

Development Committee

Monday, 6th December, 2010

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor C. Maskey (Chairman);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and
Councillors Crozier, Ekin, Groves, Hargey, B. Kelly,
Kyle, Lavery, Mallon, Mac Giolla Mhín, McKee,
Mullaghan, P. Robinson, J. Rodgers, Rodway and
Stoker
- Also attended: Councillor Jones.
- In attendance: Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Development Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor M. Campbell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 4th, 5th, 10th and 24th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st December, subject to:

- (i) the amendment of the minute of 5th November under the heading "Belfast and Northern Ireland 2012 Business Case" to provide that the Working Group to be established consider also the issue of the decade of centenaries and agree on a core set of principles to be applied to those events; and
- (ii) the omission of the minute of the meeting of 10th November under the heading "Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre: Review of Management Arrangements" which, at the request of Councillor Kyle, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

New Members

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Groves, Hargey and P. Robinson to their first meeting of the Committee.

Presentation - Belfast Civic Trust

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th November, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Belfast Civic Trust in relation to proposals for a Belfast History Centre. The Committee was advised that the representatives would be unable to attend the meeting, but had requested that they be received at a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee agreed that the presentation from the representatives of the Belfast Civic Trust be deferred until its monthly meeting scheduled to be held on 9th February, 2011.

Departmental Plan - Quarterly Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided a quarterly update on the Development Departmental Plan 2010/2011.

Arising out of discussion, the Committee agreed that in future a report on Travellers' Issues be submitted on a quarterly basis and that the Director write to the Minister for the Environment to ascertain the current position in relation to the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 2 2010-11

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed at on 18 June 2010 that:

- the Council would produce financial reporting packs for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and each Standing Committee on a quarterly basis
- the Budget and Transformation Panel would also receive monthly financial updates if there were any significant issues to report.

The reporting pack contains a summary dashboard of the financial indicators and an executive summary explaining the financial performance of the Development Committee in the context of the financial performance of the overall council. It also provides a more detailed explanation of each of the relevant indicators covering the year to date and forecast financial position.

As we previously advised the committee, we will continue to develop the style and contents of the reports in liaison with members. In particular, the members' financial training at the end of September 2010 provided a good opportunity for discussion and feedback on the reports. It is therefore intended to make some amendments to style and layout for the quarter 3 financial reports.

Central finance and our departmental management team have worked together to develop the information within this financial reporting pack.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Current and forecast financial position 2010/11

Net expenditure for the Development Department was £0.2m (quarter 1: £0.3m) below budget for the quarter representing 2% of estimated net expenditure. The forecast year end position for the department is estimated to be £0.5m (quarter 1: £0.5m) which is 2% below budget.

The 3 key reasons for the current under spend within the department are in line with quarter 1 and relate to vacant posts, delays or non activation in projects and work programmes caused by delays in structural reviews and other external factors and additional In year efficiencies.

The department will continue to monitor the variance between actual and budgeted expenditure during quarter 3, especially those areas highlighted during the quarter 2 budget review process.

In line with quarter 1, we recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee continues to consider how best to use this forecast under-spend along with those arising from other departments, as was discussed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22 October 2010.

The financial reporting pack, a copy of which has been circulated, contains more detail on both the overall council position and the financial performance in each of the Services within the Department.

We would like to emphasise that the end of the financial year is still several months away and that there are significant uncertainties which could impact on the forecast. Nevertheless, a half-year forecast is helpful to members in making financial decisions for the remainder of 2010/11 and to inform the 2011/12 rates setting exercise.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 There is a year to date under spend of £0.2m and a forecast under spend of some £0.5m.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 There are no equality or good relations considerations attached to this report.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee is recommended to note the above report and associated financial reporting pack.”

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report on vacancies and the use of agency staff in the Department be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Neighbourhood Renewal Update

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

1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that, there are 12 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships within the BCC area. Each Partnership was tasked with producing a Vision Framework (7-10 years) and Action Plan (3 years) for the Neighbourhood Renewal area. The 12 Partnerships are:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| - Inner East Belfast | - Inner South Belfast |
| - South West Belfast | - Greater Shankill |
| - Greater Falls | - Lenadoon |
| - Upper Springfield | - Crumlin/Ardoyne |
| - Inner North Belfast | - Andersonstown |
| - Ligoniel | - Upper Ardoyne/Ballysillan |

The actions plans were completed for each area and submitted to DSD for consideration and funding support. These Plans proposed thousands of actions that would need to be delivered by a range of organisations in key areas such as housing, health, education, community safety, good relations, employability, community development, culture, tourism, leisure, children and young people, older people and environmental and physical improvement.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The Council has become a key participant in the neighbourhood renewal process and to date a wide range of support has been provided including:-

- Overall coordination of council's response to neighbourhood renewal facilitated through SNAP.
- Officer participation and representation provided on all 12 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships through Community Services.
- Action Plan responses prepared for each of the 12 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships Action Plans.
- Implementation of a number of key actions pertaining to the Neighbourhood Renewal Plans.
- Provision of area-based intelligence to support the neighbourhood renewal process.
- Neighbourhood renewal resource directories prepared for the Partnerships detailing Council services and key staff working in the local area.
- Implementation of the Lenadoon Neighbourhood Renewal Pilot in partnership with BRO. See below for further details.
- On-going work with BRO regarding the development of partnership approaches to the implementation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans including the Service Delivery Model.

2.2 Lenadoon Neighbourhood Renewal Pilot

At the Development Committee meeting of 10th December 2008, council agreed to work with BRO in an exploratory neighbourhood renewal partnership project. Piloted in the Lenadoon Neighbourhood Renewal area, the project would enable both organisations to deliver on their commitment to the NR action plan in a more integrated manner and then apply any lessons learned to other neighbourhood action plans.

A two phase pilot programme has been designed for the Lenadoon area. Phase 1 was completed between January and March 2010. Phase 2 projects have been developed and an application for funding to implement these projects has been submitted to BRO.

An overview of the Lenadoon pilot and its associated projects and activities has been circulated. Given the success of this partnership approach to delivery, it is recommend that further discussions should now take place with BRO regarding the potential to develop additional projects and activities in other Neighbourhood Renewal areas. Updates on such discussions or proposals will be brought to Committee in due course.

2.3 Next steps

Whilst work is on-going with regard to the implementation of the Council's response to the Neighbourhood Renewal Action plans there are a number of pieces of work that are on-going that may have implications for future service delivery.

These include the following:-

- BRO is in the process of completing an implementation review of the Belfast Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans. This review has considered each priority within the plans and measured and identified if they have been either fully, partially or not met at all. The review has also identified future priorities for each Partnership. This review can be made available in due course.
- BRO is in the process of developing its Service Delivery Model, a process which focuses on rationalizing services funded through the NR fund. This again will have an impact on organisations which are focused on delivering services relating to; Community Development, Training and Community Education and Drugs/Alcohol.
- DSD is also in the process of developing a policy framework on Urban Regeneration and Community Development. The role of Neighbourhood Renewal will be considered within this.
- Following the development of the Lenadoon Pilot it is recommended that engagement with BRO takes place regarding the future roll out of addition pilots across the city.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Co-ordinated by the SNAP Unit

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 There are no adverse implications in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- Notes the contents of the report.
- Agrees that discussions should be held with BRO regarding pilot approaches in other Neighbourhood Renewal areas with updates brought back to Committee in due course.

