

# Development Committee

Wednesday, 13th April, 2011

## MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Maskey (Chairman);  
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey); and  
Councillors Crozier, Garrett, Groves, B. Kelly,  
Kirkpatrick, Kyle, Lavery, Mac Giolla Mhín, McKee,  
Mallon, Mullaghan, J. Rodgers, Rodway 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;  
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Services Manager;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors M. Campbell and Ekin.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 16th, 24th and 28th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th April, subject to:

- (i) the omission of the minute of 28th March under the heading "Belfast City Council Framework to Tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities" which, at the request of Councillor McKee, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration;
- (ii) the amendment of the minute of 28th March under the heading "Employability Support – Proposals Received" to provide that Councillor Jones be removed from the list of those Members who had voted to accept the proposal and replaced by Councillor Groves; and
- (iii) the amendment of the minute of 28th March to include approval for the submission of the response to the consultation regarding the provision of local generalist advice.

### **Routine Correspondence**

#### **Department for Regional Development's Roads Service - Car Parking Charges**

The Democratic Services Officer circulated, for the attention of the Members, correspondence which had been received from the Department for Regional Development's Roads Service regarding a proposed increase in the charges applied to both on-street and off-street car parking. In addition, the correspondence outlined the intention of the Roads Service to designate a number of additional streets as areas where car parking charges would apply.

Noted.

#### **Invest NI**

It was reported that correspondence had been received on behalf of Invest NI requesting permission to make a presentation to the Committee at a future date. The Democratic Services Officer advised the Members that the purpose of the presentation would be to update the Council on the work of Invest NI and to explore areas for future collaboration between both organisations.

The Committee agreed that a special meeting be held to receive a presentation from Invest NI on a date to be determined by the incoming Chairman.

#### **York Street/Westlink Interchange**

The Democratic Services Officer reported that the Department for Regional Development's Roads Service had requested permission to update the Committee on the modifications which had been carried out at the York Street / Westlink Interchange.

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation in this regard at a special meeting, to which all Members of the Council would be invited, to be held on a date to be agreed in conjunction with the incoming Chairman.

### **Development Committee - Agenda**

A number of Members referred to the lengthy agenda which the Committee was to consider at the meeting and, given that the number of reports presented had increased significantly over the past number of months, it was suggested that the Members might wish to consider holding a second scheduled meeting each month when the Committee was reconstituted after the Local Government Elections.

In response, the Director undertook to consider the matter and submit a report in this regard to the Committee at its meeting in June.

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

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 28th March in relation to the Council's Framework to Tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities.

Councillor McKee, who had requested that the matter be referred back to the Committee, indicated that the Democratic Unionist Party wished to consider further the contents of the Framework. He suggested that, in order to seek an All-Party consensus on the proposals, a workshop, to which all Members of the Council be invited, might be held prior to the Framework being reconsidered by the Committee in June.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the matter be deferred until the Committee's meeting in June to enable a workshop to be held during the interim period.

### **Departmental Plan - 2011/2012**

Due to the lengthy agenda, the Committee agreed to defer, until its meeting in June, consideration of the Development Departmental Plan for 2011/2012.

### **Renewing the Routes Initiative**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **"1 Relevant Background Information**

##### **1.1 Introduction to Renewing the Routes Programme**

The Renewing the Routes Programme is an innovative regeneration intervention that targets arterial routes and surrounding communities within Belfast. Since 2004 the Programme has facilitated the investment of approximately £6 million across the key routes. This investment has acted as a catalyst for the delivery of a range of projects which were implemented over the programme period including: over 400 commercial frontage improvements; lighting schemes; environmental improvements; public realm work; public art projects; community arts projects; landscaping; alleygating schemes; installation of tourism blades; façade cleaning and improvements to existing railings.

1.2 In July 2010, Council agreed to carry forward the proposed £300,000 budget for arterial routes improvement projects into 2011/12, to allow for the detailed analysis and prioritisation of proposed activity across all 18 designated arterial routes.

##### **1.2 Future Renewing the Routes Programme**

The Committee endorsed a methodology to prioritise the arterial routes which was developed on the basis of securing a longer-term rolling programme of local regeneration activity across the city. The survey of approximately 9,000 buildings and sites covering 62km of arterial routes is now complete for all arterial routes and the draft findings

have been presented to Members at a series of party briefings, as agreed at Committee. The feedback from Members supported the strategic consideration of these areas and is incorporated into the report.

#### **1.4 Potential broader local regeneration activity**

The Committee also approved the consideration of the potential for a framework which would allow Council to consider the scope for additional activity beyond that proposed for prioritised arterial route areas. This also formed part of the discussions with Members at the party briefings and the feedback is shown in this report.

### **2 Key Issues**

#### **2.1 Review of Activity**

During the party briefings Members expressed support for the works carried out under the programme which had already achieved transformations along parts of the key arterial routes and the potential for the continuation of this activity alongside the introduction of additional targeted local regeneration activity.

#### **2.2 Arterial Routes Core Programme**

The detailed arterial routes analysis was presented to Members at party group briefings. The sessions generated detailed area-specific comments and queries in addition to the general feedback, which is summarised below:

- the process of assessment was supported in terms of how it contributed to the local context of each arterial route;
- a number of the groups suggested that the physical improvement focus of the work should be reflected in the data by emphasising the potential for the activity to transform an area's visual appearance;
- it was also suggested that the programme should be steered by important local factors such as complementarity with other activity; local neighbourhood focus or role; and the potential viability of what Renewing the Routes can achieve in targeted areas.

- As part of the prioritisation/survey process, and following discussions with members, it was felt that the past omission of Sandy Row from consideration represented an anomaly from the designated routes based on BMAP definitions. Following a subsequent detailed survey the results suggested that the area exhibited all the characteristics of an arterial route, but was not designated under BMAP due to its proximity to the city centre. Sandy Row has now been assessed on the same basis as the other arterial routes considered as part of the prioritisation process and members have been given the option to consider the merits of including the area as part of the proposed programme as per Table 1a below
- Members also noted that the budget of £150,000 (including fees) for each area was smaller than that afforded by the recent Integrated Development Fund.
- It was also noted that Integrated Development Plans for each of the nodes would be brought back to Committee with estimated costs.

2.3 This feedback has been fed into the proposed programme shown below. This proposed programme is dependent on Committee's endorsement to enable work preparation for implementation activities to resume in the current financial year.

**TABLE 1a:**

**Option 1. Proposed Core Programme with the inclusion of Sandy Row as an arterial route.**

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Area</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
2011/12	Antrim Road 2	New Lodge Road to Oceanic Ave
	Sandy Row	Donegall Road to Grosvenor Rd
	Castlereagh Street 1	Albertbridge Rd to Beersbridge Rd
	Grosvenor Road 1	Westlink to Falls Road
2012/13	Ormeau Road 1	Donegall Pass to Stranmillis Embankment
	Newtownards Road 2	Witham Street to Beersbridge Rd
2013/14	York Road/Shore Road 4	Lowwood Park to Shore Crescent
	Falls Road/Glen Road 6	Kennedy Way to Ramoan Gardens

or

**TABLE 1b:**

**Option 2. Proposed Core Programme. Programme based exclusively on the originally designated routes.**

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Area</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
2011/12	Antrim Road 2 Ormeau Road 1	New Lodge Road to Oceanic Ave Donegall Pass to Stranmillis Embankment
	Castlereagh Street 1 Grosvenor Road 1	Albertbridge Rd to Beersbridge Rd Westlink to Falls Road
2012/13	Donegall Road 1	Bradbury Place to Donegall Road Railway Bridge
	Newtownards Road 2	Witham Street to Beersbridge Rd
2013/14	York Road/Shore Road 4 Falls Road/Glen Road 6	Lowwood Park to Shore Crescent Kennedy Way to Ramoan Gardens

2.6 Members will note that the prioritisation methodology was previously agreed by Committee. Stage 1 encompassed the detailed survey and assessment of all the identified routes (through physical, economic and social indicators) to provide a basis for the comparison of individual areas and initial prioritisation. Stage 2 comprised the further prioritisation taking into account the party briefing's strategic influences for the individual study areas.

2.7 **Streetscape Proposals**

For Members' information: an initial approach has been made to Council from the East, West and Shankill Partnership Boards seeking technical assistance in delivering a number of public realm and local regeneration projects. A bid has been submitted by the Partnership Boards for support from the Executive (via the Social Investment Fund) and following further developmental work around specific roles and responsibilities a report will be brought back to Committee for consideration.

2.8 **Future Local Regeneration Activity**

The June 2010 Committee endorsed the investigation of the potential for local regeneration activity outside the current prioritised arterial routes programme.

2.9 As part of the briefings the potential scope and type of arterial work in other commercial areas or local neighbourhoods was discussed to refine where there could be the opportunity for additional activity.

- 2.10 The current programme focuses on arterial routes in recognition of their important local role and their collective value as important drivers for the physical, economic and social sustainability of the city as a whole. Developing a local regeneration framework that could support the expansion of activity beyond the existing target areas would require a different approach to prioritisation. A focus on activity in local or neighbourhood hubs was however recognised as offering the potential for integrated working across the Council and beyond, especially in the context of the ongoing RPA and the new power of well-being for Council.
- 2.11 In terms of taking this agenda forward, it is important that it proceeds in the context of the development of the Council's overall place-shaping agenda and the development of a city resourcing plan. These issues were discussed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 4 March. The Committee discussed the need to 'work in partnership and form strategic alliances to ensure continued investment in the City during this period of austerity and to secure necessary resources to make things happen, with a greater focus on delivery.' The Committee recognised that this conversation needs to include a focus on projects that are significant both at a city and a neighbourhood level. The Committee agreed a number of workstreams, including looking at the issue of neighbourhood investment. Issues raised by the Renewing the Routes project including the further development of the framework to identify its broader applications will be fed into this workstream and a report will be brought back to the Committee for further consideration.
- 2.12 The broader approach could be developed with a local regeneration focus through the alignment of activity to address the local issues and priorities with the objective of providing a visible and responsive service. This targeted approach could support integrated local delivery through a joined-up approach linking resources or intervention more effectively. The approach to prioritisation and identification would, however, need to focus potential activities from across the organisation to support community and economic development linking to other programmes such as safety, tourism, arts, economic development and initiatives for Council owned property or assets.

**2.13 Draft Framework**

To guide the continued work, a draft framework has been developed to provide a mechanism to explore the links between the scope for the local regeneration activity based on existing hubs and the interaction with the work of the Council and other organisations. The framework has two distinct strands.

