review acknowledges there have been major difficulties for the centre over the last number of years, concern is expressed that 4 years on there is an ongoing need for substantial BCC officer support.

We also acknowledge the need for Community Services to review associated monitoring practices and to revise these in order to address group capacity to protect public funds. The service will immediately move to include a 6 monthly review of progress for all independently managed centres.

Resource Implications

The renewal of the lease would be within revenue estimates but would require ongoing officer input for monitoring and support.

If the lease is not renewed there would be an annual saving to Council of both grant aid and direct payments associated with the maintenance of the capital asset.

- The BCC grant aid for Ballymacarrett for 2010/11 has previously been agreed by committee as £55,183. Officers have not processed any payment in relation to the 2010/11 pending submission of outstanding monitoring returns.
- The further potential saving is in relation to direct payments associated with the maintenance of the capital asset. These vary annually depending upon need however the total costs in 2009/10, as the last full financial year, were £16,051.
- Furthermore the rent was assessed by Estates at £17,000 per annum from the date of the extension of lease term. However, based on a previous decision, the level of revenue funding provided to the group is net of this rent.

The gross funding subvention provided to this group is therefore £88,234 per annum

If any extension is granted, Members may wish to reconsider the level of financial support necessary in order to ensure the continuation of needs based community or leisure services in the area. Any assessment should be informed by the previous grant under spend in 2009/10 and an acceptable level of reserve.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the findings of the review and to consider the most effective future management arrangements for the site.

Given the persistent concerns over the capacity of the group the evidence would suggest that, without intensive officer support, Connswater Community and Leisure Services Ltd cannot meet the base level requirements necessary to continue to independently manage this council asset.

In order to ensure a managed withdrawal in line with this assessment and to allow time to further develop plans for alternative use of the site in line with the broader development agenda for the east of the city, officers suggest that it might be beneficial to adopt a stepped approach towards this goal. Officers therefore recommend the following:

1. Agree a time-frame within which to cease grant support as per option 4 outlined above.
2. Officers work with the group to agree a withdrawal action plan. This plan would calculate the level of grant required to maintain service provision to the agreed exit date. Any release of funds would be conditional on receipt of the 2009/10 unqualified accounts.
3. Impose increased financial management procedures to ensure compliance, for example, BCC officer to pre-approve all payments which must be agreed and recorded by the Board
4. Develop a phased exit strategy to allow for a managed withdrawal from the site. This would include:
 - A proactive communications strategy to key stakeholders including local residents, user groups, community sector, other service providers and councillors;
 - the identification and planned relocation of some local service provision;
 - work with the Community Safety team to mitigate against any potential anti social behaviour.
5. Continue to explore with BELB their expressed interest in managing the site for Youth Service provision.
6. Clarify with Estates Management any ongoing costs if the site is left vacant. Initial assessment would suggest these costs would primarily relate to maintaining site security and the reassessment and removal of the current exemption from rates due to the nature of use.
7. Asset Management Group/ Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to continue to progress development plans for the site.

Abbreviations

CCLL – Connswater Community and Leisure Ltd
MARA – Mersey Street Area Residents
CSUM – Community Services Unit Manager
CDO – Community Development Officer”

After discussion, during which the Committee sought and received confirmation in relation to the management structure, governance arrangements and financial performance, the Committee agreed:

- (i) not to extend the current lease arrangements with the Connswater Community and Leisure Services group for the Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre;
- (ii) that no further grants be released for the group;
- (iii) that all further payments to be made by the organisation be pre-approved by Council officers; and
- (iv) on cessation of the lease, Council officers take control of the facility and undertake the stepped approach as outlined in recommendations 4 to 7 of the report.

St. George's Market

The Committee was advised that the St. George's City Food and Garden Market had been shortlisted in the "Best Food Market Category 2010" in the BBC Radio 4 Food and Farming awards. The awards ceremony was scheduled to be held in the NEC Birmingham on Wednesday, 24th November and two representatives from the Council had been invited to attend. The approximate cost of attendance for two people would not exceed £600.

The Committee approved the attendance of the Chairman and the Markets Development Officer (or their nominees) at the awards ceremony.

Cathedral Quarter Development Plan

The Committee deferred consideration of a report on the Cathedral Quarter Development Plan to enable a draft Council response to the plan to be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its next scheduled meeting.

Draft Corporate Action Plan to tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities

The Committee agreed to defer, until its next scheduled meeting, consideration of the Draft Corporate Action Plan to tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities to enable Members to give further consideration to the Plan and to allow Dr. Mike Morrissey, who had been commissioned by the Council to undertake a study to assess the level of Poverty in Belfast, to be in attendance.

Update on State of the City Initiative

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will remember that a paper on the revised State of the City Initiative was agreed at Committee on 9 December 2009. At that time it was agreed to re-launch the State of the City (SOTC) Initiative by offering a better value for money series of seminars and briefings. It was agreed to move away from a single annual conference to four seminars (State of the City Development Debates) and four Development Briefs a year.

More specifically it was agreed that the initiative will maintain its name and will consist of:

- 4 Seminars (Development Debates) per year (3 in the first year): Over one year BCC would hold four quarterly seasonal breakfast seminars that would take place in City Hall.
- Publications:
- 4 Development Briefs per year (3 in the first year): This is to raise the debate and provide ‘food for thought’. The briefs would focus on the main areas covered in previous seminars in order for participants to be ‘reminded’ of what was discussed earlier.
- One major research paper per year – Development’s PBDU proposes to publish one research paper per year to support the SOTC seminars.
- Magazines – City Matters and Intercom would be used to communicate the information both internally and externally.
- Web Page: The Council’s website will be regularly updated to ensure that stakeholders are well informed. The existing corporate Facebook and Twitter would also be updated to disseminate information on the upcoming events, sharing ideas, documents and feedback on the events.
- Belfast Policy Portal: The development of a policy ‘portal’ was one of the key recommendations of the 2005 conference - a web-based service which will bring together content from the seminars and make connections back into Council work.

This ensured that the Development Department would generate a large series of products for the agreed budget, rather than only one conference.

This report now proposes the first three speakers for the State of the City Development Debates.

Key Issues

At that stage, it was proposed the first year of SOTC focus on how Belfast is recovering from the recession from different development points of view i.e. business, social, cultural, physical and environmental. It was proposed that the seminar series could be entitled 'Belfast Bounces Back'. However, Members noted that given the challenging economic climate for citizens of Belfast, this might not be the most appropriate branding. It was agreed that the Head of Economic Initiatives (who presented the paper as acting Director) would reconsider this matter. This issue was reconsidered within the Department and by Chief Officers and it was proposed that a more effective approach would be to focus on key concrete areas of work of the Council that were realistic given the economic climate, namely the Integrated Economic Strategy, the review of the Masterplan and the City Investment Framework, all of which have been agreed by Members as offering key opportunities to influence the Regional Economic Strategy and other attendant debates on resource allocation.

