

Development Committee

Tuesday, 27th September, 2011

Meeting of Development Committee

Members present: Councillor Stalford (Chairman); and
Aldermen Campbell and Humphrey;
Councillors Austin, Hartley, Hendron, Keenan, 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;
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Services Manager;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Aldermen Ekin and Stoker and Councillor Kelly.

Routine Correspondence - Meeting with Minister for Tourism

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 10th August, it had considered a report in respect of the work of the Council's Tourism Forum. At that meeting, it had been pointed out that the Forum had identified a number of issues which it wished to raise with the Minister for Tourism, Mrs. Arlene Foster, M.L.A., in respect of tourism development in Belfast. Given the considerable range of events which were due to take place during 2012, including the 100th anniversary of the launch of the Titanic, the Committee agreed that it would write to the Minister requesting that she meet with an all-party deputation from the Committee, which would be accompanied by a number of representatives from the Tourism Forum, to discuss issues pertinent to tourism development within the City. Accordingly, it was reported that Minister had subsequently agreed to meet with the Council's deputation on a date to be determined.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- that the Council's deputation to meet the Minister would consist of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, together with one representative from each of the remaining Political Parties, or their nominees;
- that a maximum of four representatives from the Tourism Forum would be permitted to accompany the deputation; and

- that the Minister's Office be advised that the deputation would wish to discuss specifically the development of tourism within Belfast and the marketing of the City as a distinct and vibrant tourist attraction.

Integrated Cultural Strategy

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th June, it had agreed that officers from the Department would consult with each of the Political Parties on the Council in respect of a proposed review of the Integrated Cultural Strategy. The Democratic Services Officer reported that a consultation exercise had been held on 20th September and that a range of views had been brought to the attention of officers in relation to the contents of any new Strategy. There had also been a suggestion that a further consultation exercise with Members should be undertaken.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- to host a further workshop, to which all Members of the Council would be invited, in the Reception Room, City Hall, commencing at 5.15 p.m.; and
- that, subsequent to the workshop, should any Political Party request further clarification on the proposed Strategy, officers from the Department would undertake to provide addition briefings in this regard.

Members' Consultation re: Council Framework to Tackle Poverty and Reduce Inequalities

The Committee agreed to host a briefing session in respect of the above-mentioned item at 5.15 p.m. on Tuesday, 11th October. It was noted that all Members of the Council would be invited to attend.

Requests to receive Deputations

It was reported that no requests had been received.

Presentation from Invest NI

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd August, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives from Invest NI in order to explore how the Council might work with the Agency to promote economic regeneration throughout the City. It was reported that Mr. A. Hamilton, Chief Executive, Ms. O. Hinds, Eastern Regional Manager and Mr. J. Fitch, Managing Director of Client Relationships, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Hamilton outlined the role and objectives of Invest NI and explained that the Agency provided support to new and existing businesses to assist them to compete internationally to attract new investment to Northern Ireland. He indicated that Invest NI worked on behalf of the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide

support to local businesses as part of its key economic development strategies. He stated that Invest NI supported both foreign and locally-owned businesses and he provided examples of successful projects which the Agency had supported over the past twelve months.

Mr. Hamilton then outlined how Invest NI had adapted to address the economic downturn and pointed out that job creation and job protection were now considered to be of equal importance as the aim of wealth creation. He gave an overview of the range of packages and initiatives which had been introduced to provide support during the recession and concluded by stating that it was the aim of Invest NI to work with in partnership with the Council to identify job-creation opportunities and to make the most effective use of resources by providing high-quality services, effective programmes and client support.

A number of Members thanked the representatives of Invest NI for attending and welcomed Mr. Hamilton's suggestion that the Council and the Agency should seek to work in partnership to deliver economic regeneration across the City. Mr. Hamilton emphasised the vital role which Elected Members played in the marketing of Belfast at an international level and also in the development of initiatives which could address areas where unemployment was most acute. He added that Invest NI would continue to explore opportunities to establish further job creation programmes, provide high-class business advice and a professional mentoring service to local businesses. The representatives from Invest NI then retired from the meeting.

After further discussion, during which Members paid tribute to the officers from the Department for their valuable work with Invest NI, the Committee noted the information provided and noted also that a report in respect of the potential for future collaboration between the Council and Invest NI would be submitted in due course.