**2.14 (1) 'Local Neighbourhoods' Activity**

The first strand seeks to define areas in the city where there may be the potential to carry out physical regeneration. Local focus areas outside of the defined arterial routes are now being identified to explore the potential for similar regeneration activity to support broader targeted interventions.

**2.15** Although not on the key arterial routes, these areas can be categorised by the existence of commercial or service cores which support a wider community or neighbourhood. These areas will be surveyed to support any prioritisation on a similar basis to that used for the arterial routes.

**2.16** Although these areas are not formally designated under any land use or operational policies, they are generally located outside or on the fringes of the main business areas of the city where they may act as natural hubs. These areas could comprise of 'Neighbourhood Areas' containing elements of community interaction with active functions such as the commercial areas on Donegal Pass or Shaws Road and 'Local Areas' that are smaller with less commercial presence but perform an important role as a community focus such as Short Strand and Ballysillan.

**2.17 (2) Additional Activity**

The second strand of work is intended to identify the potential alignment with other activity of programmes to support a prioritisation based on the integration of activity. As a basis for any expansion activities the Committee may wish to consider opportunities to support current activities where additional funding or scope for collaboration exists. This work will embrace the current work being carried out in and around 'local area working'.



2.18 Any proposals for additional activity will be brought back to Committee for consideration and should maintain the characteristics of the targeted physical regeneration, with the potential for improvement and impact.

2.19 Next Steps – Local Neighbourhoods activity

Members may wish to consider the development of the prioritised new areas (local/ neighbourhoods) as a parallel programme which would run alongside the Renewing the Routes work. The continued work will seek to refine the potential resource implications based on the type of activity in the different areas to inform the future consideration by Committee. Following the initial scoping and engagement with other parts of the Council it is proposed that the findings would be brought back to Committee, following further party briefings, for consideration.

3. Resource Implications

3.1 New areas identified would require additional resource allocation.

3.2 Any additional activity over and above the core programme may have resource implications for staffing and for match funding. A decision on individual opportunities for additional activity will be sought from Committee.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Members are requested to endorse:-

1. Option 1. Proposed Core Programme with the inclusion of Sandy Row as an arterial route, (Table 1a); or

Option 2: Proposed Core Programme. Programme based exclusively on BMAP designated arterial routes, (Table 1b); and

2. Continuation of work on the framework to identify and prioritise the opportunities for broader application of local neighbourhood Renewing the Routes type of activity alongside other local regeneration work, with the findings to be brought back to committee for further consideration following additional party briefings.”

During discussion, a Member requested that consideration be given to extending the Initiative to the Shaws Road area of West Belfast, particularly to the vicinity where a number of retail outlets were located. Further Members suggested that the Initiative should seek in the first instance to address certain areas within East Belfast where it was considered that a greater need existed than those areas which had been prioritised within the schedule of work.

In response, the Director outlined the rationale for including certain projects within the various phases of the Initiative. He pointed out that there was a limited budget available and to address the additional areas to which the Members had referred would mean that less funding would be allocated to the areas which had been prioritised. However, he pointed out that, should any additional funding become available from other sources within the timescale of the Initiative, he would undertake to review the programme and consult with the Committee in this regard. However, he emphasised that it was vital that one of the recommendations outlined within the report was endorsed at the meeting to enable the work to commence as scheduled.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt Option 1, Table 1(a); for the year 2011/2012 only and that an additional report in respect of the Initiative in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 be considered by the Committee at a future date.

**Belfast Welcome Centre and the Belfast  
Visitor and Convention Bureau**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Belfast City Council’s (BCC) (10 year) lease for the existing Welcome Centre premises on Donegall Place terminated on 31 July 2010.**
- 1.2 The landlord had served a Landlord’s Notice under the Business Tenancies (NI) Order 1996 notice on BCC proposing a new lease for a further ten years from 1 August 2010 at the existing rent of £160,000 p.a (subject to 5 yearly reviews). BCC, as tenant, subsequently applied to the Lands Tribunal for an order of grant of tenancy for one year from 1 August 2010 and month to month thereafter at a rent of £160,000 p.a. The application was made to the Tribunal as it was not possible to agree the term of the new lease with the Landlord, who had been insisting on a 10 year Lease Term. The length of term requested by BCC reflects the ongoing work around a potential relocation of BVCB and BWC.**
- 1.3 At the Development Committee meeting on 22 February 2011 Members were advised that the Lands Tribunal had set the 25 March 2011 as the hearing date for Belfast City Council’s lease renewal application. Members were also advised that**

the landlord's position at that stage was they would accept no less than a five year Lease Term on lease renewal at the existing rent. The hearing did not happen on this date as the Lands Tribunal agreed to have a further Mention on 31 March 2011 in order to give both the Landlord and BCC further time to negotiate and prepare evidence.

- 1.4 The Development Committee on 22 February 2011 had also agreed to the development of a full business case for options associated with the relocation of the Welcome Centre, subject to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreeing that the project be included within the Capital Programme. At full Council on 1 March 2011 it was agreed that further sites within the City be included as options for the relocation of the Welcome Centre.
- 1.5 The development of a full business case for the relocation of Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau and Belfast Welcome Centre was considered at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18 March 2011. The Committee were also updated on the position in relation to the renewal of the existing lease. Members were advised that if agreement could not be reached between the parties there was no guarantee that the Lands Tribunal would award a Lease Term shorter than that proposed by the Landlord. Further, that whilst the Council had applied for a new one year lease (and monthly thereafter) from 1 August 2010, given that the programme for any relocation was likely to extend beyond August 2011, it was proposed that Council officers would seek to try and reach agreement on a new Lease Term of 3 years from August 2010 or alternatively a 5 year lease with a break option at the end of Year 3.
- 1.6 Members were also advised that the time required to select and agree upon a new location, agree funding and lease arrangements, together with design, procurement and fitting out fitting may take 18-24 months.
- 1.7 The Committee were further advised that the outcome of a NITB grant application was unlikely to be known in time for a relocation to be completed by the beginning of 2012 and that in any case, relocation by the start of 2012 was not deemed to be essential; rather that as there will be considerable tourism draw arising from next year's events, a new facility would subsequently promote sustainable tourism development following 2012. This would enable a programme to be developed for the opening of a new facility by August 2013, if a new 3 year lease (from 1 August 2010) could be agreed.

## 2 Key Issues

- 2.1
- The renewal of the lease on the premises in Donegall Place remains outstanding. The Landlord's Notice for the grant of a new lease was on the basis of a further 10 year Lease Term from 1 August 2010.
  - In the absence of agreement between the parties the Lands Tribunal will make a determination on the Lease Term and the level of rent. The Landlord is entitled to seek a Lease Term of the same duration as the previous (10 year) lease and it is up to the Council, as tenant, to make a case to the Lands Tribunal for a shorter term. There is no guarantee that the Lands Tribunal will award a term shorter than that proposed by the Landlord.
  - Legal Services and Counsel's advices have been sought on the matter and extensive negotiations have taken place between the parties.
  - The time frame to select and agree upon a new location, agree funding and lease arrangements, together with design, procurement and fitting out may take 18-24 months.
  - On the basis of the above factors and in order to reach agreement without recourse to a full Lands Tribunal hearing, a proposal was put to the Landlord advisors at the Lands Tribunal Mention on 31 March, on the basis of a 3 year Lease Term from 1 August 2010 at the passing rent of £160,000 p.a. This proposal was made on a without prejudice basis, subject to Council Committee approval. The proposal also remains subject to the Landlord's Board approval.

## 3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Financial: The rent of £160,000 p.a. is the same rent as agreed in 2000 and is provided for in Departmental estimates. The rent is paid by BCC and off charged to BVCB.
- 3.2 Human Resources: Staff resources from the Estates Management Unit and Legal Services have been and will be required, to reach agreement on lease terms and complete the lease renewal.

- 3.3 **Asset & Other Implications:** The grant of a new 3 year Lease Term from 1 August 2010 will provide security of tenure and provide BCC with a reasonable timeframe within which to select and agree upon a new location, agree funding and lease arrangements, together with design, procurement and fitting out fitting out.
- 4 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations**
- 4.1 There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.
- 5 **Recommendation**
- 5.1 It is recommended that Members request the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to accept a three year lease on the existing Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and Belfast Welcome Centre premises in Donegall Place from 1 August 2010 at the existing rent of £160,000 per annum (which will be subject to subsequent Board approval of the Landlord). The new lease proposal, in accordance with Standing Orders, will be brought before the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 15 April 2011.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

#### **Lagan Canal Restoration Trust**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

- “1. **Relevant Background Information**
- 1.1 **Lagan Gateway Project**
- Members will be aware that in 2006 an offer of £1million funding was made available to Council by Ulster Garden Villages Limited (UGV) towards the reopening of the Lagan gateway Lock 1 at Stranmillis, on the basis that match funding would be available.
- 1.2 Ulster Garden Villages initially supported the Council by providing funding of £50,000 from the £1 million offer, to establish the Lagan Corridor Officer post within the Development Department.

- 1.3 A letter has been received from UGV to establish Belfast City Council's intention to proceed with its proposal to develop the Lagan Corridor. The letter highlighted the decision of the Board of UGV to reallocate the £1m funding to other projects in Northern Ireland unless the Council was in a position to confirm the scale of its contribution to the project by 31 March 2011.
- 1.4 Members will be aware that at the February 2011 Development Committee it was recommended that The Director of Development meets with Mr Tony Hopkins Chair of Ulster Garden Villages and Mr Erskine Holmes Board Director, to discuss the future of the £1million offer towards the development of the Lagan gateway Lock 1 at Stranmillis. The Director was seeking an extension to the time period granted by UGV, which would allow consideration of the prioritisation of the overall project. A meeting was held on 16 March 2011.
- 1.5 Lagan Canal Restoration Trust
- In November 2006 Members approved the establishment of the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust and in 2008 the core funding bodies appointed a manager whose remit was to set up the Trust.
- 1.6 The Trust currently represents the following core funding bodies including; Belfast City Council, Lisburn City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Craigavon Borough Council, DCAL and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Other Trust stakeholders include; DSD, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (IWAI), Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN), Ulster Waterways Group (UWG) , Lagan Valley Regional Park and a number of public stakeholders.
- 1.7 In August 2009 Development Committee committed funding to the Trust until March 2011 and the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Development Committee were appointed as Belfast City Council representatives on the Trust Board. The Board is a not for profit company limited by guarantee with charitable status.
- 1.8 Over the previous three year period Council has contributed core funding of £50,500 to the Trust. The Trust is now seeking the same level of funding from Council for the next three year period from 2011/12-2013/14.