It is proposed therefore that the Development Debates arising from the key speakers' input and engagement with external stakeholders will directly contribute to the development of the Integrated Economic Strategy, the City Investment Framework and the Masterplan through the topics it will cover and development briefs it will produce. These elements will include city design, regeneration and economic competitiveness.

These topics and speakers will emphasise the key role of the Development Department in influencing the economic and social development of the city.

Proposed provisional speakers and dates

It is proposed that the SOTC initiative will be officially re-launched at the first breakfast Development Debate on 25 November 2010 in the City Hall at 8am. Professor Niall G. Kirkwood, from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and visiting Professor at the University of Ulster has provisionally agreed to be the keynote speaker at this first seminar. He is an international urban design and architecture expert who is currently advising the Government of Korea. His expertise lies in a range of subjects, from landscaping, brownfield development, regeneration to Masterplanning.

Prof. Kirkwood will bring a fresh and innovative approach to the public conversation about city design and in particular add to the Council's review of the Masterplan. Professor Kirkwood is willing to, apart from speaking at the SOTC seminar, spend some time with the interested Council's officers to provide guidance and steer on the council's Masterplan and City Investment Framework. The proposed itinerary would be:

- 24 November dinner with Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee
- 25 November 8 – 10am SOTC Development Debate in the City Hall. The Chair of the Development Committee will welcome the invitees and the Chief Executive will introduce Professor Kirkwood and chair the question and answer session.
- 25 November, after the SOTC seminar, it is proposed to organise a meeting (short workshop style) with interested officers and finish with lunch.

We propose that the second Development Debate will take place in February 2010. The Director of Development was contacted by the US Consulate re the visit of John Palmieri, the Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Mr Palmieri will be visiting in February (as yet more detailed dates have not been confirmed). We propose that he is invited to be the second speaker for SOTC and that this be combined with other stakeholder engagement initiatives proposed by us and the US Consulate. In Hartford, Connecticut, since 2004, Palmieri served as the City's first director of the Department of Development Services, overseeing all aspects of planning, economic and real estate development. While in Hartford, he partnered with the local chamber of commerce to develop a strategic plan and marketing program for the city, established a tax increment financing district for a major mixed use development at the site of the historic Colt Firearms factory, and re-organized the City's core development functions. Some of the major projects that the Boston Redevelopment Authority is working on include the development of the South Boston Waterfront, the revitalization of Downtown Crossing, the growth of the Longwood Medical Area, the implementation of the Crossroads project, and the expansion of academic institutions. Throughout all these projects, the BRA is charged with ensuring development that works for the benefit of Boston's residents.

The third SOTC Development Debate is proposed to take place on the 24th March 2010 in the City Hall with Bruce Katz, Vice President and Director, of the [Metropolitan Policy Program](#) at Brookings Institution, a non-profit think tank based in Washington. Bruce Katz regularly advises national, state, regional and municipal leaders on policy reforms that advance the competitiveness of metropolitan areas. Members may remember that Bruce Katz visited Belfast in 2005 and spoke at the SOTC Autumn Seminar which was very well received and is still mentioned by our stakeholders.

In order to get the most out of Mr Katz's visit there is an opportunity to connect it to a Belfast workshop that the London School of Economics' City Reformers Group wishes to hold with 20 participants from various cities across Europe (for example, Bilbao, Saint Etienne, Leipzig, Glasgow and Milan). We propose to work in partnership with them to organise and deliver this workshop. The workshop would take place on the 23rd March 2010 in the City Hall. The city participants would arrive in Belfast on the 22nd March and a study tour of the city would be organised by Belfast City Council. Combining these two events would not only provide economies of scale, but also provide an opportunity to learn from wider European examples on city competitiveness.

As previously noted the SOTC Development Debates will help us to build capacity, knowledge, understanding and agreement for future joint or synergetic/integrated action in the main areas of city development. It is a key opportunity for the Development Committee to influence city development, particularly in the key areas of city design, regeneration and competitiveness.

Resource Implications

The Development Department has already allocated an existing budget of £35,000 to cover one financial year's spend in 2010/11 which will cover three seminars and three development briefs.

Key Abbreviations

SOTC – State of the City
POG – Policy Officers Group”

The Director recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report and approve the proposed itineraries, topics and speakers as outlined.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Belfast City Masterplan:
Review - Appointment of Consultants

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Council commissioned a Masterplan for Belfast in 2003 to provide a framework for the development of Belfast for the period to 2020. The Masterplan document proposed a framework for the revival of Belfast in the period to 2020.

In November 2009, the Committee approved a review of the current Belfast Masterplan to revisit the strategic vision for the City. This review, in addition to providing a clear strategic position, would provide opportunities for engagement with external strategies and stakeholders with regard to investment in the City. The review could also explore the potential for integration of work with future activity in relation to community planning and strategic Council objectives.

Following the approval from Committee, work has focussed on the potential for the revised Masterplan to be supported by and integrated with ongoing strategic Council activity on capital investment and economic development, including alignment with the City Investment Framework and the development of the Integrated Economic Strategy, which would in turn align with the ongoing development of the Regional Economic Strategy. In addition, the recent Comprehensive Spending Review and critical regional discussions on the budget and resources allocation, particularly with regard to capital investment, have generated a higher degree of urgency with regard to review of the Masterplan.

It is clear that there are going to be significantly fewer resources available in Northern Ireland as a whole and it is critical that Belfast seeks to take full advantage of any potential investment in the City. At Council, Members have supported a number of motions proposing that the Council takes a lead role in trying to mitigate the worst effects of the current economic downturn. The SP&R Committee has directed that some work is undertaken in relation to looking at alternative funding sources to undertake city development. This, in turn, suggests a more urgent need for an immediate review of the Masterplan so that, if additional funding is sourced, we have a clear, agreed direction on key priorities.

This report seeks approval to appoint the original lead consultants for the Belfast Masterplan, to carry out the first stage strategic review.

Key Issues

This changing context and the emerging strategies for areas of the City have highlighted the need for the Council to have a coherent and up to date vision for the future development of Belfast. The ongoing internal work on the review of the current Belfast Masterplan highlighted the importance of influencing regeneration/development initiatives planned for the City and ensuring that there was mutually supportive integration with the City Investment Framework and Integrated Economic Strategy.

The current spending reviews and consideration of future strategic priorities for Northern Ireland have now reached the stage where it is important that the Council engages at a political level with the Ministers of relevant Departments. The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee has already expressed its wish to meet with relevant Ministers on a systematic basis to explore the current economic challenges facing the City, potential risks to future infrastructure investment and to discuss how delivery can be progressed.

The review of the Belfast Masterplan would provide an important focus for the articulation of the Council's broad approach to the continued regeneration of the city. The Belfast Masterplan approach recognises that in order to drive Belfast forward we need better partnership working and a strong, common vision of the future to which we can all contribute.

As noted above, the recent Comprehensive Spending Review and critical regional discussions on the budget and resources allocation, particularly with regard to capital investment, have generated a higher degree of urgency with regard to review of the Masterplan. At Council, Members have supported a number of motions proposing that the Council takes a lead role in trying to mitigate the worst effects of the current economic downturn. The early strategic update of the Belfast Masterplan has become an essential component for the articulation of a cohesive Council position on the future development of Belfast and will ensure that, if additional funding is sourced, we have a clear, agreed direction on key priorities.