Cathedral Quarter Trust

The Committee was reminded that the Cathedral Quarter Steering Group had been established in 2008 by the Department for Social Development, in conjunction with the Council, Belfast City Centre Management and a range of other stakeholders. The Director pointed out that, at its meeting on 9th December, 2010 the Committee had considered a report in respect of the establishment of a Cathedral Quarter Trust as part of the Steering Group's development plan for 2010 to 2015. The Director stated that the Steering Group had since completed a period of formal consultation on its development plan and it was intended that the Trust would be established forthwith with a remit:

- to support the Cathedral Quarter as a centre for the arts and creative industries;
- to support the growth of the mixed-use economy within the Cathedral Quarter;
- to generate high levels of public participation; and
- to build and maintain a supportive infrastructure.

The Director provided an overview of proposed membership for the Cathedral Quarter Trust and reported that an invitation had been extended to the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman to become founder members.

After discussion, during which the Members noted that a report would be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in respect of the overall issue of roles and responsibilities of Members serving on outside bodies, including potential conflicts of interest, it was agreed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) would represent the Committee on the Cathedral Quarter Trust.

Department Grant Aid - 2012/2013

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

- "1 Relevant Background Information
- 1.1 **The Development Department manages a significant grant funding programme to a range of clients enabling community and cultural organisations to make a real difference in people's lives and to the success of the city. Our grant funds are a crucial enabling resource towards achieving the goals laid down in our Departmental and Corporate Plan.**
 - 1.2 **In 2010/2011 the Department dispensed £4 million in grants to organisations across the city. While we are obviously much more than a grant-maker, we must seek out how best to use our grant-making function to build on assets and opportunities, to encourage self reliance and social responsibility and to overcome the obstacles to economic growth.**
 - 1.3 **The departmental grant programme is managed across two service areas and includes a range of small and larger grant investments. The small grant schemes are subject to application and are allocated competitively against agreed criterion. The grant programme for 2011/2012 is operating within current procedures and it is intended to continue this approach in 2012/2013 in advance of any potential new small grant programme.**
 - 1.4 **This report relates primarily to the portfolio of larger grants across the department.**
 - **Community: Revenue Grant, Capacity Building Grant and Advice Services**
 - **Economic Initiatives: Culture and Arts Annual and Multi Annual Funding**
 - 1.5 **All programmes in the larger grant category are fully committed for the current financial year. Decisions are now pending on how we progress the programme for the period from 1st April 2012.**

- 1.6 The SP&R committee are currently reviewing grant funding on a corporate basis. They hope to report related appropriate findings and recommendations with a view to a planned implementation across council from April 2013.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 During the intervening period there have been significant changes in the strategic environment across all our work areas. There is no doubt that the current economic climate and budgetary pressures facing the entire public sector within Northern Ireland will result in a reduction in many of the traditional grant schemes to the sector. It is likely that we will see very significant change to current support arrangements with an emphasis on rationalisation and the ending of current contracts to be replaced with more targeted support arrangements. Central government have also indicated their intent to explore Social Impact Bonds and alternative finance sources, including philanthropic sources, and to help voluntary and community organisations ease their dependency on government grants.
- 2.2 BRO are reviewing their approach to Neighbourhood Renewal investment in the region.
- 2.3 Council officers are continuing to liaise with officials at the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) to gauge opportunities in relation to the recently established £80million Social Investment Fund and the proposed Social Protection Fund that will assist those most in need within our wider community. While the specifics of both funds are still unclear, it is important that we assist government to identify what we feel the priorities should be.
- 2.4 Economic Initiatives has been working closely with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) Whilst there have been cuts to their budgets, ACNI are working with clients to streamline their funding programmes, supporting the sector to develop 3 year business plans which will receive a three year package of funding. This will support the sector to address budget cuts at a strategic level. There are further cuts due to ACNI budget over the next few years but a forecast increase in lottery revenue will help to cover that deficit. Over 90% of the clients that BCC funds also receive funding from ACNI and therefore it is important that there is co-operation and that added value is created for both agencies and not duplication of effort or funding.

