

Development Committee

Wednesday, 15th June, 2011

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Members present: Alderman Stalford (Chairman); and
Aldermen Campbell, Ekin, Humphrey and Stoker;
Councillors Austin, Hartley, Hendron, Keenan, Kelly,
Kyle, Mallon, Maskey, McVeigh, Mac Giolla Mhín,
Ó Muilleoir, Robinson, Spence and Webb.
- In attendance: Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Alderman Crozier.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd May, subject to:

- (i) the omission of the minute under the heading "Manifesta X Exhibition" which, at the request of Councillor Lavery, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration; and
- (ii) the omission of the minute under the heading "New York/New Belfast Conference" which, at the request of Alderman Newton, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

First Meeting of the Development Committee

The Chairman welcomed the Members to the first meeting of the Committee following the Local Government Elections.

Manifesta X Exhibition

The Committee considered further the undernoted minute:

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."

During discussion, the Director of Development informed the Committee that it was clear that European funding would not be secured to assist the Council in its bid to host the Exhibition in 2014. Accordingly, he had not submitted a letter of intent on behalf of the Council and suggested that the matter be revisited with a view to bidding for the event in 2016, subject to the securing of adequate funding.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

New York / New Belfast Conference

(Councillor Ó Muilleoir declared an interest in this item and remained outside the room whilst it was under discussion.)

The Committee considered further the undernoted minute:

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."

A Member pointed out that he had, in a personal capacity, attended the Conference and outlined the benefits which he felt the Council could have gained if it had been represented formally. He suggested that the City had missed a prime opportunity to engage and forge partnerships with a range of representatives from key organisations from New York which promoted economic regeneration and business growth.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed also that a copy of the keynote speeches made at the Conference be circulated for the attention of the Members.

Date and Time of Future Meetings

(Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

In accordance with notice on the agenda, the Chairman referred to the future commencement times and dates for meetings of the Committee. He highlighted the lengthy agendas which had been presented to the Committee over the foregoing months and suggested that consideration might be given to holding two scheduled meetings each month. In addition, the point was made that, since a majority of the Members of the Committee had commitments throughout the day, the commencement time might be moved to a slightly later time.

After discussion, it was agreed

- (i) that future scheduled meetings would commence at 5.15 p.m.; and
- (ii) in principle, that the Committee meet twice-monthly during the Council term, subject to the Democratic Services Manager submitting a report in August on how this might be accommodated within the Committee Schedule and setting out the nature of the business to be discussed at each of the meetings.

Fixed-Term Working Groups and Steering Groups

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the establishment of Working Groups and Steering Groups to enable a revised report to be submitted to the special meeting scheduled to be held on 27th June.

Council Representation on Outside Bodies

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reminded the Members that, under the new governance arrangements which had been implemented by the Council in 2007, the Committee had been represented on a number of Outside Bodies and Agencies by its Chairman and Deputy Chairman, or their nominees. He reported that the Council's representation on those Bodies had lapsed on 5th May, coinciding with the date of the Local Government Elections, and indicated that it was necessary for the Committee to renew its representation thereon. Accordingly, the Committee agreed that it be represented on the various Outside Bodies and Agencies as set out hereunder:

Body	Number of Members to be Appointed	Representation
Belfast City Centre Management – Board	2 Places	Development Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees).
Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau Limited.	2 Places	Development Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees).
Employment Services Board	6 Places	One representative from each of the Political Parties on the Council.
Forum for Local Government and the Arts	1 Place	Development Committee Chairman (or their nominee).

Body	Number of Members to be Appointed	Committee
Interreg Partnership	2 Places	Development Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees).
Lagan Canal Restoration Trust	2 Places	Development Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees).
Land of the Giants Company	2 Places	Development Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees).
Nomadic Trust	2 Places	Development Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees).
Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme	2 Places	Development Committee Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees).

Appointments to Partnership Boards

(Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The Committee is responsible for making appointments to the several Partnership Boards across the City, namely the North Belfast Partnership Board, the South Belfast Partnership Board, the East Belfast Partnership Board, the West Belfast Partnership Board and the Greater Shankill Partnership Board.

1.2 The methodology used to appoint Members to these Boards has been developed over the last 14 years to try to ensure that the Boards function as effectively as possible.

2 Key Issues**2.1 North Belfast Partnership Board (8 Members)**

For the past number of years, the Committee has decided that the 8 Members should be drawn from the representatives elected to the Castle and Oldpark District Electoral Areas.

The strengths of the Parties in these District Electoral Areas is set out below, together with the number of places which the Parties would be entitled to on the Board based upon the strict application of proportionality.

<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>	<u>Representation</u>
Sinn Fein	5	(3.33) 3
Democratic Unionist	4	(2.67) 3
SDLP	2	(1.33) 1
Alliance	0	(0.00) 0
Ulster Unionist	1	(0.67) 1
PUP	0	(0.00) 0
Independent	0	(0.00) 0
	12	8

2.2 South Belfast Partnership Board (8 Members)

The appointees have historically been drawn proportionately from the Parties represented in the Balmoral and Laganbank District Electoral Areas.

The strengths of the Parties in these District Electoral Areas is set out below, together with the number of places which the Parties would be entitled to on the Board based upon the strict application of proportionality.

<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>	<u>Representation</u>
Sinn Fein	2	(1.45) 1
Democratic Unionist	2	(1.45) 1
SDLP	4	(2.91) 3
Alliance	2	(1.45) 2
Ulster Unionist	1	(0.73) 1
PUP	0	(0.00)
Independent	0	(0.00)
	11	8

There are 3 Parties – Sinn Fein, DUP and Alliance who each have 2 Members in the areas. There is one seat remaining between these 3 Parties and, in accordance with established practice, this should be allocated between these Parties over the 4-year term. Accordingly, it is recommended that the extra place is allocated to the Alliance Party in years 1 and 4 on the basis that it polled the highest first preference votes of the three Parties in the two District Electoral Areas of Balmoral and Laganbank. The seat would be allocated to the Democratic Unionist Party in year 2 and to Sinn Fein in year 3 under the same provisions.

2.3 East Belfast Partnership Board (4 Members)

The strengths of the Parties in the Pottinger and Victoria District Electoral Areas is set out below, together with the number of places which the Parties would be entitled to on the Board based upon the strict application of proportionality.

<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>	<u>Representation (year 1)</u>
Sinn Fein	1	(0.31) 0
Democratic Unionist	6	(1.85) 2
SDLP	0	(0.00) 0
Alliance	4	(1.23) 1
Ulster Unionist	1	(0.31) 0
PUP	1	(0.31) 1
Independent	0	(0.00) 0
	13	4

N.B. - There are 3 Parties – Sinn Fein, UUP and PUP – who each have the same remainder figure of 0.31. There is one seat remaining between these 3 Parties and this should be allocated between these Parties over the 4-year term. Accordingly, it is recommended that the extra place is allocated to the PUP in years 1 and 4 on the basis that it polled the highest first preference votes of the three Parties in the two District Electoral Areas of Victoria and Pottinger. The seat would be allocated to UUP in year 2 and to the SF in year 3 under the same provisions.

2.4 West Belfast Partnership Board (8 Members)

The strengths of the Parties in the Lower Falls and Upper Falls District Electoral Areas is set out below, together with the number of places which the Parties would be entitled to on the Board based upon the strict application of proportionality.

<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Members</u>	<u>Representation</u>
Sinn Fein	8	(6.40) 6
Democratic Unionist	0	(0.00) 0
SDLP	2	(1.60) 2
Alliance	0	(0.00) 0
Ulster Unionist	0	(0.00) 0
PUP	0	(0.00) 0
Independent	0	(0.00) 0
	10	8

2.5 Greater Shankill Partnership Board (7 Members)

The appointment of Members to this Board has, historically, been all the Members from the Court District Electoral Area together with any Unionist representatives from the Oldpark District Electoral Area. If this is followed for the term commencing in 2011, then the allocation would be 5 DUP, 1 PUP and 1 Independent Member.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 None.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

4.1 The allocation of Members to the Partnership Boards is, primarily, determined by the strict application of proportionality so that the Parties have the number of seats on the Boards commensurate with their strength on the Council.

5 Recommendation

5.1 The Committee is recommended to make the appointments to the Partnership Boards on the basis set out in the report.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Departmental Plan 2011/2012

The Director submitted for the Committee's approval the Development Departmental Plan for 2011/2012. He pointed out that the Plan identified the key actions, events and initiatives which the Department would oversee in 2011/2012 and added that the Plan enabled the Committee to performance manage the work of the Department. He indicated that the Plan assisted managers and officers to make informed decisions and allocate resources accordingly in line with agreed objectives. In addition, the Plan had been developed in accordance with the estimates and high level objectives as set out by the previous Committee. He pointed out that the Plan would be reviewed later in the financial year to ensure that it remained relevant to the new Committee's priorities.

A prolonged discussion ensued in respect of the contents of the Plan and the point was made, given the size, extent and financial implications to the Council of the proposals contained within the document, that it might be prudent to defer consideration of its contents to enable Members to study it in further detail. In response, the Director indicated that the Plan related to the current financial year only and had been formulated to address priorities as determined by the previous Committee. He pointed out that the Plan referred to the year which had commenced in April and the work of the Department might be impacted upon adversely if Committee approval was not forthcoming. The Director suggested that the newly-established Committee should consider developing a three-year Plan to cover the period 2012/2015, which would be aligned to the priorities of the new Corporate Plan which Members would formulate over the next number of months.

Following discussion, the Committee approved the Departmental Plan for 2011/2012 and it was agreed further that a workshop be arranged to consider the priorities aligned to the Plan for 2012/2015.

Council Engagement in Employability and Skills Development

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 28th March, it had requested that a report, which outlined the wider issue of the Council's future involvement in job creation, sustainability and skills development, be submitted for the Committee's consideration at its meeting in June. Accordingly, the Director outlined the principal aspects of a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, which contained a number of options for the Committee to consider in this regard.

A Member suggested that it might be prudent to defer consideration of the report to enable further discussion and clarification on the proposals contained therein to be provided. A further Member referred to the decision of the Committee of 28th March, at which it had been agreed, under the special expenditure powers as set out under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, to award £15,000 to the Employment Services Board to enable it to continue to operate over a three-month period commencing on 1st April. He enquired if a further legal opinion was required in order to extend funding to that organisation beyond 30th June and suggested that the report should be deferred to the special meeting of the Committee scheduled for 27th June, to allow for such a legal opinion to be considered. In response, the Head of Economic Initiatives pointed out that no formal application had been received from the Employment Services Board to extend the financial arrangement which had been agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 28th March.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Robinson,
Seconded by Councillor Kyle,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report to enable further discussion and clarification of the proposals contained therein and that an update be provided at the special meeting of the Committee to be held on 27th June.

The Committee agreed to this course of action. In addition, the Director undertook to seek a legal opinion in respect of the Committee's powers to extend funding to the Employment Services Board under the special expenditure powers as set out under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

Council Support for Economic and Business Growth

(Alderman Ekin declared an interest and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members may be aware of the focus on creating opportunities for success and of Belfast City Council's work in economic development and the work undertaken to promote economic growth in the city.**
- 1.2 Our role in economic development presently focuses predominantly on supporting the micro and small businesses not currently accessing support from other sources. These companies represent the majority of businesses in Belfast. In fact around 4 in 5 businesses employ 10 people or less.**
- 1.3 In 2010-11 Economic Development:**
 - supported 1,897 businesses, which is around 1 in 8 of all Belfast companies.**
 - provided training and development events for 3,639 people**
 - including over 650 pupils on our Youth Enterprise Programme;**
 - and 265 long-term unemployed on our HARTE programme.**

- helped these people to gain approximately 1,300 new industry accepted qualifications.
- helped 37 people back into further education and training.
- created eighty jobs.
- created £5 additional business revenue for every £1 we invested.

1.4 Examples of our successes include:

- companies on our procurement programme won new business valued in excess of £250,000 and created 2 new jobs.
- participants on our BITES programme saved £240,000 on their overheads in the first year, reduced Energy usage (Gas and electricity) by 800 MWh (Mega Watt Hours) and reduced their waste to landfill by 300 tonnes.
- last year's participation by Belfast companies in the world's largest music and media event in Austin in the USA generated \$270,000 worth of immediate new contracts for Belfast companies.

1.5 In the current economic climate, micro and small businesses continue to face significant challenges. In order to help them address these challenges, a number of support activities are proposed for endorsement. If approved, these will be rolled out directly and in conjunction with partner agencies in the course of the current financial year.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Council carried out its own Belfast Business survey 2011 early this year. It involved a telephone survey of 500 companies located within the city council boundaries. The survey was representative of the business base in the city and was stratified by company size, location and business sector.

2.2 The survey identified the scale of the challenge:

- Less than half of the businesses surveyed (46%) export outside Northern Ireland

- Around 1 in 4 businesses experienced growth over the past 12 months
- While only 12% of businesses questioned in the 2010 survey anticipated a decline in demand for the coming year, 44% of this questioned in this year's survey actually experienced a decline
- In terms of costs, the majority of businesses reported an increase in heating and fuel costs and supplier costs last year. Looking further ahead into 2011 higher proportions are expecting costs to increase across almost all areas
- Almost four out of five businesses are not availing of any government support to help their business.

2.3 In addition to direct engagement with local companies and businesses through economic development Council also interacts with businesses through its regulatory services (licensing; health and safety etc.), asset management (e.g. industrial estates management), markets (both St George's and Smithfield) and essential support services (e.g. waste management).

2.4 Proposed Economic Development Activity 2011-12

Since 1992, the council has also had discretionary responsibility for 'promoting the development of its area'. As part of this remit, it has undertaken economic development including direct activity to provide business support services. This work is undertaken in a number of ways: delivered directly, promoted in partnership with organisations or contracted through third party delivery. Some of this activity is match funded through EU Structural Funds which are managed by Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Department of Employment and Learning (DEL). It is developed in conjunction with relevant partners including Invest NI, both universities, Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC), Local Enterprise Agencies (LEAs) and other agencies working in this field.

2.5 In the course of the last year, the council engaged with 2335 businesses and individuals through a range of business support programmes, events, networking sessions, workshops and tailored mentoring activity.

2.6 In response to the findings of the business survey, and taking account of feedback from companies participating in current initiatives, a range of support initiatives has been developed for 2011/12 to help local companies, particularly the small and micro companies (and including social economy businesses), address their growth challenges at the current time. This programme of activity focuses on a number of broad themes:

- Stimulating entrepreneurship
- Supporting sustainable and inclusive business growth
- Growing key sectors
- Encouraging innovation and development activity
- Enhancing skills levels and creating sustainable employment opportunities.

Details of each of the initiatives, including budgetary commitments are attached below.

2.7 Match funding for the business development activity identified in this report is generally available from DETI through EU funding and is drawn down through a competitive application process. There are some exemptions to this. These include principally:

- **Employability initiatives:** apart from the European Social Fund programme (addressed in another report to this committee), there is not an equivalent match funding source for employability support initiatives
- **Support for independent retail activity:** this sector is not eligible for EU (or national government) support. As such, activities undertaken in this area are funded through council budgets only.