Colin Buchanan and Partners were responsible for the development of the original Belfast Masterplan for the Council in 2003. This work included the commissioning of the specialist research, the coordination of the multi-disciplinary team and the production of the final plan.

The proposed review of the plan would necessarily draw on the original research and require reassessment of the changed context summarised above and outlined in previous reports. Colin Buchanan and Partners, by virtue of the research activity and knowledge from the consultancy for the original Masterplan, would be uniquely placed to carry out the strategic review both in terms of their experience and their capacity to deliver the work to a timescale that would enable effective engagement in the resource prioritisation processes outlined above.

The timescales for the comprehensive spending review and associated processes necessitates the timely appointment of specialist support to carry out a strategic review of the Belfast Masterplan. In recognition of the broader implications and the link to the City Investment Framework, the potential for the commission was considered on an inter-departmental basis by the Assistant Chief Executive, the Director of Development and the Director of Property & Projects. Taking account of the urgent need for the completion of an effective strategic review which would provide a refreshed Belfast Masterplan as the focus for engagement and more effective partnership working towards a common vision, the proprietary appointment is considered to be the only practicable approach to securing experienced specialist consultancy support. The Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive has confirmed that he has no objection to this approval from a legal perspective and having reviewed relevant Standing Orders.

Therefore, following the internal consideration, it is recommended that, in recognition of the special circumstances and pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 62, the Committee endorses the appointment of Colin Buchanan & Partners to carry out the strategic review of the Masterplan on the basis that the costs would not exceed a budget of £30,000 and that a detailed costs proposal is submitted by them beforehand and approved by the Director of Development.

Resource Implications

Amounts are included in the approved Departmental Plan for the review of the Belfast Masterplan.

The budget will not exceed £30,000.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and to agree to the appointment of Colin Buchanan & Partners to carry out the strategic review of the Belfast Masterplan on the basis that the budget would not exceed £30,000.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Measuring Our Impact: Regeneration and
European Evaluation Frameworks**

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

"Relevant Background Information

The Development Committee is committed to improving services and developing policy based on rigorous research and evidence. This ensures we meet the needs of customers and respond to their requirements for service improvement. Research is used across the department to improve services but also to measure the positive impact of our work on the ground. Some examples of the work commissioned by the Development Committee include the 2009 Capital Flows research which has been used to prove the key role of Belfast as a regional economic driver; the 2009 Belfast Tourism Monitor which measured the economic impact of increasing tourist numbers and the effectiveness of Council tourism interventions and economic forecasting research and the Annual Attitudinal Survey of Businesses in Belfast which have been used to develop the current Local Economic Development Plan and will be used to develop the new Integrated Economic Strategy.

Members will be aware that the 2010/11 Development Departmental plan was approved by Committee on 9 June 2010. This identified some of the key pieces of research needed to support the development of the Integrated Economic Strategy and a review of the Masterplan, including a bench-marking analysis of Belfast's competitiveness.

We are mindful that Members wish to ensure that our work has a positive impact on Belfast and the lives of its citizens. We measure the effectiveness of our work via both the corporate CorVu performance management system (reports to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee) but also via evaluations of particular programmes. These evaluations are often carried out at the end of particular programmes (summative evaluation) which is a common evaluation practice. However, the current economic climate and the pressure on resource allocation means that we need to find ways of improving these existing impact measurement systems so that we can provide Members with even more useful data on the impact of our work. To this end, this paper asks Members to consider the development of two evaluation frameworks which would provide formative and summative evaluations and the potential for action research for real time learning in programmatic work.

Key Issues

We propose to develop two evaluation frameworks for:

1. Area based social and physical regeneration projects;
and
2. The impact of the council's European unit and overall council's involvement in European activities

In terms of the latter, this will be preceded by an evaluation of the EU Unit's current impact.

1. Develop an evaluation model for area based social and physical regeneration projects

In the current financial climate and given council's ongoing crucial role in place-shaping urban regeneration, we need to be able to measure the impact of social and physical regeneration projects, over and above our current summative evaluation practices.

This framework would:

- Enable us to measure the impact of physical regeneration work such as the Arterial Routes programme and the social regeneration work of community services;
- Define the intended outcomes of this work as defined by the Corporate VCM and the Development Department VCM;
- Design and put in place base lining, data collection and analysis methodologies;
- Define appropriate indicators for measuring impact building on our current evaluation practices (and building on other Departments' work on indicators such as Good Relations' work on developing indicators that measure the impact on good relations of regeneration work);
- Link the evaluation framework to the corporate performance management system; and
- Equip staff to learn from the evaluation process to improve service design.

There are some examples of good practice in this field such as the UK Communities and Local Government's evaluation of the New Deal for Communities. However, these models cannot be directly implemented here because of different systems and challenges in England. In addition, Members may also wish to include economic impact data on positive externalities; direct, indirect and induced benefits and the cost of not providing this service.

In terms of evaluation indicators, the main aim would be to build a model that enables us to evaluate social and physical regeneration projects in order to show the public the value for money and economic viability of this work. This work will benefit all council departments and would be especially beneficial for building any future proposals and negotiation tools for Members and officers.

2. Evaluation of the impact of the council's involvement in EU and global initiatives and development of longer-term evaluation framework for EU Unit

As previously mentioned, the current financial climate places a further burden on Members to define the costs and benefits associated with council's activities and, more importantly, to find ways to improve efficiency.

The work of the European unit and the council's work in Europe in general have been under understandable scrutiny to provide value for money. The unit's work to access substantial EU funds on behalf of the council and wider partners is recognised, but their additional added value in terms of policy influence is highly valuable but less well understood. The work of the EU Unit enables other parts of the council and other stakeholders to deliver their outcomes which may include creating and maintaining jobs, increasing visitor numbers, physical regeneration etc. There is an interesting counterfactual to be measured, which is, 'had the EU Unit not used its influence and relationships to influence policy and funding frameworks and then to draw down monies, X jobs would not have been created and X building would not have been built'. Described in these terms, the impact of their work is clearer.

The evaluation could address multi-level benefits, i.e. for the council, for the city, for businesses and ratepayers. It could also look at quantifying specific benefits, such as:

- Investment brought into Belfast
- Business volume as a result of trade shows
- Contribution to the efficiency agenda

It should be noted that an evaluation of the EU Unit was previously carried out in 2007 by independent consultants. This noted that for the £260K cost of the unit an additional £4.6 (€5.3) million was brought into the Belfast economy over three years (from 2004-2007).

The aim of the new evaluation and then of the ongoing evaluation framework would be to define the measurement metrics and, as above:

- Enable us to measure the impact of European work;
- Define the intended outcomes of this work as defined by the corporate VCM and the Development Department VCM;
- Design and put in place base lining, data collection and analysis methodologies;
- Define appropriate indicators for measuring impact building on our current evaluation practices;
- Link the evaluation framework to the corporate performance management system (particularly the impact of policy and planning); and
- Equip staff to learn from the evaluation process to improve service design.