- 2.5 Alongside these regional initiatives, Belfast City Council are reviewing their approach to support in a number of programme areas. Our emerging Community Development Strategy, and preliminary work on a Neighbourhood Assets Strategy, demonstrates our commitment to working in partnership to secure the necessary resources to make things happen set alongside a greater focus on delivery against targeted outcomes at both a city and neighbourhood level.
- 2.6 A Steering Group comprising of senior representatives from Belfast City Council (BCC), Department for Social Development (DSD), Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) and DSD Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU) was established to oversee a review into the way in which Community Development / Infrastructure services were supported across Belfast. The Group are considering how these could be better integrated and improved to ensure that the best possible impact is made with the funds administered in this area. This work will inform how BRO, VCU and BCC might work more collaboratively and effectively in the area of Community Development/ Infrastructure in the period up to the transfer of functions under RPA. (abbreviation needed)
- 2.7 The project recognises the need to simplify current processes and target the limited resources available in a more cost effective way. The number of different funding streams, each supported by its own administrative process leads to limited co-ordination as well as potential duplication and displacement of activity on the ground both within the community and voluntary sectors and within and between BCC/DSD. The evidence indicates that the needs of local communities could be better met with a restructuring of the current arrangements. It is anticipated that recommendations from the group will inform funding post 2013 but with opportunities to pilot collaborative approaches in the interim period. This review will impact on the Community Services larger grant programme, that is, Capacity, Revenue and Advice & Information Services.
- 2.8 Economic Initiatives through the work of the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit is currently reviewing Belfast's Integrated Cultural Strategy. The previous strategy was adopted in 2007 and runs for 4 years. A new environment now exists for culture and arts organisations in the city, new venues such as the Lyric, An Culturlann and the Mac have opened (or due to open shortly), the economic climate has impacted on public sector funding and income through ticket sales e.g. audience

figures have in some instances declined, tourism remains a strong sector and there are opportunities to increase visitors by promoting greater access to the arts and in turn contribute to the sustainability of organisations. Engagement has commenced with the sector and a draft plan is due to be presented to committee in November 2011. This plan will require a minimum of 8 weeks consultation in line with BCC's equality screening and therefore it is unlikely that any changes to how the culture and arts organisations are funded will be ready for implementation before February/ March 2012.

Conclusion

The outcomes from these various pieces of work will add value to our grant funding programme. The timescale for conclusion will dovetail with and tie in with the overall corporate timescale of the grant project.

- 2.9 We therefore suggest an interim period (2012/2013) in order to allow time to align our grant programmes to any new corporate strategy, to the outcomes of the collaborative DSD/ BCC pilot and the new Integrated Cultural Strategy.
- 2.10 In order to facilitate this, we suggest that committee agree 12 month extensions to our current portfolio of larger grants across the department as follows:
- 2.11 - Advice & Information Services
- Revenue Grant
- Capacity Support Grant
- Culture and Arts Annual Fund

This approach will minimise disruption to funded groups in that any anticipated changes to our grant programme and related systems will be managed in an integrated, and hopefully simplified, approach. That is, changes to assessment criteria, systems and processes, etc, coming from these distinct pieces of work will be implemented in line with the recommendations coming forward from the corporate grants project.

- 2.12 As part of the review of our consortia approach to Advice & Information support, Committee requested that Officers re-evaluate the allocation equation which informs current investment. This work is underway and a further report will be tabled for Committee consideration and agreement in advance of 2012/13 grant committal.

Estimates for 2012/13 include sufficient funds to cover the necessary resources to extend contracts for a further 12 months. All awards will continue to be subject to receipt of business plans and appropriate monitoring returns.

3 Resource Implications

Estimates for 2012/13 include sufficient funds to cover the necessary resources to extend contracts for a further 12 months.

- Multi Annual Funding £697,264
- Annual Funding £301,835
- Revenue Grant £818,097.85
- Capacity Grant £651,331.00
- Advice and Information £825,619.38

4 Recommendations

Committee are requested to:

- (i) Note the contents of the paper.
- (ii) Agree to continue the current Small Grant programme and related procedures for 2012/13.
- (iii) Agree to 12 month extensions to all grant contracts subject to receipt of business plans and appropriate monitoring returns.