2.8 In addition to these practical support initiatives, the council has an important strategic role to play in determining the future focus and consequent spending priorities to underpin economic growth in the city. We are strengthening our working relationship with Invest NI to agree on the key drivers to ensure the city's economic prosperity and to develop collaborative initiatives to address these, in the framework of an agreed economic strategy for the city.

- 2.9 In a similar vein, we are working with the DEL to address the significant skills challenges in the city – especially among particular groups and in specific geographical locations – and to make the connection between the economic strategy and the supporting role that skills development can play in its delivery.
- 2.10 The council also supports Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) and Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) on an annual basis. Both organisations provide services to their member companies and provide a conduit for the council to interact with businesses and to influence policy and develop collaborative initiatives around city development and tourism growth activity.
- 2.11 The council itself is also a considerable economic generator and creates business opportunities through its procurement processes. There is an opportunity to support local companies to access these and other public sector business opportunities – while adhering to EU stipulations around free movement of goods and services. There is also an opportunity to consider how social clauses can be integrated into contracts, and supporting contractors in implementing these clauses.
- 2.12 Belfast City Council has also engaged in a wide range of initiatives to enhance employability support and improve skills levels in the city. To date, much of this support has focused on site-specific activity e.g. managing the ‘TQ Work’ element of the Titanic Quarter Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and supporting employer engagement work across the city linked to the LEMIS programme. We also developed and managed the HARTE programme, as a response to the growth in the hospitality sector and the opportunities for finding employment opportunities for target groups as part of that development. We have been successful in attracting European Social Fund (ESF) match funding to run this programme for another three years, subject to council endorsement. We are currently working with DEL to look at how a skills and employability agenda for the city might be shaped, bringing together both those who are responsible for policy development and those involved in delivery of activities to ensure a better ‘fit’ to meet the future growth needs of the city.

2.13 The proposed activities for which approval is being sought are detailed below. Additional information on each of these initiatives is attached as Appendix 1. These activities will generally involve a combination of workshop sessions, networking and 1-2-1 mentoring support, based on the individual business needs.

2.14 **PROPOSED COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH**

STIMULATING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>
○ High-growth pre-enterprise support – targeted initiative	£37,500
○ Enterprise Outreach sessions/ mentoring/ events	£50,000
○ Belfast Enterprise Academy	£30,000
○ Belfast Entrepreneurs' Network (BEN)	£10,000
○ Student enterprise competitions	£5,000

2.15 **SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE BUSINESS GROWTH**

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>
○ Sales development support, including events to raise awareness of MTV, 2012 and World Police and Fire Games business opportunities	£50,000
○ Business planning for growth initiative	£33,000
○ Development of an international business networking event aimed at assisting Belfast businesses to gain access to commercial opportunities in local and international markets.	£30,000

2.16 **GROWING KEY SECTORS**

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>
○ Independent retail support programme: support for trader groups; promotional events; business support programme (Retail Therapy) and masterclasses	£200,000
○ Activities to support growth of small businesses in creative industries sector, particularly in film and television, design and digital media sectors	£100,000
○ Hospitality sector support programme – maximising business opportunities from upcoming key events	£100,000

2.17 ENCOURAGING INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>
○ New product development /business diversification support	£50,000
○ Participation in key international promotional events/activities	£50,000
○ E-commerce support/trading online support	£40,000

2.18 ENHANCING SKILLS LEVELS AND CREATING SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>
○ Match-funding support for European Social Fund projects	£60,000
○ Collaborative skills development initiatives for target groups (graduates, disadvantaged groups) – to be developed in conjunction with other partners	£100,000

In addition to these activities, there is a number of existing business support activities which are ongoing at present and for which budgetary approval has already been agreed by this committee. These include:

- Construction sales development initiative: helping 50 local construction companies access sub-contracting/supply opportunities on a range of publicly and privately funded regeneration initiatives
- Export development support: structured programme of support for a total of 30 local companies, helping these explore the practicalities of exporting and potentially trade part in trade visits or missions
- Access to finance support: helping up to 30 local businesses take stock of their financial planning and management, focusing on how they can get additional finance into the business
- BITES (Business Improvements through Environmental Solutions) programme: helping up to 24 local businesses reduce their energy use and environmental management, with a view to reducing overheads and pollution.

- Creative Industries – delivering 5 projects for sme’s working in the film, television, digital media, music and design sectors. Through networking events, business development projects and mentoring, 400 companies will be assisted, 5 new business starts identified and 10 new creative products developed.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial resources

The financial resources required for each element of the programme are detailed above. All of the budgets have been accounted for within the existing departmental allocation for the current financial year. Where possible, external funding is being sought or is already in place for all activities.

3.2 Human Resources

The programme will be coordinated and project managed by staff from the Economic Development Unit (EDU). Delivery will be done either directly through EDU staff, developed in partnership with other organisations or commissioned through a procurement exercise, as appropriate.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- #### **4.1**
- There are no specific equality or good relations considerations associated with these activities.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Approve the proposed activities by council to support business growth, particularly for the city’s micro and small businesses, including social economy companies and approve the financial allocations required to deliver each of these;
- Agree to delegate authority to the Director of Development, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee (or nominees), to approve the most economically advantageous tender for the delivery of the activities, as appropriate.

Appendix

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Description</u>
High-growth pre-enterprise programme	£37,500	<p>Providing pre-enterprise support for the development of high-level business ideas with a particular focus on creativity, innovation and product development. It is hoped that the programme will be of particular interest to graduates and those who have recently been made redundant. The targets for the programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 participants per wave • Support 5 participants to start a business within year 1 • Support 2 businesses per wave to become Invest NI client within 2 years
Enterprise Outreach sessions/ mentoring/ events	£50,000	<p>This enterprise plan aims to foster the spirit of enterprise while also encouraging the development and growth of existing businesses within the city's population. The targets for the programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide business advice and referral service from Consumer Advice Centre in City Centre location in partnership with Local Enterprise Agencies. • Provide 15 business information and ideas generation sessions to promote enterprise with particular attention to targeted communities. • Provide 15 enterprise workshops for existing businesses with average attendance of 15 participants • Provide 45 participants from enterprise workshops with up to 1.5 days one-to-one mentoring • Organise 2 enterprise events each year - Average participation at each event of 50 businesses/participants • Refer 60 businesses/participants per year to additional support programmes, networks and workshops
Belfast Enterprise Academy	£30,000	<p>Pre-enterprise student support programme which aims to assist up to 20 degree students to explore ideas and creativity, gain best practice from existing innovative businesses and develop business ideas. Almost 50% of participants in previous waves of this programme are now operating their own businesses. The targets for this programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 students supported • 4 students per wave to start a business within 2 years • Refer participants through to other forms of support and start-up programmes including Advantage, Go For It, UnLtd, Invest NI

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Description</u>
Belfast Entrepreneurs' Network (BEN)	£10,000	<p>Belfast Entrepreneurs Network (BEN) is a networking and discussion forum for small businesses located in the city. BEN was established in 2007 and has grown to a membership exceeding 600, with up to 100 business people attending the networking events. The targets for the programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise and facilitate 10 networking/workshop events • 1 joint networking event with another organisation e.g. Labour Relations Agency, Environmental Health. • Average attendance of 45 businesses per event
Student enterprise competitions	£5,000	<p>The student enterprise competition provides young people with an opportunity to run a business for a day in teams of 4-6. The targets for this programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Business Bites Day for 50 students • Assist up to 25 students to develop business plans • Enable 4 teams to run a business for a day • Provide opportunities to access advice and support from associated business and support agencies. • Provide a celebration event to announce winning team and generate interest in enterprise
Sales development support, including meet the buyer events and initiatives to raise awareness of MTV, 2012 and World Police and Fire Games business opportunities	£50,000	<p>The Sales Development programme is a continuation of a successful programme that has assisted over 45 businesses with more than 50% recording an increase in sales following involvement in the programme. The programme consists of 4 sales training workshops; 24 hours one to one mentoring and 12 hours dedicated sales prospecting support with all participating businesses guaranteed at least 6 introductions to potential new customers. The targets for this programme are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support 15 businesses a year • 30% progressing to Invest NI status • an aggregate sales growth of 25% per cohort.
Business planning for growth initiative	£33,000	<p>Helping local businesses develop a business plan to support a planned approach to growth (less than half of businesses in the business survey had a business plan). This is a continuation of a successful programme (Strategy in Business Initiative) that has previously assisted 45 businesses develop strategic planning skills and take actions to improve their overall business performance and profitability. The targets for the programme are:</p>

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Description</u>
Business planning for Growth initiative (contd)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recruit 15 companies per year for 3 years • To deliver 4 masterclasses in strategic planning each year • To deliver 32 hours of tailored mentoring for participating businesses • 30% of participants to become eligible for Invest NI support • 10% aggregate increase in profitability for participating companies
Helping companies access procurement opportunities in public and private sectors	£30,000	<p><u>Belfast MEET</u> Belfast Meet 2011 is an international business networking event aimed at assisting Belfast businesses to gain access to new commercial opportunities in local and international markets. The targets are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of 40 Belfast based small businesses who demonstrate the potential and desire for growth • A minimum of 2 pre-event mentoring sessions per company to prepare them for meeting buyers • A minimum of 120 business to business meetings • A minimum of 10 local large buyers and 5 international buyers to attend the event. • 30% of companies to secure new business customers generated through this initiative
Independent retail support programme	£200,000	<p><u>Trader Engagement</u> – Council will provide support to traders across the city to help them to form legally constituted groups/associations. Tailored advice sessions will be offered to groups to help facilitate this. Target – support up to 4 traders groups become established.</p> <p><u>Area Campaigns</u> – Council will offer support to allow local trader groups to develop collaborative marketing campaigns to promote the clusters of independent retail businesses across Belfast with a shop local focus and aim to improve recognition of the importance of the independent retail sector in the city. Target – Support up to 2 area campaigns.</p> <p><u>Retail Therapy</u> – This tailored support programme allows independent retailers to assess their business and take action to move their business forward. Target - 30 independent retailers assisted.</p>

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Description</u>
Independent retail support programme (contd)		<p>Market Start Up Programme – This programme will enable potential entrepreneurs to explore market trading as a possible business model. Participants will complete the National Market Traders Federation’s ‘NMFT First Support Programme’ which is specific to establishing a market-focused business, have access to specialist mentors and have an opportunity to test trade at St. George’s Market.</p> <p>Target – 10 traders to be assisted</p> <p>Retail Masterclasses These masterclasses delivered by retail and trade specialists are aimed at raising skills levels of existing retailers and improving the health and vitality of our shops. Themes may include marketing, visual merchandising, selling online, customer service and advertising and promotions.</p> <p>Target - 6 masterclasses (average attendance 25)</p> <p>Independent Retail Week – This festival is aimed at celebrating independent retail in the city through a week of events to drive brand awareness, business and increase revenue for small independents as well as visual merchandising and customer care workshops to improve the skills base of retailers and their staff.</p> <p>Target – deliver Retail Week by March 2012</p>
Activities to support growth of small businesses in creative industries sector	£100,000	Working with sector support bodies to develop new business initiatives for fledgling companies and those with the potential to achieve significant growth. Consideration will be give to the cross-over between the identified sectors (film and television, design, music and digital media). Details to be agreed upon with partners. Targets to be set subsequently.
Hospitality sector support programme – maximising business opportunities from upcoming key events	£100,000	<p>The programme will increase opportunities for local businesses to take advantage of tourism related developments and events it will consist of three inter-related initiatives: developing and improving the Belfast tourism product; improving customer care skills a bespoke sales growth programme targeted at businesses involved in hospitality and tourist related industries. The programmes will consist of a mixture of workshops; masterclasses; product development; customer care (Welcome Host) training; mentoring; sales training and meet the buyer events. The targets for the Programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 people will be trained through the Welcome Host Programme; • 45 businesses will receive sales development training directly related to tourism development;

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Description</u>
Hospitality Sector (contd)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120 businesses will have opportunity to meet major buyers related to hospitality and tourism industries; • 20 new tourism products will be developed; • 16 Belfast Tourism champions will be recruited and supported to develop plans and product development support to increase and enhance the Belfast Tourist product.
New product development/ business diversification support	£50,000	<p>Helping local companies consider the potential for environmental and process efficiencies and assisting traditional manufacturing businesses to diversify and take advantage of emerging opportunities in international growth sectors, predominantly within the lucrative market for low carbon goods and services. A total of three projects will be delivered through this activity with the following targets;</p> <p><u>BITES (Business Improvement through Environmental Solutions)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 105 businesses supported over 3 years – 30 from the Belfast City Council area, 30 from the Newtownabbey Borough Council area, 30 from the Lisburn City Council area and 15 from the Carrickfergus Borough Council area; • 6 full day workshops per cohort – 6 cohorts over the lifetime of the Programme; • An average of £10,000 savings identified and implemented for the participating businesses • 105 participants to achieve Phase 3 of the BS 8555 – IEMA Acorn Approach to Environmental Management; and • 105 participants to achieve the IEMA Foundation Certificate in Environmental management UK. <p><u>AIMS (Advanced Industry Material Saving Programme)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 businesses supported over 3 years – 18 from the Belfast City Council area and 18 from the Lisburn City Council area; • 6 half day workshops delivered each year; • Profitability improvement of 5% per business; and • Savings and improved productivity of £40,000 per participant. <p><u>Diversification Support Programme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 businesses supported over 3 years; • 45 diversification plans and opportunity analyses conducted; • 3 days of targeted mentoring support per participant; and • 15 businesses to develop new/improved products and services aimed at international growth opportunities, predominantly within the market for low carbon goods and services.

<u>Programme/activity</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Description</u>
Participation in key international promotional events/activities	£50,000	Consideration to be given to participation in appropriate promotional events, e.g. MIPIM, subject to analysis of benefit to be gained from such participation.
E-commerce support/trading online support	£40,000	This programme will support small and new businesses to review the application of new technologies in improving business performance (e.g. developing a website, assistance to explore e-commerce capabilities of the business and introduction of new technological methods to promote the business or make it more efficient). Target - 15 businesses per year and at least 25% will progress to Invest NI status and there will be an increase of sales per cohort of 15 of 20%
Match-funding support for European Social Fund projects	£60,000	Match funding for identified European Social Fund (ESF) projects, as outlined in separate committee report.
Collaborative skills development initiatives for target groups (graduates, disadvantaged groups) – to be developed in conjunction with other partners	£100,000	Pilot skills development programmes, capitalising on new growth sectors. Detail to be agreed with partners. Targets to be set subsequently.
Research/economic intelligence	£30,000	Commissioned research to support approach to new integrated economic strategy as well as targeting focus of existing and new business growth support.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Ó Muilleoir,
Seconded by Councillor McVeigh,

That, given the extent of the recession affecting local businesses across the City, consideration of the report be deferred to enable Political Party briefings to be provided on the proposals and how they would address the economic downturn.

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

After further discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations.

Quarterly Financial Report

The Committee noted the contents of the Department's Quarterly Financial Report for the period January till March, 2011.

Research into the Competitiveness of Belfast

The Committee noted the contents of a report which had been prepared by Oxford Economics in respect of the economic competitiveness of Belfast.