- 1.9 With the exception of NIEA all of the key funders have committed to fund the Trust for the next three years; Lisburn City Council £112,200, DCAL £56,100, Craigavon Borough Council £22,500, and Castlereagh £11,200.
- 1.10 A number of key impact reports are currently being undertaken by the Trust, namely, a Business Case and Funding Strategy from Belfast to Lough Neagh and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Lagan Corridor from Belfast to Lough Neagh. These reports are considered fundamental to the possible future capital development of the project and should be completed over the 2011 period.

2. Key Issues

Lagan Gateway Project

- 2.1 The Director of Development met with UGV in March 2011 to discuss the future of the £1million offer towards the development of the Lagan Gateway Lock 1 at Stranmillis.
- 2.2 The Director updated the UGV on the current uncertainties surrounding the project due to the upcoming Council election, the fact that the project was not included within the current Capital Programme and the projects to be funded from the City Investment Fund had yet to be finalised.
- 2.3 The Director highlighted the fact that there were numerous projects competing for these limited funds and that any bid for funding of the navigation of the Lagan would have to be considered within that context.
- 2.4 An economic appraisal presented to the Committee in September 2009 identified that the 'preferred option' was the development of the Lagan Waterway from the Lagan Weir to Edenderry at a cost of £8.66m. The next best option was the development of a gateway at Stranmillis incorporating the re-opening of the lock with an estimated cost of £3.26m. The UGV offer of £1m is specifically towards the re-opening of the lock.
- 2.5 The Chair of UGV acknowledged the fact that other potential funders had confirmed that match funding was highly unlikely to be made available in the short to medium term and that the funding of these relatively ambitious projects from Council resources represented a significant challenge. He did however emphasize that his Board would still be keen to see some progress and suggested that if a more modest project was to be presented by Belfast City Council which

would allow the lock to re-open the UGV board may consider 50% funding towards the project. It is estimated that such a project is likely to cost somewhere in the region of £500K.

- 2.6 The Chair of UGV stated that he would be prepared to go back to his board to seek an extension of the deadline for the allocation of monies subject to BCC indicating that it was prepared to consider options and that any decision would be taken within a reasonable timescale (e.g. 6 months) as there were many demands on the Trust funds. He further made the point that if the monies were to be re-allocated it was unlikely that it would transfer to another project in Belfast.
- 2.7 It is clear that no other funding is like to be available from any other source outside of the Council and UGV. In order for the project to proceed it would have to be considered within either the Council's Capital Programme or the City Investment Fund. The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee would therefore have to consider the merits of funding the various options from either of these funding streams.

#### The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust

The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is seeking funding of £50,500 from Council for the three year period from 2011/12-2013/14. Funding commitments have been agreed with other core funders.

3. Resource Implications
- 3.1 As highlighted above the 'preferred option' as set out in the September 2009 was a Lagan Navigation project from the Lagan Weir to Edenderry at a cost of £8,660,949. The 'next best' option was the development of the Lock 1 Stranmillis Gateway with an estimated cost of £3,261,860.
- 3.2 The lesser alternative of opening the lock only is estimated to cost around £500K. This smaller scale project which would need to be scoped and fully costed before it could be considered by Council. It is estimated that this would cost somewhere in the region of £5000.
- 3.3 The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust is seeking funding of £50,500 from Council for the three year period from 2011/12-2013/14. The cost to Council for one year is £16,800 and is included within the current 2011/2012 budget



**4. Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

**4.1 No adverse impact on Section 75 groupings.**

**5. Recommendations**

**5.1 It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and agree that a further report is submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to allow the project to be considered for inclusion within either the City Investment Fund or the Capital Programme.**

**5.2 Members agree to the allocation of £5,000 to re-scope and cost the potential opening of Lock 1 at Stranmillis only should the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree to consider this option.**

**5.3 Members agree a one year extension of funding for the Lagan Canal Restoration Trust until March 2012. Following this period, a review of future funding for this organisation is undertaken in light of the economic climate, future prioritisation by Council, potential external funding and partner commitment. The cost to Council is £16,800 and is included within the current 2011/2012 budget.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**HMS Caroline**

(Councillors Lavery and Mullaghan declared an interest in this matter in that they were Members of the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and took no part in the discussion.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th February, it had been advised that the HMS Caroline, which had been docked in Belfast Harbour since 1924, would be decommissioned on 31st March, 2011, and then transferred to the National Museum of the Royal Navy. Given the considerable historical significance of the ship to the maritime heritage of Belfast, it had been agreed that officers within the Department would seek, in the interim period, to secure the ship in the City until the end of 2012, when the long-term viability of keeping the vessel in Belfast could be assessed. This would be subject to clarification of a number of issues, including the following:

- (i) that the Committee be apprised of the outcome of an economic appraisal of the ship which was being undertaken on behalf of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, together with the consideration of an associated report by the Strategic Investment Board;
- (ii) that clarification be received on the estimated costs to the Council of keeping the ship in Belfast until the end of 2012, and that those costs be deemed reasonable; and

- (iii) that funding be secured from the Royal Navy towards the costs associated with keeping the ship in Belfast until the end of 2012, together with an indication from other statutory bodies and agencies in respect of funding which they might contribute towards the costs of this extension.

The Director of Development informed the Members that he had met with representatives of the Royal Navy in this regard. At that meeting, he had pointed out that the Council could not commit financially to the proposal to keep the ship in Belfast until it had considered the current outcome of, amongst other things, the economic appraisal being undertaken on behalf of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. The Director had suggested also, given that the Council was just one of many potential stakeholders in the project, that a lead agency should be appointed by central government to oversee the proposals to retain the ship in the City. Therefore, the Royal Navy had agreed to defer, until the end of September, consideration of the matter. However, the Director reported that the representatives from the Royal Navy had requested that, in the interim period, a request could be made by the Council to the Belfast Harbour Commissioners asking that the docking fees for the HMS Caroline be waived until the end of September, 2011.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a letter be forwarded, on behalf of the Council, to the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners requesting that the docking fees chargeable to the HMS Caroline be waived until the end of September, 2011. In addition, the Committee authorised officers within the Department to continue discussions with various bodies and agencies to outline the new timescale and request that they contribute to the decision on the future of the HMS Caroline which was to be reached by the end of September.

### **Belfast Music Week**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the new Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism 2010-2015 identifies high profile events and festivals as a development lever to establish a strong reputation as a vibrant capital city with unique and exciting experiences that, once visited and enjoyed, will compel return visits time and time again. The strategy’s new product development highlights that music tourism should be developed, packaged and promoted as an authentic experience to ensure that Belfast has a competitive edge.**
- 1.2 The Music Tourism Action Plan approved by Members in order to celebrate Belfast’s rich musical heritage included a series of products such as the Belfast Music Coach Tour, the Belfast Music Exhibition, a new music listings website**

Belfastmusic.org, the first ever i-phone application for music. The plan was significantly enhanced through the successful application to Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB's) Tourism Innovation Fund which contributed a further £138,750 and new partnerships that have been formed with Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), BBC and Tourism Ireland Ltd (TIL). A report 'Exploring the Music Festival Tourism Market' commissioned by NITB using Mintel, highlighted that music is a key part of our cultural offering, and foreign and domestic tourists now spend in excess of £100 million on cultural and recreational events in NI each year and domestic tourists spending over £32 million on tickets to concerts and music festivals. Tourism Ireland launched their 2011 Marketing Plans in Belfast and identified Music Tourism as a key driver for Belfast.

- 1.3 At a Development Committee Meeting on 9 March 2010, Members approved the delivery of a Belfast Music Week 2010, in partnership with DETI, ACNI, NITB and TIL. Music Week aimed to promote Belfast as a world-class music destination and a place which has a new, modern and exciting future. It concentrated on the promotion of our indigenous musicians to show our rich musical heritage, thriving contemporary musical scene and promoted and highlighted our distinctiveness.
- 1.4 The event offered the opportunity to leverage an internationally recognized brand through MTV and meant that Belfast local scene could target demographics both internationally and locally that we have not had the opportunity to reach before. This was key to developing the youth market, especially in terms of Europe and easily reaching an international market with an event of international stand out appeal

## 2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit co-ordinated venues, promoters, publicly funded organisations and the hospitality sector to deliver 100 live music events in 8 days in over 50 venues across Belfast. A summary of outputs are as follows:
- 63,320 people attended live music events from 12-19 September 2010
  - Belfast Music Week generated income of £1,185,000 for Belfast

- Positive (Northern Ireland) media coverage equated to £244,618 in advertising spend generated through local communications activity.
- Positive (National and International) media coverage equated to €1,555,960 in advertising spend

**2.2** The initiative enabled NITB and Tourism Ireland to reposition Belfast's image and perception of the destination and create appeal with a younger audience. Key messaging focused on why there has never been a better time to go to Belfast and most of all offering the unique indigenous music proposition which helps to position Belfast as a unique modern short break destination. The number of consumes that have been exposed to the Belfast message are as follows:

- Radio: 9.1 million audience
- Email newsletters: 1.3 million contacts
- 725 Radiotorials on 41 radio stations: 47 million audience
- Online Advertising: 31,300 clicks
- Spotify: 3 million closed user group
- 127 articles inc Observer, Times, Daily Telegraph, Independent, NME and Sunday Times Travel magazine
- 25,500 visits to the Belfast campaign page on discoverireland.com. There have also been 63,000 visits to the Northern Ireland page since August 1st 2010

**2.3** Approval is now sought to deliver Belfast Music Week 2011 (Mon 31 October - Sat 5 November). The aims are:

- To increase the profile of Belfast as an exciting weekend break destination to actively travelling young adults across UK, ROI and Europe and maximise the economic return from the MTV Europe Music Awards.
- To showcase and strengthen Belfast's position on the world stage as a primary destination for music, entertainment and culture.

- To increase the number of musicians doing business internationally
- To promote and enhance a confident, positive, exciting image of Belfast through delivering world-class events
- To bring together all sectors of the community from Belfast and across the region whilst improving community cohesion

**2.4 Partners and the music sector desire Belfast Music Week to take place again because:**

- There is nothing equivalent in city and it fills a product gap ie a festival of completely indigenous music. It is hence easier to promote internationally as it is distinctive to Belfast.
- It was the first time the music sector has worked in partnership rather than in competition with each other, due to Council taking a neutral co-ordination role.
- It was the first time national and international music media visited the city (over 20 visits were facilitated by NITB and TIL) for example, Editor of Observer Music Monthly, Music Editor of Sunday Times, NME.
- Knowing that there would be international attention, music promoters had gone the extra mile to deliver events which had not taken place before, from album launches on the Barge to the Top 10 Contenders, Legends Awards and the Belfast Rocks initiative.
- The showcases not only attracted visitors but gave local bands the opportunity to perform in front of national and international music industry
- Given enough notice, venues, promoters and labels are keen to programme their key events to tie in with music week.
- Many labels have suggested that their album launches could be programmed during music week and local bands would reschedule tours.