Appendix 1

**Multi-Annual and Annual Funding 2012/2013
proposed grants to organisations**

Multi-Annual Funding	Proposed (standstill) Grant 2012/2013
Beat Initiative	£34,330
Belfast Community Circus	£34,330
Belfast Exposed	£31,209
Belfast Festival at Queen's	£68,920
Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	£30,300
Cinemagic	£31,209
Crescent Arts Centre	£34,330
Féile an Phobail	£30,300
Grand Opera House	£34,330
Linen Hall Library	£42,912
Lyric Theatre	£37,971
New Belfast Community Arts Initiative	£34,070
Northern Visions	£31,209
Old Museum Arts Centre	£41,352
Ulster Orchestra	£149,283
Young at Art	£31,209
TOTAL	£697,264
	£697,264
Annual Funding	
Aisling Ghear Theatre Company	£3,000
Andersonstown Traditional & Contemporary Music School	£4,000
ArtsEkta	£6,521
Belfast Film Festival	£28,851
Belfast Print Workshop	£6,250
Beyond Skin	£3,000
Bruiser Theatre Company	£8,823
Cahoots NI	£5,228
Catalyst Arts	£3,000
Community Arts Forum	£20,604
Creative Exchange	£3,000
Culture Night Belfast	£10,000
Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich	£8,742
Dance United NI	£3,500
East Belfast Arts Collective - Engine Room Gallery	£3,000
Festival of Fools	£11,164
Golden Thread Gallery	£8,043
Green Shoot Productions	£3,000
Kabosh Theatre	£13,785

Kids in Control	£13,005
Maiden Voyage Dance Company	£3,500
Moving on Music	£18,286
Music Theatre 4 Youth – MT4Uth	£3,060
New Lodge Arts	£4,030
Oh Yeah Music Centre	£3,500
Open Arts	£3,000
Open House Traditional Arts Festival Limited	£10,579
Primecut Productions	£12,057
Queen Street Studios	£5,250
Queen's Film Theatre	£12,000
Ransom Productions	£3,523
Replay Productions Ltd	£11,832
Source / Photoworks North	£3,060
Streetwise Community Circus Workshops	£6,166
Tinderbox Theatre Company	£17,572
Wheelworks	£8,499
Youth Action Northern Ireland	£9,405
TOTAL	£301,835

Appendix 2

Revenue Grants Award 2012

Groups	Area	Award 2011/12	Budget 2012/13
An Munia Tober		£17,116.06	£17,116.06
Annadale And Haywood Residents Association	South	£2,245.00	£2,245.00
Ardcarn	East	£3,219.88	£3,219.88
Ardmonagh	West	£8,196.07	£8,196.07
Artability	West	£6,390.27	£6,390.27
Ballymac	East	£8,196.07	£8,196.07
Ballysillan Forum	North	£6,584.96	£6,584.96
Belfast Education and Library Board (Clarawood C.A.)		£9,440.97	£9,440.97
Belfast Islamic Centre	South	£5,675.97	£5,675.97
Benview	North	£13,610.16	£13,610.16
Blackie	West	£18,733.86	£18,733.86
Bloomfield	East	£8,698.37	£8,698.37
Bridge	East	£18,733.86	£18,733.86
Cancer Lifeline	North	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Cara Friend	South	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Cavehill	North	£3,084.05	£3,084.05
Chinese Welfare Association	South	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Clara Park	East	£7,579.02	£7,579.02
Cliftonville Community Group	North	£8,196.07	£8,196.07
Concerned Residents Upper Ardoyne	North	£3,574.63	£3,574.63

Groups	Area	Award 2011/12	Budget 2012/13
Divis Joint Development Committee	West	£8,196.07	£8,196.07
Donegall Pass Community Forum	South	£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Empire	South	£7,961.89	£7,961.89
Falls Womens Centre	West	£17,122.75	£17,122.75
FASA	North	£2,135.66	£2,135.66
Feile	West	£6,584.97	£6,584.97
First Step Drop in Centre	North	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Forthspring Community Group	West	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Glen Parent Youth Group	West	£18,733.86	£18,733.86
Glenbank	North	£8,196.07	£8,196.07
Glencairn	West	£3,341.66	£3,341.66
Glencolin Residents	West	£3,463.29	£3,463.29
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	South	£1,036.21	£0.00
Hannahstown Community Association	West	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Highfield Residents Trust	West	£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Holy Trinity Centre	West	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Hubb Community Resource Centre	North	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
Indian Community Centre	North	£6,584.97	£6,584.97
Ionadh Uibh Eachach	West	£6,584.97	£6,584.97
Ligoniel Family Centre	North	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
LINK	West	£7,075.54	£7,075.54
Lower Andersonstown Mothers Support	West	£3,746.12	£3,746.12
Lower Castlereagh Community Group	East	£2,294.90	£2,294.90
Lower Oldpark Community Association	North	£7,780.40	£7,780.40
Lower Shankill Community Association	West	£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Markets	South	£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Marrowbone	North	£8,196.07	£8,196.07
Mid Skegoneill	North	£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Mount Vernon	North	£13,440.37	£13,440.37
Neighbourhood Development Association	West	£3,512.61	£3,512.61
Newhill	West	£18,732.84	£18,732.84
Newtownards Road Womens Group	East	£18,733.86	£18,733.86
North Belfast Womens Initiative and Support Project	North	£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Oak	East	£1,917.89	£1,917.89
Oasis	East	£18,733.86	£18,733.86
Sailortown Regeneration Group	North	£4,500.00	£4,500.00
Sandy Row Residents Association	South	£2,801.00	£2,801.00
Shankill Womens Centre	West	£17,132.42	£17,132.42
Shore Crescent	North	£2,470.52	£2,470.52
Short Strand Drugs Awareness	East	£3,360.39	£3,360.39
St James Community Forum	West	£7,086.53	£7,086.53
Stadium Projects	West	£7,231.20	£7,231.20
STAR	North	£8,196.07	£8,196.07
Sunningdale	North	£7,203.17	£7,203.17
Sydenham	East	£3,746.78	£0.00
Tar Anall	West	£6,584.97	£6,584.97