6 Decision Tracking

Time Line: March 2011

Reporting Officer: Siobhan Watson, SNAP Manager

7 Key to Abbreviations

**NR – Neighbourhood Renewal
NRA – Neighbourhood Renewal Area
NRAP- Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan
BRO – Belfast Regeneration Office
DSD – Department for Social Development
SNAP – Strategic Neighbourhood Action Programme”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

European Unit - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will be aware that they receive regular EU unit updates with respect to the work of the EU unit. The following report outlines progress to date during the first eight months of the current financial year.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Members will recall that the objectives of the European unit are as follows;

- 1. Maximise EU funding**
- 2. Interpret, influence and disseminate EU policy**
- 3. Promote best practice in Europe**
- 4. Maximise participation in EU networks**
- 5. Raise awareness of EU affairs in the region**

The following areas of activity have been delivered with respect to each of the above objectives.

2.2 Maximise European Funding

Since the 1 April 2010, the EU unit has pursued the following EU funds;

Interreg IVA

Developed and submitted a second budget for the unit costs including staff and promotion of the Comet partnership and board costs.

Amount: Total £303,805.59

Status: Awaiting decision by SEUPB

2.3 Supporting the development of five bids for Interreg IVA funding under the enterprise call which closes 21 January 2011

Amount: TBC

Status: Submissions due January 2011

2.3 Continued work with the Comet Interreg projects submitted in December 2007

Status: Bio-recorders conservation project received letter of offer but project promoter has rejected this as the organisation cannot absorb overhead costs.

Status: Executive Leadership project led by UUJ rejected by SEUPB Steering Committee.

Status: Carbon Footprint led by BCC rejected and rejected at appeal by SEUPB Steering Committee.

Status: Three centre Incubation led by Belfast, North Down and Sligo Councils. Rejected by SEUPB Steering Committee.

Status: QUB NI Technology Centre Project still within SEUPB system.

Status: Cultural Tourism led by An Droichead being redirected to Interreg collaboration call April 2011.

Status: Chamber capacity building led by NI Chamber of Commerce rejected and will be redeveloped for the April 2011 call.

Status: Biodiversity bid submitted, led by all NI and border council biodiversity officers. Await SEUPB decision.

Status: A business clustering project has been submitted and awaits SEUPB decision.

2.4 Grundtvig

£60,000 secured to undertake a two way exchange between twelve retired seniors in the cities of Madrid and Belfast to engage in a six week volunteering programme.

Opportunity Europe

Belfast City Council's contribution of £15000, levered a further £50,000 from the EU Commission for a sixth annual opportunity Europe two day programme on St Georges Market 19-20 October which drew in 5000 post primary students and general public. Note: A detailed report will be made on the impact and value of this following an external evaluation which will be presented in the next Member's brief.

2.5 ESF

Produced a council led ESF bid with the Economic Development unit to deliver a second Harte employment programme this time involving two of the other five Comet councils, Lisburn and Castlereagh. Funding decision by DEL awaited.

Supported the implementation of the DEL led ESF 'European Learning Network on Empowerment and Inclusion'. This is 3 a year 495,000 euro project. Belfast City Council can benefit from this project by piloting tools that enable it to measure how attractive it is as a workplace for those who at some distance from employment and described as 'hard to reach'. HR staff are involved in this project.

2.6 Leonardo

The EU Unit has secured one student for Building Control, worth approximately £10k.

Note: Belfast City Council will make a bid for 2 – 3 more Leonardo placements in the February 2011 call.

2.7 Interreg IVB

Belfast City Council through ISB was invited to join a Dublin led Interreg IVB bid. After consideration a decision was made not to proceed as a partner. However, ISB can still benefit from the outcomes and learning resulting from the project.

2.8 Interreg IVB

Belfast City Council through the Property and Projects Department has been asked to engage with Manchester City on a project looking at attracting low carbon investment through a trans national framework. The purpose of this project is to design a new way of attracting private investment into energy saving technologies by developing a Procurement Model that will enable investors to get a significant rate of return.

This will be achieved by harnessing the purchasing power of a network of European cities to create a procurement framework that will enable cities to retrofit their public buildings with low carbon technologies more costly effective. This new and innovative partnership approach will increase the scale of the market of these technologies enabling the suppliers of these products and services to respond with the set of price signals that would increase investment decisions.

The model will also help cities to reduce its carbon emissions and to save millions of buildings energy bills as well as stimulating the local supply chain.

Cost and gain for Belfast City Council yet to be confirmed.

2.9 Integration Fund

Belfast City Council has had the opportunity to take part in a 625,000 euro 18 month project called 'Healthy and Wealthy Together'. Through this project the health needs of migrants are being mapped and the capacity of professionals working with migrants is developed. The Council's Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator sits on this group. By participating in this project the Council's work relating to its corporate theme of health and wellbeing is accelerated.

2.10 Future calls

The EU unit is planning to host a COMT workshop in January 2010 to undertake a planning exercise around future EU funding. Over the summer months, the unit undertook a detailed scanning exercise to examine what remains in all EU programmes to 2013, how these may be relevant to Belfast City Council, when the calls are and what the match funding implications will be.

This information has equipped the EU unit to work with Chief Officers in the context of the new Corporate Plan, to plan EU funding applications from now to 2013.

In the meantime work is ongoing in a number of funding areas;

2.11 Micro finance fund

The European Union through a programme known as 'Progress' has set aside 100 million euros to support the unemployed, soon to be unemployed entrepreneurs, would be entrepreneurs, small businesses with less than 10 employees (micro) and the social economy.

This 100 million euros has been enhanced to 500 million euros by the European Investment Fund and will be made available to the above stakeholders through intermediary funding bodies. These bodies can be banks or credit unions or organisations such as the Ulster Community Investment Fund or the Prince's Trust.

A meeting was held in Stormont with the two Junior Ministers on 11 November 2010 and the EU Manager will be in a position to provide further information early in 2011 on the practicalities of accessing the loan funding. At this time, there will be more clarity on who will act as intermediaries for NI and how the loans can be accessed.

2.12 Interreg IVA

In April 2011, the Special EU programmes Body will issue a call for collaboration projects. This is an opportunity for Belfast City Council and its stakeholders to apply for 100% funding to deliver cross border projects for local authority collaboration on social, economic or environmental issues.

The EU unit will be holding a number of information workshops directly after Christmas to ensure that stakeholders are aware of and supported with respect to applying for this funding.

2.13 Seventh Framework Programme

This is a 50 billion euro fund that provides support between industry and academia for research and innovation. Recently the EU Commissioner for research and innovation, Marie Geoghegan-Quinn, visited Belfast. Her aim was to promote the programme and the fact that NI has a poor track record in securing the funding. The local contact point for the programme is Invest NI.

The EU unit is currently working with Invest NI, INI Brussels office and CBI to plan two information and support events in the new year, one for high growth companies and one for smaller SMEs. The EU unit is also following the Commission's development of the successor programme the Eighth Framework programme and will ensure that opportunities within it are relevant to Belfast and available to Belfast Stakeholders when the programme opens in 2012.