- 2.5 A neutral co-ordination role is required to ensure Belfast Music Week is open to all live music providers and to ensure clarity of vision, aims and objectives. It will also ensure there are no programme clashes and that the sector work in partnership rather than in competition. Headline events need to be profiled to maximise MTV exposure, the venues and hospitality sector should be encouraged to programme live music and representation of genres such as classical, traditional, jazz, folk is required. It requires liaison with managers and labels to ensure schedules of bands tours and album launches coincide with Belfast Music Week. Partnerships need to be identified and the sourcing of commercial funding.
- 2.6 NITB is committed to developing the music offering and tourism access to music – both live music and additional music products. To this end, NITB are supportive of the Belfast Music Week and will seek to work with Belfast City Council to maximize the tourism opportunities and to work with the industry to ensure they are visitor ready. Belfast Music Week is in line with the NITB brand in delivering an event that is 'uniquely NI' and promotes the best of indigenous music. Belfast Music Week will add to NI's burgeoning international reputation as a place to discover great music and has the potential to provide legacy to the exciting music events that NI and Belfast will be hosting in 2011 through 2013.

### 3 Resource Implications

#### 3.1 Financial

£10,000 to support salary costs for a Co-ordinator which has been provided within the Departmental Budget 2011/12 action plan and £20,000 to support marketing and co-ordination of Belfast Music Tourism Products in 2011. MTV will brand and promote this week alongside the Europe Music Awards.

### 4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 The post would be advertised and follow Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

**5 Recommendations**

**5.1 It is recommended that Members:**

- 1. Note the contents of this report**
- 2. Consider approval of £10,000 to support salary costs of Co-ordinator which has been provided within the Departmental Budget 2011/12 action plan**
- 3. Agree to Officers working in partnership with Tourism Ireland, NITB and the music sector to leverage further funding for Belfast Music Week**
- 4. Consider approval of £20,000 to support product development of Belfast Music Tourism in 2011.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations and granted the approvals sought.

**Manifesta X Exhibition**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th February, it had agreed to contribute a sum of £10,000 towards the costs of creating a post of Manifesta Bid Co-ordinator who would work with a wide range of organisations to oversee the preparation of a joint bid for Belfast and Derry City Councils to host Manifesta X in 2014. Accordingly, the Director of Development reported that correspondence had been received from the Manifesta Bid Co-ordinator requesting that the Committee endorse a 'Letter of Intent' which would confirm the Council's prospective candidature, in conjunction with Derry City Council, to host the exhibition in 2014.

It was pointed out that, should the joint bid by Belfast and Derry City Councils be successful, the joint hosts would be required to commit a minimum budget of €3,000,000, together with a Transfer Fee of €400,000, towards the event. However, the Director advised the Committee that he had emphasised to the organisers of Manifesta X that the Council would not be prepared to submit a formal bid unless it was convinced that such a move would be affordable and would provide commensurate benefit to the City. He assured the Members that the signing of the 'Letter of Intent' would not commit the Council to any financial commitment other than the previously agreed £10,000.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to endorse the 'Letter of Intent' and noted that further progress reports would be submitted in due course.

**City Events Action Plan**

The Committee considered the City Events Action Plan and agreed that the City Events Unit commence a process of consultation on its contents with the Party Groups on the Council, prior to it being issued for public consultation.

**Development and Outreach Funding 2011/2012**

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that the Council's Development and Outreach Initiative Grants were designed to build capacity and to boost cultural activity within communities which required additional culture and arts development. She advised the Committee that a budget of £165,000 had been established for the 2011/2012 financial year. However, twenty-three applications requesting funding of £394,968.94 had been received. Due to the high standard of the submissions, only those projects scoring over 60% had been recommended for assistance.

Accordingly, following the application and assessment process, it was recommended that the following awards be made:

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Total Score</b>	<b>Amount Requested (£)</b>	<b>Recommendation (£)</b>
An Munia Tober	Not Eligible	£2,970	Not Eligible
Arts Care	58.9	£10,124	0
Arts For All	Not Eligible	£19,100	Not Eligible
ArtsEkta	63	£19,494	£11,696
Belfast Orange Fest	61.6	£14,437	£8,659
Beyond Skin	64.2	£12,500	£9,350
Cinemagic	58.9	£20,000	0
Creative Exchange	64.9	£19,290	£14,103
Dance United	63	£20,000	£12,000
Flax Art Studios	66	£18,505	£13,376.40
Ligoniel Improvement Association	Not Eligible	£20,000	Not Eligible
New Lodge Arts	69	£19,970	£14,579
Northern Visions	54.9	£15,275	0
Open Arts	67.1	£19,735	£14,414
Ormeau Baths	61.3	£15,873.40	£9,523
Prime Cut Productions	63	£19,900	£11,940
Queens Film Theatre	60.3	£17,076.50	£10,245.90
Small Steps	62.3	£21,397	£12,000
Street Wise Community	Not Eligible	£15,730	Not Eligible
The MAC	59.5	£19,950	0
The Naughton Gallery	Not Eligible	£20,000	Not Eligible
Upper Springfield	61.4	£15,200	£9,120
Youth Action	64.3	£18,700	£13,690
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£394,968.90</b>	<b>£164,696.30</b>

The Committee adopted the recommendations.



**Department for Social Development –  
Review of Service Delivery Model**

The Committee was reminded that community development work within Belfast was undertaken by a range of statutory bodies and organisations, including the Council. The Director of Development stated that the Department for Social Development, which had an overarching remit in this regard, had indicated that it wished to review the manner in which community development and infrastructure services were delivered across the City. Accordingly, it was reported that the Department for Social Development had proposed that both a steering group, on which the Director of Development would represent the Council, and a working group, on which the Strategic Neighbourhood Action Plan Manager and the Community Services Manager would represent the Council, be established to oversee this review.

After discussion, during which the Committee noted that a process of community consultation would be initiated to assist in this work, it was agreed that the aforementioned officers be authorised to participate respectively on both the steering and working groups and that further reports on the progress of the Review would be submitted in due course.

**City Banners to Promote 2012**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th August, 2010, it had agreed that a sum of £120,000 be allocated for the design, production and erection of approximately 200 Belfast Welcome Banners at a number of sites throughout the City. The banners would assist in the promotion of the series of events to be held throughout 2012 and beyond, and would be erected on a seasonal basis on arterial routes. At its meeting on 16th March, the Committee had agreed, given that there had been a delay in the commencement of the project, that £100,000 be transferred prior to the end of the financial year to the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau to enable it to deliver the project on the Council's behalf.

The Director reported that work on the design of the banners was at an advanced stage and, accordingly, the Committee was presented with a report containing draft images of the proposed banners, together with a map outlining the locations where they would be erected. The Director informed the Committee that the consultants commissioned to develop the banners had used the theme 'Patterns of the City' to assist them in producing their portfolio. He added that the banners had been designed specifically to enable them to be adaptable and that, after a period of public consultation, they would be erected in May, 2011.

After discussion, the Committee endorsed the designs for the banners as submitted and agreed that the Department would undertake a public consultation exercise prior to their erection. It was noted that, should any additional funding become available, the Committee would be consulted with a view to identifying additional locations for the erection of further banners.

### **Public Art Proposal - Lisburn Road**

The Committee was reminded that the Health and Environmental Services Department had undertaken a pilot initiative which sought to encourage owners of dilapidated properties across the City to upgrade or demolish such buildings. As part of that initiative, that Department had contacted the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit regarding the possibility of commissioning an artwork on hoardings at 155 Lisburn Road and at 173-175 Lisburn Road. Given that the Lisburn Road was considered to be one of the premier independent retail areas of the City, it was suggested that this initiative would enhance considerably the amenity of the area and that it was envisaged that a Steering Group, consisting of representatives from the retail and community sectors, would be appointed to brief an artist on an appropriate design for the artwork.

After discussion, during which the Committee approved the allocation of a sum of £6,000 towards the project, it was agreed that a suitable artist be appointed to undertake this work.

### **Northern Ireland Tourism Awards 2011**

The Committee was informed that the Council had submitted a number of applications in various categories for the Northern Ireland Tourism Awards, which would be hosted by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, and which were due to take place on 26th May at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, Belfast. The Director of Development reported that, whilst shortlisting had not been completed by the Tourist Board, the Council's applications had included the Belfast Music Week, the Great Belfast Food Initiative, Belfast Zoo and the Belfast City Hall. The awards ceremony was a significant event for tourism and hospitality in Northern Ireland and it was suggested that it was important that the Council be represented thereat. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Council reserve a table for ten persons at the event, at a cost of £675, for the incoming Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with the appropriate officers and invited guests.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **Community Support Plan 2011/2014**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

**Background**

- 1.1 Through its Community Support programme the Department for Social Development (DSD) part funds the Community Services activity of all of Northern Ireland's local authorities : '...to strengthen local communities, increase community participation and promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups, community activity and local advice services.'**

- 1.2 To be eligible for funding a local authority must prepare a community support plan (CSP) which details how it will deliver services in support of this aim. The council's previous submissions have included an analysis of local need; an examination of the corporate and departmental context within which the work of Community Services is shaped and prioritised; and detail of the objectives, supporting activity, and performance measures associated with the plan.
- 1.3 DSD made £3,435,293 available to support Belfast City Council's plan for the period 2008 to 2010 and a further £1,584,286 for the period 2010 to 2011. This represents a contribution of approximately 23% to the Community Services total annual budget.

## 2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The council has been awaiting confirmation from DSD that the Community Support programme would continue post 2011 and the related guidance to inform the nature of the required submission.
- 2.2 DSD have now confirmed they hope to issue contracts to local government for the CSP 2011/12 in advance of April 2011 and that the contracts will outline the level of funding for that annual period and the conditions which will include:
- Submission of monitoring returns on the plan for the period 2010 to 2011
  - An outline action plan for 2011 to 2012
  - Budget estimates for 2011 to 2012

The service will be in a position to meet these requirements subsequent to formal sign of the departmental business plans.

- 2.3 Members will be aware that Community Services are leading on the development of a Community Development strategy for the council which will lead to a shared model of community development in Belfast, a clearer articulation of community development goals for the city and clarity around roles and responsibilities. The vision is that a well designed community development strategy will support council in the achievement of the new corporate plan which places great

importance on the relationship between the council, its stakeholders, and the communities it serves in contributing to the quality of life of people in the city.