Groups	Area	Award 2011/12	Budget 2012/13
The Midland Social and Recreational Association		£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Turf Lodge Residents Association	West	£3,746.78	£3,746.78
Upper Andersonstown Community Forum	North	£18,732.68	£18,732.68
Walkway Community Association	East	£13,640.61	£13,640.61
Wandsworth	East	£6,439.77	£6,439.77
West Belfast Cultural and Athletic	West	£1,217.71	£1,217.71
Westland	North	£6,029.96	£6,029.96
Whitecity	North	£14,620.61	£14,620.61
Whiterock/Westrock	West	£7,238.31	£7,238.31
Willowfield Parish	East	£11,333.03	£11,333.03
Windsor Womens Centre	South	£6,584.97	£6,584.97
Sub-total		£594,587.84	£589,804.85
Independent centres			
LORAG			£55,182.71
Ballymacarrett			£55,182.71
Roden Street/Grosvenor			£55,182.71
Denmark			£20,806.00
Percy Street			£8,829.24
Carrickhill			£33,109.63
Sub-total			£228,293.00
TOTAL REVENUE			£818,097.85

Appendix 3

Capacity Support proposed grant allocations 2012/2013

Capacity	Proposed grant 2012/2013 (standstill)
Taughmonagh Community Forum	£49,665.00
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	£30,000.00
Belfast South Community Resource Centre	£44,950.00
Falls Community Council	£49,665.00
Ballynafeigh CDA	£49,665.00
South City Resource & Development Centre	£35,500.00
Upper Springfield Resource Centre	£33,110.00
Roden Street Community Group	£38,000.00
Engage with Age	£5,000.00
Ashton Community Trust	£45,116.00
Women's Support Network	£11,000.00
East Belfast Community Development Agency	£49,665.00
Greater Shankill Community Council	£33,110.00

Capacity	Proposed (standstill) grant 2012/2013
Ligoniel Improvement Association	£33,110.00
Short Strand Community Forum	£33,110.00
Falls Partnership Initiative	£30,000.00
Lower North Belfast – allocation pending	£49,665.00
Sub-total	£620,331.00
Play Resource Warehouse	£31,000.00
TOTAL	£651,331.00

Appendix 4

Advice and Information Grant 2011/12 Allocation

Advice & Information	Proposed (standstill) grant 2012/2013
CAB North	78058.71
Ardoyne Association (NBAP)	147589.80
Suffolk Andersonstown CAB	4810.25
Ballynafeigh CD Assn	106750.49
CAB East	69425.23
EBIAC	69425.23
Neighbourhood Dev Assn	38551.13
Springfield Charitable Assn	54547.56
Falls Community Council	17158.94
Corpus Christi Services	29569.23
Falls/Shankill CAB	65237.36
Suffolk Andersonstown CAB	51446.27
Greater Turf Lodge Residents	10478.81
CAB Central	59782.93
Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre	22787.44
TOTAL	£825,619.38

The Community Services Manager and the Head of Economic Initiatives answered a number of Members' questions in respect of the report and clarified the Council's legal position in agreeing to extend funding for all grant contracts for a further twelve-month period. In response to a query regarding the Department's ability to consider further applications for funding from new Groups not included within the current grant-aid programme, the Head of Economic Initiatives indicated that she was confident that sufficient resources existed to meet such requests.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Ó Muilleoir,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey, and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations and notes that, subject to the identification of suitable Departmental resources, a report would be submitted for consideration in respect of the establishment of a new culture and arts funding initiative for 2012/2013 and beyond.

