

# Development Committee

Monday, 28th March, 2011

## ADJOURNED MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Maskey (Chairman);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and  
Councillors Crozier, Garrett, Groves, Mallon,  
Mac Giolla Mhín, McKee, Mullaghan, P. Robinson,  
Rodgers and Stoker.

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

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Ekin, Hargey, Lavery and B. Kelly.

### OPENCities - Project Update

The Committee was reminded that OPENCities was three-year project funded under the European Urbact II programme. The project had been developed by the British Council and was led by the Council, together with eight other European cities, namely; Bilbao, Cardiff, Dublin, Dusseldorf, Nitra, Poznan, Sofia and Vienna. The aim of the project was to enable cities to accommodate economic migrants and address barriers which could impact on the ability of such migrants to integrate fully within their adoptive cities. It was reported that one of the key requirements of the Project was that each participating city would establish a Local Support Group and that it would assist in the development of an Action Plan for Belfast. The Action Plan would seek to address the requirements of migrant workers in accordance with the themes of leadership, governance, internationalisation, integration and inclusion.

Accordingly, the Committee considered a draft version of Belfast's Local Action Plan, a copy of which was available on the Council's Modern.gov website. It was pointed out that the Plan, which had been formulated after a period of extensive consultation, sought to address the issue of Belfast's migrant workers within a European, national and local context and establish steps which would be taken to make Belfast a more welcoming place for migrant workers. The Committee was informed that, once agreed by the Council, the Plan would be presented to the final conference of OPENCities, which was scheduled to take place in Brussels on 25th May, 2011. The Director reported that the conference would afford the Council an opportunity to promote the Action Plan and influence future policy development and funding for migrant issues.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to endorse the Local Action Plan;
- (ii) to authorise the attendance of the current Chairman and Deputy Chairman, the Director of Development and European Unit Manager (or their nominees) at the OPENCities conference in Brussels on 25th May; and
- (iii) in principle, that the Council participate in the Brussels Open Days Programme which was scheduled to take place in October, 2011, subject to a further report in this regard being submitted to the Committee in due course.

**Department of Education and Learning –  
Higher Education Strategy Consultation**

The Committee was advised that the Department of Education and Learning had issued a consultation document on the development of a higher education strategy for Northern Ireland. It was reported that the overarching aim of the consultation was to establish a context in which the higher education institutes could continue to flourish and make a distinctive contribution to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Northern Ireland. Accordingly, the Committee endorsed the undernoted response and agreed that it be forwarded to the Department for Education and Learning as the Council's contribution in this matter.

**“A Vision for Higher Education: 2010-2020**

**PROPOSAL**

- **The Department's vision for higher education is one of a sector which is vibrant, of international calibre, which pursues excellence in teaching and research and which plays a pivotal role in the development of a modern, sustainable knowledge-based economy which supports a confident inclusive society which recognises and values diversity.**

**QUESTIONS**

**Question One**

- ***What are your views on the vision outlined above for the development of the higher education sector up to 2020?***

**The Council is of the view that this is appropriate.**

## A Learning Society

### PROPOSALS

- Teaching and learning needs to be flexible, accessible and of the highest quality. More flexible pathways to qualifications need to be developed, with funding arrangements incentivising this change.
- The sector should seek to develop 'Distinctive Northern Ireland Graduates'; graduates who possess additional skills that will place them at an advantage globally.
- A greater emphasis on part-time participation in higher education and on postgraduate research and training is required involving closer collaboration with industry and continuing Government commitment to research and development activities.
- The roles of the FECs in the provision and delivery of higher education should be further developed and fostered in partnership with the Universities and University Colleges.
- There is a need to incentivise choices for STEM areas beyond the traditional higher education courses
- There is a need for a greater emphasis on sub-degree qualifications which better meet the needs of local industry and brings Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the UK and Europe.
- It is imperative that we build on the success to date of widening participation to ensure access for all those who can benefit from higher education, addressing inequalities of gender and socio-economic grouping at a time of constrained resource availability.

#### *What are your views on the above proposals?*

The document makes reference to NI using its size to its advantage but does not appear to say how this can be done or what this might actually mean. It would be useful if the document elaborated on this idea to help understand how DEL intends to develop the uniqueness of our HEIs.

The document suggests that STEM courses need to be incentivised particularly as NI lags behind the UK in non-medical related STEM students. The percentage figures provided show this is not the case. They show that 27.36 NI students are studying non-medical STEM courses as opposed to 25.6% in the UK. We do not underestimate the importance of STEM subjects, we just hope your decisions have not been made on incorrect interpretation of the figures.

We also question the need to incentives STEM students on the grounds that your report already states that HE courses are provided on the basis of demand. It seems more sensible to focus on making STEM related subjects more appealing at the school age (so that students want to continue to study them into HE) and to educate potential students as to the opportunities and higher earning potential of STEM graduates.

One of the major barriers to high quality research in UK institutions is the unpredictability of funding streams. This particularly affects full-time researchers who are often not treated equally to teaching staff in terms of pay, job security, contract conditions, etc. A practical negative impact of this is a high turnover of researchers and subsequent loss of knowledge. DEL has the opportunity to use its funding approach to address some of these problems e.g. through the use of longer-term research grants.

## QUESTIONS

### Question Two

- *How should higher education in Northern Ireland be delivered to best support the needs of current and future learners, including those in the workforce?*

The first proposal states that learning needs to be 'flexible, accessible and of the highest quality.' While we agree that these are commendable aspirations, we have concerns that they may actually limit some opportunities. For example, there is potential to use associated or even third party providers of education who may be extremely flexible and accessible but 'only' of very good quality rather than 'the highest quality.'

### Question Three

- *How can learning at higher education institutions in Northern Ireland be made distinctive from the rest of the UK, the Republic of Ireland and Europe, leading to graduates with greater employability potential?*

## Higher Education and the Economy

### PROPOSALS

- Research should continue to be funded at an appropriate level to enable our Universities to fulfil their central role to develop and sustain a world-class research base in Northern Ireland.
- Increased employer engagement with higher education and the continual development of knowledge exchange activity with businesses, the public sector and with the third sector is required.
- The promotion of entrepreneurship in the local economy through the higher education sector, including the development of graduates with the right set of skills necessary to compete in a global economy.
- Working more closely with local industry, particularly SMEs and potential investors to ensure that skills gaps are identified and addressed, putting in place flexible client-focused approaches to do so.
- Northern Ireland must play to its strengths, ensuring the development of a high quality skills base and a willingness to respond to investors.
- Cross-departmental co-operation to promote interest in, and the study of, priority subjects from an early age, achieving the right balance between these and other subject areas, whilst respecting academic freedom.

*What are your views on the above proposals?*

The Council is already involved in programmes to encourage graduates to consider entrepreneurship. We also have partnerships with the HE sector to help SME's develop new products and prepare them for market. Hence we welcome the proposals and would be willing to share our experiences.

### QUESTIONS

#### Question Four:

- *How can the higher education sector maximise its contribution to Northern Ireland's economy, particularly in relation to research and development?*

Our previous comments about research also apply here. The DEL is in a position, through its approach to funding research, to create a more stable environment for those interested in pursuing a career in research.

**Question Five:**

- *How can higher education, government and business work more effectively to identify research and development needs and improve the knowledge and skills of the current, and future, workforce?*

There is a tendency for HE to think of knowledge skills, and workforce development in traditional terms of degrees, masters, etc. It should be noted that employers need staff to have new skills not necessarily new certificates and as such, short, focused programmes can be more relevant than a part-time qualification based course.