- 2.4 This work is nearing completion and the final draft is scheduled for presentation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June in advance of a public consultation exercise. The community development strategy is based on a three year time period 2011 to 2014 in line with the timeframe with the corporate plan.
- 2.5 While community development work is delivered by the whole of council, Community Services provides both some of the main functions of community development and they can also support the contributions of other departments. The community development strategy will obviously inform the work of the service and the related Community Support Plan in coming years. It is proposed therefore that the council's CSP submission document should be for the same period.
- 2.6 DSD have advised that while their basic submission requirements are for a one year plan, they are also willing to receive a three year CSP. DSD have indicated that it is likely the department will host a critical review of the CSP programme during the coming year with a view to improving practice and impact towards agreed community development outcomes. In doing so they welcome the developing BCC Community Development Strategy and the link to our planned CSP for the 2011-14 period. The initial draft of the Community Support Plan 2011-14 is currently being prepared by Community Services staff on this basis.
- 2.7 Given the timeframes and various factors and obligations described above, it is proposed that, in the interest of efficiency savings, the preparation of the final submission to DSD should follow this process:
  1. Community Services to submit to DSD its annual monitoring returns; an outline action plan for 2011 to 2012; proposals for a public consultation exercise; and budget estimates for 2011/2012
  2. Community Services to hold Party briefings on the proposed content of the CSP 2011-14 and that this plan is informed by the BCC community development strategy.

3. Following contributions from Members, officers to table a draft CSP for development committee consideration (August 2011)
4. Following council endorsement of the draft plan, officers to arrange a focussed public consultation for the Community Development Strategy and the CSP in late summer 2011.
5. A final draft of the CSP for 2011 to 2014 to be presented to Development Committee in November/ December and, following council endorsement, submission of final CSP to DSD.

2.8 Therefore it is proposed that consultation on the CSP is in tandem to that on the CD strategy. Community Services are in the process of appointing facilitators to assist in this public consultation. As part of the specification the facilitator has been asked to ensure that:

- The consultation will be informed by the results of already completed pre-consultation work on the community development strategy.
- That, at the end of the process, the council will have successfully consulted in the first instance with our Members; then with our communities; our internal council stakeholders; external partners including the community sector; and the groups Community Services support through its work.
- The consultation will provide opportunities for contributions from the wider community sector in Belfast; statutory sector representatives; service users and residents.
- We are particularly keen to use existing small scale community networks across the city for this purpose. This approach to be supplemented by the use of direct mailings, questionnaires, online surveys, phone calls, web, social media, email, etc.
- The consultation will be carried out to a standard that ensures fulfilment of our commitments to Section 75 legislation and conforming with Equality Commission guidance and best practice, and the Scottish National Standards for engagement.

**3 Resource Implications**

- 3.1 There are no additional resource implications over that agreed in budget estimates.**

**4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

- 4.1 Preparation of the Community Support Plan will be subject to Equality Screening and a full independent Equality Impact Assessment**

**5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- 1. Note the development of the BCC Community Development Strategy and the planned arrangements for formal consultation**
- 2. Approve the proposed process for submitting a Community Support Plan for 2011 to 2014 to the Department for Social Development.**
- 3. Agree to Party Briefings in advance of presentation of the Draft Community Support Plan to Development committee in August 2011”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Pride of Place Cities Competition 2011**

The Committee was advised that the Pride of Place Cities Competition provided Community Groups from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland an opportunity to showcase initiatives which would have a lasting and positive impact upon their communities. Since 2004, the Council had sponsored, with considerable success, the participation of several groups in the Competition. The 2011 Pride of Place Cities Competition permitted a maximum of six entries per Council, subject to defined categories and rules. Accordingly, the following four groups had been identified by the Council as being suitable for entry in this year's competition:

- Upper Springfield Community Sports Development Unit – which worked to develop an inclusive community sports' programme to provide increased opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity;
- Finaghy Crossroads Project – which sought to promote personal safety within the Finaghy area and worked to encourage good relations through the advancement of equality, respect and diversity;

- Heart Project in the Community Health Initiative – this project aimed to improve the physical and mental well-being of people within the Falls District of Belfast by tackling, in conjunction with a range of agencies, the key causes and effects of stress; and
- Donegall Pass Community Forum – which aimed to develop the Forum as an effective network for community groups and others working for the benefit of the area. It aimed also to raise awareness of the needs of that community and to attract investment and resources.

It was reported that the cost of entry, per project, was £500 and this year's awards ceremony would be held in the Knightsbrook Hotel, Trim, Co. Meath, on a date to be confirmed in November.

After discussion, the Committee approved the entry of the four groups as outlined and approved also the attendance of the incoming Chairman, the incoming Deputy Chairman and the Director of Development (or their nominees), together with a maximum of three persons per external project at the ceremony, and authorised the payment of the competition entrance fees, travelling, accommodation and subsistence allowances in connection therewith.

#### **Leisurewatch Scheme**

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 7th August, 2009, had agreed that the Council would subscribe to the Leisurewatch Scheme. It was reported that the Scheme aimed 'to improve public protection by finding creative and practical multi-agency solutions to the problems of sexual offending'. Accordingly, the Scheme had enabled the Council to provide training for staff to raise their awareness of adults who may seek to use public facilities, such as leisure centres, to gain access to young people. In addition, the Scheme had overseen the establishment, in conjunction with the Police Service of Northern Ireland, of an official protocol whereby concerns reported by staff were acted upon promptly.

The Director of Development indicated that the Scheme complemented the Council's existing Child Protection Policy. An independent assessment of the Council's leisure and community facilities had reported that they were 'very well managed and controlled' and that the Council had invested significantly in training for staff and volunteers to achieve a high level of safety. Accordingly, the Committee was requested to authorise the payment of £6,700 for the renewal of the Council's membership of the Leisurewatch Scheme for 2011. It was pointed out that continued membership of the Scheme would enable additional staff training to be provided and to permit also the formulation of guidelines for external contractors working in Council properties. It was noted that these draft guidelines would, in turn, be presented to the Council's Chief Officers' Management Team for its consideration.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

### **Play Progress - Update**

The Committee was apprised of the changes which had been implemented to the Council's Play Service in 2010 and was advised that a delegation from the International Play Association was due to visit Belfast and Northern Ireland as part of a study tour prior to its Conference which would take place in Cardiff in early July. The Director of Development pointed out that the visit of the international delegation to Belfast on 30th June would provide the Council with an opportunity to showcase its play initiatives and enable officers to network with the participants. He reported that, whilst the participants would be responsible for organising their own transport to and from Belfast and for their accommodation, the Council would be providing transport for a study tour throughout the City and also hospitality at a post tour networking event. He indicated that the costs associated with this would be in the region of £2,000, provision for which had been made within the Play Service budget.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided in relation to Play Service activity in 2010 and granted approval for the expenditure as outlined in relation to the hosting of the international delegation on 30th June.

### **Department for Regional Development – Spatial Strategies Consultation**

The Committee was advised that the Council had been requested to respond to the Department for Regional Development's Proposed Framework for Spatial Strategies on the island of Ireland. It was reported that the Framework sought to address a number of key planning challenges facing both parts of the island and to explore also the potential for future collaboration in spatial planning. The Committee was informed that the Framework contained four key aspects, as set out hereunder:

- Equipping the Island – which dealt with major infrastructures such as energy and communications networks, ports and airports;
- Competitive Places – which dealt with the linkages and co-ordination between key locations within the island;
- Environmental Quality – which dealt with the conservation and enhancement of shared natural and cultural heritage assets, particularly in relation to water quality, habitats, archaeology and architectural heritage; and
- Spatial Analysis – which dealt with the gathering of data on common trends, harmonising and integrating key datasets, such as population, employment, transportation, housing, retailing and environmental indicators.

Accordingly, the Committee endorsed the undernoted response to the Department for Regional Development's proposed framework:



**“1.1 Overall comments”**

- 1.1.1. While we have some concerns about the contents of the draft Framework we would like to say that we welcome this initiative and are in support of efforts to improve coordination and cooperation in spatial planning. We are therefore broadly in support of the aims of the framework, especially where it can provide mutual economic advantage such as in transport links, tourism, energy supply etc. The Council is already actively involved in a number of regional collaborative projects and will continue to support this approach.**
- 1.1.2. For example, Belfast City Council (BCC) is an active member of the COMET (COuncils of the METropolitan region) and through this, also engages in the Interreg IVA cross border programme. Recent activities have involved cross border network groups, showcasing collaborative working, meeting MEP to discuss the areas needs, hosting visits and conferences on subjects such as successful trans-national working. We will continue to work on regional collaborative projects in areas such as creative enterprise education and development, supporting young entrepreneurs, local procurement, supply chain opportunities and innovation.**
- 1.1.3. However, we are concerned that the framework document, its analysis and resulting conclusions are almost entirely based on the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for the Belfast area. You will be aware that the RDS has only recently been out for consultation and hence can not yet have been finalised. We do not think it appropriate to base this framework on a significant but unfinished strategy document.**
- 1.1.4. At the time of writing BCC’s response to the draft consultation on the RDS is still being finalised but we should be able to provide a copy to you in April. Initial work on our Belfast Masterplan reveals several significant concerns about the assumptions and direction of the RDS. An initial overview of these concerns is provided in the following paragraphs. Until these concerns are adequately considered and appropriate amendments made to the RDS, it is difficult for the Council to fully endorse this Regional Spatial Strategy Framework.**

**1.1.5. Emerging Masterplan Themes:**

The 2011 Masterplan is currently reviewing the key issues of economic competitiveness that Belfast has to address in order to perform its core city role. The changed economic context is recognised in that economic recovery will be slow and that investment resources in all sectors will be scarce. However, the priority of developing a strong and growing core city remains the Masterplan's primary focus, and a number of emerging themes, relevant to the Regional Development Strategy, will be advanced to help Belfast achieve this;

- Continue to develop the role of the city as a economic driver and location of future employment that support regional economic prosperity
- Recognise the importance of the centre city zone, stretching from the university area to the harbour estate, as the prime economic space in Northern Ireland
- Enhance connectivity and accessibility within and to the centre city, particularly where this improves access to jobs, education and training opportunities
- Grow the population, attract new residents and support the improvement of environmental quality including air quality, public realm enhancements and access to shared open space
- Develop a competitive local carbon economy, with associated opportunities for job creation
- Maximise the use and potential benefits of infrastructure including existing resources and underused land and buildings
- Enhance the potential of natural assets and open space, including the provision of strategic connections, to deliver a range of benefits to health and wellbeing, wildlife protection, flood risk management and capacity for sustainable modes of transport.