Rebalancing the Northern Ireland Economy: Consultation

The Committee approved, subject to the strengthening therein of the Council's comments on its support for a reduction in the rate of Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland, the undernoted response to the aforementioned consultation being undertaken by HM Treasury:

“Is there a need to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy by strengthening the private sector over the longer term and to increase economic growth and promote significant new investment?”

The UK government has invested heavily in growing the private sector in Northern Ireland for some 30 years especially since the introduction of the EU Structural Funds in 1995 with over £4billion allocated to economic development over that period. However it is clear that that investment, while necessary, has contributed to a structural imbalance in the economy. The upshot is that the regional economy is now seen as being dependent on the public sector, with a private sector whose potential for growth, innovation and exports needs to be further boosted¹.

Going forward, it is clear that there will be less public funding available and therefore an alternative approach is essential.

In this regard, cities – and Belfast in particular – can play a significant role in meeting this challenge. In the current Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 10 year review, it is noted that the new RDS is being prepared in a very different economic context to its predecessor. The consultation document describes ‘how cities and urban areas will come to the fore and will be the drivers for economic development. The main spatial considerations shaping future growth are the importance of Belfast and Derry with a network of key service centres...’ (para 2.59). Belfast currently provides employment for 108,000 in-commuters from neighbouring districts – over half of all those employed in the city². It is also home to two-thirds of Northern Ireland's service sector FDI (by value) and 75% of total NI service sector exports originate from Belfast.

¹ Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2011), *Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland*

² Oxford Economics, (2009), *Belfast Flows of People, Skills, Spending and Investment*

Cities therefore have the potential to make the greatest contribution to the required economic growth and efforts to grow the private sector should consequently be focused here.

Where is there most scope for increasing productivity, reducing labour market inactivity and increasing growth?

The focus should be on developing both 'soft' and 'hard' economic infrastructure.

In our response to the Northern Ireland Executive's consultation on 'Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Prosperity', we suggested that addressing the skills challenges was fundamental to addressing the challenges of productivity growth, labour market inactivity and economic growth.

We referred to a report undertaken on behalf of Belfast City Council in 2008 which found that over half of net new jobs in Belfast over next decade will require graduate qualifications while less than 1 in 7 will require no qualifications. A similar report undertaken at Northern Ireland level sought to forecast future skills needs up to the period 2020 – the period of this strategy³. This report noted that, if Northern Ireland had equivalent UK concentrations in sectors, the following could be achieved:

- 12,000 more people in employment with sub-degree, degree and post-graduate qualifications
- 30,000 more managers and 20,000 more professionals
- 4,000 more STEM degree holders
- 7,000 more creative and arts degree holders in the workforce.

In order to achieve the targets set within the existing Programme for Government (PfG), it suggested that growth would require uplift in skill levels across the workforce, particularly at graduate and post graduate level. The current funding challenges around university education will place additional pressure on achieving this target.

The report concluded that there was an absence of a clear sectoral roadmap for the economic future of the region. We consider that this is an important element in maximising economic growth: identifying key sectors where the region can compete globally and putting place the support services (skills, infrastructure) to allow these to be addressed.

³ DEL, 2009, *Forecasting Future Skills Needs in Northern Ireland*

The economic inactivity challenge remains the most stubborn of all challenges and has not been impacted to any significant degree, even during the period of economic growth, prior to 2008. The report suggests that welfare reform has the potential to impact positively on this challenge. However, we would contend that careful consideration needs to be given to managing the short-term difficulties that this may create, particularly in some geographical areas of the city of Belfast and other large conurbations. It may be appropriate to look at introducing some flexibility or innovation in the benefit regime, as has happened in other countries i.e. phasing out of benefits over a period, allowing people to retain some benefits while they are training for employment. The ultimate objective is to help those who can work to find employment – and therefore make a positive contribution to the economy – but this process needs to be carefully managed.

How could a reduction in the rate of corporation tax in Northern Ireland support additional investment, higher growth rates and increased employment in the Northern Ireland economy?

HM Treasury has concluded that a reduced corporation tax could play a significant role in helping to rebalance the NI economy in the long term by encouraging foreign and direct investment and indigenous private sector growth.

The prevailing rate of corporation tax on trading profits in the RoI is 12.5% which, some commentators have argued undermines NI's ability to attract and sustain inward investment and has given the RoI a distinct economic advantage in this respect. However, HM Treasury advises caution in assuming that a lower corporation tax would have the same effect in NI as it has had in the RoI. This point is echoed in the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's report on the Corporation Tax proposals, from May 2011.

A recent report by PricewaterhouseCoopers⁴ (PwC), found 'no evidence' that the Irish Republic's low corporation tax, had, by itself attracted high levels of foreign direct investment. PwC's own research suggests that a variety of factors, of which low corporation tax was only one, contributed to the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' economy meanwhile a reduction the NI rate to the levels being called for could have a negative impact on tax revenues that in turn could lead to a cut in the NI 'block grant' by as much as £280million per annum. PwC takes the view that an attractive tax regime, with world-class infrastructure and skills, and an efficient planning system make a better offering to inward investors.

⁴ 'Government Futures: Corporation Tax - Game changer or game over?' PricewaterhouseCoopers, (January 2011)

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee report on this issue suggests that 'much of the evidence to the Committee has suggested lowering the corporation rate would be advantageous but would not be effective in isolation⁵'. In this regard, corporation tax could be effective if it was part of a basket of investments and incentives geared towards improving productivity and creating economic growth.

What are the views on the estimated costs impacts on tax receipts arising from a lower corporation tax rate in Northern Ireland?

HM Treasury offers some scenarios but cannot provide a definitive analysis of the cost to NIE's block grant. Assuming additional investment and business growth arising from a 12.5% reduction in corporation tax it is estimated that an extra £10-20million could be raised in tax revenue per annum with a corresponding increase in excise duties of up to £55million per annum as a result of rising demand for consumption of goods and services. If this is the case, this is a positive development, and the Northern Ireland Executive will need to put in place a framework in which these monies are reinvested in activities to promote further economic growth.

It is acknowledged that the sums used in the consultation are indicative and that there is no precise figure available on current corporation tax contributions from Northern Ireland companies. The Northern Ireland Committee report suggests that 'The Northern Ireland Executive needs to know how much corporation tax is raised in Northern Ireland, how the corresponding reduction in the block grant will be calculated, including how the block grant is readjusted in retrospect, and how this is likely to impact upon the total block grant and public expenditure planning now and in the future⁶'. Reducing the level of corporation tax and the financial impact of that requires solid baseline information as a starting point for making calculations on the potential impacts.

What are the risks to the Northern Ireland Executive arising from a devolved corporation tax rate?

The greatest risk would come about if a cut fails to bring about a net increase in new business investment. In this scenario, the revenue shortfall will have to be found from the NI 'block grant' or from savings/additional revenues elsewhere. In order to mitigate this risk, the Northern Ireland Executive will have to put in place a comprehensive enterprise-focused programme for government in which all relevant departments are working towards common goals and targets.

⁵ Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2011), *Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland*, p49

⁶ Northern Ireland Affairs Committee (2011), *Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland*, p30

There is also potentially a risk of displacement, where a GB based company decides to relocate to NI to take advantage of a 'softer' tax regime at the expense of another deprived part of the UK. In both scenarios, the risk management lies with the Northern Ireland Executive so measures would need to be put in place to deal with this.

There is also a potential risk of 'transfer pricing' strategies where multi-plant companies attribute a greater share of their profits to NI to avoid tax that would otherwise be payable to the UK Exchequer. In this scenario, the Northern Ireland Executive and Exchequer would need to work closely together to ensure that this does not occur.

What are the potential compliance costs and administrative burdens for business arising from a devolved corporation tax rate in Northern Ireland?

As with any new process, there will be start-up costs for the new tax regime, operating costs and auditing expenses that would have to be covered from any revenue collected.

It is noted that calculating these costs is a difficult task but that any costs would have to be borne by the Northern Ireland Executive. We would recommend that the system put in place is sufficiently resourced to ensure a smooth transfer and to simplify the system for businesses from the outset.

What approach should be taken to adjust the block grant arising from a devolved corporation tax rate in Northern Ireland?

As identified above, we consider that it is important for the Treasury to make an assessment of the corporation tax 'take' from Northern Ireland at present in order to identify the scale of the cut from the block grant.

Once this information is available, responsibility can then be given to the Northern Ireland Executive to give the Assembly the power to set its own rate of corporation tax; and allow the Assembly to keep those receipts.

There are various ways in which the new rate can be introduced – either as a one-off change at a certain point in time or by a phased approach over a number of years.

What are the views on the balance of potential costs and benefits of a reduced corporation tax rate in Northern Ireland?

If effective rebalancing of the economy is achieved and there is a net increase in new foreign and direct investment and a growth in indigenous firms, then the loss of tax yields may be offset.

Alternatively if the recession continues and other global factors continue to chip away at Northern Ireland's competitiveness, the reduction in the block grant could be punitive with a corresponding impact on productivity, living standards and public services.

Given that the Northern Ireland Executive will bear the risks should receipts be lower than anticipated, it is critical that accurate calculations of the current contribution to the Exchequer from corporation tax in Northern Ireland are established as a baseline. This will allow informed decision making about the level of any new rate as well as the method of introduction.

However, at this stage, there is still some further work to be done to determine whether the introduction of such a measure is practical and, indeed, possible. If that is the case, we consider that there is merit in exploring the potential of varying the corporation tax as a possible tool for enhancing the region's economic competitiveness on a global scale - but only if it is accompanied by a range of wider supporting measures.

What are the views on the merits of a deferred implementation of a rate reduction in Northern Ireland and its potential impact on investment decisions?

As previously noted, it may take some time for the practicalities around the establishment of this system to be put in place. As such, we consider that there is likely to be some lead in time from announcement to introduction. We would suggest that it is important that sufficient resources are allocated at this stage and therefore do not see that the system could come into place with immediate effect in any case. However the deferral would potentially be short term.

If this was the case, this may not impact too negatively on investment decisions, given that they generally take some time to come to fruition. There is a need for balance in this and we would suggest that a deferral period, if introduced, would be time-bound and of a relatively short duration.

What are the views on the extent to which a phased reduction in the rate of corporation tax in Northern Ireland could support a rebalancing of the economy while allowing the costs of the reduction to be more effectively managed?

The consultation identifies the relative merits of a phased approach in terms of allowing gradual adjustments to the regime and managing the impact on the overall Northern Ireland Executive. This approach appears to have popular political support and may reduce the perceived risks arising from a reduction in the block grant.

However the central issue for the potential investors and for existing businesses appears to be the consideration that, once introduced, the measure should have some degree of certainty as to its longevity. This is critical for future economic stability and can not only help secure new business but also encourage repeat investments by existing companies.

What are the views on the impact that restricting any reduction in corporation tax receipts to trading income only would have on the aim of rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy and the value for money of a corporation tax reduction?

The consultation notes that proceeding along the lines of Republic of Ireland i.e. only trading income is subject to the reduced corporation tax (12.5%) with non-trading income (e.g. interest on investments) taxed at 25%, would lead to a scenario where up to £85m per annum in revenue receipts might be foregone.

If a differentiated approach were to be taken, consideration would need to be given to introducing regulations to prevent or restrict losses being transferred between trading and non-trading income and thereby avoid 'brass plating', where businesses move to a lower cost location without any significant economic benefit accruing to that area.

While the final decision on the detail of the policy would rest with the Northern Ireland Executive, we would urge that any policy introduced in straightforward for the businesses to understand and that it is based on embedding companies within the locality and adding value to the local economy.

What are the views on whether there are other options to offset the cost to the NIE of a reduction in the rate of corporation tax that would be consistent with the overall aim of rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy?

The proposal that a reduction in corporation tax could be resourced by reducing other fiscal incentives e.g. R&D credits, would potentially have a counter-effect and may outweigh the benefits that a reduction in corporation tax might bring about. This development would not be consistent with efforts to rebalancing the economy as this is precisely the type of activity that the government wishes to encourage more of.

What are the views on extent to which changes to R&D tax credits, annual investment allowance, training credits or a national insurance holiday could provide feasible, effective, affordable and value for money support for the rebalancing of the Northern Ireland economy.

As identified above, the UK government is already considering measures to enhance the uptake of R&D among businesses and this development can be a welcome support measure to encourage greater innovation, particularly for small businesses.

However it is our view that there is no need for a change to the taxation system to allow this to happen. It is, rather, an issue of promoting the uptake of such incentives, and this can be done by encouraging greater collaboration between the research communities and local businesses.

We have already noted that we consider that investment in skills development is central to the successful deliver of an ambitious economic vision for Northern Ireland's economic growth. However consideration will have to be given as to whether this is done by fiscal incentives or by re-configuring the education and training systems to support greater work-based learning and to re-orientate the systems to underpin the current and future growth of the economy."

Collaborative Attendance at MIPIM 2012

The Director reminded the Committee that the MIPIM Conference was one of the world's largest property exhibitions and was held each year in Cannes, France. Since 2000, the Council had been represented at the event and in 2010 it had hosted a promotional stand in conjunction with Lisburn and Derry City Councils, together with a range of government departments and private sector companies. The Director provided the Committee with an overview of the advantages and disadvantages which that collaborative approach had brought and reported that, in 2010, excluding staffing costs, it had cost the Council £20,000 to participate at MIPIM.

The Director outlined a number of options for consideration for the Council's future participation at the event and provided an overview of the costs and potential benefits. He acknowledged that, whilst the Council had participated at MIPIM for a significant number of years, it had been somewhat difficult to identify the specific

benefits which the City had accrued, given the significant costs associated with participation. He suggested, given the current constraints on the Council's financial resources, that the Committee consider reviewing the Council's future options for participation at MIPIM or other similar events.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Humphrey,
Seconded by Councillor Robinson and

Resolved – That the Council agrees not to be represented at the MIPIM Conference in 2012.

Shopmobility and Belfast City Centre Management

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will be aware that, at the 16 March 2011 meeting of the Development Committee, it was agreed that up to £25,000 would be provided to Shopmobility for the provision of accessibility services within the city centre. This funding was to be framed within a service level agreement with Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM), ensuring that the services provided were aligned to the aims and objectives of this organisation.

1.2 At its 27 April 2011 meeting, the Board of BCCM indicated that it was concerned that the services to be provided were not proprietary and that, potentially, an organisation other than Shopmobility could provide these services.

1.3 It was therefore proposed that a quotation for the procurement of the specified services be drawn up and issued by BCCM, subject to endorsement of this approach by Belfast City Council.

2 Key Issues

2.1 In discussions with BCCM, it emerged that there are a number of accessibility-related activities within their current business plan which would benefit from specialised input. These include:

2.2 Accessibility into and around the city centre

- Audit and assessment of the 10 'mobility hubs' identified in a recent DSD/DRD report**

- Present reports on the facilities at each location and develop action plans for the enhancement of provision at these locations
- Undertake an audit of designated 'walking corridors' on key city centre routes to check for accessibility issues e.g. crossing points; drop-off points; dropped kerbs
- Present reports to identify priority actions to enhance accessibility on these routes.