2.14 Open Cities

Following a consultation meeting with key government departments on 19 November, the EU unit is working to develop funding bids to support the projects within the OPENCities local action plan. This project seeks to address barriers to the integration of economic migrants within Belfast. It is an Urbact II funded project involving the British Council and eight other EU cities. Belfast City Council's EU unit leads the project and has been working with key city stakeholders including migrants, employers and government bodies to identify and subsequently address the barriers to integration and to promote the positive aspects of economic migration.

A detailed report will be presented to members in January 2011.

2.15 EU Public Health Call

The EU unit is currently supporting the Belfast Health Development Agency and Belfast City Council to prepare a bid for the February 2011 EU Public Health Call. Further details will be provided as this develops.

2.16 Interpret, influence and disseminate EU policy

On a daily basis, the EU unit examines the policies and legislation emanating from the EU Commission and EU Parliament that are relevant to Belfast City Council departments. Each of the EU officers provide a policy update on a regular basis to the respective department management teams that they support.

This is an under promoted and undervalued aspect of the EU unit and in reality is critical for guiding Belfast City Council to be compliant with new EU law and in turn ensure Belfast City Council avoids any fines or negative attention.

2.17 An example of how important this work is the recent Buildings Directive, whereby the legislation was to enforce public authorities to energy certify buildings under 250 m². This would have cost the Council a substantial amount of money to be compliant. The EU Unit lobbied the European Commission and this legislation was postponed from being ratified in the European Parliament.

2.18 A further example is where the EU unit helped a Belfast City Council working group set up to implement the new EU Services Directive. This meant that Belfast City Council had to have any external contracts and supplies opportunities available online compliant with EU law by December 2009. This is to ensure that any business across the EU could compete for BCC business. Failure to reach the December 2009 target would have led to hefty fines for Belfast City Council.

2.19 The EU unit held a policy information workshop in partnership with OFMDFM in the Ulster Hall on 19 October 2010. The purpose was to provide stakeholders with an overview of Europe's new Digital Agenda and the forthcoming opportunities and relevance to stakeholders of this new policy area. The unit invited Belfast City Council's ISB section and interested ICT companies and academia from across the Comet region. The unit will follow the policy area and hold further workshops as the agenda and funding opportunities emerge. It is anticipated that Belfast City Council will soon sign the Eurocities Green Digital Charter as our sign of commitment to the new EU Digital Agenda.

2.20 Belfast City Council signed the Eurocities Climate Change Declaration, committing the city council for the first time to climate change targets. On the back of this, council will hold the first ever climate change conference in Belfast on 10 March 2011. The EU unit will lead on this and has already secured world renowned speakers.

2.21 As members will be aware, since the November 2010 committee meeting, the EU unit is proactively developing a strong lobby with regard to EU funding for Belfast Post 2013. The unit is currently developing an evidence base to show good use of EU funding to date in Belfast and will push for a strong role for local authorities and a strong urban dimension to future EU funds in NI post 2013. Conversations around this have already begun with government departments here and the NI Assembly and a parallel process is well underway involving Belfast City Council through the Eurocities network.

2.22 Promote Best practice in Europe

2.23 HR project

During this year, the EU unit provided Belfast City Council's HR department with an opportunity to engage in a two-way exchange study visit with the city of Lyon. This project sought to examine each of the city's gender equality approaches. Belfast City Council's approach was viewed as very innovative and as best practice and the detail will be promoted in a published booklet to be promoted across the EU at local government level.

2.24 Tourism

In January 2010, the EU unit in partnership with the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau held a Belfast Tourism showcase in Brussels. This was the first ever showcase held in the new NI Executive Bureau Office and attracted over 100 interested parties from business journalists to conference organisers and EU Institutions.

2.25 Eurocities AGM

In November 2010, the EU unit profiled the work of the city on economic migrants at the 2010 AGM. The unit had a formal slot in the programme and generated interest from 15 other cities in Europe.

2.26 Development Department Away Day

The unit profiled the purpose and work of the unit at the recent Belfast City Council Development Department away day in City Hall, held on 1 November 2010.

2.27 Brussels Open Days, October 2010

Each year all the regional offices and institutions in Brussels engage in a week long programme known as Open Days. 2010 marked the eighth year and the EU unit had a three pronged role within the programme.

1. Through Quartiers en Crise, the Chair of Development spoke at a high level EU Parliament and Commission seminar held in the NI Office in Brussels. The Chair spoke on Belfast approaches to working at a neighbourhood level and gave examples of Belfast City Council's best practice in this field. The Chair also spoke at an informal public debating event on the evening previous to the seminar on the role of youth and leadership.
2. The EU unit facilitated an opportunity for the Chair of the Good Relations Partnership to speak at a seminar around diversity and integration in cities and promoted the work of the council's Good Relations Partnership, the Peace Plan and the Migrants Forum.
3. The EU unit delivered a seminar on behalf of all NI local government delegates at the Open Days. This event held in the NI Office in Brussels involved speakers from all the key Brussels departments providing an overview of policies and funding opportunities relevant to councils in NI and the border from regional policy to economic development, agriculture, the digital agenda and research and innovation.

4. The EU unit facilitated a meeting of all NI local authority delegates in Brussels with the MEPs North and South of Ireland. The purpose was to brief MEPs on obstacles in NI to EU funding and seek their support in lobbying to ease these. In addition, the purpose of the meeting was to begin the EU lobbying post 2013 for an enhanced role for local authorities and a continued Interreg programme. Belfast City Council and other players have been invited back to Brussels in the new year when the MEPs will facilitate a direct lobbying meeting with the commissioner responsible for EU funding and regional policy, commissioner Johanne Hahn.

This was followed by a promotional reception for the key players in Brussels. A full report and presentations are now available within the EU unit.

2.28 NI Executive Office official opening

The EU unit along with the Lord Mayor and nominees of the Chair of Development and Deputy Chair will attend the official opening in Brussels on 9 December and will ensure that the work and priorities of council both now and in the future are communicated at EU level.

The EU unit made several informal presentations to the NI Assembly this year and last year including the DFP Committee, DETI Committee, NI Assembly Committee and OFMDFM Committee.

The purpose of each engagement was to promote the work and impact of the council's EU unit as the only dedicated local government resource on the island of Ireland.

- 2.29 At the request of Derry City Council the EU unit presented its work to Derry City Council, Derry Chamber and others and continues to advise the city of Derry on EU funding, policy and networking opportunities. Members should note that Derry City Council is currently in the process of establishing a European unit and of joining the Eurocities network as an associate member.

Each year, the European units hosts inward study visits. These are requested by other municipal or national authorities and other stakeholders from throughout Europe. Interested players like to examine Belfast City Council's and others best practise in a number of areas ranging from community and youth, to brownfield development and regeneration, to conflict resolution and use of EU funding. To date the EU unit has facilitated nine inward study visits and attended all of the Lord Mayors civic/ambassadorial briefings.

2.30 Maximise participation in EU Networks

2.31 Quartiers En Crise

Since 1989, Belfast City Council has been a member of the QEC network of cities working on integrated local urban development. As members will be aware, in a bid to rationalise networking activity and to concentrate on Eurocities engagement, the council withdrew from this network and resigned as Treasurer at the AGM in June 2010.

Despite this, Belfast City Council and its local partners still had to honour 2010 work commitments within the network. To this end, the unit engaged in a high level EU policy discussion event during the Open Days programme in Brussels in October 2010 as detailed earlier.