Equally students can acquire useful experience and a greater understanding of the relevance of their studies through work placement opportunities. The Council offers several placements each year and is convinced of the benefits to organisation and student. We suggest the department may be able to do more to raise awareness about placement arrangements among the private sector.

**Internationally Connected**

**PROPOSALS**

Expansion of Northern Ireland's market share within the UK in respect of

- international activity and overseas student enrolments through the development of a unique Northern Ireland higher education selling point.
- Encouraging, incentivising and supporting Northern Ireland students to avail of the opportunities for international mobility.
- Institutions should seek to further develop their portfolio of well managed overseas institutional partnerships that benefit not only their students and institutions but Northern Ireland as a whole.

- Healthy and substantial international research links should continue to be fostered, for overseas trade and inward investment. In particular, HEIs should continue to work with SMEs to ensure they are well placed to reap the benefits of internationalisation.

What are your views on the above proposals?

### QUESTIONS

#### Question Six:

- *As higher education becomes increasingly globalised, how can Northern Ireland's institutions further expand their international portfolios, to assist not only the higher education sector, but Northern Ireland as a whole?*

The Council is involved in a number of events to promote the area internationally (EU events, MIPIM, Nashville, etc) and would welcome input from the HE sector.

#### Question Seven:

- *How can Northern Ireland's students be encouraged, incentivised and supported to become more internationally mobile?*

As in the introduction, we refer to the opportunities for students to be internationally mobile through the EU lifelong learning programme and Framework Programme 7. We try to promote these through programmes such as 'Opportunity Europe' and 'Leonardo students'.

### Higher Education and Civil Society

### PROPOSALS

- Increasing opportunities for learners to enter higher education and assist in the development of initiatives and programmes at the HEIs to ensure the establishment of an open and diverse society.
- Promoting the creation of sustainable outreach links between the HEIs and the local voluntary, community and local Government sectors, supported by external engagement committees in which all stakeholders are represented.

- HEIs working in partnership with FECs to encourage and promote the provision of higher education in enabling those from geographical 'coldspots' to benefit from a higher education experience.

What are your views on the above proposals?

### QUESTIONS

#### Question Eight:

- *How should the already established relationships and interfaces with local communities and civic society be developed further to maximise their effectiveness?*

The Council already enjoys a good relationship with HEIs as referenced in the consultation document (Holylands, etc) and as previously mentioned in this consultation response. We welcome any efforts to further develop these relationships.

#### Question Nine:

- *If new relationships and interfaces need to be established, what should they look like?*

### Higher Education Finance and Governance

### PROPOSALS

- Changing the funding model for higher education to a simplified system that better reflects the need for part-time, modular study to ensure flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness in higher education.
- Assessing the extent to which MaSN, as a means of controlling expenditure, is still fit for purpose.
- Considering whether the Financial Memorandum between the Department and the Universities and University Colleges takes account of the UK-wide
- HEI Financial Memoranda and also reflects the appropriate degree of assurance.



- Striking a clear balance between HEI autonomy and the role of the Department through a renewed funding and governance framework to ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities.

What are your views on the above proposals?

### QUESTIONS

#### Question Ten:

- *How can we ensure that government funding is being used effectively to support learners and respond to economic priorities?*

While we agree that the tax payer needs to be assured that funding is being used appropriately, we would be concerned about introducing another layer of reporting. The consultation document says that Universities and Colleges are now generating 'significant income from private and voluntary (trust) sources and are accountable for the use of such monies to the funder.' (p56) It seems sensible for the same accountability mechanisms to be used to satisfy the needs of DEL. Developing and implementing a system that creates duplications of reporting work will only divert resources away from teaching and research.

#### Question Eleven:

- *What are your views on the higher education funding model in Northern Ireland?*

We agree with the proposal that efforts should be made to create a new simplified system that better reflects the aims of this strategy and the changing climate for the education sector. However, we expect that reaching agreement on a new approach will be very difficult. Consequently we suggest that a range of basic options is considered, with reference to approaches taken elsewhere, and a review of the pros and cons of each is produced for consultation.

#### Question Twelve:

- *How could government funding, including student support, be revised to support modular and flexible study?*

As mentioned in the introduction, our main concern is the potential for disincentive, particularly to those from disadvantaged areas or low income families, posed by higher student fees. Having successfully encouraged uptake of HE by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, over a period of several decades, the unintended consequence of any reduction in funding is likely to be a reversal of that success story.

**Question Thirteen:**

- *What are your views on the cap on student numbers (MaSN)?*

The Consultation paper seems to suggest that the MaSN approach is no longer appropriate. We would prefer to see details about alternative approaches (the removed completely option on page 51) before making comment.

**Implementing the Strategy**

**QUESTION**

**Question Fourteen:**

- *What are your views on the establishment of a strategic implementation body to oversee implementation of the strategy when it is finalised?*

We support the proposal but would add that the implementation body also has to have the appropriate 'blend of experience and expertise' and authority, if it is to be successful."

**Guidance on the Provision of  
Local Generalist Voluntary Advice**

The Committee considered the undernoted report and adopted the Council's general comments which related to the Department for Social Development's consultation on "Guidance on the Provision of Local Generalist Voluntary Advice". A copy of the general comments was made available on the Council's Mod.gov website.

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 **As the Committee will remember a paper regarding the DSD Consultation on Guidance on the Provision of local Generalist Voluntary Advice was tabled on the 15th February requesting an information session for Members. Due to diary pressures Democratic Services have not been able to arrange this session, instead the relevant papers have been sent to Members for information.**

- 1.2 The deadline for a response to DSD was Monday 7th March 2011. We asked for an extension to the deadline but unfortunately DSD would only agree an extension to the 10th March. As a result we have notified DSD that we will submit a formal response after the deadline. To support committee consideration, officers have prepared a draft for discussion.
- 1.3 DSD Guidance on the Provision of Local Generalist Voluntary Advice
- 1.4 The draft guidance from DSD was produced in response to many Councils requesting such a document. The guidance will act as a tool to support Councils in making informed decisions about resourcing local generalist voluntary advice provision. The guidance does not seek to replace any requirements in relation to voluntary advice the Council already has in place nor is it intended to replace any legal advice that Councils feel they should seek in respect of any aspect of their relationship with local voluntary advice organisations.
- 1.5 There is little specific detail in the draft guidance. The approach taken is to provide a basic framework that lists key considerations and then points to good practice where it exists.
- 1.6 SUMMARY of the draft guidance
- The guidance has 4 main sections.
- 1.7 **Section 1: Method for allocating funding**  
The business case for funding should be explained within the Council's Community Support Plan. It is recommended that advice services are:
- accessible to all, and targeted at those most in need;
  - can be sustained in the long term;
  - can demonstrate value for money; and
  - can demonstrate appropriate quality of provision.
- 1.8 This should be achieved through a network of Area Advice Centres backed up by appropriate outreach provision, to be determined by Councils, along with the use of technology to ensure access to the greatest number of disadvantaged communities.