2.3 Marketing and Communication

- Development of a marketing and communication campaign to promote the Belfast Access Guide – to be launched in June 2011
- Support retailers and small businesses in implementing best practice identified in the guide.

2.4 It is proposed that these activities will frame the work programme for the delivery period August 2011 – March 2012.

2.5 An advert for the provision of services will be placed in relevant local press, following agreement of the specification and procurement process.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 A budget of up to £25,000 has been set aside for this work within the current year's business plan.

3.2 If this approach is endorsed, the delivery of this work will be overseen by the Public Space Management Group of BCCM (chaired by Belfast City Council's Director of Health and Environmental Services).

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 Positive contribution to equality and good relations by enhancing accessibility for those with accessibility problems.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members:

- note and approve the proposal by BCCM to go through a procurement exercise for the provision of accessibility services, further to the Committee's decision of 16 March 2011

- **approve the proposed work plan outlined in section 2.2 and 2.3.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Advice Services Funding

The Committee was reminded that the Council was, as part of a consortium which had been established in 2005, a major funder of advice and information services across the City. It was reported that the Council's level of funding for 2011/2012 was £355,729 and that the Department for Social Development provided match funding to the Community Support Programme, which in 2011/2012 would be in the sum of £469,902. The Committee was also reminded that, in 2011/2012, the Council's advice allocations for the City would be distributed on the following percentage basis, viz., North Belfast 27.33%; South Belfast 13.51%; East Belfast 16.82%; West Belfast 32.34% and City Centre 10.00%, which would be subject to a future review.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to accept the Department for Social Development's funding of £469,902 for 2011/2012. It was agreed also that this would be distributed across the City in accordance with the percentage breakdown as set out.

Titanic Centenary: Tenders for Events and Creative Lights Show

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request extensions to existing events tenders beyond their initial contract period and for the issuing of a laser lighting tender for the purpose of the marking the opening of the Belfast Titanic building. This tender would be on behalf of NITB with BCC as the delivery vehicle for the event, but not involve Council finances.**
- 1.2 Members are asked to note that in October 2010 Council agreed to the issuing of the tenders listed below:**
- 1.3**
 - **Production Management**
 - **PA, Stage and Lighting**
 - **Mobile Video Screens**
 - **Fireworks**
 - **Carnival Parade**
- 1.4 All these tenders assist in the delivery of the Council's large scale civic events by the way of production management contracts with a variety of companies. This arrangement allows experienced operators to tender for Council contracts whilst full budgetary control remains within the Council. These service contracts would be issued initially for one year, with the option of renewal for a further three years.**

1.5 Members are being asked to extend the existing contracts. The rationale behind the request to Committee is due to: the need to develop and put in place a more robust procurement strategy aimed at achieving greater value for money and minimising risks associated with today's public procurement environment. All these factors have added to a considerable delay to the issuing of tenders, along with added workloads for both the Procurement and City Events Units. As a result, it is unlikely that the respective tender processes will be completed by the end of the terms of the current contract periods.

1.6 **Belfast Titanic Festival 2012 Laser & Lighting Tender**

As part of the commemoration to mark the centenary of Titanic 2012 Members are being requested to agree to the issuing of a tender for a laser and lighting show on behalf of NITB on the basis that this event will form part of the Council lead Titanic Belfast festival.

2 **Key Issues**

2.1 The City Events Unit has been working with the Council's Procurement Unit since the Committee approved the issuing of the tenders in October 2010. As the process has developed it has become clear that in order to ensure maximum value for money within the tendering process that considerable more work is required to enable the tenders to go public. Therefore, with the endorsement of the Procurement Unit, Members are asked to approve an extension to the existing contracts.

2.2 The existing service contracts are due to expire between the end August and the start of November 2011 and despite the extensive work by the both Council units it is clear that the tendering process will not be completed before the expiration of the current contracts. Therefore, Members are being requested to agree to the extending of the contracts on a month to month basis, with a cap of six months from July 2011.

2.3 **Belfast Titanic Festival 2012 Laser & Lighting Tender**

Members are reminded that the Council has agreed to the staging of a series of events connected to the centenary of the Titanic in 2012. As part of the commemoration the Council will be working with NITB to deliver a Belfast Titanic Festival during 2012. Part of this event will involve a world-class laser

lighting show on the outside of the new Titanic Belfast building. This project would be funded solely by NITB but tendered for by BCC. This show would be run over a two week period at a cost of £500,000 and be a part of the planned overall Titanic Belfast centenary programme, managed by BCC. The significant cost attached to this element is the desire to showcase not only the new Belfast Titanic building, but to produce a display of a truly international standard, that will help to attract international visitors to the city.

- 2.4 Members are asked to note that alternative sites are also being considered by NITB for this show. Therefore, if members agreed to the issuing of this tender an update of the final chosen location will be brought back to Council in due course.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The cumulative cost of extending tenders would be £230,000. This finance is within the Council's City Events Unit revenue budget

- 3.2 The budget for the Titanic Belfast laser lighting show would not involve Council resources and would be financed solely by NITB.

3.3 Human Resources

There are no additional staffing resources connected to this report. All elements will be handled within existing staff structures.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 As with all major civic events activity, the outputs have the potential to bring together people from a wide range of backgrounds and therefore promote good relations in the city.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is requested that Members approve:

- an extension to the contracts stated above
- the issuing of a laser lighting contract on behalf of Northern Ireland Tourist Board."

During discussion, the Head of City Events and Venues clarified for the Members a number of issues regarding the proposed extension to the current contracts and indicated that the Council's Procurement Unit and Legal Services Section had both confirmed that it would be appropriate and cost efficient in these instances to extend the terms of the contracts. In addition, it was pointed out that the Council's ability to deliver the projects outlined might be impacted upon should there be a delay in extending the contracts.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau - Update Report

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report which outlined the targets which had been set in respect of visitor numbers, business and leisure tourism and visitor servicing by the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau for the year 2011/2012.

Cultural Tourism Visitor Management Plan - Tender for City Signage

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 Cultural Tourism Visitor Management Plan

The Cultural Tourism Visitor Management Plan (CTVMP) was developed in 2004 to encourage visitor flow throughout Belfast through the provision of an integrated navigation, orientation and interpretative signage system.

1.2 Approximately 200 signs have been installed throughout the City to date including welcome hubs, primary hubs, navigational blades, building blades and finger posts. Appendix 1 outlines the images of the Signage Scheme. New signs are erected subject to demand and budget availability.

1.3 At the meeting of the Council in March 2007 approval was given for the Cultural Tourism Visitor Management tender and in August 2007 a four year tender was awarded to deliver the CTVMP Phase 2 to include the design, manufacture, delivery, installation, storage and subsequent maintenance of signs. The current CTVMP tender ends in September 2011. Appendix 2 gives an example of the Tender Signage Brief for Phase 1 CTVMP.

1.4 In 2009, the Cultural Tourism Visitor Management Plan won the Association of Town Centre Management's National Award in the 'Centre Move' Category, which dealt with moving people around the centre of a city.

2. **Key Issues**

- 2.1 **Members are asked to consider inviting tenders for a further four year period. The value will be up to £100,000 per annum and therefore the contract must be advertised via European journal and will take approximately 10-12 weeks to award.**
- 2.2 **In case there is any delay in the tendering process, Members are also asked to approve the extension of the existing contract until the new contract is in place. If required, this would be no more than a few weeks.**
- 2.3 **The current CTVMPT tender is being delivered by Red Sky Group Ltd. The Directors of Red Sky placed the company into Voluntary Administration following the purported cancellation of contracts by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The decision was taken with full agreement and the continuing support of the bank.**
- 2.4 **The Administrators (BDO Chartered Accountants) have successfully secured the support of the Company's core supplier and sub-contractor ensuring a continuity of supply of its services.**
- 2.5 **The Council's Legal Services and Project Management Unit met with BDO, to discuss the current trading status.**
- 2.6 **The outcome is that Red Sky is continuing to trade and is supported by the bank and Administrator who want to ensure they continue as an ongoing concern. All of the Council's orders will be monitored by the Administrators. The Council's Legal Services and Project Management Unit are satisfied with this arrangement and Red Sky will continue to deliver the CTVMPT until the contract expires in September 2011 or if agreed by Members, when a new contractor is appointed.**

3. **Resource Implications**

3.1 **Financial**

Tender for the design, interpretation, construction, cleaning and maintenance of signage, over four years. £100,000 per annum exists within Departmental budgets for ongoing cleaning and maintenance.

3.2 Human Resources

Within the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit. The process of tendering will be managed by the Procurement Unit and the contract will be managed in partnership with the Project Management team in Property & Projects Department.

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 approve the invitation to tender for a four year period, for the design, interpretation, construction, cleaning and maintenance of signage, and that delegated authority be given to the Director of Development to appoint the most competitive tender.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Titanic Quarter Memorandum of Understanding –
Community Engagement**

(Mr. T. Husbands, who had recently been appointed to the position of Chief Executive of Titanic Belfast, left the room whilst discussion in this matter was ongoing.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will be aware of the financial commitment of £10million to be made by Council towards Titanic Belfast, an iconic tourism signature project for the City and Northern Ireland. This new world-class visitor attraction forms part of the regeneration of the Titanic Quarter, a major mixed use scheme that once complete will form a new quarter of the city within an expanded Belfast City Centre offering residential, tourism, retail, leisure and high quality employment opportunities to the residents of Belfast and beyond.

1.2 Titanic Belfast was first identified in NITB’s Strategic Framework for Action 2004-2007 as one of five key tourism signature projects for development to enhance the Northern Ireland tourism offering. Identified for its potential to create international stand out and world class excellence

for Northern Ireland, Titanic Belfast is based on the Titanic and Maritime Belfast Heritage theme. This iconic building, located in the heart of the Titanic Quarter development will open in April 2012 marking the 100th anniversary of the launch of the vessel. It will showcase the story of the Titanic and the wider theme of shipbuilding and seafaring in Belfast, including the engineering, industrial, social, cultural and economic origins and connections.

- 1.3 The Titanic Belfast project is leveraging £90million of public and private sector investment and will create not just significant economic benefits but a wide range of social benefits which will have the potential to improve the quality of life for everyone in the City.
- 1.4 Members may recall that as a condition to the Council's funding, Titanic Quarter Ltd (TQL) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Council in June 2009. The aim of the MOU is to maximize the potential of the regeneration of the former shipyard, ensuring the development is integrated with the rest of Belfast. The agreement sets out obligations on both parties and a number of Government Departments to ensure that people from all over the City have the capacity to access the opportunities arising from the regeneration of the 185-acre site. The current MOU sets out the governance structure and management arrangements for taking this process forward and seeks to promote partnership working across a number of priority areas namely, work, tourism, housing, space, access and outreach. Working Groups have been set up under each of these themes, all of which are now functional, albeit with different levels of impact at this point. A detailed report on the progress of the various workstreams will be presented to the Titanic Quarter Working Group once it is reconstituted.
- 1.5 At a Special Meeting of the Committee on 30 November 2010 Members noted a critical issue was to ensure effective city wide engagement and agreed that a project be developed to design and implement a meaningful and comprehensive engagement programme, ensuring that communities have both ownership of and access to all the opportunities presented by the Titanic/ 2012. In agreeing the above, Members also noted that some existing resources would have to be reallocated in order to undertake the project.

- 1.6 The main purpose of this report is therefore to update Members on progress made by Council in relation to addressing these city-wide engagement priorities.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Since the special meeting on 30 November, significant progress has been made in addressing a wide range of city-wide engagement priorities and a summary of key developments and achievements are noted below.

2.2 Working Group

Under existing MOU arrangements, TQ Outreach, a working group whose aim is to maximise the engagement of Belfast's communities in the regeneration of Titanic Quarter has been established and is presently chaired by the Department of Social Development (DSD). To date, the group activity has not been as effective as we would have hoped due to the broad range of partners involved and a lack of resources to drive the engagement process forward. To this end it is critically important that Council now takes a leadership role in driving the community engagement process forward, given the importance of this project to the City, the level of investment in the project by Council and the proximity of the opening of Titanic Belfast.

2.3 Community Engagement Plan

The year 2012 will be a once in a generation opportunity to project Belfast in a positive fashion to a wide international audience.

- 2.4 It is an opportunity to present the city as a confident, vibrant, forward looking city which regards itself as having a bright and exciting future. The international audience includes investors, tourists and talent from across the globe who might wish to invest, visit or locate in Belfast.

- 2.5 If we are to be successful in promoting that image abroad, it is important that local citizens and their communities share in that vision and believe that they will benefit from future investment. In order to do this they must first understand the potential benefits which 2012/Titanic presents for everyone in the city and that they too reflect and communicate this vision of the future.

- 2.6 In order to achieve this goal the Council wishes to embark on a major engagement exercise with every section of society in the city in partnership with Titanic Foundation Ltd (TFL), the charitable company set up to oversee the construction of and operation of Titanic Belfast and ensuring that everyone in Northern Ireland can benefit from this substantial public investment. The Community Engagement Plan is contained in Appendix 1 and focuses upon four key areas of work:
- 2.7 **Public Outreach** - involves a range of public interfaces that promote the Titanic/2012 brand across the city to all citizens e.g., Roadshows, Information Sessions, Fun days, Walking Tours, Events and Exhibitions, Festivals, Presentations and Facilitated Site Visits.
- 2.8 **Social Outreach** - uses social media and communications activities as a way of informing citizens of the latest developments, key activities and gaining their feedback e.g., Interactive website and email, Facebook and Twitter updates, City Matters, E-zines, Blogs and Targeted Mailshots.
- 2.9 **Organised Community Engagement** - involves working through and with the key structures within local communities to promote the opportunities presented by 2012 and Titanic across the city e.g., targeted contact with key organisations across a range of sectors including community and voluntary sector, schools, sports organisations and youth clubs; Presentations; Information Sessions; Scheduled Site Visits and the appointment of Community Champions.
- 2.10 **Re-branding BCC activities** – As Council is a major deliverer of programmes and projects across the city there now exists an opportunity to build on these existing activities and consider how they could be re-branded to promote 2012 and Titanic for the year ahead e.g., Council Grant Schemes, Parks & Leisure Outreach activities, Summer Schemes, Community Centre activities, Council events and festivals and Thematic work e.g. Children and Young People, Older People, Sports Events and Youth Forum.
- 2.11 Members are asked to note that whilst the Titanic brand will be key, this community engagement programme will not be limited to Titanic Quarter and Titanic Belfast but will be set within the broader context of the planned activity for 2012 which offers a major opportunity for all parts of Belfast.

The launch of the Titanic Belfast Building, the Cultural Olympiad and the completion of several key physical projects such as the Metropolitan Arts Centre, the Lyric Theatre, An Culturlann, the Spectrum Centre and the upgrade of Dunville and Woodvale Parks offer the chance to project Belfast in a new and exciting way and to begin to drive visitor numbers across the city and provide a strong economic boost. In addition the 100th Anniversary of Titanic, the 150th anniversary of the Ulster Hall and the 50th Anniversary of Belfast Festival at Queen's also take place in 2012.

2.12 Community Engagement Resources

The Community Engagement Plan which has been developed and now requires resourcing in order to ensure its effective delivery.