**1.1.7. Concerns with the proposed RDS**

- 1.1.8. Based on this, the Council has a number of concerns with the proposed RDS. Firstly, the preferred RDS strategy, based on a polycentric growth model, is inappropriate for the current economic climate and threatens to undermine the longer term performance of the regional engine, centred on the Belfast Metropolitan area, and other key urban centres. The development strategy should focus on centres that have established urban capacity and that can optimise the utilisation of committed infrastructure investment thereby maximising the potential for sustainable balanced development. The implications of the current preferred strategy risks reducing the potential for even modest economic recovery as scarce resources will be dissipated and spread too thinly.**
- 1.1.9. A conspicuous deficit within the draft RDS is the absence of an urban policy as a counterpoint and balance to the strong rural policy within the document. An urban policy is considered essential to enable the key urban centres to develop coherent strategies at development plan level to spearhead regeneration, sustainable transport and a compelling quality of life agenda for the continued development of our towns and cities.**
- 1.1.10. As suggested above, the RDS needs to carefully manage the tensions between urban and rural. A rising tide lifts all boats and the extent of Belfast's contribution to the GVA of the whole of Northern Ireland needs to be fully understood.**
- 1.1.11. A specific recognition is requested within the RDS of the importance of the 'Centre City Zone' as articulated in the Belfast City Masterplan as the primary economic space in the region. Spatially this is the engine of the region's economy and bespoke strategic policies are required to ensure that this performs its role.**
- 1.1.12. Belfast's rate base is in decline due to its falling population. This will have serious implications for the ability of the city to deal with cohesion issues and maintain its performance as the regional driver.**
- 1.1.13. There is a general concern that the strategy is not sufficiently robust to address strategic issues relating to housing and employment growth. These will be critical elements for future development plans which will be undertaken by new planning authorities under the review of public administration (RPA).**

- 1.1.14. The Council is strongly opposed to the retention of Sprucefield as a regional shopping centre within the strategy. This policy position is inconsistent with the role and performance identified for the leading urban centres.
- 1.1.15. More effective policies for managed housing growth are needed in order to grow the city's population and ensure the right house type is provided in the right location. These measures should ensure an urban bias by managing the release of any greenfield sites and potentially damaging levels of over zoning which would impact negatively on urban areas and infrastructure.
- 1.1.16. A strategy to ensure priority is given to the reuse of brownfield land should be outlined in more detail. This strategy should recognise disparities in the levels of previously developed land between council areas and, in conjunction with improved housing policies, ensure that sites are released in a way that supports sustainable patterns of development.
- 1.1.17. The RDS should include a more detailed policy that will enable the identification and protection of strategic employment sites. This should focus on bringing forward sites in the most appropriate locations, particularly where access to public transport and other infrastructure is available.
- 1.2. **Specific points on the Regional Spatial Strategies Framework**
  - 1.2.1. *Equipping the Island* – we support this principle of well planned, ecologically friendly infrastructure.
  - 1.2.2. *Competitive Places* – we would support enhanced physical connections between key urban centres, promoting Belfast as a key driver for the region.
  - 1.2.3. *Environmental Quality* – we would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with authorities south of the border in strategic planning for the protection and enhancement of shared natural assets.
  - 1.2.4. *Spatial Analysis* – we support the integration of datasets/ indicators. We work to develop GIS & demographic information, which allows an evidence-based approach to identify need and enhance service provision. Our existing datasets are available for analysis by external stakeholders.

- 1.2.5. In section 4.8 and 4.16 we suggest that consideration should be given to the implication of transferring planning powers to Local Authorities. While this would strengthen Belfast's position we recognise that it would potentially make regional spatial planning more fragmented.
- 1.2.6. We would also prefer to see an increase in specific guidance in the final document. The current version is more focused on summarising the existing strategies and the statistical situation rather than providing definitive advice or an approach to future strategies, projects and investments."

#### **Planning Policy Statements 23 and 24**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

**1.1 PPS 23 & 24**

The Minister for Environment launched two new draft planning policies aimed at managing sustainable economic development on 17 January 2011.

- 1.2 Draft PPS23 seeks to put in place policy for assessing proposals for enabling development. The document states that 'Enabling development' is a development proposal that is contrary to established planning policy and in its own right would not be permitted. Such a proposal may be allowed where it will secure a proposal for the long term future of a place of heritage significance, or scheme of significant regional or sub regional public benefit and may also be acceptable to secure the future of non listed buildings of local significance.
- 1.3 Draft PPS 24 is intended to provide guidance on the weight to be accorded to economic considerations in the making of planning decisions. Policy EC1 states 'Full account shall be taken of the economic implications of a planning proposal, including the wider implications to the regional and local economy, alongside social and environmental aspects in so far as they are material considerations in the determination of planning application to which they relate'.

1.4 The Draft goes on to state that where the 'economic implications of a proposal are significant, substantial weight shall be afforded to them in the determination of that planning application. In such cases, substantial weight can mean determinative weight.'

1.5 Regional Transportation Strategy Review

The Minister for Regional Development launched the public consultation of the revised Regional Transportation Strategy for a 15 week period on the 16 March until 28 June 2011.

1.6 The current Regional Transportation Strategy 2001 – 2012 was used to secure public funding for transport infrastructure projects throughout the region. The revised Strategy aims to build on what has been achieved and summarise the current transportation position for the region.

1.7 The revised strategy seeks to set high level aims and strategic objectives for transport in the region that will form the basis for future decision making and funding priorities. The stated objective is to move towards greater sustainability which will contribute positively to growing the economy, improving the quality of life for all and reducing transport impacts on the environment.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The key issue in PPS 23 is the justification outlined under the Policy ED1 Enabling Development. It refers to development that would normally be refused, having regard to prevailing planning policy, but could be exceptionally permitted in order to protect heritage assets or secure regional or sub regional public benefit. There is concern that Draft PPS 23, in its current format, could be exploited to enable contentious development proposals other than heritage schemes to be permitted under the guise of public benefit.

2.2 The key issues for Draft PPS 24 is the wording with the use of the term 'determinative weight' and the absence of guidance or justification for such a broad policy. The policy unfairly heightens the material influence of economic considerations at the expense of other environmental and social considerations. It could also undermine the contents of all other planning guidance, including regional strategies, development plans and other PPSs.

**2.3 PPS 23**

Enabling development under PPS 23 has its origins in England, where, in 2008, English Heritage published a policy statement titled 'Enabling Development and the Conservation of Significant Places'. From this title it is clear that enabling development is directly linked to the conservation of significant places, which the document goes on to describe as heritage assets.

**2.4** The Council would accept that enabling development can help fulfil this objective by securing the long term future of a place of heritage significance. However, Draft PPS 23 contains additional criteria which considerably expand the remit of what constitutes enabling development so that it no longer solely concentrates on safeguarding heritage assets.

**2.5** The reference in the policy to apply to 'a scheme of significant regional or sub regional benefit' may result in the incentive to conserve heritage assets being devalued or the focus changed to facilitate large developments that could otherwise be contrary to policy being approved. It would be recommended that 'Enabling Development' should be restricted to the consideration in circumstances where it will secure the retention of heritage assets with the removal of any reference to additional criteria. Suggested recommendations to amend draft PPS 23 have been forwarded to Members.

**2.6 PPS 24**

The Council strongly supports the need to promote and prioritise economic development in Belfast and the region of Northern Ireland, however the development must be in the appropriate location to maximise longer term economic development for the region and must not be at the detriment of sustainability of the environment and to society.

**2.7** It should be highlighted that no comparable policy exists in Britain or the Republic of Ireland and the use of the term 'determinative weight' is a legal phrase that is not stated in any other PPS in Northern Ireland. The inclusion of the phrase implies the favour of economic considerations, to the detriment of other environmental and social considerations. A number of recommendations to amend or replace the policy have been circulated to the Committee.

**2.8 Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) Review**

The potential for new strategic transportation guidance was highlighted in the Departmental Plan approved by Committee in 2010. The development of corporate responses on strategic planning policies, including the Regional Transport Strategy with external specialist support was highlighted as a specific potential future action.

**2.9** The Regional Transportation Strategy should play a critical role in setting the context for the continued development of the transport infrastructure for Belfast to maintain and develop its role as the driver of growth for the region. It is essential that the RTS focuses on an improved transport infrastructure for the city and provides formal linkages to any Investment Strategy proposals with an emphasis on supporting economic regeneration, public transport provision and connectivity.

**2.10** External specialist support is required to support the development of a response to influence the final RTS and ensure the potential for the continued development of Belfast. The revised RTS will provide the basis for future decision making on funding priorities for transport infrastructure in Northern Ireland and it is essential that Belfast City Council are fully informed and engaged in the process.

**2.11** It is anticipated the external support will provide the following services:

- A review of comparable transport strategies from other administrations and identification of good practice;
- Focused stakeholder engagement;
- A review of the high level aims and strategic objectives of the revised strategy; and
- Advice on the strategic direction and funding priorities for transport infrastructure in Belfast and drafting of a response to the revised RTS.

**3 Resource Implications**

**3.1** The resource implications would be anticipated to be up to £9,000 for RTS Review.



4 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

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

5 **Recommendations**

5.1 The Committee is requested:

- (i) To consider the undernoted responses to PPS 23 & 24 and if appropriate endorse the submission to the Department of the Environment prior to 6 May 2011.
- (ii) Agree the commission of external consultancy support with a budget of up to £9,000 for input into the RTS Review

**Draft Response to PPS 23 Enabling Development**

1.0 **Introduction**

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) are significant statements of regional planning policy that are consulted by decision-makers when assessing planning applications for development. In terms of their status, they command the highest position in the hierarchy of material planning considerations and can be critical in determining whether or not a planning application should be approved or refused.

Draft Planning Policy Statement 23 titled 'Enabling Development' (PPS 23) puts in place policy for assessing applications for enabling development, which is defined in the PPS as follows:

*'Enabling development is a development proposal that is contrary to established planning policy and in its own right would not be permitted. Such a proposal may however be allowed where it will secure a proposal for the long term future of a place of heritage significance, or scheme of significant regional or sub-regional public benefit (the principal proposal), and may also be acceptable to secure the future of a non-listed building of local significance.'*

Source: Paragraph 1.1 Draft PPS 23

Therefore, an application for enabling development is one that would not normally be allowed, as it is contrary to planning policy, but may exceptionally be permitted in order to secure a public benefit. For the most part, public benefit in the draft PPS is

generally associated with securing the long-term future of a place of heritage significance with the critical exception of the regional or sub regional schemes.

## **2. The purpose of Enabling Development**

Enabling development under PPS 23 has its origins in England, where, in 2008, English Heritage published a policy statement titled 'Enabling Development and the Conservation of Significant Places'. From the latter title it is clear that enabling development is directly linked to the conservation of significant places, which the document goes on to describe as heritage assets.