Evaluation of Economic Development Unit - Programmes and Evaluation Framework

The Director advised the Committee that the Department's Business Development Unit was seeking permission to undertake an evaluation of the Economic Development Unit to assist in the development of an evaluation framework to oversee its work over the next three years. The Director provided an overview of the work of the European Unit, particularly in respect of its success in securing European Union Structural Funds. He outlined the range of enterprise and business initiatives which the Unit had provided assistance towards and pointed out that, given the current economic climate, it had been deemed necessary to re-evaluate the work of the Unit to enable it to focus on a smaller number of activities in order to maximise its potential. The Committee was advised further that the aims of the review would be:

- to develop a logical framework to reflect 'theories of change' as adopted by the Unit;
- to identify clear outcomes, both quantitative and qualitative, which would enable achievements to be measured;
- to establish a practical data collection system; and
- to provide training for staff in respect of the logical framework and to utilise data collection systems more effectively in conjunction with existing Council systems.

Accordingly, the Committee was requested to authorise expenditure in the sum of £25,000 to undertake the evaluation of the Unit, provision for which had been made within the Department's revenue estimates.

After discussion, the Committee granted the authority sought.

Quarterly Finance Report - Quarter 1, 2011/2012

The Committee considered the Department's quarterly finance report for the period from April till of June 2011. The Director clarified a number of issues in respect of the Department's financial position and in particular the extent of, and factors contributing to, a projected year-end under spend.

Noted.

Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau - Performance Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1. Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members at Development Committee on 15th June 2011, agreed to contribute £1,865,465 towards Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau’s (BVCB) marketing and visitor servicing plans in 2011/2012 and agreed that the first six months of performance would be reported back to Committee in September 2011.

1.2 The top line targets outlined in the Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework by 2014 are;

40% increase in overnight visitors to 2.38 million

20% increase in bed-nights to 4.7 million

20% increase in spend to £294 million

1.3 To reach these targets will require a joint effort between Belfast City Council, BVCB, Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), Tourism Ireland and the private sector. This report provides an overview of BVCB’s performance to date against specific performance indicators as detailed in the Belfast City Region Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan 2010 – 2014 (presented to Development Committee in February 2011).

1.4 A list of BVCB’s key targets and performance achieved to date has been circulated.

1.5 Officers meet BVCB on a regular basis to discuss progress of the plan and sit as observers on the Board. Eight Members of Belfast City Council are Directors on the Board of BVCB. A formal review of progress is undertaken by officers on a quarterly basis.

1.6 BVCB is tasked with leveraging income from the private sector. In BWC, space is allocated to Failte Ireland (FI) at a rental value of £25k / year and this has generated income in previous years of £5k. This is further clarified in Appendix 2.

2 Key Issues

2.1 NITB Funding

When Committee agreed funding for BVCB in June 2011, NITB was still in the process of confirming their contribution. NITB has now issued their Service Level Agreement which

the board of BVCB has agreed. Overall funding has been reduced from NITB from £600,000 to £416,667, with the main impact on Leisure Tourism Marketing, which they no longer support (a decrease of £175,000). NITB has increased support towards Business Tourism Marketing and continue to support Visitor Servicing, although the latter on a decreasing scale. NITB has given a commitment to fund BVCB up to 2015, subject to budgets prevailing and satisfactory performance.

- 2.2 Officers have discussed this directly with NITB and the rationale for the reduction in funding is based on cuts to their own budget and competing demands. In respect of Leisure Marketing, NITB have a budget of £2 million (partly funded via ERDF) to target NI / ROI markets. This funding can not be allocated to a third party. NITB has given a strong commitment that Belfast will feature heavily in any campaign and they will work with BVCB at planning stages to ensure consistency around messages and activities. This presents an opportunity for Belfast to influence £2 million marketing spend in our closest markets.
- 2.3 The reduction in visitor servicing may be offset by NITB investing in the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre (BWC) to ground floor location. They have indicated that are willing to support a proportion of the capital costs (subject to application and appraisal) on the basis that any move would contribute to the BWC being more financially viable and less dependent on public funding.
- 2.4 Other priorities identified in the Belfast City Region Marketing and Visitor Servicing Plan include:
- 2.5 Digital Marketing – the plan identified the need for BVCB to maximise new digital media platforms, which is even more relevant if budgets are reducing. BVCB is currently in the process of up grading the www.gotobelfast.com website and developing a new digital marketing strategy. There is an opportunity to further align this work to Belfast City Council's digital media activity.
- 2.6 Tourism Ireland / NITB – BVCB is to develop an influencing role to ensure that Belfast is positioned appropriately within both NITB and Tourism Ireland activity. NITB is already mentioned above, and meetings continue between both organisations to better align marketing activity. In respect of Tourism Ireland, there are ongoing discussions on market plans and potential opportunities for co-operative campaigns