- 2.13** TFL has agreed to contribute a sum of £75k towards its implementation however does not have the human resources to support delivery of the plan. TFL has therefore requested that Council project manages its contribution towards the identified Titanic/2012 community outreach activities through the creation of a Service Level Agreement.
- 2.14** Given the financial commitment from TFL, it is now imperative that the Council also contributes both financial and human resources in order to ensure that there is effective engagement with the wide range of community stakeholders and citizens across the city. Discussions are currently underway with each of the Area Partnership Boards and other key partners to ensure our activities are linked into other planned outreach activities currently being developed around Titanic/2012.
- 2.15** The Development Department has identified a sum of £104k from existing resources to ensure that all communities across the city can benefit from the engagement programme. Existing budgets have been identified through Community Services to support the delivery of community engagement pilots, through SNAP for developing area plans to support Titanic /2012 outreach activity across the city and through Economic Development which currently coordinates all MOU activity between Council and TQL.
- 2.16** Members are asked to note that the financial resources identified within the Community Engagement Plan are indicative at this stage and will be revised accordingly as and when programme activity commences.

2.17 Ambassador Programme

The critical factor in delivering an effective engagement process between now and the opening of Titanic Belfast will be the availability of a team of committed, enthusiastic, experienced officers with a proven track record in community engagement.

2.18 Whilst the Development Department will take the lead in coordinating all Titanic/2012 activity it is recognised that this project is a council wide priority and therefore requires the support of experienced Officers from other departments within the council. To assist with implementation of the Community Engagement Plan Council has designed a Titanic/2012 Ambassador Programme and has recruited approximately 30 suitably skilled individuals to be the public face of the outreach programme.

2.19 The role of the ambassadors will be to raise the profile of Titanic/2012, sell its benefits across the city; engage with citizens and community groups regarding opportunities, deliver workshops and presentations to the public and feed back key issues for follow-up.

2.20 An initial workshop was hosted on 9 June to introduce nominated Officers to the project; underlining its importance to the Council and the City and equipping individuals with the necessary information and tools to effectively engage with stakeholders at a community level. It is now intended that focused training sessions will be delivered during summer 2011 with engagement activities commencing shortly thereafter.

2.21 Whilst a number of individuals across the organisation and in partner organisations have agreed to participate on the Ambassador Programme, it is requested that Elected Representatives also consider championing the Titanic/2012 brand, promoting all activities and events and helping sell its key benefits across the city. In recognising that the needs and issues of local communities will differ across the city, Council is presently developing individual, localised engagement plans with each Area Partnership Board to ensure that all citizens will be able to experience and benefit from Titanic/2012 activities.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 There are significant human and financial resource implications in terms of Council effectively overseeing and delivering the community engagement programme.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Given the significance of 2012, the importance of the regenerative potential of the Titanic Quarter and the level of Council investment in Titanic Belfast, the associated Community Engagement process must be regarded as being of corporate significance.

- 5.2 In light of the above, Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and good progress is being made by each of the six thematic working groups.
- Note the most critical issue at this point is delivery of an effective community engagement programme, supported by a team of experienced Officers across the Council.
- Note Council and TFL has developed a Community Engagement Plan with buy-in from a wide range of public, private, community and voluntary stakeholders and has agreed to develop individual, localised engagement plans with each of the Area Partnership Boards to ensure that all citizens and communities across the city are able to experience Titanic/2012 activities.
- Approve a proposal for TFL to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Council, jointly cooperating in the development and implementation of the community outreach programme and subsequently reimbursing Council for its share of the costs (£75k).
- Approve the proposal to reallocate existing Council resources to a value of £145k and for these budgets to be utilised to support Titanic /2012 outreach activity.
- Consider Member nominations to support the Titanic/2012 agenda.”

The Director outlined the principal aspects of the report and referred to the potential benefits which Titanic Belfast could bring to the residents of the City. He referred to the significant plans for community engagement which had been envisaged and outlined the key work of the Thematic Groups which had been established to deliver the objectives as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Titanic Quarter Limited.

A Member referred to the work of the Thematic Groups and suggested that the benefits which had been realised to date by local communities had been somewhat limited. He indicated that a meeting should be sought with the key stakeholders in the project to address the issues raised. A further Member indicated that the Titanic Memorandum of Understanding had, given the significant investment which the Council had made to it, not delivered the substantial benefits which had been foreseen. He referred specifically to the issues of job creation, the development of social housing, economic enhancement and community empowerment through the project.

A further Member suggested that the Council should, rather than invest heavily in Titanic Belfast, seek to promote, on a collaborative basis, what he suggested were the three primary quarters of the City, viz., the Gaeltacht Quarter, the Cathedral Quarter and the Titanic Quarter. He indicated that such an approach could create a dynamic model of economic regeneration across the City and that the Council's financial commitments to Titanic Belfast should be re-examined accordingly.

After prolonged discussion, it was

Proposed by Councillor Robinson,
Seconded by Alderman Humphrey,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations as set out within the report and that a special meeting, to which the key stakeholders would be invited, be held in due course to discuss the issues which had been raised by the Members.

On a vote by show of hands nine Members voted for the proposal and seven against and it was accordingly declared carried.

It was noted also that the Director would submit for the Committee's information a report in respect of the financial assistance which the Council had thus far provided to the development of the Gaeltacht Quarter.

Licence and Lease Renewals: Community Usage

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Key Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to facilitate Committee consideration of the proposed extension of existing lease arrangements for the following premises:**

- Benview/Ballysillan Play Centre
- Loop River Play Centre
- BELB/Clarawood Community Association – Anne Napier Centre
- Walkway Community Association
- Percy street Community Centre

2. **Benview/Ballysillan Play centre**

2.1 **Key issues including any relevant background information:**

Community Services has, since June 1997, had a Licence Agreement with Benview/Ballysillan Tenant's Association to use part of the community owned Benview Community Centre to run a BCC play centre. We are seeking to renew this Licence Agreement for a further 12 months from the 1st July 2011

2.2 **Resource Implications:**

This licence has operated with the council paying a rental amount to the Tenants Association of £4,025.56 (2010/11) for partial use of their facility. This rental will be met from within existing budgets.

2.3 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations:**

There are no equality or Good Relations considerations.

2.4 **Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Licence agreement is renewed for a further 12 months subject to a rent of £4,025.56 per annum. This acquisition will be subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and incorporation of appropriate terms as confirmed/agreed by council's Legal Services.

2.5 **Decision tracker**

CDM to liaise with Director of Property and Projects with a view to bringing a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course.

3. **Loop River Play Centre**

3.1 **Key issues including any relevant background information:**

In February 2007 the Community and Recreation committee approved the use of the Scout Association's Courtney Hall, situated on the Cregagh Road, as alternative accommodation for the Loop River play centre. Previously the play centre was located in the Belfast City Council Loop River park but this was sold for housing development. The play centre has full use of the building during the day from Monday to Friday and has been holding over in occupation since expiry of a renewal in August 2010 continuing to pay £190.00 per week as originally agreed in 2007.

3.2 **Resource Implications:**

This licence has operated with the council paying a rental amount to the Scout Association of £190.00 per week which will be met from within existing budgets.

3.3 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations:**

There are no equality or Good Relations considerations.

3.4 **Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Licence agreement is renewed for a further period of 18 months from 1 July 2011 again at a cost of £190.00 per week. This acquisition will be subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and incorporation of appropriate terms as confirmed/agreed by council's Legal Services.

3.5 **Decision Tracker**

CDM to liaise with Director of Property and Projects with a view to bringing a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course.

4. **BELB/Clarawood Community Association –
Anne Napier Centre**

4.1 **Key issues including any relevant background information:**

In October 2006 the Community and Recreation committee agreed to BCC leasing the Anne Napier centre on the Clarawood Estate from the BELB and then to sub-let the

premises to Clarawood Community Association, with a further update being given in February 2007. This lease/sub lease arrangement was requested by BELB and agreed because of historical difficulties around arrangements with the previous community group tenant. BELB therefore asked that Council facilitate the development of a new organisations which would ensure ongoing service provision and to mitigate against further risk asked that Council become the tenant and sub lease to the group.

Due to difficulties in agreeing the lease arrangements with the BELB, the leases were not in place until 1st July 2009 and covered a two year period until 30 June 2011. Over the last two years this arrangement has enabled the Clarawood C.A. to provide community development support to the people of the Clarawood estate.

The BELB have indicated they wish to continue this partnership arrangement and are content for the current Lease/sub lease to continue for a further term.

At the end of each financial year BELB provide BCC with the costs relating to the running of the Anne Napier centre. A delay in BCC receiving timely information for 2010/11 has created difficulties in paying BELB for the 2010/11 utility costs with these costs still being outstanding. Discussions with the BELB have taken place in order to resolve this purely procedural issue for future years.

4.2 Resource Implications

There are no resource implications in the first year as these will be met from within existing budgets with the costs relating to the BELB/BCC lease being met from the Revenue grant allocation to the Clarawood C.A. The costs for 2012/13 will be subject to a successful revenue support application from Clarawood C.A.

4.3 Equality and Good Relations Considerations:

There are no equality or Good Relations considerations.

4.4 Recommendation

It is recommended that the lease arrangement relating to the Anne Napier Centre between the BELB and BCC and the sub lease arrangements between BCC and Clarawood Community Association are renewed for a further 2 years from the 1st July 2011 subject to the revenue grant allocation to the Clarawood Community Association being sufficient to meet all related costs.

4.5 Decision Tracker

CDM to liaise with Director of Property and Projects with a view to bringing a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course.

5 Walkway Community Association

5.1 Key issues including any relevant background information:

Walkway Community Association has, since November 1995, leased the site covering 1-9 Finvoy Street from the council and on which they have located their Community Centre. The current rent is £375.00 per annum. Number 1 Finvoy Street is owned by DRD Roads Service with numbers 3,5,7 & 9 Finvoy Street owned by the council.

The site is located on the proposed route of the Connesbank Link road scheme as provided in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport plan 2015 and the site may be needed if this development goes ahead. It can be noted that the route of this scheme has been developed as the Comber Greenway. DRD have been contacted by our Legal Services and they have confirmed that DRD have no objection to the renewal of the council's lease for 1 Finvoy Street for a further 5 years subject to a rent of £1 if demanded in order to facilitate council's subsequent Lease to Walkway Community Association.

5.2 Resource Implications:

There are no resource implications for council with Walkway having agreed to the revised rent of £475.00 per annum and the Lease from DRD is subject to a nominal amount.

5.3 Equality and Good Relations Considerations:

There are no Equality or Good Relations considerations.

5.4 Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Lease for 1-9 Finvoy Street be renewed for a further 5 years from the 5th November 2010 at a revised rent of £475.00 per annum. It is also recommended that council renew the Lease with DRD for a similar period of 5 years, subject to a nominal rent. Both this acquisition from DRD and subsequent disposal to Walkway Community Association will be subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders 46 and incorporation of appropriate terms as confirmed/agreed by council's Legal Services.

5.5 Decision tracker

CDM to liaise with Director of Property and Projects with a view to bringing a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course.

6. Percy Street Lease

6.1 Key issues including any relevant background information

In 1982 the Trustees of the Lower Shankill Group Welfare Committee were granted a month to month Licence to occupy the Percy Street Community Centre at a rent of £221.36. This agreement is covered by the committee decision of 7th March 2006 to include the rental cost of independently managed premises leased from council within the annual Council grant.

At present the licence only contains 12 clauses and is not very comprehensive. To address this, the centre has been approached and has agreed in principle to a revision of this licence.

Property and Projects have indicated that, from an estate management view, the current licence should be replaced with a lease similar to other independently managed sites such as Grosvenor and Shaftsbury Recreation Centres at a revised rent that reflects the use of these premises. This revised rent has been assessed as being £1,550.00

6.2 Resource Implications

As the committee decision of the 7 March 2006 would apply there would be no resource implications, in that whilst the re assessment of the rent proposes an increase, this would be included within the annual Council grant and deducted before the grant is released.

6.3 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

A revision of the licence and a change to a lease agreement would bring the agreement in line with other similar BCC Independently Managed lease agreements. With appropriate timeframe's and exit clauses in place should they ever need to be implemented.

6.4 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Licence Agreement with the Lower Shankill Group Welfare Committee in respect of the Percy Street Community Centre is changed to a lease agreement similar to those in place with other Independently Managed Centres to include the appropriate timeframes and exit clauses should they ever need to be implemented.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Volunteer Celebration Event

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Belfast City Council through the work of Community Services has benefited in 2010 from over 75,000 hours of volunteer support. This has enabled the Council to deliver an enhanced service to local communities.

1.2 According to the 2010 Volunteer Impact Assessment Report conducted for Community Services by Volunteer Now, for every £1 that BCC invests in volunteering, £3.45 is levered in return. This information is based on a VIVA (The Volunteer Investment and Value Audit) calculation which uses the average gross hourly wage of a full-time employee in Northern Ireland to give an economic value to volunteer hours.

1.3 The Volunteer Impact Assessment Report 2010 identified a number of benefits of volunteering, for example, for the council through extending and informing its service delivery and for the volunteer by developing skills and confidence and a sense of community belonging:

- The important work of the summer schemes has benefited year after year from the dedication of our volunteers with 69% of our volunteers involved in this work. This has enabled our children and young people to benefit from a range of varied activities and experiences.**
- Supporting the continued development for the youth of the city, the Youth Forum has provided an opportunity for young people from across the nine electoral wards of Belfast to contribute to a series of projects through volunteering e.g. supporting the development of**

Belfast's new Urban Sports Park and working with Good Relations on the second phase of the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan. This important work helps us to work with and engage with our next generation in the development of the city and improve the design and deliver of our services.

- Volunteers also benefit as individuals from volunteering. Of those surveyed, 66% stated that their team working skills had improved through volunteering and almost 2/3rds of volunteers indicated that their sense of community identity had also increased. 80% of our volunteers told us that one of the biggest benefits of volunteering was their feeling that they are making a useful contribution and giving something back to their local community.
- Local communities benefit from volunteering as it enables BCC to provide an added value to the services we provide locally. 91% of service users surveyed indicated that they felt volunteers brought special qualities to what they did and that the services offered by volunteers were as good as you would get anywhere.

1.4 2011 is the European Year of the Volunteer (EYV). This is a year designated by the European Union to acknowledge the value and work of volunteers. This is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise the significant contribution of volunteers to BCC. It is also the 10th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of Volunteering: IYV +10. The EU has identified 4 themes for this year

- To create an enabling and facilitating environment for volunteering in the EU
- To empower volunteer organisations and improve the quality of volunteering
- To reward and recognise volunteering activities
- To raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering

1.5 Volunteer Now, the regional volunteer agency for Northern Ireland, is leading work on EYV and has identified 'Valuing Volunteers' as its theme.