*A significant place specifically refers to 'any part of the historic environment that has heritage value, including but not limited to scheduled monuments and other archaeological remains, historic buildings (both statutorily listed or of more local significance) together with any historically related contents, conservation areas, parks and gardens either registered or forming the setting of a listed building, and registered battlefields.'*

Based on this definition, it is clear that enabling development is principally connected to the conservation of a building, a group of buildings or a site that is deemed to be a significant heritage asset.

The concept of enabling development recognises that conservation and maintenance of a significant heritage asset can be a costly exercise and therefore it is sometimes necessary to show flexibility in the determination of related proposals that are aimed at financing this conservation.

At one level, this flexibility may relate to a decision on how a building is used and/or how it looks. Accordingly, enabling development could involve permitting a change of use in a building that is contrary to planning policy – if this use enables the building to be preserved on a long-term basis. A hypothetical example may involve using an historic building located within the Retail Core of Belfast City Centre for residential purposes, even though prevailing planning policy stipulates that retail uses only should be permitted there. Likewise, enabling development could relate to permission for an exceptionally large extension to a listed building on the basis that the rent income secured by the additional space will enable the listed building to be preserved and maintained.

At another level, enabling development may involve the consideration of proposals that go beyond a change of use or appreciable extension to a building of heritage value. For example, this may include permission for entirely new development to take

place within the grounds of an historic garden in order to secure its upkeep. It could even relate to a grant of permission on a totally different site, if this enabling development would help subsidize the improvement and maintenance of the heritage asset in question.

Having regard to the above, the Council fully acknowledges and supports the need to safeguard the heritage assets within its Council area. Indeed, one of the Council's Corporate Strategic Objectives states *'To ensure that Belfast becomes a more sustainable city by helping to protect its built and natural heritage.'*

Equally, the Council also accepts that enabling development can help fulfil this objective by securing the long term future of a place of heritage significance. However, having stated the above, Draft PPS 23 has chosen to considerably expand the remit of what constitutes enabling development so that it no longer solely concentrates on safeguarding heritage assets. Instead, it is conceived a wider concept that can be applied to most development proposals, not just those seeking to conserve heritage assets. The Council are concerned that this approach may result in developers not attempting to conserve heritage assets at all, if the incentive of enabling development is made equally available for new build schemes.

### **3. The implications of Draft PPS 23**

Draft PPS 23 has greatly increased the circumstances in which it could be used to permit enabling development (that is development which would normally be refused) to include 'schemes of significant regional or sub-regional public benefit.' Draft PPS 23 does not specify what constitutes regional or sub-regional schemes, therefore most medium to large scale applications could effectively seek to be classified as such. In other words, even moderately sized applications can aim to be described as having a sub-regional public benefit.

Draft PPS 23 also states that enabling development may also be acceptable to secure the future of a non-listed building of local significance. Again, there is no clear definition of what this means and the scope for interpretation is immense.

Added to the above, Draft PPS 23 has introduced the term '*principal proposal*' to apply to schemes of '*significant regional or sub-regional public benefit*'. This then makes it possible to confer the status of 'enabling development' to a contentious part of a scheme which must be permitted in order secure the development of the remaining part of the scheme (the principal proposal). The point can be illustrated in the proposal for major shopping centre development at Sprucefield. Here, the developer maintains

that the huge retail scheme can only work from an economic perspective if an enabling proposal to build a 26 unit shopping mall, roughly the size of Castle Court, is also permitted alongside the John Lewis store. In other words, the enabling development of a shopping mall will enable (or pay for) the principal proposal (John Lewis) to locate at Sprucefield. This proposal is based on the interpretation that this is a scheme of regionally significant public benefit. However, this so called enabling development could be proposed in spite of the fact that prevailing retail planning policy has a clear presumption against allowing High Street retailing to locate in out of town locations, for fear of destroying existing town centres. This case clearly demonstrates how, at the regional level, the concept of enabling development under Draft PPS 23 could be tailored to serve the self-interest of a developer as opposed to the wider public interest and longer term sustainability.

Therefore, if the wording Draft PP23 is adopted in the current form the unrestrictive highly contentious planning applications which are contrary to planning policy could seek to obtain planning permission simply on the pretext of securing a questionable public benefit. The guidance as to the measures of any potential public benefit and a mechanism to balance this against any assessment of potentially adverse impacts has not been included in the proposal.

#### **4. Recommendations**

The Council would suggest the consideration of two options in terms of its consultation response to Draft PPS 23.

##### **Option 1 - Amend Draft PPS 23**

Enabling development should only be considered in circumstances where it will secure the retention of heritage assets. This is the reason why the concept was introduced in other jurisdictions and this has always been its intended purpose. For Draft PPS 23 to expand enabling development to include regional and sub-regional development schemes, the conservation of heritage assets will most likely suffer because the unique incentive to improve them will be devalued. The incentive for developers become involved in the sometimes protracted and difficult business of preserving old, historic sites is depleted when the incentive of enabling development is made equally available for new development on more straightforward sites.

Within this context, Policy ED 1 of Draft PPS 23 could be amended to restrict the circumstances in which enabling development may be considered. This could involve the following amendments:

- The removal of any reference to regional and sub-regional schemes of public benefit for the reasons explained above.
- One of the circumstances in which enabling development may be considered needs to be omitted. This refers to *'the cessation and removal of undesirable use elsewhere on land in control of the applicant, where appropriate.'* The Council are concerned that this could result in a situation where a landowner or developer could intentionally blight a site with a view to obtaining a more lucrative planning permission. For example, a green-field or under used site could be turned into a scrapyard in the knowledge that, under Draft PPS 23, planning permission may then be granted for housing as a preferable alternative.
- Further clarification is required on what is meant by *'a range of leisure facilities'*. Under Draft PPS 5, leisure facilities are defined as *'Indoor or covered recreation and leisure facilities including swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasium and other sport halls; cinemas, concert and dance halls, theatres, amusement arcades and centres, restaurants, cafes and licensed premises.'* The Council would not consider the development of cinemas and amusement arcades merits finance through enabling development. Accordingly, the range of leisure facilities in Draft PPS 23 needs to be more clearly specified.

Similarly, further clarification is also required in identifying what is meant by a *'non-listed building of local significance'*.

**Option 2. Incorporate policy on 'Enabling Development' as an Addendum to PPS 6**

The Council consider the embodiment of policy on enabling development within PPS 6, which deals with Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage as a worthy alternative. By explicitly linking policy on enabling development to PPS 6, developers will be left in no doubt that it will only be considered for proposals which help conserve the form of heritage assets identified in the main body of the PPS.

## 5. Conclusion

The Council would highlight that the concept of 'Enabling Development' refers to development that would normally be refused, having regard to prevailing planning policy, but could be exceptionally permitted in order to secure a public benefit. This public benefit is commonly associated with the protection of heritage assets, such as listed buildings and historic parks, which are typically expensive to retain and maintain. In this regard, the introduction of the policy provision would be worthwhile, but only if it is restricted to heritage assets and not speculative development proposals of questionable public benefit.

The Council are concerned that Draft PPS 23, in its current format, could be challenged and has the potential to enable highly contentious development proposals to be permitted. The policy proposed needs to be refined so that it can help protect and sustain Northern Ireland's rich legacy of buildings and historic sites. Accordingly, it is hoped that the Council's recommendations outlined in Options 1 and 2 above will allow the Department to revisit Draft PPS 23 so that it can become a more focused and reasonable instrument of policy.

### Draft Response to PPS 24

#### 1.0 Introduction

Planning Policy Statements are significant statements of regional planning policy that are consulted by decision-makers when assessing planning applications for development. In terms of their status, they command the highest position in the hierarchy of material planning considerations and are critical in deciding whether or not a planning application should be approved or refused.

Paragraph 1.4 of Draft PPS 24 states that *'the purpose of this draft PPS 24 is to provide guidance on the weight that should be accorded to economic considerations in the making of planning decisions.'*

The Council fully recognises that economic considerations play an important role in the determination of planning applications. One of the Council's Corporate Strategic Objectives is *'to stimulate and support economic growth and to enhance the cultural and tourism experience of the City.'* In this regard, therefore, the Council is also fully supportive of the desire to make economic growth and wealth creation a top priority of The Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government.

However, having stated the above, the Council's Corporate Strategy also recognises that this economic objective must be balanced against other social and environmental objectives that seek to promote a high quality environment in which to live. These objectives are equally important and are outlined below.

- *To improve the quality of life for present and future generations by making Belfast a better place to live, work, visit and invest in.*
- *To create a vibrant, shared and diverse city.*
- *To ensure that Belfast becomes a more sustainable city by helping to protect its built and natural heritage.*

Draft PPS 24 is titled 'economic considerations' and focuses exclusively on attaching substantial weight to them, therefore it may be inferred that social and environmental concerns are correspondingly downgraded in importance. This would be unacceptable to the Council and the unacceptability of Draft PPS 24 is reinforced when both the origins and contents of the document are considered in more detail.

## **2.0 The origins of Draft PPS 24**

The origins of this PPS can be traced back to a Ministerial statement made in Stormont that sought to elevate the importance of economic considerations in the determination of planning applications. The statement was introduced at the time of highly disputed planning applications at Sprucefield and at Magheramorne, near Larne. In recognition of the clear intention that the statement would serve as policy, without any consultation, it was quashed in the High Court in October 2010 for having no legal basis. It appears that Draft PPS 24 seeks to legitimise this original statement through the introduction of a new policy. The Council is concerned that it has been prepared at the time when objections to contentious planning applications are due to be heard at a number of inquiries, including the controversial proposals at Sprucefield.

Against this background, the contents of this policy together with its timing and purpose are a significant concern for Belfast City Council.

## **3.0 A review of Draft PPS 24**

The full extent of the policy is reproduced below.

**Policy EC1 – Economic Considerations**

Full account shall be taken of the economic implications of a planning proposal, including the wider implications to the regional and local economy, alongside social and environmental aspects in so far as they are material considerations in the determination of the planning application to which they relate.

Where the economic implications of a proposal are significant, substantial weight shall be afforded to them in the determination of that planning application. In such cases, substantial weight can mean determinative weight.

‘To allow the planning authority to make an informed decision on an individual development proposal, it is essential in submitting planning applications, that sufficient information about the economic implications (positive and negative) is provided. This information should be proportionate to the scale and significance of the relevant development proposal.’