2.32 Eurocities

The EU unit engages at every level in this critical network. Each department within council is currently reviewing the value of engagement in 2010 and agreeing on the 2011 work plan. A detailed report will be presented to members in January 2011.

2.33 Belfast in Europe

The EU unit in September 2009 launched the Belfast in Europe network in the Waterfront Hall. This local stakeholders network has replaced Quartiers en Crise and involves the following players; NI Housing Executive, Belfast Area, Partnership Boards, Belfast Health Trust, Proteus, Healthy Cities, PSNI, DEL, OFMDFM and the Belfast Metropolitan College.

The group has recently agreed a terms of reference and work plan and will meet bi-monthly to coordinate and promote EU work in Belfast and ensure that EU funding and information opportunities are widely communicated and embraced within the city region.

2.34 Comet Partnership

The unit continues to act as Secretariat to the six council Comet partnership. A recent review and agreed way forward has taken place and is detailed as a separate report to members this month.

Members will also be aware of the unit's role in facilitating an official Comet Interreg launch and transnational conference held in City Hall on 10 November 2010 following a facilitated visit by the four local authorities of the Dublin region and the North South Ministerial Council. The purpose of this visit was to explore future potential collaboration along the Belfast to Dublin corridor.

2.35 Raise awareness of EU affairs in the region

2.36 This year to date, the EU unit has supported four small business EU information events, two city centre, one in west Belfast and one in North Belfast. The purpose of these was to provide current EU policy and funding information relevant to Belfast businesses. These annual events are delivered in partnership with the council's economic development and procurement units.

2.36 The unit facilitated a meeting with the Dublin Regional Authority, the DOE of NI and the NI Environment Agency. The purpose of this was to try to engage NI stakeholders in the coastal zone management work aspect of the Irish Sea Partnership that Belfast City Council signed up to in 2008. The ISR initiative will begin to take off in 2011 and members will be regularly updated.

2.37 The EU unit in partnership with the EU Commission Office in NI, OFMDFM and others held the seventh annual Opportunity Europe two day festival in St George's Market on 19-20 October 2010. Supported and attended by the two Junior Ministers, the event attracted every single post primary school in NI and delivered a re-vamped and exciting programme including one for senior citizens of Belfast. A detailed report with media coverage will be presented to members in January 2011.

2.38 This year the unit held an EU briefing session for the Belfast Metropolitan College and has engaged in an ongoing support service to encourage and assist the college in EU activity. The unit provides regular support to other stakeholders including Cinemagic, University of Ulster Jordanstown, NI Chamber of Commerce, Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, NI Consuls Association, MLAs and NILGA.

2.39 The EU unit provides regular briefing and support to all the councils thematic work officers and the policy officers forum and on request to any council officers requiring help on EU matters on ongoing EU project delivery e.g. Urban Skatepark.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 All costs relating to EU activities undertaken in the last eight months have been either agreed within the Development Department plan or agreed individually by the Development Committee.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 All EU unit activity adheres to the council's equality and good relations considerations.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to note the work of the European unit over the last eight months.

6 Decision Tracking

There is no decision tracking attached to this report

7 **Key to Abbreviations**

EU – European
SEUPB – Special EU Programmes Body
UUJ – University of Ulster Jordanstown
QUB – Queens University Belfast
NI – Northern Ireland
ESF – EU Social Fund
DEL – Department of Education and Learning
OFMDFM – Office of the First and Deputy First Minister
HR – Human Resources
AGM – Annual General Meeting
DFP – Department of Finance and Personnel
DETI – Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
QEC – Quartiers En Crise
PSNI – Policing Service of NI
DOE – Department of the Environment
INI – Invest NI
CBI – Confederation of British Industry
MLAs – Members of the Local Authority
BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
NILGA – NI Local Government”

After discussion, during which the Members raised concerns in relation to the manner in which the Special European Union Programmes Body applied the criteria for applications for European funding and the need for the Council to utilise and co-ordinate all resources in relation to applications for European funding, the Committee agreed that Pat Colgan be invited to meet with the Committee to address its concerns.

Cathedral Quarter Development Plan

The Committee was reminded that the Laganside Corporation had been dissolved in July, 2007. In 2008, the Department for Social Development, working in conjunction with the Council, Belfast City Centre Management and other key stakeholders, had set up a Steering Group to develop and implement a five-year Strategic Vision and Development Plan for the area. The Department for Social Development had committed funding to enable the Steering Group to produce a Strategy and promote the area, including the employment of a Cathedral Quarter Development Manager. The Cathedral Quarter Development Plan had now been drafted and circulated for consultation and a draft Council response to the document is set out hereunder:

“1. **Background & Discussion**

The draft Cathedral Quarter (CQ) Strategy 2010-2015 proposes to establish a Management Trust which will:

- Provide a forum for all stakeholders to work together
- Work with disparate government agencies and departments to focus on the unique needs of the area
- Leverage funding, including external resources not available to government
- Manage the Cathedral Quarter's managed workspaces and event funding with appropriate government oversight
- Facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of services
- Implement the Cathedral Quarter Development Strategy

Whilst the Management Trust would provide a focus for the CQ, Belfast City Council would have concerns that other areas across the city would want to adopt a similar approach and Council would need to consider this carefully within a city wide context, before any precedent is set. It is difficult to determine the power of a Trust within the current constraints of government departments.

Private/public sector financial models to support the development of Cathedral Quarter must be fully explored.

2. The CQ Development Plan

In guiding the future development of the Cathedral Quarter the four key priorities of the Management Trust will be:

- To support the Cathedral Quarter as a centre for the arts and creative industries
- To support the growth of the mixed-use economy in Cathedral Quarter
- To generate high levels of public participation
- To build and maintain a supportive Infrastructure

Belfast City Council (BCC) broadly supports the 4 Priorities identified in the strategy

BCC notes that the draft strategy contains highly ambitious aspirations for the area in a relatively short period of time. These aspirations are commendable however need to be strengthened by a short, medium and long term implementation plan where the Key Targets should be SMART - specific, measurable, achievable and timebound.

CONSULTATION

BCC recommends that the Development Plan is open to consultation with a wider stakeholder network and not only those with direct interest in the Cathedral Quarter.

MARKETING, COMMUNICATION & VISITOR SERVICING

BCC would recommend that marketing and communication plans are strengthened in the implementation plan and that the proposed management trust works closely in partnership with the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB).

It is also noted that the key target under Objective 3.3. to include 'Visitor information point(s) in the Cathedral Quarter' must be done in partnership with the Belfast Welcome Centre and in consideration government departments that have the legislative powers over public land.

STREET TRADING & MARKET DEVELOPMENT

The CQ Draft Strategy does not allude to the development of on street trading or market development in the area. BCC has worked closely with representatives from the CQSG on designating locations in the CQ realm and seeks clarification on whether this remains an aspiration for the CQSC.

DEVELOPMENTS

Objective 2.2: Balance public and private land use to meet the needs of the cultural quarter (page 22) has a Key target to include: establish CQ as a Business Improvement District (BID) to facilitate zoning implementation. The plan should note that Northern Ireland at present does not have the legislative authority to establish a BID and the new Management Trust must factor into their plan that any change in legislation will take a number of years.

The role of DSD should be emphasised in bringing forward Royal Exchange and any other improvements in the adjoining NW quarter of the City.