1.6 Volunteers Week is an annual event which takes place every year from 1st to 7th June. This is an opportunity to recognise the contribution that volunteers make to the work of organisations. Community Services are celebrating and

recognising the contribution of our volunteers during that week by presenting certificates and sending thank you cards to our volunteers. A number of centres are organising thank you events to coincide with Volunteers Week and we are hosting Volunteer Week displays in centres across the city.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 In order to recognise, value and celebrate the contribution of volunteers to our work we would like to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the designation of 2011 as European Year of the Volunteer to hold a celebration event in the City Hall on 14 September 2011. This will build on the activities taking place as part of Volunteers Week in June 2011.
- 2.2 This event is an important way to demonstrate that BCC, through Community Services, values the significant contribution of its volunteers. It is also important in helping to retain and renew the commitment of our existing volunteers who make a significant contribution to our work and that of the broader community sector.
- 2.3 In addition, Community Services has secured a small amount of funding (£500.00) from 'Volunteer Now' to develop an Older Volunteer of the Year Award. We are working in partnership with the Older People's thematic group to develop the award process. The event has been endorsed by the All Party Reference Group on Older People (29th March 2011). It is envisaged that the award will be presented at an event in December 2011.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 The funding required for the celebration event is £6,000. This is available within the unit revenue budgets.
- 3.2 The Older Volunteer of the Year Award will be funded from the £500.00 secured from Volunteer Now.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Committee is requested to agree that a celebration event be held in the City Hall on 14th September 2011 as part of the European Year of the Volunteer 2011, in order to recognise, value and celebrate the contribution of volunteers.

- 4.2 The Committee is requested to agree that £6,000 from the current Community Services budget be used to fund the event.
- 4.3 The Committee is asked to support the Older Volunteer of the Year Award.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Community and Play Centres –
Membership of Management Committees**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th October, 2008, it had agreed to seek expressions of interest from Members for appointment to Community and Play Centre Committees. The Director indicated that the current list of nominees required to be updated and, subsequent to the Local Government Elections on 5th May, it would be appropriate to seek expressions of interest from Members for nominations to Management Committees.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that those Members who had previously been on the undernoted list of Management Committees, and had been re-elected at the Local Government Elections, be re-appointed for the next Council term and agreed also that a report in respect of expressions of interest received from additional Members would be submitted for consideration in due course:

Ardoyne Community Centre Councillor Lavery	Knocknagoney Community Centre Alderman R. Newton Alderman Rodgers Councillor Jones
Concorde Community Centre	Ligoniel Community Centre Councillor Lavery
Dee Street Community Centre Alderman R. Newton Alderman M. Campbell Alderman Rodgers Councillor Jones Councillor Kyle	Morton Community Centre Alderman Ekin Alderman Stoker Councillor Kelly
Donegall Pass Community Centre Alderman Stalford Alderman Stoker Councillor McCarthy Councillor Patterson	North Queen St. Community Centre Councillor Convery Councillor Lavery Councillor Maskey
Duncairn Community Centre Alderman Browne Alderman Crozier	Olympia Community Centre Alderman Ekin Alderman R. Patterson Alderman Stoker

Finaghy Community Centre Alderman Ekin Alderman R. Patterson Alderman Stalford Alderman Stoker Councillor Kelly	Sandy Row Community Centre Alderman Stalford Alderman Stoker Councillor Kelly Councillor McCarthy
Glen Road Community Centre Councillor Attwood Councillor O'Neill	Suffolk Community Centre Alderman R. Patterson Alderman Stoker Councillor Kingston
Hammer Community Centre Alderman Stoker Councillor Kingston	Whiterock Community Centre Councillor Tim Attwood
Highfield Community Centre Alderman McCoubrey Alderman Smyth Councillor Kingston	Woodvale Community Centre Alderman Humphrey Alderman Smyth
Horn Drive Community Centre Councillor Attwood Councillor O'Neill	Avoniel Play Centre Alderman M. Campbell Alderman R. Newton Alderman Rodgers Councillor Hendron
Inverary Community Centre Alderman R. Newton Alderman Rodgers Councillor Jones	

State of the City - Development Debates

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 9th December, 2009, it had adopted a revised format for the Council's State of the City initiative. He provided an overview of feedback received on the revised format and outlined the successes of the series of debates which had been hosted by the Department. He pointed out that the next scheduled debate would take place on Tuesday, 28th June in the Banqueting Hall, City Hall, and would focus on economic issues pertinent to the City. In addition, the keynote speaker would be Mr. Neil Gibson from Oxford Economics, who would give an address on the findings of his research into Belfast's economic competitiveness and outline the challenges which faced the City. The Director added that further debates would take place during the year and a report on the topics for discussion would be submitted for consideration by the Committee at its meeting in August.

Noted.

'Belfast on the Move' - Consultation Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 6th December, 2010, it had endorsed a response to the 'Belfast on the Move' consultation which had been launched by the then Minister for Regional Development, Mr. Conor Murphy, M.L.A., in the City Hall in September, 2010. The Director reported that, subsequent to the submission of the Council's response, the Department had undertaken a review of the original consultation and had made a number of amendments as a result. Accordingly, the Director outlined the proposed changes which the Department was seeking to make to the original document, viz.,

- the locating of a coach 'drop off and pick up' point in Donegall Square West;
- minor amendments to the location of service bays in response to concerns raised by traders; and
- a new cycle lane in Joy Street.

The Committee was advised that further consultation would be undertaken by the Department and that a report on further proposed amendments would be submitted for the Committee's consideration in due course.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information provided.

Belfast City Masterplan: Review and Response to Regional Transportation Strategy

The Committee agreed to receive, at its meeting on 27th June, a presentation in respect of the Council's proposed approach to the review of the Regional Transportation Strategy.

Forum for Alternative Belfast - Summer School

The Committee was reminded that the Forum for Alternative Belfast, which had been established in 2009, sought to encourage debate on the ongoing changes to the City's built environment by drawing on the lessons of the past to influence future development. In both 2009 and 2010, the Forum had hosted successful summer schools which had addressed, respectively, the subject of brown field sites in Belfast and the adverse impact which the major roads network had had on the inner north area of the City.

It was reported that the third annual Summer School would take place from 15th till 19th August in the Ashby Institute at the Queen's University of Belfast. The topic for the School would be the issue of the connectivity of south Belfast to the city centre. Accordingly, the Director advised the Committee that a request for support for the hosting of the Summer School had been received from the Forum for Alternative Belfast. He pointed out that the event had been organised on a voluntary basis and aimed to attract participants from local communities, as well as representatives from statutory bodies and agencies from across Belfast.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to contribute a sum of up to £2,000 to assist the Forum for Alternative Belfast in the holding of the Summer School. It was agreed also that all Members of the Committee would be authorised to attend the Summer School as an approved duty.

Planning Policy Statement 2 - Natural Heritage

The Committee endorsed the undernoted response as its submission to the above-mentioned consultation:

Council Response

Introduction

Belfast City Council welcomes this opportunity to comment on revised Planning Policy Statement 2 – Natural Heritage. Protection of our natural heritage is in line with our Corporate Plan key theme – *Better Care for Belfast's Environment* and as such we are pleased to see greater protection of natural heritage assets through the planning system.

This revision to PPS 2 is a welcome update considering the significant changes in the statutory framework that governs protection of our natural heritage assets. The revised PPS 2 will provide a valuable mechanism to ensure the protection of our biodiversity and aid Northern Ireland in the preparation for future EU targets and commitments.

The revised document aims to update the planning policy framework for the protection of designated sites and protected species to achieve a policy that is up to date and fit for purpose. In order to help achieve a document that will be as relevant and practical as possible the Council have covered the topics in the Department's questions and highlighted a number of key issues in this response.

Biodiversity provides numerous ecosystem services such as water purification, carbon storage and flood protection. For example pollination by bees and other insects provide services boosting agricultural production worth at least \$153 billion annually. Many of these services are under threat.

The recent Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) report estimated the economic value of biodiversity and ecosystems between \$21 trillion and up to \$72 trillion per yr. By 2050 loss of biodiversity under a business as usual scenario could cost up to 7 per cent of global GDP. The study shows that the cost of sustaining biodiversity and ecosystem services is lower than the cost of allowing biodiversity and the services it provides to decline.

The EU Communication 'Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020' acknowledges that biodiversity loss is the most critical global environmental threat alongside climate change – and the two are inextricably linked. Consequently the EU has committed to a new vision and target for biodiversity 'to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 and restore them insofar as possible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss'. The previous EU 2010 biodiversity target to halt the loss of biodiversity was not met.

In Northern Ireland we have set targets to significantly reduce biodiversity loss by 2010 and to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2016. It is imperative that the economic benefit our natural heritage provides through these services is considered within the planning process.

The revised PPS 2 lacks justification and amplification for each policy, in each case relying on the Supplementary Planning Guidance. Whilst Belfast City Council welcomes the attempt to achieve concise and more streamlined Planning Policy Statements this should not be done at the expense of clarity and essential guidance. Consideration should be given to providing further expansion on the key elements of each policy.

Belfast City Council have identified some essential elements in the Supplementary Planning guidance that should be included in the revised Policy Statement, these have been identified in the following pages.

Section 1

The Statutory Framework should refer to the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Under Strategies there should be reference to the new EU long term 2050 vision and 2020 target. The 2020 biodiversity target is to 'halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss'. Given the inclusion of ecosystem services and the target to prevent the degradation and restoration of these services, this should be incorporated within this Planning Policy Statement.

The NI Invasive Alien Species Strategy which is currently out for public consultation should also be referenced.

Under Section 2.0 Preparing Development Plans there should be specific reference to Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs).

Under Section 4.0 Planning Policy after the point 'The provisions of these policies will prevail unless there is other overriding policy or material considerations that outweigh them and justify a contrary decision.' The Council would like to see inclusion of the statement from Supplementary Planning Guidance section 3.4.5 'the granting of planning permission does not obviate the holder of ensuring legal compliance with other legislative requirements'.

Policy NH1 – European and Ramsar Nature Conservation Sites - International

There should be specific reference to the Habitat Regulations Assessment Process within the PPS rather than in the Supplementary Guidance.

The phrasing of the first paragraph 'not normally' may be misleading and ambiguous. We suggest that for clarity consideration is given to rewording this paragraph along the following lines.

Planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that, either individually or in combination with existing and/or proposed plans or projects, is not likely to have a significant affect on a European Site.

And

Where a plan or project is likely to have a significant affect on a European site then planning permission will only be granted when it has been ascertained that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

Further consideration should also be given to ensuring consistency with the statutory legislation in all instances particularly the EC Habitats Directive.

Policy NH2 – Species Protected by Law

To improve clarity we suggest rewording paragraph 1 in relation to European Protected Species. As the exceptional circumstances when planning approval would be given Belfast City Council would prefer that the phrase 'not normally' is exchanged for a more conclusive phrase such as that identified above.

Supplementary Guidance:

We welcome the inclusion of the statement in Section 3.1.4 that ‘it is a criminal offence to harm a statutorily protected species’. This should also be included within the Planning Policy Statement.

We welcome the inclusion of the statement in Section 3.4.5 of the supplementary guidance that ‘the granting of planning permission does not obviate the holder of ensuring legal compliance with other legislative requirements’. This should also be included in the Planning Policy Statement.

Within the Planning Policy Statement a differentiation is made between European Protected Species and Other Protected species, however, within the Supplementary Guidance these have been amalgamated (Page 23 of SPG). We believe that the separation of European Protected Species and Other Protected Species is preferable given the very different legislative basis for their protection.

In addition Section 3.4.2 states Planning authorities should consult with NIEA before granting permission and consideration should be given to attaching appropriate planning conditions under which the developer would take steps to secure the long-term protection of the species. For European protected species we suggest that NIEA must be consulted.

While we strongly welcome the use of appropriate planning conditions to secure the long-term protection of the species, we feel that there should be specific reference to the mechanisms to ensure this such as the use of Article 40 agreements. We also consider that planning conditions must be monitored on a more rigorous basis, especially where designated sites and species are concerned.

We strongly welcome the inclusion of pre application discussions.

Within Section 3.4.4 it would be useful to list the European protected species.

Policy NH3 – Sites of Nature Conservation Importance – National

As mentioned above the inclusion of the word normally does not seem to be required given that the exceptional circumstances are stated. Consideration should be given to offering more clarity by changing the phrasing here, or offer guidance within the Policy Statement by providing some justification and amplification.

Supplementary Guidance:

Section 4.2.2 states 'Planning authorities may seek advice from NIEA'. We suggest that NIEA must be consulted where there is a possibility of a planning application affecting a National site.

Section 4.2.4 states that 'benefits for the proposal which outweigh the value of the site need to be of national importance and of a long-term interest, sufficient to override the value of the site'.

How will the value of a site be measured?

Have short term and long term economic interest been defined?

It should be noted that for sites such as ancient woodland or peatland it may take hundreds or indeed thousands of years for sites to establish or recover. Cognisance of these timeframes should be taken during the decision making process.

Policy NH 4 – Sites of Nature Conservation Importance – Local

We welcome the inclusion of this policy and the protection it affords to Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance. The future role of local development plans in the designation of SLNCIs and policies for these sites must be considered.

Supplementary Guidance:

The criteria for these sites in Section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 is the same as for National sites. We consider these inappropriate for local sites. For example 'the integrity of the site, including the value of the site to the habitat network' is inappropriate given the nature of Local Nature Reserves which are sites 'provided by District Councils for nature conservation which are particularly appropriate for educational, recreational or public information services'. Consideration should be given to amending these paragraphs accordingly.

It would be more appropriate to include criteria relating to the usage of these sites for example significant impacts on the site's amenity or educational uses.

Section 5.2.5 states that 'benefits for the proposal which outweigh the value of the site need to be of local importance and of a long-term interest, sufficient to override the value of the site'.

Clarification is need as to how the value of a site will be measured and what the definition and assessment of short term and long term economic interests will be.

The types of development that will be considered as appropriate could be outlined.

Planning authorities should not only consult with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency but also the relevant Local Authorities.

Policy NH5 – Species, Habitats or Features of Natural Heritage Importance

We particularly welcome the inclusion of this policy and support the inclusion of priority habitats and species, ancient and long-established woodland, features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna, features of earth science conservation importance and rare or threatened native species within this policy. We do however consider that river corridors should also be included within NH5.

We are concerned at the wording ‘known’ in the first paragraph. While we accept the statement in 6.1.2 that ‘the planning authority does not have, and cannot reasonably be expected to have, total knowledge of the potential natural heritage significance of every site’ There is a dearth of data for priority habitats and species across NI as identified in the 2009 Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group Report on the Delivery of the NI Biodiversity Strategy.

Supplementary Guidance:

Section 6.9.7 While we welcome that opportunities will be taken to secure new planting or sowing within development proposals, these should be appropriate to the site and NIEA should be consulted.

We strongly encourage the inclusion of Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance under Policy NH5.

Other Issues

Invasive Alien Species (IAS) are mentioned ion Section 1.5.1 of the supplementary guidance. While this is welcomed it is noted it has not been referenced in any of the policies. Will IAS be considered a material consideration? Planning can play a major role in relation to IAS, for example in terms of the creation of ‘pathways’ which facilitate their spread such as roads and waterways. Given that IAS are estimated to cost GB approximately £2 billion per year. We strongly urge that the impacts of IAS are considered more fully in determining planning decisions.

While Belfast City Council welcomes this Planning Policy Statement we believe that Planning authorities will require training in relation to priority habitats and species and that monitoring of planning conditions is essential to ensure the protection of biodiversity.”