As a policy document designed to afford substantial weight to economic factors when assessing planning applications, Draft PPS 24 is not a substantial document. Policy EC 1 consists of two paragraphs only and a single explanatory paragraph. The minimalist composition reflects the unusual nature of the document. It is quite rare for economic considerations to be separated from the broad range of planning considerations and dealt with in isolation. They are typically considered alongside other environmental and social considerations that make up a general set of principles which public bodies must take into account. As far as the Planning Service is concerned, these broad principles are set out in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS 1) entitled ‘General Principles’. This publication will be referred later in Section 5.0 of this submission.

A detailed review of Draft PPS 24 reveals the following points:

- Policy EC 1 makes no reference to location. It does not distinguish between planning proposals within settlements and those proposed for the countryside. This effectively means that a proposal to build for example a shopping centre in an area of high scenic quality, such as the Belfast Hills, could be permitted under Draft PPS 24 simply because it would create a number of jobs. Equally, a proposal to build for example a casino or amusement arcade in a wholly residential area, could be entitled to serious consideration under this Draft PPS merely because of the jobs it would create.



When guiding economic investment into Northern Ireland the standard technique adopted by planners is to apply the sequential approach. This approach involves exploring investment opportunities in the City Centre first, followed by consideration of those sites beyond the City Centre but within the settlement limit. This sequential approach logically recognises that economic investment in the City Centre has wider regeneration benefits and greater potential to create spin-off employment and investment nearby. It also acknowledges that job creation in the heart of the city carries a reduced risk of displacing employment from elsewhere. However, because Policy EC 1 pays no regard to location and focuses primarily on creating jobs without a mechanism to balance the cost to the environment and to society, those jobs linked to commercial development at the edge of settlements or in the countryside will be given the same determinative weight as those proposed for Belfast or other centres. On this basis, it is reasonable to conclude that economic investors will be attracted to Greenfield sites on the edge of settlements rather than urban centres such as Belfast. This is primarily because they have the unfair attributes of greater site or land areas, the potential unregulated or free car parking which centres such as Belfast could never hope to compete with. As a consequence, the application and utilisation of the policy could severely harm the prospects for investment in regeneration projects in urban centres and even in neighbourhood level renewal or regeneration areas.

- Policy EC 1 does not differentiate between economic implications for the regional and local economy, therefore all planning applications - no matter how small or how inappropriately located - can seek to obtain planning permission on the sole basis that investment is being proposed with an economic return or several jobs being provided.
- Finally, the term 'determinative weight' is a legal phrase that is not stated in any other PPS in Northern Ireland. Its very inclusion suggests a bias in favour of economic considerations, to the detriment of other environmental and social considerations. It therefore undermines the necessity for public bodies to assess all considerations in a consistent and reasonable manner.

Taking account of the concerns outlined above, the implications of supporting Draft PPS24 in its current format need to be fully understood. These are highlighted below.

#### **4.0 Implications of Draft PPS 24**

The Council is concerned that Draft PPS 24 could make the policy recommendations of all Development Plans, Strategies and Development Frameworks redundant. This includes a wealth of extensively consulted strategies and policies prepared by Belfast City Council and other government departments such as the DOE, DRD and DSD. This would include publications such as the:

- Belfast City Council Masterplan;
- Belfast City Council Corporate Strategy;
- Regional Development Strategy (RDS);
- Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (BMAP);
- DSD Masterplans for Belfast City Centre;
- Detailed application guidance notes; and
- all other Planning Policy Statements in Northern Ireland.

By dismissing the recommendations of plans and strategies the draft policy could effectively contravene the need to respect the plan-led approach in the assessment of planning applications.

Adoption of Draft PPS 24 in its current form could therefore overshadow the consultative input of the Council's elected representatives and the general public in formulating policy. It could also be used to disregard genuine issues raised by European-based environmental impact legislation. This could in turn undermine the broader policy and lead to decisions challengeable under European Law.

Decisions on planning applications involve a considered, balanced assessment of a range of material considerations. By singularly elevating the importance of economic considerations this PPS could bias the evaluation process and essentially result in predetermined outcomes for planning applications.

In many respects, Draft PPS 24 will lead to a total diminution of the Council's function in framing its own strategies and policies, simply because they will be overridden by the stipulations of PPS 24 with no recourse to appeal other than through legal challenge. Indeed, if statutory consultees such as council and plans and policies are capable of being overruled by 2 paragraphs in Draft PPS 24 then the very need for planning departments to exist at all could be called into question.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

The Council would recommend consideration given to two options:

**Option 1 - Amend Draft PPS 24**

Policy EC 1 of Draft PPS 24 could be amended to take into account the following points:

- It has to be made clear that substantial weight will only be attached to economic considerations when the assessment of the application is finely balanced, having regard to other environmental and social considerations. In other words, economic considerations will only tip the scales in favour of the proposed development when it is shown that there will be no demonstrable harm to environmental and social interests of acknowledged importance.
- A distinction also has to be made between the economic implications of major planning applications and minor applications. As Draft PPS 24 currently stands, a proposal to provide even one job in a minor but controversial development could be argued as sufficient grounds upon which to afford determinative weight to economic considerations.
- Finally, the last sentence which refers to 'determinative weight' has to be omitted, no other planning policy in the other administrations or the Republic of Ireland uses such terminology. This is because it side steps the need to collectively weigh up all considerations when arriving at a decision.

Within the context of the above points, Draft PPS 24 could be amended to read as follows:

*'Full account shall be taken of the economic implications of a regionally significant planning proposal, including the wider implications to the regional economy, alongside social and environmental implications in so far as they are material considerations in the determination of the planning application to which they relate.*

*Where the economic implications of a regionally significant proposal are significant and where the proposed development causes no demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged environmental and social importance, substantial weight may be afforded to economic considerations in the determination of that planning application.'*

The planning policy statement should also contain more detailed guidance to the approach to the assessment of economic considerations. This should include clear guidance to ensure that any decision taken under PPS 24 does not undermine broader strategies and policies within PPS or Development Plans.

**Option 2 - Amend Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS 1) entitled 'General Principles'**

PPS 1 outlines the general principles that the Department observes in formulating planning policies, making development plans and exercising control of development. Understandably, given the desire to promote sustainable growth, PPS 1 prudently links economic development with sustainable development (see quote below).

*Sustainable development seeks to deliver the objective of achieving, now and in the future, economic development to secure higher living standards while protecting and enhancing the environment. Para 11, p7, PPS 1*

However, in recognition of the need to respect the spirit and purpose of Draft PPS 24, it might be worth strengthening the weight attached to economic considerations as part of an amendment to PPS 1. Accordingly, paragraph 10 of PPS 1 could be amended to incorporate the second paragraph outlined in Option B above so that it reads as follows.

*'In exercising its planning functions, therefore, the Department must integrate a variety of complex economic, social, environmental and other factors, many of which have implications beyond the confines of the land-use planning system.*

*Where the economic implications of a regionally significant proposal are significant and where the proposed development causes no demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged environmental and social importance, substantial weight may be afforded to economic considerations in the determination of that planning application.'*

## **6.0 Conclusion**

Whilst the Council strongly supports the need to promote and prioritise economic development in the region, the Council equally recognizes that development must not come at any price to planning policy, the environment and society. The wording of Draft PPS 24 inappropriately heightens the material influence of

**economic considerations at the expense of other environmental and social considerations. Not only does it appear to eclipse the contents of all other planning guidance, including regional strategies, development plans and other PPSs, it questions the very necessity to plan at all. The Council would highlight the fact that no comparable policy exists within the other planning administrations or the Republic of Ireland and therefore would urge a fundamental review of this Draft PPS. In this regard, it is hoped that the Council's recommendations outlined in Options 1 and 2 above will allow the Department to revisit Draft PPS 24 so that it can become a more balanced and reasonable instrument of policy."**

After discussion, the Committee endorsed the responses to PPS 23 and 24 and agreed to commission an external consultant, up to a cost of £9,000, to assist the Council in the development of its response to the Regional Transportation Review.

#### **Delegated Authority - Funding 2010/2011**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided details of projects awarded funding under the Rolling Programme and the Community Festivals Fund by the Director of Development in accordance with the authority delegated to him.

#### **Royal Exchange - Listing of Buildings**

The Committee was advised that the above-mentioned item had been withdrawn from the agenda and that the Town Planning Committee, at its meeting on 7th April, had considered the matter.

#### **Conference - New York/New Belfast**

The Committee was reminded that first New York/New Belfast Conference had taken place in New York in June, 2010, and that a follow-up conference was scheduled to take place there in June, 2011. The Director of Development reported that the Council had been requested to consider whether it wished to be represented at the 2011 Conference and he provided an outline of the programme and the main speakers at the event.

The Director pointed out that the Conference would provide an opportunity for the Council to engage with a range of representatives from key organisations within the United States of America which promoted economic regeneration and business growth. The programme would focus particularly on promoting linkages between both cities and was organised by a range of organisations, including Fordham University, Continental Airlines, Tourism Ireland and Titanic Quarter. The Conference would also enable networking to be carried out through a series of workshops which would provide an opportunity for the Council to address some of the issues raised during the recent 'State of the City' workshops. Accordingly, the Director reported that the Council had been requested to provide sponsorship for the conference. This would be in the sum of £3,000 and would provide the Council with an opportunity to make a presentation at one of the sessions, together with securing two delegate places.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to provide sponsorship for the New York/New Belfast Conference at the cost of £3,000, and that the incoming Chairman and the incoming Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with two officers, be authorised to attend. In addition, it was agreed that the total cost to the Council, including travel, subsistence and accommodation costs would not exceed £9,000.

### **Notice of Motion - The Belfast Story**

The Committee was advised that, at the Council meeting on 4th April, the undernoted Notice of Motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Mullaghan and seconded by Councillor N. Kelly, had, in accordance with Standing Order 11e, been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council recognises the major opportunities which will arise in 2013 out of the celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of the award by King James I of the charter which established the town of Belfast.

There is substantial interest in the story of Belfast’s growth from humble beginnings to a major European city and the development of a distinct ‘Belfast Story’ would serve as a focus for the promotion of the city. The ‘Story’ should include a wide range of information on a number of topics about Belfast including its industrial past; its social, cultural and political history; emigration, migration from rural areas and overseas links; innovation and enterprise; and sport to name but a few and, of course, the ‘Story’ continues to develop.

It is to be hoped that the development of a distinct ‘Belfast Story’ would serve as a tourist attraction in its own right as well as acting as a gateway to point visitors to explore the themes more fully across the city.”

Accordingly, Councillor Mullaghan requested that the Department undertake to investigate the feasibility of developing a ‘Belfast Story’ and that a report, which would outline the Committee’s options in this regard, be submitted for consideration at a future date.

The Committee agreed that a report in this regard be submitted in due course.

Chairman