The potential impact of the redevelopment of Central Library should be noted in the plan as LibrariesNI, through funding from Department of Culture and Leisure, plan to develop a mediatech facility and a £30m refurbishment completed in 2014. This development of arts infrastructure should be maximised in the CQ Development Plan.

OPERATIONAL

Within Objective 4.1 of the Consultation, (Ensure a clean, safe and well-functioning public realm through effective local management), it does mention that maintenance of the public realm such as timely collection of bins and regular cleansing and upkeep of streets, footpaths and other surfaces must be coordinated to meet the needs of weekday, weekend and evening economic activity. BCC recommends that there is a need to ensure that any development within the area takes into account waste storage facilities and access to these.

This would also be recommended in a number of other objectives including:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Objective 1.4: | Expand and renew the Managed Workspace provision |
| Objective 3.4: | Promote best practice to ensure maximum accessibility to Cathedral Quarter premises, public spaces, services and activities |
| Objective 4.3: | Improve access for pedestrians and cyclists and calm the traffic |

CQSG should access the following link for full guidance:

<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/buildingcontrol/wastestorage.asp>

FUNDING

BCC supports the plan but at this stage will not commit to any funding packages referred to in the plan.

3. Summary:

1. Members ask that the CQSG note that this plan necessitates wider consultation with all stakeholders and not just those with a direct interest in the Cathedral Quarter.
2. Council is minded to support the Plan however there would be no commitment at this stage to any of the funding packages referred to in the Plan.
3. The Cathedral Quarter Vision and Framework is top line and reflects the council's own strategies in relation to tourism, culture and arts; Cathedral Quarter is listed as one of the 9 tourism place destinations in the Belfast Integrated Strategic Framework.

4. BCC recommends that there is a need to ensure that any development within the area takes into account waste storage facilities and access to these.
5. The role of DSD should be emphasised in bringing forward Royal Exchange and any other improvements in the adjoining NW quarter of the City.
6. The potential of the impact of the redevelopment of Central Library should be developed as they plan a mediatech facility and hope to have a £30m refurbish completed in 2014.
7. BCC currently supports the work of the CQSG and will support their work along with all stakeholders and partners by sitting on the steering group at senior officer level.
8. Any emerging management structure should be considered on a city wide basis and innovative financing models should be explored.
9. Cathedral Quarter will include the MAC which when opened in 2012 will play a key role in supporting the culture and arts sector across the city.
10. Cathedral Quarter and its public spaces including Custom House Square provide the City with exciting event potential. Development and outreach initiatives similar to that explored as part of Culture Night should be developed further.
11. It is important that the CQ is not seen in isolation and is connected to other parts of the city including Titanic Quarter and North Belfast via the North Belfast Cultural Corridor both physically and through public transport.
12. The development of the University and Royal Exchange are critical to the success of CQ and BCC should continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure the maximum opportunities are exploited with both of these significant developments for not only CQ but for the city.
13. The strategy requires an action plan for implementation.”

After discussion, the Committee approved the draft response, subject to it being amended to include a request that more arcades and covered shopping areas be provided in the Cathedral Quarter and that the Plan include a specific statement indicating that the area will be a shared and welcoming quarter that is committed to a “shared and better future” based on equity, diversity and interdependence for all cultural traditions.

Development and Outreach Initiative

The Committee was reminded that the Council distributed a range of funding to culture and arts organisations. Due to the need for those organisations to plan their programmes, the Council endeavoured to award funding as early in the financial year as possible. Therefore, a call for funding under the Development and Outreach Programme would be opened in early January and close in February. The initiative aimed to build capacity and boost cultural activity in communities with weak cultural infrastructure. Applications must be made on behalf of a consortia of arts, heritage and community organisations and beneficiaries must be from the top 50% of the most deprived areas in Belfast, according to the Multiple Deprivation ranks for Northern Ireland, or have a disability. It was anticipated that approximately thirteen Partnerships would receive support and the maximum level of funding available per project would be £20,000. A total amount of £165,000 had been included in the budget for the Initiative.

The Committee agreed to the opening of the Development and Outreach Initiative in January, 2011.

Consultation - Belfast on the Move Response and Strategic Planning Policy Consultations

Consultations – Belfast on the Move and Strategic Planning Policy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 ‘ Belfast on the Move’ was launched by the Minister for Regional Development in City Hall on the 30th September 2010 and a public consultation process was initiated, requesting for comments to be submitted by the 30th November 2010. Representatives from the Department attended a Special Committee on the 24th November 2010 and outlined the proposed changes to the traffic management in the city centre.**
- 1.2 Proposals for Strategic Planning Policy Guidance in the form of the draft review of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and guidance in respect of the weight of economic issues in the consideration of planning applications were recently announced.**
- 1.3 This report provides an update of the draft response to ‘Belfast on the Move’ taking account of the consideration and comments from the Special Development Committee and seeks approval for the appointment of technical support to develop responses to forthcoming strategic planning policy consultations.**

2 **Key Issues**

2.1 **‘Belfast on the Move’ During the Special Development Committee on the 24th November 2010, Members had the opportunity to explore the detail of the proposals with the Department for Regional Development staff.**

2.2 **The Draft Response attached in Appendix 1 takes account of the issues and comments raised during the consideration by Committee along with responses from internal consultation with Council departments.**

- **In response to the queries and comments from the Committee, the members of the DRD deputation provided clarification in relation to an number of elements including:**
- **The proportion of through traffic using the city centre;**
- **enforcement in relation to the use of junctions and moving traffic offences;**
- **the strategic approach to traffic management in the city;**
- **the use of bus lanes by cleansing vehicles;**
- **improving access to Donegall Square East and West and the relocation of bus stops from Donegall Square West to Queen Street;**
- **funding bids for these proposals and the Rapid Transport project;**
- **car parking for persons with disabilities;**
- **the relationship between Rapid Transit Lanes and public taxi hire ranks;**
- **potential transport proposals for the north of the city centre;**
- **parking of tour buses and coach parking bays; and**
- **the objective of reducing longer-stay car parking.**

The draft response to the consultation has been updated to reflect the comments made by the Members. The final draft response is appended to this report for consideration by the Committee.

- 2.3 The Potential for new Strategic Planning Policy Guidance was highlighted in the Departmental Plan approved by Committee in 2010. The development of corporate responses on strategic planning policies, including Planning Policy Statements, and the Regional Development Strategy with external specialist support were highlighted as specific actions within the Departmental Plan.
- 2.4 The draft review of the Regional Development Strategy is being considered by the Regional Development Committee and is likely to be issued for formal consultation in December 2010.
- 2.5 The RDS should play a critical role in setting the context for the continued development of the city as the driver of growth for the region. It is essential that the RDS maintains the balance of future growth in favour of the city as the driver of growth and provides formal linkages to any linked Investment Strategy proposals such as the transportation plan, infrastructure proposals and the emphasis on public transport provision / connectivity.

Focussed work is required to support the translation of the work on the city region into the strategy and influence the final RDS and ensure the potential for the continued development of Belfast.

- 2.5 The Minister for the Environment recently announced proposals for the development of new PPS guidance to address the issue of the weight to be attached to economic considerations in the consideration of planning applications.
- 2.6 The introduction of economic considerations to the decision making process through PPS guidance could have significant implications for the assessment of development proposals both within the city and the wider region. The consideration at the High Court of earlier attempts to introduce these provisions suggested that the proposals amounted to a material change in the way planning applications were to be determined and could directly influence the outcome.