Integrated Cultural Strategy Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th May, 2010, it had approved the development of a new Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast and authorised also a review to be carried out on the Council’s multi-annual and annual funding schemes. It was reported that the review had been completed and, accordingly, prior to it being considered by the Committee in September, authority was sought to undertake Political Party briefings.

The Committee granted the approval sought.

Literary Tourism

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that at a Development Committee meeting held on 10 June 2009, approval was given to develop Literary Tourism in Belfast. The Cultural Tourism Strategy ‘Developing Belfast’s Opportunity’ detailed the aim to support and develop new cultural tourism product development and to make specific areas of culture and heritage more accessible to visitors. In Belfast City Council’s new strategy, *Belfast Tourism Gateway to the Future*, Literary Tourism has been identified as a priority area in order to develop the Belfast Experience.**
- 1.2 It was recognised that there is substantial potential for the development of Literary Tourism in Belfast. The UK currently features number one in a list of the top ten literary destinations of the world compiled by TripAdvisor and literary tourism contributes up to £2.6 billion a year to the British economy. In July 2010, Dublin was designated as a UNESCO City of Literature and have put in place a range of products to capitalise on Literary Tourism. Belfast now attracts global literary renown and over the past decades, this has been our foremost imaginative export. Belfast’s literary heritage has a role to play in ‘place-making’ and is an important dimension in the marketing of Belfast as an international destination. Belfast’s own literary reputation plays a part in this global success story and there are many benefits from enhancing our literary offer.**

1.3 Following recommendations at a meeting of the Development Committee held on 16 September 2009, an advisory group was established to oversee content development for a Literary Tourism Programme. At a further meeting held on 9 December 2009 members agreed that Literary Tourism should be submitted to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Tourism Innovation Fund which aimed to enhance the growth, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of tourism by stimulating product development and improving the visitor experience. The application resulted in a contribution of £118,500 from NITB towards Belfast's Literary Tourism and plans were also significantly enhanced through new partnerships established with Queen's University, BBC, Arts Council NI and Tourism Ireland. Based on leading Case Studies from the UK's Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change such as 'Developing the Potential of Literary Tourism' and Dublin's Literary Tourism initiatives, the aims of the new products and initiatives were to:

- create distinction for Belfast in a competitive marketplace
- appeal to special interest and niche tourism markets and attract domestic and out-of-state tourists
- enhance the visitor experience
- improve the weekend economy and increase overnight stays
- use innovative technology to improve access to and dissemination of visitor information
- encourage the economic benefits of tourism

1.4 An update on product development and content was provided to the Development Committee Update in August 2010.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Belfast City Council's Literary Tourism Plan is now in place and the following new products have been completed and will be seen for the first time at the Belfast Book Festival on 13 June 2011.

2.2 1. Belfast Through Writers' Eyes

Partners: Queen's University, Arts Council NI

Short films enable visitors to journey with 16 of Belfast's internationally award winning poets and writers who have each chosen their favourite locations, discussed how Belfast has influenced their work and read a piece of their work related to Belfast. It is available on multi-media platforms including an iPhone app walking tour. Also included is a section for News/Events keeping visitors up to date with a multitude of readings and festivals.

2.3 2. Promotion of Literary Events and Establishing Networks

Using the success of models such as Late Night Art and Music Tourism to work in partnership with all current providers to develop and promote literary tourism, including the Belfast Book Festival, Linen Hall Library, Central Library, Queen's University, Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, Belfast Festival at Queen's, Féile Festival, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, CS Lewis and literary societies, Belmont Tower, publishers, booksellers and not for profit literary event providers in Belfast. Working in partnership will increase the profile and impact of our literary product to domestic and out-of-state visitors.

2.4 3. Empty Buildings Quotations

Partners: Arts and Business and Belfast City Centre Management

Empty shops profiling literary quotes from Belfast's internationally recognised and award winning writers.

2.5 4. The Belfast Poets and Writers Exhibition and BBC Literary Archive

Partners: BBC, Queen's University Venue: Belfast City Hall

A Hall of Fame of our most internationally renowned writers, past and present and key literary facts about Belfast. The exhibition is accompanied by a listening kiosk which captures the creative genius of local writers and the extraordinary stories of everyday life. Visitors can listen to readings from a selection of writers including Louis MacNeice, John Hewitt, Stewart Parker, CS Lewis, Marie Jones, Glenn Patterson, Michael Longley and Seamus Heaney.

2.6 5. LiteraryBelfast.org

Partners: Culture NI, Arts Council NI

An immersive and interactive online exhibition of Belfast's Literary heritage. Each genre includes introductions, venues, festivals, hall of fame and fully searchable events listings for all Belfast literature genres (CNI is Arts Council NI's strategic online vehicle to promote culture and the only online events listings service in Northern Ireland). This site forms the source of all mobile application development. Along their journey visitors can step into interactive audio visual spaces, witness fascinating one-off interviews with our largest literary names.

2.7 6. The Belfast Book Festival - June 2011

Partners: Arts Council NI, Crescent Arts Centre

The Belfast Book Festival aims to be a unique, individual and compelling experience for visitors and to promote our modern culture, characters and writers, poets and playwrights on the world stage. It concentrates on the promotion of our indigenous writers to show our rich literary heritage, thriving contemporary literary scene and promote and highlight our distinctiveness.

2.8 7. Development of Literary Tours and Trails

CS Lewis Coach Tour
Literary Belfast Walking Tour
Nearly True Children's Literary Walking Tours

2.9 On 6 September 2011, Belfast City Council will partner with NITB, Arts Council NI, Queen's University, BBC and Tourism Ireland to stage an event in the Ulster Hall with Belfast's internationally award winning poets and writers who have contributed to the project (in kind) to raise awareness of the literary tourism product internationally. It is an opportunity to showcase products to the GB, ROI and European Markets and to recognise the contribution Belfast's writers have made to the initiative. There will be an opportunity for the public to attend and we would be keen for Belfast City Council to maximise this platform and to have a key role in order to acknowledge the contribution these writers have made to the city. Tourism Ireland will promote Belfast's literature and new products internally by organising a series of media trips familiarisation trips, and externally to raise the profile of Belfast and its writing scene internationally and increase tourism revenue from this market.

- 2.10 *'Ireland has given the world great plays prose and poetry and for millions around the world our literary heritage is their first connection with the character and characters of Ireland. We love a good story well told and the promotion of literary tourism will engender greater appreciation of Belfast's impressive literary CV.'* Tourism Ireland
- 2.11 NITB is committed to developing the literature offering and tourism access to literature – including festivals, events and additional literature products. To this end, NITB are working in partnership on the Literary Belfast September event and will seek to maximize the tourism opportunities and to work with the industry to ensure they are visitor ready. Literary Belfast is in line with the NITB brand in delivering an event that is 'uniquely NI' and promotes the best of indigenous writing. Literary Belfast will add to NI's burgeoning international reputation as a place to discover great literature and has the potential to provide legacy to the exciting festivals that NI and Belfast will be hosting in 2011 through 2013.
- 2.12 *'Literary tourism is an excellent addition to the list of tourism products in Northern Ireland and will give visitors a chance to explore our rich literary heritage and experience our thriving contemporary scene. This initiative adds momentum to the good work that has already been done to highlight Northern Ireland's strong connection with CS Lewis. At a time when visitor numbers continue to grow it is important that we continue to develop authentic experiences such as this, to add depth to Northern Ireland's reputation as a must-see destination.'* Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

Belfast City Council's contribution of £39,500 has been accounted for under the approved Tourism, Culture and Arts 2010-11 Literary Tourism budget.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members;

1. Note the contents of this report

2. Approve participation of the Chair of the Development Committee or nominee to take part in the Literary Tourism event on 6 September 2011 and to approve attendance of all Members of Development Committee at the event.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report and adopted the recommendations.

Community Festivals Fund

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview and breakdown of the Community Festivals Fund for 2011/2012.

Department of Education and Learning: Consultation – Pathways to Success

The Committee endorsed the undernoted response to the above-mentioned consultation:

Council Response

Overall comments

The Council is broadly supportive of the draft strategy and looks forward to seeing a more detailed proposal in due course. The Council also recognises the good work that has already been done in this area by DEL.

While not directly affected by the proposal, the Council sees this strategy as impacting on its priority to support children and young people and to reduce poverty. It also aligns with our work to increase employability and create jobs while helping local businesses and growing the economy. The Council is already involved in several relevant programmes. These include, support for people who may wish to become entrepreneurs, yearly work placements for university and school age students, outreach programme for the long term unemployed people and programmes to help long-term unemployed into jobs (such as our HARTE scheme), attending career fairs and similar events, providing mock interviews and other learning opportunities for young people, various skills and employability training across our community centres, and programmes to deter young people from engaging in anti-social behaviour.

The Council's main concern with the proposals is the focus on Category B NEETs as described in sections 2.9 to 2.11 and 2.23 to 2.24. Firstly, according to DEL's figures:

- 16% are Category A – people doing a gap year or voluntary work and so do not need help.
- 18% are Category B – those 16-19 year olds with a child or who are experiencing serious illness or disability, a significant proportion of which may be unable to work or undertake training no matter what support is available.
- 66% are Category C – those that despite no identifiable barrier are still NEET.

Assuming category A will not need help, that means of those that need support, 79% are Category C compared to only 21% who are in Category B. Normal business logic (as well as ethical concerns) would suggest therefore that targeting Category C would help more young people and hence provide a bigger impact with the resources available.

Secondly, the barriers described for Group B (16 – 19 year olds with a child or who are experiencing serious illness or disability) seem to be factors that are not easily dealt with under DEL's current remit and are already being addressed by other departments such as DHSSPS. While reluctant to reduce the debate about young people who can not find employment or training to a 'numbers game,' using the report's own argument from section 2.23 – 2.24 suggests that more people will be helped and the cost to society will be lower if the strategy focuses on category C.

Regarding categories of NEETs, the Council also wonders if DEL has any information relating to the breakdown of numbers in other ways. For example, what are the relative percentages in the groups mentioned in section 4.6 of the report? Or do we know the breakdown using the method mentioned by Prince's Trust, Barnardos, the Gerry Rogan Investment Trust, Opportunity Youth and Business in the Community etc. That is, how many are those with 'A' levels who are motivated to look for work; those with GCSEs who would be amenable to training provision; and those uneducated young people who need help with their motivation. While we appreciate the difficulties of getting figures for these categories, having a better understanding of the split would help identify which interventions are most appropriate. Approximate figures may be possible to obtain via sampling surveys.

We appreciate the philosophy of supporting those most at need but, taking the points highlighted in the previous four paragraphs, we wonder if a focus on category B is the best use of resources in this instance. The data provided by DEL suggests that a focus on category C would be more effective. More importantly, and based on general good practice, we suggest that the strategy's focus should not be on target Groups at all but on the target underlying causes that lead to being NEET.

If we have misunderstood the rationale, perhaps a fuller breakdown of the figures and costs would be appropriate in the report. This might show the numbers from the different groups, the short and estimated long terms costs of them remaining as NEETs, the estimated numbers that will find their own way out of NEET status, and the estimated numbers that the interventions can actually help within each group.

The Council also has some concerns that the work within DEL may be slightly fragmented. In recent months we have seen consultations launched for tuition fees, widening participation in higher education, a strategy for higher education and this strategy for those not in education, employment or training. These four strategies obviously all overlap and affect each other and we hope they have been developed and will continue to be refined with clear reference to each other.

1. *Do you agree with the suggested strategic direction?*

No

Comments:

See overall comments. In summary the Council has some concerns over the focus on Group B as described in sections 2.9 to 2.11 and 2.23 to 2.24. We appreciate the philosophy of supporting those most at need but wonder if this is the best use of resources in this instance (a key priority in section 2.27). Our concern is twofold. Firstly, according to DEL's figures, 79% of NEETs that need support are in category C and normal business logic (as well as ethical concerns) would suggest that targeting this group would help more young people and hence provide a bigger impact with the resources available. Secondly, the barriers described for Group B (21% of those that need support: 16 – 19 year olds with a child or who are experiencing serious illness or disability) seem to be factors that are not easily dealt with under DEL's current remit and are already being addressed by other departments such as DHSSPS.

2. *What elements of the supporting evidence do you believe are most compelling?*

The total numbers involved, the likelihood of them continuing to struggle to find employment and the cost to society.

3. *Is there other evidence you would suggest?*

A fuller breakdown of the figures and costs. The numbers from the different groups, the short and estimated long terms costs of them remaining as NEETs, the estimated numbers that will find their own way out of NEET status, and the estimated numbers that the strategies interventions can actually help from each group.

A breakdown of the relative percentages in the groups mentioned in section 4.6 of the report. Or any further breakdown that helps identify the underlying problems and hence where interventions are likely to have the biggest impact.

4. *If you disagree with the direction please suggest an alternative direction?*

A focus on where we can achieve the most good e.g. the largest numbers in groups determined by the underlying causes that we can address regardless of whether they might also be in category A, B or C.

5. *What evidence do you propose to support this alternative as a more effective approach?*

Your own evidence presented in the report with further refinement as mentioned above.

6. *Do you agree that the initial suggested set of strategic actions is a good start?*

Yes

Comments:

7. *What actions offer the best outcome and what actions need to be further enhanced?*

4.16 The development of relationships with businesses, colleges and training organisations and the development of exchange and employability programmes will be considered in the context of 'Preparing for Success'.

4.21 Structured youth activities that lead to improved self-confidence and self-esteem.

4.42 Initiatives to help young people to become self-employed.

8. *What are any other actions/enhancements you would suggest?*

We suggest the direct work with NEET's to understand their needs, what support works and what does not, may be useful complemented by studying what measures have worked elsewhere. (This is referenced at the bottom of P44). Though we understand that there will be differences in the education and benefits systems elsewhere.

Central departments should also consider the significance of their procurement power, especially on larger projects and contracts such as those mentioned in section 4.50. It may be possible to include clauses that encourage the winning suppliers to provide opportunities for NEETs.

The strategy may benefit from a greater reference to the need to create actual jobs for NEETs. While we fully agree that their time while unemployed should be filled with training and learning opportunities these need to be done with a realistic expectation of employment to follow. This affects both the motivation of the young person and also the longer term cost to society.

(Referring to section 5 of the consultation document)

9. *Do you agree that the suggested plans for further work will effectively take forward the initial actions required to reduce the numbers of young people who are in the NEET category?*

Yes

Comments:

We agree with the need for improved coordination and encouraging collaboration but have slight concerns about the formation of new partnerships as listed on page 45. We agree that partnerships can provide coordination and alignment between existing activities and new partnerships may be necessary to address any gaps or opportunities that emerge as part of the research work. However, we must avoid establishing new partnerships that exist for little more than the sake of existing or that feel the need to launch new programmes with little regard for the overall NEET strategy.

10. *What other strands might need to be further considered?*

It may be worth having a specific strand aimed at raising awareness of the scale of the NEET problem, its impact on young people and longer term affect on society. In particular, this could be aimed at potential employers.