- 1.9 Section 2: Overarching principles**
- **Independence** - Be independent of political parties, statutory organisations and free from other conflicts of interest.
  - **Impartiality** - Provide an impartial service open to everyone regardless of race, religion, politics, age, sex, sexual orientation or disability.
  - **Accessibility** - Provide a free and accessible service to all members of the community which it serves.
  - **Confidentiality** - Provide a confidential service to all its clients and meet all data protection legislative requirements.
  - **Effectiveness** - Provide an effective service to all of its clients and the community which it serves. The advice centre should be able to show its effectiveness through demonstrable and measurable outcomes.
  - **Accountability** - Provide a service which is accountable to users and others who work with the advice centre.
- 1.10 Section 3: Quality of advice**  
The framework suggests measuring quality in 5 areas:
- **Establishing the facts and diagnosing the problem**
  - **The advice**
  - **Action or support**
  - **Signposting and referral**
  - **Advice records**
- 1.11 Councils are advised to discuss with their local voluntary advice organisations how their documentation and recording systems evidence that the criteria are being met. Consideration can also be given to any other quality schemes they may use to meet the standards.**
- 1.12 Section 4: Organisational frameworks**  
This section covers the governance arrangements that should be in place for a well run advice organisation. This includes, finance, planning, people management, and client care. Most of the section refers to existing guidance on good practice such as that from Investors in People, Volunteering NI, Investing in Volunteers, and DSD's earlier guidance on finance and governance in the voluntary and community sector. Reference is also made to legal requirements that apply to the provision of debt and immigration advice.
- 1.13 The full proposal is available online:**  
**<http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/consultation-provision-of-local-generalist-voluntary-sector-advice.htm>**

- 1.14 The 'Opening Doors' strategy is available at:  
<http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/voluntary-and-community/vc-publication/vc-strategy-for-voluntary-advice-services.htm>
- 1.15 The consultation document has been passed to all Departments within Council as well as to the Development Department Management Team to gather feedback. On Friday 28th January Community Services attended a briefing from DSD to better understand the proposals and their implications for Belfast. Attached is the summary from that meeting.
- 2 **Key Issues**
- 2.1 Belfast City Council's current practice on local generalist advice, which was endorsed by Council on 9 December 2009 following the Deloitte report, is in line with the draft guidance document. BCC has an established pattern and system for our advice services investment in the City. Deloitte's report concluded that our consortia model represents best practice in advice delivery.
- 2.2 Point 2.6 of the draft guidance document proposes that advice provision is 'provided through a network of Area Advice Centres' – this is the structure which is currently in place in Belfast City Council.
- 2.3 The document recommends that funded advice groups should work to quality advice standards. The advice hubs currently funded by the Council are members of CAB or Advice NI and work to these organisation's quality standards. This is in line with the draft guidance recommendations.
- 2.4 Committee have agreed to extend the current funding arrangements to the Area Advice Consortia for 2011/12 pending consortia compliance with agreed procedure. This which will include the submission of effective work programmes and ratification of 2010/11 monitoring returns. They have further agreed to review the current BCC Advice Grant Programme in advance of any 2012 funding arrangements. This DSD guidance can inform the design of the new advice programme.
- 2.5 At the briefing sessions with DSD, some members of the advice sector raised concerns regarding potential hidden costs particularly regarding IT. They also strongly suggested that the funding be moved to a 3 year time scale to fit with the Community Support Plan cycle.

- 2.6 In general however the advice sector and other councils were in support of the guidance proposals.
- 2.7 As noted above, the deadline for a response to DSD was Monday 7th March 2011. We asked for an extension to the deadline but unfortunately DSD would only agree an extension to the 10th March. As a result we have notified DSD that we will submit a formal response after the deadline. To support committee consideration, officers have prepared a draft for discussion.

3 **Resource Implications**

- 3.1 There are no additional resource implications for Belfast City Council.

4 **Equality and Good Relation Considerations**

It is unlikely that the guidance would have an adverse impact on equality or good relations issues.”

**Belfast City Council Framework to  
Tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 **Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the original proposal for a Poverty & Inequalities strategy was taken to the Development Committee on 11th November 2009. At that time, the Committee was reminded that in 2008 the Development Department had commissioned Dr. Mike Morrissey to undertake a study to assess the level of poverty in Belfast and to recommend anti-poverty initiatives which the council could undertake in the short and medium term. A number of workshops were held with Members and officers in 2009 to consider Dr. Morrissey’s findings, which had concluded that the council should develop a framework to tackle poverty and inequalities.
- 1.2 Three main methods by which the council could implement the Framework were highlighted at the November 2009 Committee meeting:
1. improve access to, and delivery of, council services;
  2. better targeting of the council’s existing budgets; and

3. using the council's statistical and performance management systems to monitor both the levels of poverty at a neighbourhood level and the council's achievements following the implementation of the strategy.

The Development department and its Policy and Business and Development Unit (PBDU) were tasked to lead on the development of a council framework to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities, within the context of the corporate theme of 'Improving Health and Tackling Health Inequalities', as recommended by the Chief Officers.

It was agreed that the process to develop the framework would involve working closely with Members, consulting key stakeholders and public consultation. Between November 2009 and October 2010, PBDU worked on this project and developed the first draft of a Framework for consideration by Committee.

- 1.3 The draft Council Framework to Tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities was taken to Committee in November 2010. At Committee, following a recent Good Relations seminar under the 'One City' project, where Dr Mike Morrissey had presented on the relationship between economic development, good relations and tackling inequalities, Committee requested that Dr Morrissey be asked to give this presentation to Members and address how the issues he raised might be addressed by the new Framework.

Dr Morrissey gave a presentation to the Committee in February 2011. Further details are given below. Issues raised by him have been addressed in the final draft of the Framework which is now being presented to Committee.

Members also requested party briefings on the Framework. At the time of writing two briefings have been confirmed and Democratic Services are currently confirming the others so that they can be held before March Committee. Any additional issues raised in the party briefings will be raised verbally at the Committee.

## 2 Key Issues

### 2.1 Presentation from Dr Morrissey, February 2011

Dr Morrissey's presentation focused on the strong economic arguments for ensuring that cities exercise leadership in addressing poverty and inequalities. He noted a Centre for Cities report in 2011 which stated:

**‘The varied geography of both recession and recovery makes it even more important that local authorities are empowered to devise strategies that respond to their distinctive local economic circumstances. Empowering cities, in particular to build on local assets, will be vital to supporting the UK’s prosperity. Containing over 70 percent of Great Britain’s private sector jobs, cities and their hinterlands will be critical to driving private sector growth in the future.’**

Given Belfast’s key role as a regional economic driver, we need to look at what makes an urban economy successful. He noted that talented people are at the core of the urban economy and that these people are attracted to cities rather than to specific jobs. As such, cities need to be attractive, safe, green, clean and open. Therefore, we need a model of urban competitiveness that embraces comparative economic advantage; a commitment to social inclusion; engaged citizens and a sense of belonging and crucially, sharing.

He also noted that Belfast has experienced persistent poverty which will be worsened by the extensive impact of the economic crisis. The most deprived wards in Belfast under the Robson Index in 1991 were the same under the Multiple Deprivation Index in 2010.

## **2.2 Most Deprived Wards in Belfast (Common to Both)**

<b>Robson 1991</b>	<b>Noble 2010</b>
<b>Ardoyne</b>	<b>Ardoyne</b>
<b>Ballymacarett</b>	<b>Ballymacarrett</b>
<b>Beechmount</b>	<b>Beechmount</b>
<b>Blackstaff</b>	<b>Blackstaff</b>
<b>Clonard</b>	<b>Clonard</b>
<b>Crumlin</b>	<b>Crumlin</b>
<b>Duncairn</b>	<b>Duncairn</b>
<b>Falls</b>	<b>Falls</b>
<b>Glencairn</b>	<b>Glencairn</b>
<b>Glencolin</b>	<b>Glencolin</b>
<b>New Lodge</b>	<b>New Lodge</b>
<b>Shaftesbury</b>	<b>Shaftesbury</b>
<b>Shankill</b>	<b>Shankill</b>
<b>The Mount</b>	<b>The Mount</b>
<b>Upper Springfield</b>	<b>Upper Springfield</b>
<b>Whiterock</b>	<b>Whiterock</b>
<b>Woodstock</b>	<b>Woodstock</b>
<b>Woodvale</b>	<b>Woodvale</b>



Macro-level policy development and interventions are the role of national and regional governments, but there is a need for city level action. Dr Morrissey noted that the Council had a key leadership role at this city level. In the first instance, he noted that Council would be exercising considerable leadership just by confirming this Framework, the first Council to do so in Northern Ireland. He noted that the Framework outlines Belfast City Council's unique role in exercising leadership, developing services and delivering interventions that will tackle poverty and inequalities. He made specific mention of research and monitoring on economic development issues and on the social impact of the current policy environment. The latter is included within the Framework, while the former will be addressed by the Review of the Masterplan and the new Integrated Economic Strategy.