Recommendations would be made as to how this work could be improved, be it in terms of communication, outreach, performance or the extent of international work.

The above evaluation work will enable the department and the council at large to measure impact more effectively; to improve efficiency via service redesign and so to more effectively serve our customers and the citizens of Belfast and to evidence value for money in a restricted resource environment.

Resource Implications

The costs for both pieces of work would be covered under the existing budget of the Development department – the research budget of the Policy and Business Development Unit.

Each piece of work would cost a maximum of £25,000. Both pieces of work would be finalised before the end of the financial year.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to approve the proposals to:

1. Commission the development of an evaluation framework for social and physical regeneration projects
2. Commission the evaluation of the work of the EU Unit and the development of an ongoing evaluation framework for the EU Unit.

Decision Tracking

John McGrillen will report back on the evaluation frameworks in April 2011.

Time line: April 2011 Reporting Officer: John McGrillen”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

B-Team Dissemination Event - Dresden

The Committee was reminded that the Council was the Lead Partner in the European Regional Development Fund INTERREG IVC project B-Team which sought to bring together practitioners and experts from different countries to address the problems associated with the regeneration of Brownfield sites. As part of the exchange of knowledge, the partnership would seek to improve regional policies and bring forward the development of sites in each partner location. The practical exchange of knowledge would take place during "Brownfield Days" in each partner location, with the experience and lessons learned being collated to inform practice across the partnership at "European Dissemination Events". The dissemination events, which were projected to occur five times during the three year lifespan of the project, would seek to both test and disseminate the results to a wider audience.

It was reported that the first dissemination event would consider the findings from the Oulu and Torino Brownfield Days, with a focus on environmental/remediation and land-use policy issues. The event would take place in Dresden, Germany on 13th December, 2010 and was being organised by Dresden, the B-Team's German partner, in co-operation with the local authorities in Oulu and Torino. The event programme would feature a significant level of political engagement from the local authority and support the potential for the development of the pledges. The event presented the opportunity for the Council to contribute both at political and officer level at the proposed events. There were no financial resources associated with attendance at the event.

The Committee approved the attendance of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) and a Council officer at the Dresden Dissemination Event.

European Structural Funds

The Committee was reminded that European funding, known as structural funds, ran in six year cycles. Northern Ireland had received benefit to date of 800 million Euros and was benefiting currently from the following funds in the 2007-2013 programming round:

- European Regional Development Fund (distributed via the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment) – 300 million Euros
- European Structural Fund (distributed through the Department of Employment and Learning) – 300 million Euros
- INTERREG IVA (distributed via the Special European Union Programmes Body) – 256 million Euros
- Rural Development Programme (distributed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) – 600 million Euros
- Peace III (distributed via the Special European Union Programmes Body) – 333 million Euros

In addition to the mainstream funds outlined above, Northern Ireland stakeholders could avail also of a wide range of European funding programmes by applying directly to Europe or through nationally appointed contact points. The Committee would be aware of many of those funds and the fact that the Council, through the European Unit, had secured a significant amount of funding in recent years both for the Council and City stakeholders.

The Committee was advised that there remained a highly significant level of European funding available to Northern Ireland and Europe as a whole to the end of the current funding period, that is, December 2013 and work was being undertaken by the European Unit in order to agree a way forward to prioritise and maximise such funding opportunities for the Council.

The Director of Development advised the Committee that stakeholders across Europe, including City governments, were already looking to influence the shape of funding in the next programming round which was 2014-2020. Member States across Europe were currently in the grips of an economic recession and had competing priorities with much less funding. There were a number of developments underway presently at the European Union level which would impact on decisions regarding future Structural Funds programming post-2013 and already quite a number of European cities and regions had written formally to their national governments, the European Commission and the European Parliament to begin to set out their positions and priorities to try and influence the thinking and planning that was underway.

He reported that the Department of Finance and Personnel, the lead Government Department in Northern Ireland for European Union Structural Funds, had advised the Council that the time for consultation with stakeholders on the likely funding opportunities and priorities would be mid to late 2011. However, having spoken to representatives of the other European Union cities and having tracked also the ongoing Eurocities lobby, it was important that Belfast began to formulate its position now based on existing and emerging information. Accordingly, an early position paper, copies of which had been circulated to the Members, had been prepared which outlined the strategic context for forming a Council view and trying to establish a position in terms of what the Council would like to see in a new European Union programming round for Northern Ireland 2014-2020.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and approved the submission of the early position paper in relation to the Council's views on European Union Structural Funding post-2013 to the Department of Finance and Personnel, the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Department for Employment and Learning, the Department for Social Development, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels

The Committee was advised that the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels, which had opened in 2001, was moving to new premises and had issued an invitation to the Council for representatives to attend the official opening on 9th December. The office was part of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, the aim of which was to help Northern Ireland better engage in the European Union.

The Committee agreed to accept the invitation and authorised the attendance of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Chief Executive and the European Manager (or their nominees) at the official opening.

Nashville Sister Cities

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to the Nashville Sister Cities to enable it to be considered at a special meeting which had been arranged to be held later in the month.

Enterprising Britain Award Ceremony

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th September, it had been advised that the Council had won the Northern Ireland heat of Enterprising Britain 2010, which was a nationwide competition delivered locally by Invest Northern Ireland. The competition recognised and rewarded the town, city, place or area which was successfully creating jobs, boosting local business and nurturing entrepreneurial talent as the United Kingdom emerged from recession. The Council had been shortlisted in the last six in the national competition, however, had not been successful in progressing to the final three. The Director reported that Enterprising Britain had confirmed that a presentation ceremony for the twelve regional winners would be held in the House of Lords on 15th November and each regional winner had been invited to attend.

The Committee authorised the attendance of the Chairman (or his nominee), together with one Council officer, at the Enterprising Britain Awards ceremony in London on 15th November.

Consultation: Early Years Matter Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Council has been invited to respond to Department of Education NI’s (DENI) draft strategy for children’s early years (age 0-6). This policy aims to ‘value and respect the early years of a child’s life, while also laying the foundations of and removing barriers to learning so that each child can develop as a successful learner; and achieve positive outcomes for children by supporting their development through high quality, child-centred and family-focused services, ensuring greater equality of access.’

The target audience for the consultation is:

**Principals and Boards of Governors of all
grant-aided schools;
Education and Library Boards;
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and
Assessment; and
Teachers’ Unions.**

Key Objectives of the strategy

The strategy has four key objectives, shown below:

- to improve the quality of early years provision thereby promoting for children better learning outcomes by the end of the Foundation Stage especially in language and number; and also in the child's personal and social development, physical and cognitive development, emotional well-being and readiness to learn;
 - This will be achieved by working with stakeholders to develop and agree key educational milestones; developing a quality framework to assess early year provision; reviewing and updating the pre-school curriculum, and identifying poor provision by inspection.
 - Additionally, DENI will commission research to assess the quality and effectiveness of provision and of the transition from pre-school to primary education; reviewing issues relating to two-year olds in nursery provision on an area basis; developing means of sharing key information between agencies; and promoting the use of the 'Understanding the Needs of Children' assessment tool.
- to recognise and respect the role of parents of young children and to raise the level of engagement by DE (and its partners) with families and communities;
 - This will be achieved by a family programme in funded pre-school provision to raise awareness among parents; ensuring the effectiveness of available advice; and consulting with parents to inform policy development.
 - Additionally, DENI will expand the reach of the existing 'Sure Start' and programme for Two Year Olds; work with Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) in the development of Play & Leisure; and promote the importance of regular attendance in early years' settings.