- 2.7 The development of the responses would necessarily draw on previous research and responses to both development plan proposals and Planning Policy Statements. Due to the differences in the proposed consultations subjects it is proposed that the technical support is provided by two separate focussed consultancy commissions with budgets of £7,000 for the RDS Review and £5,000 for the proposed PPS.

3 **Resource Implications**

Amounts were included in the approved Departmental Plan subject to further clarification through a proposal paper.

4 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

There are no equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report

5 **Recommendations**

Members are requested to:

- 5.1 Consider and if appropriate endorse the content of the suggested response to the proposed 'Belfast On The Move' consultation as set out in Appendix 1
- 5.2 Agree the commission of external consultancy support with budgets of £7,000 for the RDS Review and £5,000 for the proposed PPS.

6 **Decision Tracking**

Further to agreement, that if appropriate, a response be submitted to the Department for Regional Development
Timeline: December 2010. Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

Draft responses to the RDS Review and the PPS to be brought back to the Committee for consideration.

Timeline: March 2011. Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

7 **Key to Abbreviations**

DRD – Department for Regional Development
RDS – Regional Development Strategy
PPS- Planning Policy Statement

8 **Documents Attached**

Appendix 1 – Draft Response

Appendix 1

Draft Response

The Council generally supports the 'Belfast on the Move' proposals to promote sustainable transport options for the city centre. The proposal to reduce the amount of unnecessary through traffic in the city centre is welcomed, however, the measures must ensure the city centre remains accessible for leisure, shopping and business use. The increased priority for pedestrians and public transport in the city centre is supported along with the need to provide sufficient dedicated parking spaces for disabled people.

The Council considers a strategic approach to traffic management in Belfast is necessary to integrate the 'Belfast on the Move' city centre transport proposals with the rest of the city. The potential for displaced traffic from city centre streets to cause congestion elsewhere or create adverse impacts on residential communities should be continually monitored and managed.

In the consideration of this response to the specific 'Belfast On the Move' proposals it should be noted that the Council does not endorse the longer-term proposal for the completion of the southern section of the City Centre Ring (Bankmore Link). The Council in previous responses highlighted design concerns and the need to consider sustainable transport options such as the implementation of Rapid Transit, Park & Ride and expansion of Quality Bus Corridors prior to building new road infrastructure.

Parking and moving traffic offences in the city centre

The Council considers that enforcement of moving traffic offences will be critical for effective traffic management in the city centre. The enforcement of general traffic using bus lanes is needed to ensure the benefits of dedicated bus lane provision and changed priority are realised. Also the issue of traffic congestion at box junctions and illegal parking of taxis, tour buses and coaches should be enforced.

The current arrangements whereby the Police Service for Northern Ireland has responsibility for enforcing moving traffic offences with DRD responsible for parking offences may undermine the potential for coordinated action and effective management. The decriminalisation of moving traffic offences with single responsibility could ensure more effective enforcement of moving traffic offences in order to contribute to improvements in traffic management and road safety. The Council would strongly recommend that parallel actions are taken by DRD and PSNI to address this issue.

Cycling provision

The Council supports measures for dedicated off road cycle lanes and the use of bus lanes for cyclist. However, the introduction of one way traffic to a number of city centre streets may result in longer journeys in some circumstances for cyclist to reach city centre destinations. The Council would request consideration is given to the introduction of contra flow cycle lanes in proposed one way streets such as Donegall Place. In addition, the potential for cyclists to share pedestrian areas should be considered through the changing of regulations to facilitate appropriate opportunities.

Bus Routes

The Council would support measures to increase the number of through bus routes in the city and the reduction of bus layover in the city centre. These changes should be accompanied by further improvement to the Metro Bus Service along the arterial routes and further development of Park & Ride to provide attractive alternatives to the private car.

Barrack Street area

The Council would support measures to restrict 'rat running' in the Barrack Street residential area.

Waste Collection and Street Cleansing issues

The Council's waste collection vehicles need to stop frequently along the carriageway the city centre in order to empty bins and collect waste. The refuse vehicles require full access in close proximity to where the bins or waste facilities are located as it not feasible, or safe to move large bins across roads in busy city centre traffic locations. Provision for waste collection vehicles to stop in the bus lanes for short periods to allow Council operatives to undertake statutory waste management functions should be included within design and enforcement regimes.

Council operations in the City Centre also require vehicular movements in all streets and any proposals to pedestrianise areas or restrict traffic should ensure access is maintained for Council vehicles including mechanical street sweeping vehicles.

St Georges Market

The traffic management proposals should ensure that market traders retain access to St George's Market to allow for unloading and loading of produce.

Disabled Access

The sustainable transport measures must be linked to the implementation plan of the Department for Social Development, Access and Mobility Study to ensure that the disabled community is not disadvantaged in accessing city centre services. Sufficient dedicated parking spaces for disabled people should be provided throughout the city centre.

Air Quality

The Council recognises that technical solutions to improving poor air quality are achievable through the reduction of the amount of traffic in the city centre, combined with measures to remove the most polluting vehicles from our roads and/or to keep them out of the city centre. Measures that promote the use of (clean) public transport, together with those that support low impact transportation such as cycling and walking assist in the improvement of the city centre environment. In relation to air quality, the Council would support the scheme to introduce 'Sustainable Transport Enabling Measures' in the city centre and it considers that there is the potential for positive outcomes in relation to air quality should this proposal be implemented. The Council would request that air quality issues are considered at all stages as part of the detailed planning process for this proposal and that the Council is kept informed on predicted impacts, particularly in relation to ambient levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter at relevant monitoring locations.

Longer Term proposals

The longer term measures include the proposal for the Bankmore link between Cromac Street and Hope Street. The Streets Ahead Phase 2 proposals link the full pedestrianisation of Donegall Place and the creation of an iconic square in the setting of the City Hall, to the development of the Bankmore Link.

Whilst the Council would support the further pedestrianisation of Donegall Place and an improved public realm setting for City Hall as suggested in the Streets Ahead Phase 2, there would be concerns in relation to the proposed link to the Bankmore Inner-ring Road as the only mechanism to facilitate such future action. Further consideration should be given to sustainable transport options such as the implementation of Rapid Transit, park & ride schemes and expansion of Quality Bus Corridors prior to building new road infrastructure."

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that representatives of Translink be invited to a future meeting to discuss the relocation of bus stops from around the City Hall area.

Community Development Project Grants

The Committee was reminded that the Community Development Project Grants were awarded to organisations which initiated small-scale community projects that contributed to the overarching aim of building the capacity of local people. The maximum amount which could be awarded to any one group under the scheme was £500.

It was reported that a total of 60 applications had been received in the second open call for funding by the closing date of 1st October, of which 21 were from organisations who had received funding when the first grant had opened in March, 2010. As the potential grant allocation would exceed the budget, only recommendations for those 39 applications received from organisations which had not yet received a Community Development Project Grant were being submitted to the Committee for consideration at this time. An end of year review of all grant budgets would be undertaken which would indicate if funding might be available for the remaining 21 applications. If funds permitted, further recommendations in relation to those would be submitted to the Committee in February.