- 2.3 Members presented Dr Morrissey with a series of questions including but not limited to: the need to shrink the public sector and encourage private sector growth; the impact of poor housing on poverty and inequalities; the issue of corporation tax; the need for immediate action rather than more research; the need for leadership on the part of the Council; the need to support people into employment and to target our resources effectively; the need to address segregation; the need to reduce benefit dependency and the need for participative democracy.

In his various responses, Dr Morrissey noted the need to build the private sector and mitigate the negative social impact of the economic crisis; the need to reduce economic inactivity rates; the need to encourage more movement and connection between public and private sectors; the need to see Belfast as a whole city and importantly to focus on the economic arguments for supporting inclusion as a path to creating a more competitive urban economy.

2.4 Developing the draft Framework

The draft Framework has taken considerable time to develop. As can be seen in the action plan, every council department is contributing to it. There was also pre-consultation research carried out with some key stakeholders. The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, Barnardos, the Women's Support Network and the Council for Homeless were commissioned to provide preliminary research findings on the needs of people in poverty and on ways the council could improve its service delivery.

This qualitative research took the form of focus groups and was completed at the end of June 2010. The main objectives of this research were to address three main areas: a brief overview of what council services people in poverty (young people, older people, lone parents, homeless, etc) currently use; what problems or difficulties they face; and what they believe should be changed or improved. These research findings have been very useful in framing this draft plan making it more grounded.

In addition, the changing economic and financial climate has meant that Chief Officers and other key staff wished to ensure that any draft Framework was realistic about current and future council resources. As a result, any proposed action which could not confirm resources either in existing budgets or planned budgets for 11/12 and 12/13 was removed. Chief Officers met twice to consider and confirm this and to ensure the draft Framework presented to Committee was realistic.

At the time of writing two party briefings have been confirmed and Members Services are currently confirming the others so that they can be held before March Committee. Any additional issues raised in the party briefings will be raised verbally at the Committee.

## **2.5 Purpose of the draft Framework**

The purpose of the Framework is:

- To raise awareness of poverty and inequalities in Belfast;
- To improve access to, and delivery of, councils services;
- To better target existing council resources to contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast; and
- To use the council's statistical and performance management systems to monitor the levels of poverty across the city and in neighbourhoods and to monitor the council's achievements following implementation of the Framework.

The Framework defines clear and concrete actions the council is already taking or is planning to take over the next five years.

The Framework clearly notes that the council can't solve poverty or end inequalities. Rather, the council can:

- be more inclusive in our service delivery;
- ensure that the resources we have are used in the best way and with highest social impact;
- provide support to citizens at a time when it is most needed;
- collect poverty and inequality indicators and information to raise awareness, monitor and challenge; and
- build partnerships for more integrated service delivery.

In terms of managing public expectations, it is important to note that the Framework does not aim to end poverty and inequalities in Belfast, which would be beyond its scope and beyond the remit of the Council. The purpose described above very clearly notes that this is a Framework for how the Council can raise awareness of these issues and contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities.

As such, the draft Framework is realistic and resourced. The emphasis is on describing and highlighting the work already being carried out across the council (which is already resourced) and to identify a relatively small number of new initiatives that have the potential to contribute to tackling poverty and reducing inequalities by improving the ways in which current services are delivered.

The Council will closely monitor the performance of the Framework in order to ensure that it does make a difference on the ground. There will be a review of the Framework every two years which will identify its successes and areas for improvements. The draft Framework will be equality screened before going out for public consultation.

## 2.6 Next steps for the draft plan

- equality screening of the Framework, March 2011
- Draft Framework to be ratified by council on 1 April 2011
- Public consultation, April 2011 – June 2011
- Changes to draft Framework resulting from public consultation, July 2011

- Final Framework to Committee in August 2011, and
- Final Framework ratified and launched in September 2011

#### **2.7 Monitoring and reporting**

The Development department will monitor the day-to-day progress of the Framework and a formal report on progress will be brought to the Development Committee once a year.

#### **4 Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The budget for this work was agreed by Committee in November 2009 – a total of £32,000. So far, £12,000 has been spent on pre-consultation research and developing the strategy. This leaves £20,000 for public consultation events, consultation materials, production of the final document and a launch event. It should be noted that it is not intended to produce a high spec designed document, rather a simple publishable Framework, designed internally. The aim is for a fully engaged consultation process.

#### **5 Good Relations and equality Considerations**

- 5.1 The Framework to Tackle Poverty & Reduce Inequalities aims to address inequalities in the city and as such will enable further the council's work on equality and good relations. The action plan within the Framework outlines specific actions that include work with marginalised communities including those in the Section 75 categories and actions which aim to mainstream approaches to reducing inequalities across the council's work.

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Introduction**

One of Belfast City Council's corporate objectives is to contribute to reducing inequalities in Belfast. This Framework describes the role our services can play in raising awareness of poverty and inequalities in Belfast and in contributing to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast. It is not in the Council's power to end poverty in Belfast, but we can make our services more accessible and effective. The Council will play a key leadership role by promoting a model of urban competitiveness that balances economic development and social inclusion.

### **Purpose of the Framework**

The purpose of the Framework is:

- To raise awareness of poverty and inequalities in Belfast;
- To improve access to, and delivery of, councils services;
- To better target existing council resources to contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities in Belfast; and
- To use the council's statistical and performance management systems to monitor the levels of poverty across the city and in neighbourhoods and the council's achievements following implementation of the Framework.

The Framework defines clear and concrete actions the council is already taking and will take over the next 5 years.

### **Poverty in Belfast**

Poverty remains one of the most persistent and significant issues facing Northern Ireland with the population in Belfast being particularly affected. The city has eight of the 10 most deprived wards<sup>1</sup> in the region and nearly half (48%) of the population in the Belfast local government district live in the most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland. The most recent deprivation measures from 2010 show that 57% of the most deprived SOAs in Northern Ireland are in Belfast.

In 2008 the council commissioned some exploratory research<sup>2</sup> from Dr Mike Morrissey into the issue of poverty in Belfast to assess the scale of the issue and its complexity. Some of the findings include:

- Around 20% of people in Belfast live in poverty which is higher than the Northern Ireland average of 18% and the EU average of 16%;
- 37.6% of children live in workless households – NI average is 21%;
- 11% of lone parents are in poverty compared to 8% for NI;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> M. Morrissey, 'Research on Poverty in Belfast', 2008

- Those groups who in poverty or who are most at risk of poverty include:
  - Older people
  - Children in workless households
  - Lone parents
  - People from minority ethnic communities
  - People with disabilities.

The NI Executive defines a household in poverty<sup>3</sup> as having one that has an income that is 60% or less than that of the median household income in the year. This is equal to £115 per week for a single adult with no dependent children or £195 per week for a single adult with two dependent children under 14.