- to improve equity of access to quality early years provision;
 - This will be achieved by raising the minimum standard of qualification for funded early years staff; developing an 'early years leadership programme' for leaders in pre-school provision; identifying and disseminating best practice; and capacity building support in the non-statutory sector.
 - Additionally, DENI will review the funding mechanism to address any equality issues; develop a mechanism to manage the allocation of pre-school places; ensure that all voluntary and private pre-schools who are funded through the Pre-School Expansion Programme work within the SEN framework; improve access to Irish-medium pre-school provision; seek to expand provision for two year olds; and maintain part-time provision with the statutory pre-school sector (any changes to such provision will be based on criteria linked to access and to disadvantage).
- to encourage greater collaboration among key partners to promote greater integration in service delivery.

Additional Factors to consider

The strategy highlights 5 major factors affecting the development of the strategy. These are shown below:

- there can be no assumption, at this point, of substantial new resources becoming available - it may be a case of making better use of existing resources so the Department will need to ensure that all interventions are effective and appropriate;
- the reorganisation of education and health under RPA offers an opportunity to do things differently and to remove some institutional barriers;
- the Strategy will have to complement the Minister's policies including literacy and numeracy, SEN and inclusion, newcomer children and the Review of Irish-medium Education;
- it will have to take into account new and emerging relevant Executive policies - for example, childcare, disability discrimination and play and leisure; and
- strong partnerships will be central to success eg the relationship between DE and DHSSPS in relation to policy; the relationship between ESA and relevant health bodies in terms of delivery; the involvement of parents, communities and others with the statutory agencies.

Elements for success

Some of the key elements required to ensure implementation are:

- Ministerial and Executive endorsement to make early years services a priority;
- broad stakeholder involvement and participation to promote public engagement for implementation of the recommendations;
- partnership between departments and providers to make best use of funding and support;
- ensuring early years policies are complementary with other related policies;
- detailed action plans to facilitate implementation of the recommendations, identifying division of responsibilities, allocation of resources and the likely time-frame; and
- strategic use of public campaigns to draw attention to early years

The full proposal is attached as appendix 2.

The questions within the consultation relate to whether we agree with each objective and outline actions or not. As the emphasis in the consultation document is on the top level actions rather than specific detail, the responses we have gathered have also focused on general issues. In particular, we have made reference to the 'Review of Belfast City Council Play Service' and subsequent changes to our play service provision.

Key Issues

Please refer to the attachment for the full draft response. In general we feel the aims and objectives of the strategy are reasonable though we have raised some concerns. These are listed below:

- There is not enough information in the strategy to understand how resources will be reallocated. It has been mentioned that some programmes will be expanded yet also that there is likely to be no additional resources. This implies cuts will be made elsewhere.
- Mention is made of the importance with key partners but it would be helpful to see how this is going to be achieved and to see some input from them in the strategy. We feel there are many opportunities for working with our Children and Young People unit and Play Team.

- It would be useful to see a clear vision of how the DE see the two arms of statutory and non-statutory provision developing.
- There is a suggestion that the strategy focuses on years 3 and above. It would be useful to see how 'early' early years will be supported and how this links with the Health Service.

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 draft consultation response (appendix 1) and;
- To suggest additional comments to include in the response to DENI.

Decision Tracking

Subject to approval, the Draft response, together with any additional suggestions will be returned to the DENI by the 30 November 2010.

Timeframe: 30 November 2010 Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook

Key Abbreviations

DENI – Department of Education NI
DE – Department of Education
OFMDFM - Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister
SEN – Special Education Needs
ESA – Education & Skills Authority

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Draft Consultation Response – Early Years Matter

Appendix 1

Please find below our comments in response to your invitation to comment on your Early Years Strategy.

Please note that the views expressed in this response are subject to final ratification by full council on the 1st December 2010. Unfortunately, the timescales and the timing of this consultation have made it impossible to submit a ratified response.

Provisional Response

We broadly approve of the objectives and actions outlined in the draft strategy and we believe there are many opportunities for working together to improve early year support in Belfast. In particular, we would also like to draw your attention to the work we do with early years children and their parents through our Community Services centres and staff. We also have a Children and Young People unit and 18 staff in the Play Team. Our Centres and initiatives are based in areas with the most need of support and so may provide opportunities for shared services and improved access, which would support your work under objective 2.

Regarding specific early years support, following a review Council's services – 'Review of Belfast City Council Play Service' – in early 2009, it was agreed that Council should withdraw from pre-school provision on the basis of other bodies being better placed to lead on and resource such provision. However we are still very much involved in play services and our early pilot programmes are showing encouraging outputs, with such programmes extending the geographic scope of the service, targeting new groups and introducing innovative play methodologies. We are also working hard to provide skills to local parents so that they can create self sustaining play support activities in local communities.

Please contact us if you would like to know more about our services or the report mentioned above.

With regard to your draft strategy, we have provided specific feedback to your consultation questionnaire at the end of this letter. We also have some general observations, which I have listed overleaf:

- There is not enough information in the strategy to understand how resources will be reallocated. It has been mentioned that some programmes will be expanded yet also that there is likely to be no additional resources. This implies cuts will be made elsewhere.
- Mention is made of the importance with key partners but it would be helpful to see how this is going to be achieved and to see some input from them in the strategy. We feel there are many opportunities for working with our Children and Young People unit and Play Team.
- It would be useful to see a clear vision of how the DE see the two arms of statutory and non-statutory provision developing.
- There is a suggestion that the strategy focuses on years 3 and above. It would be useful to see how 'early' early years will be supported and how this links with the Health Service.

EARLY YEARS (0-6) STRATEGY

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Vision and Aims

It is the purpose of the draft Strategy to define a framework for DE policy and to set out key objectives and actions for future development and improvement. Research and evidence gathered in the development of the Strategy identified the four main priorities indicated above. Based on the evidence and research considered the draft Strategy sets out as its vision:

- To enable every child to develop to their full potential by giving each one the best start possible.

Question 1 - Is this the right vision? Is it an appropriate vision for an early years strategy?

Yes

No

Please add any comments you have:

Based on existing policy and practice, and on the research, the draft sets out its aims to:

- value and respect the early years of a child's life, while also laying the foundations of and removing barriers to learning so that each child can develop as a successful learner; and
- achieve positive outcomes for children by supporting their development through high quality, child-centred and family-focused services, ensuring greater equality of access.

In achieving these aims the Department will seek to engage stakeholders involved in early years provision.