The Committee considered the applications which had been received and which had not received funding during the first tranche and agreed to adopt the recommendations as set out below:

APPENDIX 1: Recommendations for Grant Approval

GROUP NAME	APP NO	REQUESTED	RECOMMENDED
NORTH			
Asbestos Support N.I. (ASNI)	1730	£500.00	£500.00
Basement Youth Club	1756	£625.00	£500.00
Belfast Beginning Experience	1781	£2000.00	£500.00
Carrickhill Residents Association	1736	£500.00	£500.00
Ligoniel Improvement Association	1762	£500.00	£500.00
Wishing Well Family Centre	1734	£429.00	£429.00
Sub Total		£4,554.00	£2,929.00

GROUP NAME	APP NO	REQUESTED	RECOMMENDED
SOUTH			
Ellis Court Residents Ass.	1748	£500.00	£500.00
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	1758	£500.00	£500.00
Lower Ormeau & Botanic Environmental Association	1750	£500.00	£500.00
Men Utd.	1753	£1,000.00	£500.00
St. John Vianne Senior Citizens Club	1749	£500.00	£500.00
Sub Total		3,000.00	£2,500.00
EAST			
Avoniel Over 50's Club	1747	£500.00	£500.00
Belfast East Seniors Forum	1768	£500.00	£500.00
Bellwood Seniors	1744	£500.00	£500.00
Medway Court Residents Assoc.	1779	£500.00	£500.00
Romanians in N.I.	1789	£500.00	£450.00
Sydenham Cross Community Support	1770	£500.00	£500.00
Sub Total		£3,000.00	£2,950.00
WEST			
Caird Cheathru na Gaeltachta	1780	£500.00	£500.00
Centre For Health and Wellbeing	1731	£500.00	£500.00
Divis Tower Gardening Assoc.	1783	£500.00	£500.00
Divis Youth Project	1760	£600.00	£500.00
Falls Residents Association	1761	£600.00	£500.00
Glór Na Móna	1788	£500.00	£500.00
Greater Shankill Senior Citizens	1738	£500.00	£500.00
Highfield Mother & Toddlers	1755	£500.00	£500.00
Lenadoon Community Forum	1757	£500.00	£500.00
Lenadoon Women's Group	1735	£500.00	£500.00
Roden Street CDA	1776	£500.00	£500.00
West Belfast Senior Citizen Forum	1737	£500.00	£500.00
Women In Safe Hands (WISH)	1751	£500.00	£500.00
Sub Total		£6,700.00	£6,500.00
GRAND TOTAL		£17,254.00	£14,879.00

APPENDIX 2: Recommendations for Grant Refusal

GROUP NAME	APP NO	Comment
Clonard Association	1752	Not a Community Development Organisation
Conservation Volunteers	1782	Application Incomplete: No Annual Accounts No evidence of AGM No list of Committee Members
Polish Saturday School	1769	Not a Community Development Organisation
Romanian Community Centre	1786	No Annual Accounts No Bank Account
South Belfast Friendship House	1785	Application Withdrawn
South Belfast Community Lifestyle Forum	1787	Directly Managed Community Centre User Group (ineligible)
Village Focus Group	1759	No Annual Accounts No evidence of AGM
Ballysillan Youth Football Club	1741	Not a Community Development Organisation No Annual Accounts
Looking Ahead Group	1784	Application Withdrawn

Community Services Grant - Advice and Information Services

The Committee was reminded that the Council was a major funder of Advice and Information Services through a consortium model which was based on geographical providers. That approach to funding and advice delivery had been established in 2005/06 and involved over 20 organisations, which included both the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Independent Advice providers. Following considerable lobbying from both the Advice providers and Local Government, the Department for Social Development had agreed to provide an additional £500,000 in the current financial year for local advice services across Northern Ireland, of which £157,000 had been taken up by Belfast providers. The total financial support for advice services in Belfast which had been administered by the Council during the previous year had been £997,836. That had allowed the sector to process 112,693 enquiries of which over 18,000 were debt related. Monitoring returns had demonstrated that the funds levered an additional £12,175,133 in claimed benefits. Officers had requested a Council budget of £369,610 in support of advice services in the 2011/12 revenue estimates. If that were to be approved, it might lever a further £469,902 from the Department for Social Development, which was an indicative figure based on the previous year's grant.

It was reported that correspondence had been received from Ards Borough Council indicating its intent to write to the Minister for Social Development requesting him to review and increase his Department's contribution to the Citizens' Advice Bureau in light of the present socio-economic climate and the Bureau's continued increased workload and requesting all other Councils in Northern Ireland to write to the Minister in support.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister in this regard and agreed also to include the Independent Advice sector in the response.

Creative Industries - South by Southwest 2011

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th May, 2010, it had agreed to support the Council's participation at the South by Southwest Media Conference and Festival 2011. The conference, which was the premier global event focusing on the creative side of the music and entertainment business, would take place in Austin, Texas from 14th till 19th March, 2011. The aim of attending the event was to further the Council's support for the Creative Industries by promoting Belfast musicians and music-related businesses to an international audience and showcasing the investment and purchasing opportunities offered by Belfast's music industry.

Accordingly, it was recommended that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with one officer, be authorised to participate in the event.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Arts and Business Northern Ireland Awards

The Committee was reminded that the Arts and Business Northern Ireland Awards ceremony was an annual celebration of the partnerships between Northern Ireland's arts organisations and private businesses. In the previous year, the Waterfront Hall had been presented with the overall Arts Award for its innovative approach to corporate partnerships and sponsorships. This year, the Waterfront and Ulster Halls had been nominated in a number of categories and the awards would be taking place in the BBC Blackstaff Studios on 20th January, 2011. Accordingly, a number of invitations had been extended to Members of the Committee and Council officers to attend the event.

The Committee approved the attendance at the 2011 Arts and Business Awards event of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with the appropriate officers.

European Social Fund - Match Funding Requests

The Committee deferred consideration of a report in relation to the European Social Fund Match Funding requests until the Department of Employment and Learning had decided on which projects it was likely to support and to enable all applications submitted to be considered together.

Consultation Ulster-Scots Agency - Funding for Music and Dance Tuition Services to Communities

The Committee was advised that the Ulster-Scots Agency was undertaking a review of grant programmes operated under its Financial Assistance Scheme. The aim of the review was to refine processes to reduce the complexity of its current system and to improve transparency in decision making, while minimising the administrative burden on organisations in receipt of grant. Accordingly, it was proposed that the undernoted comments be submitted as the Council's response:

“General Comment

The general aim and ethos of the revisions appear to be sound, especially in relation to openness and transparency. However, it is not always clear how the programme links with the overall strategic aims of the Agency itself. Section 6.1 also refers to the need to reflect diversity, which does not appear to be accounted for within the main body of the consultation paper.

Within any new framework, we suggest that the application process should be proportional to the level of grant and the capacity of the communities, while endeavouring to further develop their capacity.

More interaction with other funding bodies, as well as between community groups, is encouraged to ensure synergies.

The Council is currently undergoing a review of its community and arts funding approach with a view to developing a new culture and arts strategy. Some of the findings from the Council’s review may be of interest to the Ulster-Scots Agency and we would be happy to discuss these.

Specific Questions

Question 1: What sort of help should we offer new groups?

In addition to financial assistance, in-kind advice is invaluable to new organisations. This should include signposting to other relevant funding schemes through Council, Arts Council and other bodies. However, it may be more effective to concentrate on developing existing groups and strengthening ties with other cultural providers working in this area e.g. Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association Northern Ireland and the Highland Dance Association.