At a presentation to Council in February 2011, Dr Mike Morrissey noted that Belfast struggles with persistent poverty. The 20 most deprived wards in Belfast under the Robson Index in 1991 were the same under the Noble Multiple Deprivation Index in 2010<sup>4</sup>.

<b>Most Deprived Wards in Belfast (Common to Both)</b>	
<b><i>Robson 1991</i></b>	<b><i>Noble 2010</i></b>
<b>Ardoyne</b>	<b>Ardoyne</b>
<b>Ballymacarett</b>	<b>Ballymacarrett</b>
<b>Beechmount</b>	<b>Beechmount</b>
<b>Blackstaff</b>	<b>Blackstaff</b>
<b>Clonard</b>	<b>Clonard</b>
<b>Crumlin</b>	<b>Crumlin</b>
<b>Duncairn</b>	<b>Duncairn</b>
<b>Falls</b>	<b>Falls</b>
<b>Glencairn</b>	<b>Glencairn</b>
<b>Glencolin</b>	<b>Glencolin</b>
<b>New Lodge</b>	<b>New Lodge</b>
<b>Shaftesbury</b>	<b>Shaftesbury</b>
<b>Shankill</b>	<b>Shankill</b>
<b>The Mount</b>	<b>The Mount</b>
<b>Upper Springfield</b>	<b>Upper Springfield</b>
<b>Whiterock</b>	<b>Whiterock</b>
<b>Woodstock</b>	<b>Woodstock</b>
<b>Woodvale</b>	<b>Woodvale</b>

<sup>3</sup> [www.niassembly.gov.uk](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Presentation from Dr Mike Morrissey to Belfast City Council on the 3rd February 2011.

The EU defines relative poverty as:

*‘People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live.*

*They may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted.<sup>5</sup>*

The council has limited powers in terms of increasing income. However, we can have some impact on the disadvantages listed above that create poverty and inequalities. The Framework therefore adopts the EU definition of relative poverty and focuses on these wider determinants.

#### **What can a local authority do?**

Northern Ireland district councils do not have a direct statutory remit to tackle poverty and we recognise that we can't provide an additional income to households at risk of poverty. However, we can contribute to tackling poverty and inequalities by raising awareness, making services more accessible and better target our resources. Given the large number of services that we deliver at a local level, there are opportunities for the council to have a direct and positive impact.

For example, we offer a range of programmes at our leisure centres and in our community facilities. Decisions around the design of such programmes, their pricing, opening times and promotion will all affect how easy it is for those in poverty to get access to them. We can be more inclusive in our service delivery, focus on where the needs are and ensure that the resources we have are used in the best way and with high social impact to serve all citizens in Belfast.

The council also delivers economic development programmes and works with small and micro businesses to help them grow and build their capacity in obtaining contracts from the public sector. The work of our procurement and economic development work clearly demonstrates that small actions can make a big difference

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<sup>5</sup> From The European Anti-Poverty Network's website ([www.eapn.org/](http://www.eapn.org/)) and adapted from, Joint Report on Social Inclusion, European Commission, 2004

in providing opportunities for micro businesses or social economy enterprises. A full list of council's activities and services that have an impact on people in poverty is in Appendix 1.

These interventions reflect the Council's key leadership role at a city level. Macro-level policy development and interventions are the role of national and regional governments, but there is a need for city level action. This Framework and action plan outlines Belfast City Council's unique role in exercising leadership, developing services and delivering interventions that will tackle poverty and inequalities.

#### Why create a Framework now?

Belfast City Council has decided to develop this Framework in order to:

- 1) Improve Belfast's urban competitiveness and encourage sustainable economic growth by addressing persistent social inequalities. Belfast can only become the leading world city if economic growth is supported by a decrease in social inequalities.
- 2) Align the council to the emerging regional and national policies in the area of poverty and social inclusion, including but not limited to OFMDFM's Lifetime Opportunities and its current work on developing a regional Child Poverty Strategy.
- 3) Ensure that through joint working we achieve economies of scale and integrate people and place based approaches 'doing more for less'.
- 4) Reduce the cost to the economy (and to the council): Recent research<sup>6</sup> estimated that child poverty costs £25 billion each year in costs to the Exchequer and reduced GDP. This research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that child poverty represents 71% of social services spend across the UK.
- 5) Raise the council's profile as a key city wide local service provider supporting citizens across the city.
- 6) Fulfil our existing obligation under the Corporate Plan: A Framework for tackling poverty and reducing inequalities will make a substantial contribution to fulfilling our strategic objective to reduce inequalities under the 'Better Support for People and Communities'.

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation: 'What can we do to tackle child poverty?', 2009



- 7) Support communities to deal with the legacies of the conflict - The most deprived areas within Belfast are those areas that suffered most during the recent conflict and are also the areas where there are disproportionate levels of poor health, educational opportunities, job opportunities and social opportunities. These legacies need to be tackled in a coordinated manner in order to reduce overall poverty and inequality.
- 8) Build on the 2010 European Year of Social Exclusion: This is the European year against poverty and exclusion. The key objectives were to raise public awareness about these issues and renew the political commitment of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion.

**How does the Framework support the Council's corporate objectives?**

The Corporate Plan sets out six strategic themes for the organisation (NOTE: Once new corporate plan is developed, these themes and goals will need to be revisited). These are based on our analysis of need in the city, the views of the public and future challenges and opportunities.

Below we describe how the Framework supports each themes:

**1. City leadership - strong, fair, together**

This is about 'place-shaping' and being ambitious for Belfast and its people through advocacy, partnership working and leading by practical example.

Related poverty aims:

- Improve poverty and inequalities knowledge base and awareness;
- Influence regional and national poverty and inequalities policy; and
- Enhance the council's role in reducing poverty and tackling inequalities in Belfast.

**2. Better opportunities for success across the city**

This is about wealth creation – supporting business, developing key growth sectors and securing investment within the city by supporting opportunity, skills, innovation and regeneration.

**Related poverty aims:**

- Increase the use of the council's assets to support employment and job creation; and
- Increase the growth of social economy projects.
- Reduce worklessness and improve skills

**3. Better care for Belfast's environment**

The council supports a clean, green city now and for the future by securing the long term viability of the city and its environment by creating a cleaner, greener and healthier environment and through education and protection.

**Related poverty aims:**

- Contribute to waste reduction; and
- Reduce fuel poverty.

**4. Better support for people and communities**

This is about finding ways to better connect with local people; building capacity to influence and address local issues, tackling inequalities and improving relationships; making the best use of local services to address the issues facing the city and its neighbourhoods and enhancing the city by making it safer, healthier, more inclusive, welcoming and enjoyable.

**Related poverty aims:**

- Improve the quality of life of people in or at risk of poverty;
- Effectively engage people in or at risk of poverty, particularly in areas in and around interfaces where the legacies of conflict are most stark; and
- Provide advice services for people at risk of poverty.

**5. Better services**

Making the best use of our resources to provide a range of services which best meet local need and improve quality of life; providing services to a high standard that are easy to access and that maximise their value for money and effectiveness.

**Related poverty aims:**

- **Improve our service delivery to provide a better access for people in poverty.**

**6. Better value for money**

**Ensuring resources are fully aligned to our priorities; that our services deliver value for money; that we attract people who will work to deliver the best services and develop the organisation and lead the organisation through the RPA.**

**Related poverty aims:**

- **Maximise social impact of our procurement, project and regeneration spend.**

**To achieve the goals we have developed a detailed Framework that brings together many existing contributory strands of council work with a number of new initiatives which have been proposed by the relevant council services.”**

After discussion, during which it was agreed that the amount specified for the undertaking of public consultation exercises on the Framework be reduced from £20,000 to £10,000, the Committee endorsed the contents of the document.

**Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre - Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th January, it had agreed to extend, for a period of six months, the interim management arrangements at Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre, subject to a number of conditions which Connswater Community and Leisure Services Limited would have to adhere to in respect of the future management of the centre. Accordingly, a report updating the Members on the progress to date in this regard was tabled for consideration.

The Director of Development reported that, in accordance with the Committee's wishes, work was ongoing, in conjunction with the Connswater Community and Leisure Services Limited, in the production of programme of activities at the Centre. He pointed out that all financial transactions were being scrutinised by Council officials and that funds were released only when they were satisfied that the expenditure had been incurred properly in accordance with the Council's regulations. In respect of a number of issues of probity, the Director reported that the Council's Audit, Governance and Risk Services was compiling a report for the attention of the Council's Legal Services Manager who, in turn, would liaise with the appropriate authorities in respect of the further investigation of these issues.

After discussion, during which a number of Members expressed their gratitude to the Council officials for their work in this regard, the Committee agreed to note the information provided.

### **Travellers' Liaison Management Unit - Update**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of an update report on the work of the Travellers Liaison Management Unit.

### **B-Team**

The Committee was reminded that the Council was a lead partner in the European Regional Development Funded INTERREG IVC, known as the B-Team project. It was reported that this project brought together a number of specialists in Brownfield regeneration from throughout Europe to discuss and explore issues of mutual concern at European Dissemination Events. It was reported that the next scheduled meeting of the project would take place in Debrecen, Hungary, on 19th and 20th April. The Director reported that this meeting would present an opportunity for the Council to contribute, through both officer and political participation, in an event which would address regeneration challenges that would be of benefit to the work of the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to be represented at the aforementioned event by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) and approved the associated travel; accommodation and subsistence costs which it was noted were in the region of approximately £350 per delegate and would be covered by the Project.

### **Cathedral Quarter Steering Group**

The Director of Development reported that, as part of the development of a five-year plan in respect of the Cathedral Quarter, the Cathedral Quarter Steering Group had requested to meet each of the Parties for further discussion.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

### **Committee Site Visits**

The Director of Development reminded the Members that, due to time constraints, the Committee had been unable to undertake a number of site visits over the preceding months viz., to the George Best City Airport; Belfast International Airports; the Stena Line Terminal; and the former Harland and Wolff Paint Hall within the Titanic Quarter. He pointed out that, given that the Local Government Elections were scheduled to take place on 5th May, the Committee would be precluded from undertaking these site visits prior to the ending of the Council term.

A Member referred to the rise in the air passenger duty which had been introduced on 1st March, and suggested, given that this could impact adversely on the numbers of tourists choosing Belfast as a destination, that it might be prudent for the Committee to seek to undertake a site visit to one or both the airports prior to the elections.

After discussion, the Committee agree to undertake a site visit to one or both of the airports during the month of April and agreed further that a report be submitted to the reconstituted Committee in June recommending that it agree to undertake the outstanding site visits.

### Annual Events Programme 2010/2011

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1      Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1      Over that last fifteen years Belfast City Council has developed an annual programme of events. The programme spans the calendar year from the annual St Patrick’s Day concert and parade in the spring to the Christmas Lights concert in winter and includes major sporting events. The events in 2010 attracted over 250,000 people generating just under £6.5 million additional economic activity for Belfast. The annual budget to provide for and deliver these events is just below £1.39 million for the 2010/11 year (in 2011/12 this figure was £1.5 million). In 2010/11 the return on the Council’s investment was just under £6.00 for every £1.00. The events have also attracted on average 7% of out-of-state visitors to the city, adding to the economic benefit of, and the vibrancy and cultural activity of Belfast. The programme also acted as an attraction to local citizens and rate payers, providing large-scale free public events to Belfast, with extensive positive media coverage, while receiving a public approval rating of nearly 90% for the entire year’s programme of activities.**
- 1.2      These figures do not include St Patrick’s 2011, Christmas and MTV events from 2010 and are projected estimates based on previous event statistics**

**2      Key Issues**

**2.1      Breakdown of Events Budget**

Details of the events programme, which is primarily based around key public and celebratory holidays and incorporates major sporting events including the Belfast Marathon, is indicated in the table below. This table shows a breakdown of all Council expenditure related to each event and its associated funding streams, including provision for the Support for Sport programme and a level of contingency.

Members are asked to note that the Events budget, as part of the Development Department revenue estimates, was approved by Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and approved by Council in February 2011.

2.2

<u>Event &amp; Date(s)</u>	<u>Additional Details</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Titanic 100 Festival 31 March – 31 May	This event would involve a series of exhibitions in City Hall and its grounds, with free entry to talks, tours and theatrical performances. The event will mark key Belfast anniversaries connected to the Titanic story including: the opening of the Thompson Dry Dock; Harland & Wolff's 150th anniversary; the 101st anniversary of the laying of Titanic's keel and the centenary of the launch of the ship on the 31 May 1911. The planned programme would have input from other Titanic locations in: Cobh, Co Cork, Cherbourg, Southampton and Liverpool.	£150,000
Deep River Rock Belfast City Marathon 2 May	This would be the 30th year of Ireland's biggest mass participation event, which attracts nearly 18,000 competitors. At the time of writing this report some 1,000 marathon entries have been received, an increase year on year on the same period.	£40,000
Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival, 24 – 26 June	Over the last five years BCC has developed a free to access maritime event that celebrates Belfast's historical connections to the sea. The three day event brings together the modern and historical aspects of sailing – from high tech vessels to heritage class sailing vessels of the 19th century. Up to 20 vessels including modern tall ships and operational naval craft will be moored on the quayside close to Belfast's city centre. Land based activities will include continental market, live music, a family fun zone and a range of maritime exhibits and stalls.	£230,000
Lord Mayor's Belfast City Carnival 18 June	This event introduces the new Lord Mayor to the citizens of Belfast	£28,478

<u>Event &amp; Date(s)</u>	<u>Additional Details</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Royal Opera House Live Site Broadcast, City Hall, June/July TBC	This event would be a repeat of previous live links to the Royal Opera House in London. The event would be financed by the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure as part of their funding to the BBC Live Site Screen. The event would also be subject to approval by the SP&R Committee.	No input from BCC
European Scottish Pipe Band Championship, 30 July	Committee approved the bidding for this event in 2009 and Belfast was successful in securing this prestigious event for a three year period (2010-2012). This one day event is anticipated to attract in the region of 12,000 spectators. However, the Championships will also be complemented with a music festival, financial provision for which is included in the above costs and run in conjunction with the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association.	£135,000
British Transplant Games, 4 to 7 August	This event was approved by Council back in November 2008 and will attract in excess of 1,000 transplant athletes from across these islands.	£70,000
MTV EMA and Music Week, Date TBC	This would see the staging of Europe's biggest music award night in Belfast. It would also involve a week of music related events to showcase Belfast	£120,000
Belfast Autumn Fair, 17 & 18 September operated with BCC Parks & Leisure	This proposed event would be run in cooperation with BCC Parks & Leisure incorporating their traditional Autumn Flower Show. This event normally attracts an audience of 12,000 people.	£30,000
Halloween Monster Mash, Sunday 30 October	Annually this event has attracted an audience in excess of 25,000 and in the last few years has been staged in Belfast Harbour and outside the Odyssey complex.	£132,000