Question 2 - Do you agree that the aims are appropriate?

Yes

No

Please add any comments you have:

Objectives

In support of the aims and to ensure effective policy making and implementation four key objectives have been defined. For further information on the rationale behind the objectives please see Annex 2 of the draft early Years (0-6) Strategy.

The draft Strategy elaborates on the objectives in terms of what the Department of Education needs to address and what it needs to do under each objective.

Quality of Provision

Objective One: To improve the quality of early years provision thereby promoting better learning outcomes for children by the end of the Foundation Stage, especially in language and number; and in the children's personal and social development, emotional well-being and readiness to learn.

The draft Strategy identifies the following matters which DE needs to address:

- an increased focus upon outcomes by the end of the Foundation Stage especially to raise standards in language and number;
- closure of the gap between those children who are least school ready and those who are most ready;
- provision for those working with children of a common framework for child development across the years 0-6 (taking account of relevant guidance) accompanied by appropriate milestones, the implications for learning and standards and quality indicators against which the provision can be quality assured;
- promotion of the early identification of developmental delays, especially in relation to language and other barriers to learning;
- greater focus on identified special or additional needs and disadvantage to ensure that relevant provision is targeted to provide help to those children who need it most; and
- strengthening the links, on an area basis, between early years providers (from birth to six years of age) at points of transition (currently Sure Start (0-4), pre-school (3-4) and Foundation Stage (4-6), to ensure progression in learning and development and the exchange of relevant information.

Question 3 - Are these the key issues for DE to address?

Yes No

Question 4 - Do you consider that there are other areas that should be addressed to improve quality of provision?

The Council endorses the priority area of improving the provision and quality of service above and welcomes the opportunity to explore the potential for greater partnership working in the future with DE. The Council through the provision and programming of Community Centres, Community Initiatives, Play Schemes, quality parks and open spaces and leisure environments provide perfect places and opportunities for play for young children. The Council provides various indoor and outdoor play facilities for young children (0 – 6 years old) offering access to opportunities to educate, develop knowledge and understanding of the natural environment and promoting physical and mental health and wellbeing. We would be interested in the development of a common framework and keen to input into its development.

The draft Strategy proposes that DE will undertake the following actions:

- (i) DE will take steps to improve outcomes at the end of Foundation Stage by the following actions:-
 - a. DE will commission ETI to work with the HSCTs, ESA, and others to set out the milestones to be expected in a child's development up to the end of the Foundation Stage and to identify best practice to achieve them. These will focus particularly on physical, personal, social and emotional development, intellectual and language and numeracy development and will promote more effective progression for children;
 - b. DE and DHSSPS will commission ETI, Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority and HSCT to develop a Quality Framework for the registration and evaluation of early years provision. The Framework will comprise a broad outline of child development and the key milestones, the implications of these for quality learning provision along with the DHSSPS Minimum Standards and the ETI quality indicators to guide self-evaluation and regulation and inspection;

- c. In light of the work set out especially at b. above, DE will require ESA to review the pre-school curriculum and advise DE on how it should be updated to ensure a coherent and complementary approach across the early years;
 - d. DE in collaboration with DHSSPS and HSCTs, will address issues of underperformance or inadequate provision in pre-school settings and in the Foundation stage, identified through inspection, to ensure that the highest standards are achieved and maintained; and
 - e. DE will seek to identify an appropriate mechanism to capture progression in child development and learning linked to the milestones developed by ETI.
- (ii) DE will develop a co-ordinated approach to early years provision to ensure smooth transitions with appropriate exchanges of information at the different stages through the following actions:-
- a. DE will commission research and evaluation from ETI and other sources to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of provision and of the transitions into pre-school and primary school; it will focus in particular, on the assessment of the children's development and progression in learning, provision for SEN, the transfer of information and the continuity of the curriculum;
 - b. DE will commission ESA to address, on an area basis, the issues relating to two year olds in nursery provision and to reception classes in primary schools to ensure that provision is age appropriate;
 - c. DE will work with DHSSPS to develop a mechanism (drawing on existing data sources where appropriate) by which key information can be shared more effectively so that relevant agencies can access the most up-to-date information on the child with a view to addressing any identified areas of difficulty; and

- d. DE will work with DHSSPS to promote the use of the Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) assessment tool across children's services as a comprehensive single means of assessing recording and communicating across agencies to improve the early identification of difficulties and appropriate interventions.

Question 5 - Do you agree with the actions proposed?

Yes

No

Please add any comments you have about the actions proposed:

Will the research in ii a) considering 'learning' in the wider context e.g. the play provision activities we have previously referred to.

Question 6 - What further actions could be taken to ensure that the objective is achieved?

The Role of Parents and Carers

Objective Two: To recognise and respect the role of parents and carers of young children and to raise the level of engagement by DE (and its partners) with families and communities.

The draft Strategy identifies the following matters which DE needs to address:

- . the quality of communication with parents;
- . the engagement with parents in support of their child's learning and development so that they can fulfil their key role as the first educators of their children and to strengthen the partnership between parents and early years staff;
- . the need to work with parents of children in funded provision to address any barriers to learning their children face, including SEN;
- . the impact of the health, care and learning services provided to parents in disadvantaged areas through Sure Start Programmes; and

- . the incorporation of play-based learning, including access to outdoor play, in early years provision, recognising that play is a vital part of the informal learning in early childhood.

Question 7 - Are these the key issues for DE to address?

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 8 - Do you consider that there are other areas that should be addressed to recognise and respect the role of parents and to raise the level of engagement?

The Council endorses the areas outlined above particularly the last two points. The Council already works in partnership internally (Parks and Leisure and Community Services) and externally with local crèches, early years and schools in providing access to junior play equipment within our playgrounds. For example the Department facilitates specific projects i.e. 'Come and Play' project which aims to encourage children to spend more time playing outside.

The Council also provide various programmes and activities geared towards toward parents and toddlers. Mother and toddler swims are offered within some of our Leisure Centres and the Leisure Development Unit in partnership with BCSDN are currently developing a parent & toddler programme to promote physical activity and health wellbeing.

The draft Strategy proposes that DE will undertake the following actions:

- (i) DE will promote close and collaborative working between parents and early years providers to assist their vital role in supporting their children's learning by the following actions:-
 - a. DE through ESA will put in place a family programme in funded pre-school provision to increase awareness amongst parents of the child development milestones and to assist them with the early identification of additional or SEN. In this way it is intended that parents will themselves become involved in the removal of barriers to learning. This programme will take full account of existing good practice;

- b. DE will ensure the effective provision of information and advice to parents on the availability of early years services and will collaborate with DHSSPS in the Families Matter Strategy; and
 - c. DE will consult with parents in order to ensure that their views are incorporated into policy formulation. ESA and other appropriate bodies (including Sure Start) will consult with parents on the development of early childhood services.
- (ii) DE will build support for parents in areas of disadvantage by working with partners to support the capacity of parents to assist with their children's learning by the following actions:-
- a. DE will seek to expand the reach of Sure Start and the Programme for Two Year Olds to improve support for children and families living in areas of highest disadvantage;
 - b. DE will work with OFMDFM in the development of the Play and Leisure policy. ESA will provide families with information on their role in encouraging the value of play, including outdoor play, in the development of early learning; and
 - c. DE will promote the importance of regular attendance in early years settings.