Question 2: What steps should we take to help established groups?

Sustainable viability is very difficult for arts and community groups to achieve and is likely to become more difficult in the current financial climate and so it is to be hoped that existing groups will respond to this consultation request and so answer the question directly. Additionally there may be some benefit in facilitating increased dialogue and cooperation between groups. This might help identifying opportunities to share resources, transport, venues, equipment etc. This dialogue might also help to avoid timetable clashes for events and training, potentially increasing the availability of volunteers and teachers.

Question 3: How do you think the programme should be split?

We have no specific preference. However, unless there are other agencies that could help with one activity more than another and thus release the pressure on the USA, it would seem sensible to split the programme based on demand for funding actually received.

Question 4: Is tuition needed in other musical or dance disciplines or in other areas of Ulster-Scots cultural activity?

Yes and some of this could be delivered by RSPBA and Highland Dance Association.

Question 5: Do you think tutors are best placed to organise tuition classes?

No because it may become purely monetary. The need and demand should come from the communities to maximise impact. Again umbrella bodies such as RSPBA and Highland Dance Association might be better placed.

Question 6: How far would students travel to take part in tuition classes?

Nil response

Question 7: Do you agree that funding should be targeted at a smaller number of quality projects?

Generally yes and perhaps funds could be filtered via groups like RSPBA and Highland Dance Association.

Question 8: How would you choose projects for support?

Clear criteria based on USA goals and objectives. Perhaps using a combination of option 3 and 4 might be effective. Consideration could also be given to providing assistance to groups to develop project planning and management skills, which would build capacity among new and established organisations. Projects should ensure a good fit with the Agency's overall strategy.

Under option 3, consideration should be given to whether the need for an increased contribution from established groups will create a financial barrier for participants, e.g. through increased class costs.

Working in partnership should be a criterion for support, rather than a model.

Question 9: Do you agree that a proportion of the budget should be ring-fenced for new groups or disciplines under-represented across the programme? If so, what proportion?

Applications from new groups should be selected on merit.
See Q1 response.

Question 10: What might the Ulster-Scots elements of the programme include?

Dance, drumming, pipes and musical/dance history.

Question 11: Are your organisation's member groups likely to work in partnership to deliver tuition?

There may be possibilities to link into programmes we support such as the European Pipe Band championships and any attached festival.

Question 12: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the payment process? Are there other improvements that you would suggest for 2012?

Nil response

Question 13: Are there other issues that we should consider to improve tuition services in communities?

Nil response

Thank you for asking us to respond to the proposals.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Consultation - NI Commissioner for Children and Young People's Draft Corporate Strategy 2001-14

Consultation: Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's Draft Corporate Strategy for 2011-14

The Committee was advised that the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People had produced a draft Corporate Strategy for 2011-14 and was seeking the Council's comments thereon. Accordingly, the Director submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted proposed response:

“General Comments

Thank you for asking us to comment on this strategy. One of the Council's priorities is to create opportunities to improve the well-being of Children and Young People and we provide significant support for children particularly through our Parks & Leisure department and our Community Services function including the Children and Young People unit and 18 staff in the Play Team. Our support includes play schemes, the CYP Forum, summer schemes; swimming tuition; multiple sports development programmes; parks events; educational visits; Zoo schools and toddler programmes; to name but a few. Most of these events are hosted in our own facilities including parks; leisure facilities, which include outdoor pitches, open spaces and playgrounds; and Community Centres, which are often located in areas of highest need. As such we welcome further discussion on ways in which our activities may complement each others efforts.

Of course, we appreciate that members of our CYP Unit have already been in discussion with you about this strategy and more generally about the work you do. As such you will already be aware that we think the strategy is sound and that there are areas where we may be able to work together.

Specific Questions

Q1. Do you broadly agree with our vision, mission and values? Yes

Q2. Do you broadly agree with our analysis of the external factors affecting our Corporate Planning 2011-14? Yes

Q3. Do you broadly agree with our key assumptions? Yes

What other assumptions could be made in developing this Corporate Plan?

The second assumption that NICCY will receive adequate financial support through the difficult economic situation may be optimistic. It might be worth considering contingencies or clarifying priorities in the event that there is not sufficient funding to achieve all of the objectives within the strategy.

Q4. Do you broadly agree with the approach that NICCY has taken, in aligning our Corporate Objectives with our statutory duties? Yes

Q5. Do you consider the general activities listed after each objective to be appropriate ways for NICCY to deliver on its objectives? Yes/No

What other things could NICCY do to deliver on these objectives?

We have suggested some minor changes (in *italics*) to the activities, which we feel may better reflect the full scope of NICCY's work.

Objective 1: Promote a better understanding of children's rights

We will do this through:

Promoting an understanding of children's rights *and responsibilities* to children and young people, parents, carers and our stakeholders.

Objective 2: Review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services relating to children and young people

We will do this through:

Conducting or commissioning research, consultations and/or investigations *providing guidance and training alongside the safeguarding children work particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour.*

Objective 3: Advise Government and relevant authorities on the rights and best interests of children and young people

We will do this through:

Producing reports to Government on matters affecting children and young people, *including lobbying for joined up working across government to be able to support young people to stop engaging in antisocial behaviour and reintegrate with their communities.*

Q6. *What issues do you think NICCY should work on during this Corporate Plan period?*

As highlighted in the 'Context' section of the strategy, the next few years will see an increasingly challenging financial climate and potentially new Ministers and Elected Members. Consequently, we feel that the priority for NICCY will be on lobbying at a strategic level to ensure there is a proper appreciation of the needs of children and young people at the highest level. In turn this will ensure that appropriate resources are made available to all agencies that support children and young people.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

We need to ask for some information about you and/or your organisation to allow us to assess the range of respondents when analysing submissions.

At the end of the consultation we shall publish a paper summarising the outcomes of the consultation. Information you provide in your response to this consultation, including your name, may be included in this document, or published or disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

If you would prefer your name to be treated as confidential, please tell us, and we will not use it in our feedback document. However, you should be aware that, under the FOIA, we cannot guarantee confidentiality."

The Committee approved the draft response.

St. George's Market Update

The Committee was advised that a representative of the St. George's Market traders had submitted a request to address the Committee in relation to the Sunday Market before the extended trial period ended on 31st January, 2011.

The Committee agreed to accede to the request and that the representatives be received at the meeting scheduled to be held on 12th January, 2011.

Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre:
Review of Management Arrangements

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 10th November, a copy of which is set out hereunder:

“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 owed 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 Holywood 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 & Holywood 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."*

Councillor Kyle, at whose request the item had been referred back, advised the Members that, since the last meeting of the Committee, at least seventeen groups had been using the facility and Council officers had been working in conjunction with the Management Team in order to keep the Centre running. He requested that the Committee agree to the current position being allowed to continue until the end of the financial year and that a further review be undertaken at that time.

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable a legal opinion to be sought and to a report thereon being submitted to the Committee in January, the report to include also information in relation to the support which had been provided to the Group by the Council and that, in the meantime, the current management arrangements, which had been put in place by the Committee at its meeting on 10th November, be continued.

**European Local Economic Development
Funding Engagement Event**

The Committee was advised that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association was holding in the Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown on 13th December a European Local Economic Development Funding Engagement event and had invited two Members and two Council officers to attend.

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

Chairman