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<u>Event &amp; Date(s)</u>	<u>Additional Details</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Christmas Switch-on and programme, from Saturday 19 November	<p>Anecdotally seen as the official start of the City's festive season this programme would be launched with the annual switch-on concert, on a similar basis to the event in 2010, which was successfully orientated towards the family audience.</p> <p>This programme includes costs for a schools carol service at the Belfast Waterfront (organised with the Belfast School of Music), live music in Belfast City centre and festive lighting at City Hall, taking into account the associated issues raised by Members at the Development Committee in January 2011. Entertainment for 2011 will be family focused and there will be a more participatory elements to the Councillors' post-switch on function.</p>	£138,000
St Patrick's Day, 17 March 2012	This planned event encompasses a carnival parade and live concert to mark St Patrick's Day. Parade participants come from across the city with the event attracting out -of-city & out-of-state visitors.	£140,000
Support for Sport funding	This is an annual programme of funding that sports clubs and sports event organisers can access. The programme is issued via a single tranche via public notices and is accessible via the Council's webpage.	£97,500
Sail Training Funding	As in previous years it is proposed that this funding will be used in connection with Ocean Youth Trust to continue the work of enhancing young people's personal skills base via sailing activities. This process also allows BCC to continue its bidding process for bringing the Tall Ships back to Belfast (possible return date for this event would be 2015).	£20,000
Event Economic Impact Surveys & Event Bidding	This proposed finance comprises the economic surveys undertaken for each event and additionally provides for an additional level contingency for the annual events programme	£40,000



<u>Event &amp; Date(s)</u>	<u>Additional Details</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Cultural Olympiad & BBC Live Site Screen	Approved by Council back in April 2010, this project would see the operation of a 25 sq m LED screen in the grounds of City Hall. It is anticipated that this screen will be on line by the end of April/start of May 2011. BCC finance allocated is for maintenance, insurance and security costs. The Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure will allocate £30,000 for the programming of this space as part their commitment to the BBC Live Site Screen.	£20,000
		£1.39 million

### 2.3 Committee Approval Process

Members are requested to note that historically Council approval process for the programme of events is obtained in the Autumn. However, due to a delay in the Council confirming departmental budgetary levels, this report has been held until after last month's Council meeting regarding budgets.

### 3. Resource Implications

#### 3.1 Financial

The table above indicates the annual civic and sports events programme with individual associated events budgets. The total overall budget for this programme is £1.39 million. This is the annual budget for events run by the Council and part of the overall Departmental revenue estimates.

#### 3.2 Human Resources

There are currently no additional staff requirements.

### 4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

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

**5 Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- **Members approve the annual civic and sports events programme as outlined in the report and it's associated funding.**

**6 Decision Tracking**

**Further to approval, officers will monitor funding and evaluate the outcomes of all events and provide post-project details as part of the Department's annual review. These outcomes will be presented to Members as part of the City Events Unit key performance indicators.**

**Timeline: March 2012      Reporting Officer: Gerry Copeland"**

During discussion, a Member, whilst indicating support for the programme of events, pointed out that the Council did not include the annual "Orangefest" within its programme and he suggested, given the event's size, scale and tourist potential, that this was perhaps an oversight on behalf of the Council which perhaps needed to be reviewed.

After discussion, the Committee approved the annual civic and sports event programme as outlined in the report, together with the associated funding as set out.

**Community Chest: Easter Programme**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Prince William and Kate Middleton are to marry at Westminster Abbey on 29 April 2011, which has been declared a bank holiday in celebration. A limited number of community organisations and Community Centre Committees have requested information in relation to opportunities for support for community activities to celebrate the Royal Wedding.**
- 1.2 In line with previous practice, we have agreed the use of BCC Community Centres as location for activities outside our normal opening hours with BCC absorbing related facility and staff costs.**
- 1.3 The bulk of enquiries have come from local community organisations and have centred on access to small grant support. Some requests for financial support have also been received from Community Centre Committees.**

- 1.4 In consultation with other services managing grant programmes there is no specific related planned activity other than a possible fund within the Peace III bonfire management programme. SEUPB are currently considering a request from the Good Relations Partnership to utilise under spend through the provision of up to £50,000 to existing groups on the Tackling Physical Manifestations Programme to develop local community events to mark the Royal Wedding and/or the impending Royal Visit. The maximum cost for each individual event would be up to £1,000.
- 1.5 Also the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit are opening a Community Festivals Fund which is subject to formal Letter of Offer from DCAL. The closing date for the first tranche of this annual fund is 23rd March 2011. The total programme budget is £158,000 and allocations are normally spread evenly across each of the 4 open calls. This is a highly competitive fund with applications in the main sponsored by well established community based arts organisations. Any application for funds in support of Royal Wedding celebration events would have to meet the programme's definition of a Festival:
- A Festival is a series of activities within a condensed time period of at least one day in length (i.e. 8–10 hours). Activities are usually different but related. A Festival is not one event scheduled over several days i.e. a series of similar events (e.g. one performance happening several times) nor is it a fundraising event, nor a commercial event.*
- A community festival is a series of events with a common theme delivered within a defined time period. It is developed from within a community and should celebrate and positively promote what that community represents.*
- 1.6 The Big Lottery has confirmed there are no specific funding streams for this event. However, they were able to reference the more general funding streams which may be used for this event.
- 1.7 Precedent exists within the service to respond to celebration events of this nature within our Community Chest small grant stream. This mechanism was used in support of local community activity related to the Golden Jubilee in 2002.

1.8 The Community Chest is a grant aid fund that is established periodically in response to particular initiatives. This grant stream was established to allow the service to subsidise specific community activity such as, for example, responding to European themed years or local /international events or seasonal celebrations particularly at Christmas. The nature of the activities that will be funded will be decided, at any specific time, by the priorities of council however the emphasis is on community activities which promote a sense of community spirit and involvement. Access to Community Chest funding has been confined to groups in receipt of service grant aid support. The grant aid policy indicates that limits will be set on the total amount of funding available and on the amount of funding available to individual groups. All applicants are required to submit an Community Chest application form and are subject to assessment against agreed criteria.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Officers have identified a number of potential responses for consideration.

2.2 Option 1: Limit our resource support to the use of BCC Community Centres and indicate there is no available related BCC grant support. Officers would sign post organisations to the Big Lottery and other funding streams as appropriate.

2.3 Option 2: Do above but also set aside a limited budget within the 2011/12 service small grant allocation for community activity during the Easter week. This would include proposed events to celebrate the Royal Wedding but would not be limited. Officers propose the Easter seasonal fund should be managed in line with the agreed Community Chest process whereby there is no open call for applications, rather, correspondence is issued to all current grant recipients advising them of the opportunity to access small grant support up to a maximum of £200.

Correspondence would include the short community chest application form with details of eligible activity and indicate priority will be given to programmes where the emphasis is on community activities which promote a sense of community spirit and involvement. It would also include details of any related monitoring requirements which would be designed commensurate to the level of grant support.

2.4 Option 3: Alongside option 1, set aside a limited budget within the 2011/12 service small grant allocation and invite applications from local community groups via public advertisement.

Indicate the maximum likely grant size (£200) and outline eligible activity and criteria for consideration as Option 2 above. Successful applicants would also be subject to commensurate monitoring requirements.

**2.5 Given the following factors:**

- Limited level of interest which however does include community centre committees, community organisations and elected members
- Limited timeframe in which to manage any competitive call
- Limited total grant budget
- Officers can sign post groups not currently in receipt of service grant support to the Big Lottery fund or if agreed the Peace III Tackling Physical Manifestations Programme

Officers recommend Option 2. All applications would be assessed under current criteria and allocations made within delegated authority permissions. Officers suggest that committee may wish to extend eligibility to requests from Community Centre Committees.