Question 9 - Do you agree with the actions proposed?

Yes

No

Please add any comments you have about the actions proposed:

Our new Play Service schemes aim to give local parents skills to run their own local play facilities. The DE's strategy could benefit from this network of contacts and access to parents of children in areas of higher need.

Question 10 - What further actions could be taken to ensure that the objective is achieved?

Equity and Access

Objective Three: To improve equity and access to early years provision.

The draft Strategy identifies the following matters which DE needs to address:

- a. the funding issues between providers in relation to pre-school provision raised in the Chief Inspector's Report 2006-08 and the need to ensure that resources are used as effectively as possible to improve services;
- b. qualification levels, professional development and access to specialist support for the early years workforce in the interest of greater equity between the statutory and non-statutory providers and of raising standards;
- c. the provision of appropriate Irish-medium education as appropriate for those who wish to avail of it;
- d. the developmental Programme for Two Year Olds and their parents in areas of disadvantage, particularly linked to Sure Start;
- e. the delivery of early years provision that is appropriate to age and stage of development and aligns with best practice; and
- f. the identification and dissemination of good practice across early years provision for children with additional or special needs.

Question 11 - Are these the key issues for DE to address?

Yes

No

Question 12 - Do you consider that there are other areas that should be addressed to improve equity and access to early years provision? If so, what are they?

As well as access to parents and children who are most in need mentioned earlier, the Council is planning to launch an Anti Poverty Strategy soon. There may be scope for linking some of our work to action d) above.

The draft Strategy proposes that DE will undertake the following actions:

- (i) DE will increase the skills of the workforce in DE funded early years settings by promoting a higher level of qualifications and wider access to professional development through the following actions:-
- a. DE, with DEL, ESA, and other relevant bodies, will work towards raising the minimum level of qualifications for those working in all DE funded early years settings, including Sure Start, to an NVQ level 3; the minimum level of qualification for the leader-in-charge will be raised to NVQ level 4 or above;
 - b. ESA will secure or procure an 'early years leadership programme' and provide access to it for those currently in leadership in funded pre-school provision;
 - c. ESA, working in conjunction with ETI, will identify and disseminate 'best practice' drawing from both statutory and voluntary/private funded early years provision to promote quality across the entire early years workforce; and
 - d. DE will seek to support the non-statutory sector through capacity building to ensure they can benefit fully from the opportunities offered by the SEN policy.
- (ii) DE will take steps to address issues of access to early years provision by the following actions:-
- a. DE will consider changes to the funding mechanisms to address the equality issues in pre-school education taking account of resource constraints;
 - b. ESA and the HSCTs will devise a mechanism through the existing partnership structures, to manage the allocation of pre-school places on an area basis and to ensure that provision is age-appropriate;

- c. Given that early years provision is offered through small units and that some pre-school children still take up reception places in primary school. ESA will introduce an area-based approach to the planning, delivery and support of early years provision to ensure that knowledge, expertise, good practice and resources are shared more widely across the providers and that provision is age appropriate;
- d. All voluntary and private pre-school providers who are funded through the Pre-School Expansion Programme will be required to work within the revised SEN framework;
- e. ESA will provide access to development and to informed advice and expertise from the full range of pupil support services for staff in funded pre-school settings. This support will be managed through the 'area-based' area approach referred to above;
- f. DE will develop proposals to improve access to Irish-medium pre-school provision;
- g. DE will maintain part-time provision with the statutory pre-school sector; any changes to such provision will be based on criteria linked to access and to disadvantage; and
- h. DE will seek to expand provision for two year olds.

Question 13 - Do you agree with the actions proposed?

Yes

No

Please add any comments you have about the actions proposed:

Likewise the Council agrees with the statement of expanding the provision for two year olds and in particular for (0-6 years old). The department will take cognisance of this age group when developing its future strategies and plans (i.e. pitches strategy, leisure strategy and participation plan).

Question 14 - What further actions could be taken to ensure that the objective is achieved?

Collaboration and Integration

Objective Four: To encourage greater collaboration among key partners to promote greater integration in service delivery.

The draft Strategy identifies the following matters which DE needs to address:

- . the primary focus of interventions must remain, at all levels, on the child and their needs;
- . better involvement among the key partners particularly education, health and social care, to ensure a more joined-up and integrated approach, especially in relation to early intervention strategies; and
- . the contribution of early years provision to the wider Executive consideration of childcare policy.

Question 15 - Are these the key issues for DE to address?

Yes

No

Question 16 - Do you consider that there are other areas that should be addressed to encourage greater collaboration among key partners to promote greater integration in service delivery? If so, what are they?

The draft Strategy proposes that DE will undertake the following actions:

- (i) DE will seek to develop and promote collaborative partnerships both within and outside government to ensure that a coherent view is taken of the needs of the child by the following actions:-
 - a. DE will contribute to the Executive's actions for children in relation to the early years and will work with other departments to embed these in the next Programme for Government, including the development of relevant Public Service Agreement targets;
 - b. DE will require ESA and the Public Health Agency to develop more integrated provision in the delivery of its early years services;

- c. **ESA and the Health and Social Care Board/Public Health Agency will work together on evaluation and sharing of data; and**
 - d. **DE and DHSSPS will explore the optimum use of existing accommodation to promote greater integration of services.**
- (ii) **DE and DHSSPS will work through ESA and the Health and Social Care Board/Public Health Agency to develop the most effective structures for the collaborative regional planning of services and how best to develop more integrated services in early years provision by the following actions:-**
- a. **DE will commission ETI to inspect and report on the quality of the learning provision in all early years settings; DE will consult with DHSSPS, on how the HSCT regulatory function should align with the quality improvement role of ETI to ensure the highest possible standards of provision set out in the proposed quality framework;**
 - b. **DE will collaborate with DHSSPS to improve health and social and educational outcomes for children and their families. DE intends to address issues around speech and language provision and health and social well-being; and**
 - c. **in order to promote issues of healthy eating and nutrition, DE will expand the remit of its current nutrition associates who currently work with ETI in primary schools, to work in pre-school settings.**

Question 17 - Do you agree with the actions proposed?

Yes

No

Please add any comments you have about the actions proposed:

Our Sports Development Unit and Parks Outreach staff engage with local communities in the design and delivery of various programmes and projects. Belfast Zoo provides an outreach service from September to March when they carry out preschool visits out to nursery schools, play schools, parent and toddler groups etc. to look at animals, their colour, patterns, texture, movements and any sounds they might make and also food habits. In relation to point (ii) c above and in terms of promoting issues of healthy eating and nutrition, parks outreach managers within the Council organise small educational workshops with young children of (4 – 6) years of age which involves:

- Planting up window boxes with vegetables
- Nature trails and scavenger hunts.