11. ***Are there other specific ways of working you would suggest under any particular strand?***

12. ***What level of commitment are you prepared to offer to help make the work plans (at Section 5 of the consultation document) effective? Please tick one or more of the following:-***

a) ***No commitment at this stage.***

b) ***I wish to be kept informed.*** ✓

c) ***I wish to be a participant and contribute my experience.*** ✓
(Through our Economic Development Unit and Children and Young People Unit)

d) ***I will put myself forward to lead a particular strand.***

e) ***Other Please specify:***

(Referring to section 6 of the consultation document)

13. ***Do you agree that the mechanism suggested will co-ordinate the implementation of the strategic actions?***

Yes

Comments:

14. ***What other co-ordination actions might offer an enhanced outcome?***

15. ***Are there any other actions/enhancements you would suggest?***

It is not clear from the document whether there will be representation from the various delivery agents of the final strategy. If this was not the intention we would strongly suggest that they are involved in the steering group.

16. ***If you have any other general comments please include these below:***

We appreciate the difficulty in trying to coordinate the activities across departments to address this very important issue. We hope therefore that our feedback is not viewed as overly critical but seen as an indication of how much we hope that the problem of young people not being able to find employment or training can be addressed."

**Consultation Department of Justice –
Criminal Record Regime**

The Committee endorsed the undernoted response to the above-mentioned consultation:

“Council Response

Thank you for asking us to respond to the Criminal Records review. The proposals have created much interest especially within our HR Dept, Children and Young People unit and wider Community Services.

Unfortunately, due to the regional and Council elections it was impossible to put your proposals and our analysis to our Committee before the deadline. We are sending these comments in the hope that they may still be useful.

Background Information

Belfast City Council is a Registered Body which uses AccessNI for Enhanced Disclosures on some staff posts and for volunteers that will work in our directly managed community and play centres with children and vulnerable adults.

We are also registered as an Umbrella Organisation and process Enhanced Disclosure on behalf of community organisations for volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults.

Q10 Balance between public protection and individual rights in the current Disclosure process

The issue appears to be what is regarded as individual rights. The main rationale behind our work is to support children, young people and vulnerable adults. Their needs are paramount and their protection must take priority. Hence their individual rights to attend a service where they will not be potentially harmed has to remain paramount.

There needs to be the mechanism where challenges can be made regarding the information provided. Applicants are able to see the information provided by AccessNI as they receive a copy of the certificate that is provided to the employer.

Within Belfast City Council Community Services, we follow NIACRO guidelines and where there are concerns regarding information about a volunteer, they are offered a meeting to provide further information before a decision is made.

Q11 *Criteria for eligibility for AccessNI Disclosures in your sector clear?*

As part of our overreaching work with children and young people, we have developed good practice guidelines both for working with children and in the recruitment of volunteers. Our guidelines are based upon best practice and follow guidance outlined through the Children (NI) Order 1995, Volunteer Now and Keeping Safe Child Protection guidelines.

Most of our service would not be considered as a regulated body as we do not provide childcare services. We do provide an extensive range of services for children where they are supported, befriended and supervised. Where the volunteers have responsibility for children in the play setting and would potentially be in a one to one situation, we would seek Enhanced Disclosures prior to working with children.

Q12 *Should volunteers be treated differently from paid employees in terms of eligibility for AccessNI disclosures*

The community sector is primarily comprised of volunteers who work on a regular basis providing a valuable service for children and vulnerable adults. Many of the community groups are comprised only of volunteers with no paid staff. Their roles and responsibilities would be the same as a paid staff member.

For Community Services, as part of our community development ethos, we actively encourage volunteers to take part in projects and to take on roles of responsibility. This may include taking responsibility for children during a session or out on a trip without a paid member of staff.

Many of services would not be delivered without the support and backup of volunteers who are able to step in to both support and run projects when paid staff have other demands.

Part of the work of Community services is to empower volunteers to run projects that will include work with children or vulnerable adults.

We would therefore argue that volunteers need to be treated the same as paid employees as they will have the same responsibilities.

The suggestion that volunteers may not require checks if they are supervised would be difficult for our organisation. This is because it would place a heavier dependence on existing staff resources to supervise the volunteer and we would be unable to ask the volunteer to take on certain responsibilities. There would also be inconsistencies leading to conflicts if you were to have some volunteers checked and others not.

Q13 *Should police intelligence information form part of an AccessNI disclosure*

One of the main benefits of the AccessNI was the provision of police intelligence to ensure that, where there were concerns that were non-convictions, that they were prevented from being a potential risk to children and vulnerable adults. It was our understanding that this was brought in following the Ian Huntley case where police intelligence information was not available.

Q14 *To what extent should old and minor offences be included in AccessNI disclosures*

The question is what criteria will be used in deciding? An organisation should have a consistent policy and practice regarding what convictions will be considered when making a decision. The information regarding decision making should be available to candidates. Therefore candidates will be aware of what will be of concern and that the other offences will be disregarded.

Q15 *Should AccessNI disclosures be portable?*

The question is to how decisions would be made regarding the suitability of a person to work with children or vulnerable adults. We would welcome the development of a system that would enable disclosures to be portable. This would require a decision making process to be developed to enable consistency across organisations.

Q16 *Updating information*

The updating of information is a very good idea in that organisations would be aware if there are any new concerns. It would also compliment the portability of AccessNI disclosures and reduce the need for new checks on existing staff or volunteers. One of the main reasons organisations carry out new checks on staff and volunteers is to ascertain if there have been any changes in a person's information. A robust system would be required that is effective and keeps employers up to date.

Q17 *Priorities*

1. Continuous updating and Portable disclosure certificates
2. Better integration of international data
3. More relevant and consistent police intelligence
4. Reduced cost / bureaucratic burden

Our list of priorities is based on the following reasons:

1. and 2. would be a joint top priority as they would decrease the number of checks required. They would also ensure information is continually updated to enable organisations to know if there have been any new concerns regarding a person's background. To support this it would be essential for employers to be able to make 'on-line' checks to ensure the certificate is valid.

Q19-22 *Criminal Records*

Regarding criminal records, there should be no change in the current system in that all convictions should continue to appear on the disclosure form. This provides information regarding the background of a person and potential patterns of re-offending. If an organisation has a robust system for decision making regarding previous criminal records, there is a protection for the potential staff member or volunteer. The system would include confidential storing and shredding of documents.

Q24 *Overseas data*

An inconsistency with the current system is the difficulty in being able to check people who arrive from outside the UK. The only records available are those relating to the time they have resided in the UK. Therefore this leaves the potential for a person with a history of harm against children or vulnerable adults to work in the UK with these groups. While this is an identified need, we currently do not have views on how best this can be done."

European Unit - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding developments on two key initiatives led by the European Unit:

- 1. The COMET Network**
- 2. The Opportunity Europe Programme.**

2 Key Issues

2.1 COMET Network

2.2 Members will be aware that the European Unit is Secretariat to the Councils of the Metropolitan Area (COMET) Network. This partnership, established in 2002 is a collaborative of the six local economic development units within the Greater Belfast Metropolitan Area. The network is funded by way of a Service Level Agreement with each Council contributing £5000 per annum. This is used to offset operational and project related costs.

2.3 To date the success of the Partnership with such limited financial resourcing has been notable. COMET has been successful in attracting European funding, established the COMET Interreg partnership, undertaken joint trade missions and business events and formulated joint lobbying responses in the fields of economic development and urban regeneration. Officers and elected members from the six Councils also undertook a Economic Development European Awareness visit to Brussels. Following a strategic review of the network officers have recently finalised a five year action plan.

2.4 The independent review of the partnership found that prior to establishment, collaborative working on economic development matters within the cities of Belfast and Lisburn and the boroughs of North Down, Newtownabbey, Castlereagh and Carrickfergus was sporadic and ad hoc. The review notes however, that relationships have been strengthened and developed through the partnership’s formalisation and has reached the point where contact between officers occurs on specific issues. Equally it recognises that without the structure, officers would focus solely on delivering for their individual areas and not reap the added value of collaboration. This added value was determined as:

- 2.5 - Ability to engage in European initiatives and collective projects which they would not have participated in or funded as a single entity;
- Ability to engage in new areas of activity which they would not have traditionally considered within local economic development activity;
 - Sharing of resources for joint activity has ensured better value for money in attaining Council objectives;
 - Availability of the resource provided by Belfast City Council's EU Unit and the associated experience and expertise which does not currently exist in the other member Councils; and
 - Leverage of additional funding
- 2.6 In its analysis of COMET, the review concludes that as it stands, COMET is primarily an operational entity. Whilst members are satisfied with this emphasis, they do seek to become more strategic and to increase awareness of the partnership's existence. To this end a five year plan has been developed as an initial step in this process.
- 2.7 The Action Plan is focussed around 4 objectives:
- Stimulating enterprise and entrepreneurship
 - Business development and growth
 - Promoting the COMET region
 - Urban planning and policy
- 2.8 Under each theme is an ambitious list of desirable activity that partnership members would like to see happen within the Metropolitan Area and highlights where there would be an efficiency or benefit in acting collaboratively. Such activity includes a creative industries support programme, assisting SMEs to identify and source new market opportunities, developing a robust evidence base for the metropolitan area to facilitate further funding applications and engage in urban lobbying and European activity. Whilst this plan is extensive, it is however reflective of a number of internal and external influences, namely:
- It recognises that each participating Council will have its own corporate, departmental and unit objectives and that Councils should have the flexibility to opt in or out of activities dependent on this strategic fit.

- Securing additional funding to enable projects to become operational
 - The results of pilot initiatives will determine whether a second project phase is pursued
 - That the economic environment will determine whether initiatives remain appropriate
- 2.9
- The political landscape will equally influence what is obtainable. This plan straddles 2 European Programming periods, is being launched as a new Assembly and 6 local Councils embed and it is also likely that discussions regarding the Review of Public Administration will reopen during the Plan's lifetime.
 - Certain projects within the Plan will need further development and scoping but are included as their objectives are aligned to COMET's ethos.

It is proposed that upon adoption by the six Councils, officers will commence implementation of the Plan and it will be held under regular review, the first scheduled for December 2011.

2.10 **Resource Implications**

There are no additional financial implications for Belfast City Council in approving the COMET Action Plan. Actions will either be funded from within the Partnership's Service Level Agreement or external funding sought.

2.11 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

There are no Equality or Good Relations considerations attached to this report

2.12 **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note the contents of the report and approve the COMET Action Plan 2011-2015

2.13 **Decision Tracker**

Once content of the report is approved, implementation of the COMET Action Plan will be reviewed annually by the partnership members and reported to Council Chief Executive Officers.

3. **Opportunity Europe**

- 3.1 **Members will be aware that the European Unit, in partnership with the European Commission Office in NI, organises an award winning annual flagship event, called 'Opportunity Europe'. The aim of this two day fair is to promote the opportunities that Europe presents for studying, living, working or volunteering abroad. The target audience is primarily post primary students from across Northern Ireland but is open to the general public also.**
- 3.2 **This year's event will take place in St George's Market on 18 and 19 October 2011 and on offer will be 50 workshops on career opportunities and cultural diversity, quizzes, language taster sessions, online video conferencing, and workshops using art, drama and multi-media. A new perspective in 2011 will be a sub-theme looking at how young people can participate in European Volunteering schemes and city events which have a European dimension. This year's event is being branded as part of the European Commission's 'European Year of Volunteering' and as the local event within the Committee of Regions 'Open Days' Programme.**
- 3.3 **The Opportunity Europe programme will be officially launched on Friday 23 September 2011 to coincide with the European Day of Languages in Lagan College. After a Continental breakfast, students will present a language based schools assembly with speeches from the European Commission Office in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research and Belfast City Council.**
- 3.4 **Members are requested to agree the attendance of the Chair, Deputy Chair or nominee at the official Opportunity Europe Programme launch in September and the official opening of the fair in St George's on Tuesday 18 October at 11am.**
- 3.5 **Belfast City Council's £15000 contribution to the Opportunity Europe programme is directed towards workshop delivery and comes from within the EU unit annual budget.**
- 3.6 **Resource Implications**

£15 000 from within the EU Unit annual budget is invested in Opportunity Europe as per its 2011-2012 Business Plan

3.7 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

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

3.8 Recommendations

That members approve the attendance of the Chair, Deputy Chair or nominees at Opportunity Europe's official launch on 23 September 2011 in Lagan College and at the official opening of the Opportunity Europe fair on Tuesday 18 October 2011 in St George's Market.

3.9 Decision Tracker

The delivery of Opportunity Europe will be monitored through generated press coverage, attendance figures, participant evaluations, workshop coordinators' and exhibitors' feedback."

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and approved the contents of the COMET Strategic Review for 2010 and Action Plan from 2011 to 2015, copies of which were available on the Modern.gov website.

PLACE - Restructuring and Management Agreement

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th November, 2003, it had agreed to support the creation of the PLACE Design Centre which aimed to assist in the promotion and awareness of urban design and architecture pertinent to the City. To this end, the Council had provided premises for PLACE within 35-47 Donegall Place, which it shared with both the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and Belfast City Centre Management. The Director reminded the Committee that, from 1st August, 2010, the Council had agreed to extend its lease of 35-47 Donegall Place for a further three years and it was reported that PLACE had requested that it be permitted to continue to operate within the premises over the period of the renewed lease, viz., to end on 31st July, 2013. In addition, it was noted that PLACE had requested that the same levels of Council support be provided to it during this period in respect of the costs associated with rent, rates, maintenance, service charges and insurance premiums.

It was reported that PLACE had undertaken an internal review of its structures and, as a result, a new company had been formed. The aim of the new company was to promote its core principles to a wider audience and it was reported that the renewed management structures reflected a full range of members of statutory bodies and agencies from throughout Belfast. Accordingly, it was reported that PLACE had invited the Council to renew its membership of the organisation and to consider whether it wished to avail of the offer of two positions on its management board.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to extend its support to PLACE until 31st July, 2013, subject to the drafting of a suitable management agreement. In addition, it was agreed that the Council renew its membership of the organisation and that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) represent the Council on the management board.

Belfast/Switzerland - Christian Heritage Festival

(Ms. L. Leonard, European Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Development reported that a request for assistance had been received from representatives of a consortium which was overseeing a mini festival to celebrate the Christian and cultural linkages between the Belfast Lough area and Saint Gallen in Switzerland. He explained that 2012 would mark the 1400th anniversary of the founding by St. Gall of the St. Gallen Monastery in Switzerland, which had been designated a world-heritage site. It was reported that the organisers were hoping to use the festival to raise awareness of the year-long Europe-wide celebrations of the centenary which will take place throughout 2012. It was reported that the consortium would be hosting a lunchtime event in the City Hall during the week beginning 17th October. This would be attended by approximately 150 guests, together with a number of international dignitaries, and invitations would be extended also to the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff, together with all Members of the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to provide financial assistance towards hospitality for this event in the sum of £1,100. It was noted that a report on how the Council might mark the anniversary in 2012 would be submitted in due course.

Mr. Tim Husbands

The Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the meeting would be the last one attended by Mr. Tim Husbands in his capacity as Head of Civic Events and Venues. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman paid tribute to and thanked Mr. Husbands for the work which he had undertaken on behalf of the Council over the previous seventeen years and wished him every success in his new position as Chief Executive of Titanic Belfast.

Chairman