**2.6 If approved, officers across all funding streams will share applicant information during the assessment process.**

**3 Resource Implications**

**3.1 From agreed grant budget stream 2011/12. In order to ensure sufficient resources for other grant categories, officers would suggest an upper allocation limit of £20,000 based on a maximum individual grant of £200.**

**3.2 DSD have not yet advised councils of levels of funding under their Community Support Programme. The draft BCC Community Service Grant Aid Programme 2011/12 has been developed to reflect the 2010/11 level of support and the BCC grant match has been included in the revenue estimates for the Service.**

**3.3 Staff resources would be allocated from within existing teams, however, depending on the level of interest, Option 3 would be resource intensive particularly given the obvious time constraints.**

**4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

**4.1 Any available resources would be open to all organisations defined by the preferred option.**

**5 Recommendations**

**5.1 Committee are asked to:**

- (i) Support the use of the Community Chest grant stream to subsidize specific community activity during the Easter period. The grant would be made available to community and voluntary groups, including community centre committees, wishing to organise small-scale events which would be assessed against existing criteria. Applications can include, but would not be limited to, activity to celebrate the Royal Wedding.**
- (ii) Agree £20,000 as the total amount of funding available and limit the amount of funding available to individual groups to £200**
- (iii) Note that application approvals and related payments will be authorised by the Director of Development in accordance with the authority delegated to him.**

**6 Decision Tracking**

**Cate Taggart will action decision April 2011**

**7 Key to Abbreviations**

**NRP Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership”**

During discussion, a Member suggested that, to make the proposed programme more appealing on a cross-community basis, that the reference to the Royal Wedding be deleted from the associated report.

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor Mac Giolla Mhín,

That the Committee agrees to remove the reference within the report to the forthcoming Royal Wedding and that the Community Chest be open to all Groups which promoted a sense of community.

On a vote by show of hands four Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was accordingly declared lost.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations as set out within the report and agreed also that a fact sheet be prepared for groups, which would be ineligible for funding, which signposted them to other places/bodies from which support for such events could be obtained.

### **Employability Support - Proposals Received**

(Mr. J. Walsh, Legal Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd February, it had noted that requests for financial support had been received from both the Employers' Forum and the Employment Services Board. At that meeting, the Committee had agreed that it would invite both organisations to its March meeting in order to provide presentations on the work which they carried out in West Belfast and the Greater Shankill area. Accordingly, at its meeting on 16th March, subsequent to the presentations, the Committee agreed, to progress the matter further, that it would require a legal opinion on whether, and by what means, it could provide funding to both organisations. The Committee therefore considered a legal opinion, which had been prepared by the Legal Services Manager. The Legal Opinion indicated that the Committee would have discretionary powers to provide funding under the special expenditure powers as set out under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. A summary and options for the Committee in this regard is set out hereunder:

#### **Summary**

1. The Council has the power to incur expenditure subject to being satisfied that a direct benefit will accrue and that the benefit will be commensurate with the payment made;
2. The Council must objectively assess that there will be a direct benefit in terms of the objectives of the organisations as opposed to contributing to the running costs;
3. Incurring expenditure to the extent that other projects or other agreed corporate objectives were compromised or prejudiced could leave the Council vulnerable to legal challenge; and
4. Whilst there is an existing policy on Section 115 payments, the scale of the payment sought here needs careful consideration in the context of the current climate of economic retrenchment and potential equality impact.

#### **Options**

1. The Council could approve the expenditure subject to being satisfied that existing commitments and objectives are not compromised and that a direct benefit commensurate with the payment made will accrue;
2. The Council could approve a sum less than that sought subject to being satisfied that the tests already identified are or will be satisfied;
3. The Council could explore with other statutory agencies alternative ways of meeting the financial deficit of the organisations concerned with a report to be brought back by the Director of Development at a later stage; and

4. If the Council were so minded, it could look at the issue of job creation in a city wide context and consider issues of funding in that broader policy context after dialogue with other agencies and voluntary organisations.

During a prolonged discussion, a Member made the point that, should the Committee agree to fund both organisations on the basis that they had made unsolicited requests for assistance, without resorting to open competition through public advertisement, it could leave the Council open to a legal challenge from organisations which provided similar services in the City. The Legal Services Manager reminded the Committee that it was being asked to exercise its discretion to incur expenditure under Section 115 in this instance only. He advised the Members that the broader issue of the Council's future policy in regard to job creation and sustainability could be addressed in due course. He reminded the Committee and it must be certain that such expenditure would be in the interest of, and bring direct benefit to, the District and its inhabitants. He pointed out that no provision had been made for a Section 115 budget and if the Committee was so minded to fund either or both of the projects, then it would be necessary to reallocate financial resources from within the Department's budgets, which would impact on other projects which had been agreed within the financial estimates.

A Member suggested that if the Committee was minded to agree to fund organisations which operated principally only within the west of the City, whilst not addressing the needs of Belfast as a whole, the Council might set a precedent and encourage other organisations to submit similar requests for assistance. He added, given that no agreed Council policy existed, such a step could leave the Council in a somewhat difficult position. He suggested that the Council's lack of a City-wide policy needed to be addressed forthwith and that a decision to grant funding on the terms outlined within the legal opinion should be deferred until June, when a report addressing the wider issues of job creation and sustainability across the whole City could be submitted for the Committee's consideration. He stated that in the absence of a policy, it might be remiss of the Committee to consider these requests in isolation.

The Legal Services Manager indicated that the funding sought in this instance was considerable and amounted to almost one-third of that which could be expended by the Council under Section 115 in any financial year. He added that, whilst there was discretion to incur the expenditure sought, if the Committee was so minded, it may be preferable to address the issue of job creation on a City-wide context with the Director of Development bringing a report back to the Committee in due course.

Further Members made the point that a number of questions which had been raised with the representatives of the Employment Services Board at the meeting of the Committee on 16th March had not been addressed during the interim period. The point was made also that, given that funding to the Employment Services Board was due to cease on 31st March, it might be prudent for the Committee to seek to address initially the funding requirements of that organisation on a short-term basis to enable it to continue operating.

The Director emphasised that the Committee must assure itself that, should it wish to grant funding to either organisation, that it was doing so under the special expenditure powers as set out in Section 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.



He made the point that, should the Committee accede to the requests, that there was an onus that any benefit accruing to the Council must be commensurate with the expenditure incurred. Therefore, he added, the organisations would be required to demonstrate that they had utilised the resources in a manner which was beneficial to the City overall. He addressed a number of the Members' concerns and pointed out that the Committee might wish to consider initially the request of the Employment Services Board, whose funding was due to cease on 31st March. He indicated that the request for assistance from that organisation had been in the sum of £60,000 over a twelve month period. He indicated that, in the interim three-month period, prior to the submission of a full report on the Council's future options in job creation and sustainability, the sum of £15,000 would be required by the Employment Service Board, and that it was a matter for the Committee to consider its options in this regard.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Mullaghan,  
Seconded by Councillor Mallon,

That the Committee, as an interim gesture, agrees to grant funding to the Employment Services Board, up to a maximum of £15,000, over a period of three months commencing 1st April, under the special expenditure powers as set out in Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the District and the inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefit so accruing would be commensurate with the payment to be made.

The Committee agreed that the proposal be determined by means of a recorded vote.

A poll having been taken on the proposal, there voted for it eight Members, viz., the Chairman (Councillor Maskey), the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and Councillors Garrett, Groves, Mallon, Mullaghan, Mac Giolla Mhín and McKee; and against it two Members, viz., Councillors P. Robinson and Stoker.

The proposal was accordingly declared carried.

It was noted that a report, which would outline the wider issue of the Council's future involvement in job creation and sustainability, would be submitted to the Committee in June.

Chairman