In relation to point (i) d the Council is keen to explore future partnership opportunities with the DE.

Question 18 - What further actions could be taken to ensure that the objective is achieved?

Additional Comments

If you have any additional comments you wish to make about the draft Strategy please use the box below.”

The Committee approved the response to the consultation document.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 2 2010-11

The Committee was advised that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda and would be re-submitted for the Committee’s consideration in December.

Outstanding Accounts

In accordance with Financial Regulations, the Director of Development sought the Committee’s authority to have a number of bad debts amounting to £9,058.75 written off, a schedule of which had been submitted for the Committee’s information. He pointed out that all reasonable measures had been undertaken to recover the debts.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

Belfast City Carnival 2011

The Committee granted authority for tenders to be sought for the delivery of the Lord Mayor’s component of the Belfast City Carnival 2011, at a cost of approximately £70,000, and delegated authority to the Director of Development, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, to appoint the contractor based on the most competitive bid.

Go Belfast Awards

The Committee was reminded that the Go Belfast Awards was an annual ceremony in which the “Best of Belfast” was celebrated in the fields of entertainment and lifestyle. The awards were voted for by members of the public and were promoted through the Go Belfast publication. The closing date for voting in the 2010 awards was 1st October and 25,000 votes had been received across a range of categories, including Visitor Attraction of the Year, Hotel of the Year and Festival/Event of the Year. The 2010 awards would take place in the Europa Hotel on 26th November.

It was reported that the Continental Market had been shortlisted for the Visitor Attraction of the Year Award and the Ulster Hall had been nominated in the Live Music Venue of the Year category. The cost of attending the awards ceremony was £125 plus VAT per person, however, one complimentary place at the event had been offered to each shortlisted finalist.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the attendance of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with two Council officers, at the Awards Ceremony at a cost of £250 plus VAT.

Belfast Civic Trust - Request to Make a Presentation

The Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from representatives of the Belfast Civic Trust in relation to its proposals for a Belfast History Centre.

Policing a Shared Society - Peace III Proposal

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Frank O’Hagan, the Traveller Liaison Officer (TLO) was requested to attend A PSNI Senior Management Team meeting to advise on matters relating to the policing and Traveller/Gypsy communities. This request emanated from a NI Assembly Member’s questions relating to the frequency which the Traveller community were stopped at PSNI vehicle check points. The TLO advised the PSNI management team the ratio of stop and search was 12 times more than that of a settled community and was unacceptable. It was recommended the PSNI revise their policy on policing the Traveller community. He also advised that the three recommendations on policing in the Promoting Social Inclusion Report on Travellers (1999) had not been implemented by PSNI and that specific Home Office guidance to all police forces on policing the Traveller and Gypsy communities had not yet been addressed in Northern Ireland.

Following this meeting the TLO provided a number of training/information sessions with senior PSNI personnel and was requested to advise the PSNI on specific Traveller matters with respect to a PSNI EU Peace III proposal. A working group was established including

- **Gerry Murray and Phil Robinson from PSNI,**
- **Katy Hayward, K Radford and M Lomarova from Queens University Belfast,**
- **Derek Hanway from An Munia Tober,**
- **Neil Jarman from Conflict Resolution,**
- **Martin Collins from Pavee Point,**
- **P Connaughton from Cavan County Council**
- **Frank O’Hagan, Belfast City Council’s Traveller Liaison Officer.**

The result of this working group has been to develop a funding bid to be submitted under the Peace III programme.

Key Issues

The basis of the proposed Peace III proposal is to develop a training programme for An Garda Síochána and PSNI to work with and to develop protocols with Travellers. The proposal supports institutional development to deliver a shared society and assist citizens in organising themselves to promote active citizenship and the accountability of public service to constituencies.

The project will:

- Improve the capacity of PSNI and the police service in the border region to engage positively with the Traveller community and in so doing to become more adept in culturally-aware policing of marginalised groups in a shared society.
- Create conditions for building the levels of confidence and satisfaction of the Traveller community in NI and the border region in the policing service
- Learn lessons from good practice in police services elsewhere in the EU in culturally sensitive policing engagement with Traveller and Roma groups
- Establish the foundations for a network and forum for cross border co-operation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI in addressing the particular needs of the Traveller community.

BCC has been asked to be a partner in this Peace III proposal and Gerry Murray of PSNI has written to seek Council support. Belfast will not be expected to devote any financial resources to participate. The only resource requirement is input from the TLO in terms of time and sharing of knowledge and expertise to advise on the project.

The TLO's input to supporting PSNI to date has been extremely positive. The TLO considers this project to have the potential to provide a solution to the policing of the Traveller community. This has been a sensitive, outstanding issue that needs to be addressed.

BCC is committed to working with the Traveller community via the TLO and the Interdepartmental Traveller Liaison Group and both key drivers of this work would be enhanced by this programme i.e.

- To improve the quality of life of the Traveller community
- To empower the Traveller community to take informed decisions that have a positive impact on their lives

The TLO considers the Council's core objectives would also support this work and the possible outcomes of the PSNI EU Peace III proposals.

Resource Implications

The only resource requirement from BCC is the input from the TLO in terms of time and sharing of knowledge and expertise to advise on this project.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members consider and support the request for BCC to be a partner in the Peace III project application which will take the form of input in terms of time, advice and sharing of knowledge and expertise on behalf of the Traveller Liaison Officer.

Decision Tracking

Further to agreement the Council's will support the request to be a partner in the PSNI EU Peace III proposal.

Timeline: January 2011 Reporting Officer: Catherine Taggart

Key Abbreviations

TLO – Traveller Liaison Officer”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Consultation - Coleraine Harbour

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received in relation to a public consultation on the Proposed Coleraine (Transfer of Harbour Undertaking) Order (Northern Ireland), which proposed to effect legislation to transfer the ownership and responsibility for Coleraine Harbour from Coleraine Harbour Commissioners to Coleraine Borough Council.

Accordingly, it was recommended that the following comments be submitted as the Council's response in this regard:

- The Council does not have any specific issues to raise with regard to the proposed transfer of property, rights, liabilities and obligations from the Harbour Commissioner to Coleraine District Council.

- However, you will be aware of previous discussions about the future of ports and harbours. In particular, the Council's response in September, 2006 to the "Ports Policy – Your Views Invited" where it was asserted that the Council believed that the Port of Belfast would be best served by a governance structure that retained the Trust Status of the port with the potential for extended powers. As such the Council would follow the transfer with interest.

The Committee approved the foregoing comments as the Council's response in this regard.

Audit Matter

The Director of Development advised the Members of ongoing fraud investigative work which had been undertaken by the Department in relation to one of its services and that, once investigations had been concluded, he would submit a further report to the Committee.

Noted.

Aisling Awards

The Director of Development advised the Committee that the Fourteenth Annual Aisling Awards would be held on 25th November in the Europa Hotel. He reported that the Renewing the Routes team had been shortlisted for the Gaelge Award in the Outstanding Services to the Irish Language category.

The Committee authorised the attendance of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with appropriate Council officers at the event.

Chairman