e.g. carrier activity from GB market. This area requires a continual interface and as Market Plans are developed for 2012, there is now an opportunity to influence Tourism Ireland at planning stages.

- 2.7 Focus – BVCB needs to prioritise market segments and activity. In relation to focusing activities, BVCB has embraced the need to focus and recently restructured to prioritise business tourism and digital marketing activity.
- 2.8 Research and Evaluation – this remains an important issue to be addressed. This will require a joint approach between Belfast City Council, BVCB, NITB and DETI (NISRA). The level of detail required in respect of visitor profile, market share as well as timeliness of statistical information must be tackled. This is primarily an action for the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit and meetings have already been scheduled for the end of September.
- 2.9 Overall, BVCB's performance to date is on target and it is recommended that the next instalment of their funding, £759,500 is released. In respect of the decrease in NITB funding, it is important that the council and BVCB influence the NITB's £2million marketing budget as well as Tourism Ireland's budget to ensure the city can deliver the step change that 2012 and 2013 creates the platform to achieve. It is therefore recommended that Committee consider inviting NITB and Tourism Ireland to present on what they are doing for Belfast.
- 2.10 Due to trading trends as outlined in the letter of request (Appendix 2) BVCB have made a request that FI continue their rental contract and that the income contributes to the financial position of the Belfast Welcome Centre, and that BCC allow rental income received remain within the accounts of the Belfast Welcome Centre.
- 2.11 BVCB will showcase Belfast at the World Travel Market Show, ExCel London, 7th to 10th November 2011. The focus will be Titanic and presents a valuable opportunity for the city. As has been customary it is recommended and requested that Council is represented by the Chair, Deputy Chair and one officer.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Financial

Next instalment of BVCB's funding, £759,500 to be released. Committee approved the overall contribution of £1.865 million in June 2011 and it is included in Departmental budgets for 2011 / 2012.

3.2 Cover delegate fees, travel, accommodation and expenses of Chair, Deputy Chair and one officer to attend the World Travel Market to not exceed £1,000.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and:

- Release the next instalment of BVCB's funding, £759,500.
- To consider inviting NITB and Tourism Ireland to present to Committee on what they are doing for Belfast.

4.2 Members are asked to approve the Chair, Deputy Chair and one Officer to attend the World Travel Market, ExCel London Monday 7th to Thursday 10th November 2011.

4.3 Members agree that the rental income from the Failte Ireland desk in BWC remain in the accounts of BWC."

During discussion, a Member raised concern in respect of the extent of the Council's financial contribution to the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau. It was pointed out that, since the Northern Ireland Tourist Board had decreased its own contribution to the Bureau, and it was therefore necessary that the Council was satisfied that it accrued benefits commensurate with the level of contribution made to the Bureau. A further Member pointed out that the matter of the permanent re-location of the Belfast Welcome Centre was an issue which needed to be resolved as soon as possible. Given the points raised, it was suggested that it would be advisable for the Committee to invite representatives of the Bureau to attend a future meeting.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations and agreed also to invite representatives from the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau to attend its meeting scheduled for 25th October.

United Kingdom Aviation Framework - Consultation

The Committee endorsed, subject to the inclusion of a Member's comments in relation to issues regarding to the mitigation of noise disturbance, flight paths in respect of departures and landings at the George Best Airport and the strengthening of the case for the Belfast to London service to be considered as a Public Service Obligation Route, the undernoted response to the above-mentioned consultation in respect of the development of a sustainable United Kingdom Aviation Framework:

Appendix 1

"General comments	
	Belfast City Council is particularly interested in the development of an aviation framework. The city and wider region rely heavily on our two airports to help develop tourism and attract economic investment. As the area continues to suffer more than most from the economic downturn and an ongoing over-reliance on the public sector for employment, anything that adversely affects tourism and economic investment is of significant concern to us.
	There are particular flying slots, which are of strategic importance to the economic well-being of the city and the wider region and we would strongly advocate that these are maintained. This comment relates primarily to early morning departures and late evening return flights (within permitted timetables) from the key hub airports of London Heathrow and London Gatwick.
	In addition, there are some very specific issues for Belfast and Northern Ireland, which do not apply elsewhere across the UK. These relate, in particular, to the fact that we have a land boundary with the Republic of Ireland, which has a large international airport in Dublin – as well as a number of regional airports. These airports operate under a different taxation regime – in particular regarding Air Passenger Duty (APD) levels.
	The consultation document makes reference to aviation in the widest sense, including the aerospace industry. Again, this is of particular importance to Belfast with a significant portion of our employment and exports dependant on the aerospace industry.
	Moreover, the discussion around alternatives to air travel – principally through the high-speed rail network – is not relevant in the Northern Ireland context. The consultations on the national high-speed rail network exclude this region. As such, we are disproportionately dependent on air transportation. This issue will affect not only Northern Ireland but also other outlying areas and peripheral regions.

	<p>Belfast City Council has been actively represented on the Consultative Forum of Belfast City Airport for a number of years and has recently been invited to participate on the forum for Belfast International Airport. Attendance at these forums is a useful mechanism for identifying the economic and environmental impact of the airport on the city and the wider region and their continued existence is supported.</p>
<p>Responses to specific questions <i>(numbered according to references in the framework document)</i></p>	
<p>The aviation sector</p>	
<p>5.2</p>	<p>What do you consider to be the aviation sector's most important contributions to economic growth and social well-being?</p>
	<p>Leisure and Business tourism rely heavily on the Aviation Industry. Northern Ireland's Tourism GDP is approx 4.9% whereas ROI is 6%. The target of tourism in Belfast, a 40% increase in overnight visitors over the next 5 years, is dependent on the development of air routes. These routes are critical to the development of Belfast's and Northern Ireland's economy.</p>
	<p>The total value of direct tourism spend in Belfast during 2009 was £451 million. This level of spend supported 10,148 full time equivalent jobs. The sector is predicted to grow in future years as a result of unprecedented investments in tourism infrastructure and major events. This growth is increasingly important in the current economic climate.</p>
	<p>The presence of a significant local aerospace sector has 'knock on' benefits for the economy such as attracting other high value businesses, creating technical jobs and raising the local skills base, which in turn can attract inward investment from high-value industries.</p>
	<p>Bombardier is the largest manufacturing employer in the region, currently providing employment for around 5000 people. The establishment of an Research and Development centre at the plant and the focus on development work for the new 'C series' planes ensure that the company is firmly embedded in the local economy. This, in turn, creates opportunities within the supply chain and accounts, in some part, for the relative resilience of the manufacturing sector in the current economic climate.</p>

5.3	<p>Are some sub-sectors of aviation more important than others? If so, which and why?</p>
	<p>Tourism is extremely important in terms of both its actual and potential contribution to employment numbers and its contribution to the region's overall GDP. This will be particularly important in the coming years (2012 and 2013) when a range of major events will take place in Belfast and the city of Derry. Appropriate air routes access is vitally important to ensure the viability of the infrastructure and programming investment.</p>
	<p>Aerospace manufacturing is also vitally important in the local context, along with the associated research and development work, in which our local universities are directly engaged.</p>
<p>International connectivity and hub airports</p>	
5.9	<p>How important are air transport connections – both international and domestic – to the UK at both national and regional levels?</p>
	<p>Air travel remains the most common means of entry into Northern Ireland, with almost three quarters (74%) of overnight visitors and a third (34%) of day-trippers arriving by plane. The results of a 2009 survey indicated that access by air was the preferred method of travel for 75% of those travelling from Scotland and 90% of those travelling from England and Wales into Belfast. There were 1.7 million overnight stays in the city during 2009, an increase of 7% on the previous year. Most of these, 92% were from outside Northern Ireland.</p>
	<p>Northern Ireland tourism demand in terms of revenue, is forecast to increase by 2.8% per annum, in real terms over the next 10 years (Deloitte 2010). To meet and exceed these targets Belfast and Northern Ireland need to develop further air connections. Air connections to Belfast are vital to the development to the Tourism Economy. Tourism is forecast to be the 4th fastest growth area in the UK over the next 10 years.</p>
5.10	<p>As long as people and goods can easily reach their desired destination from the UK, does it matter if they use a foreign rather than a UK hub airport?</p>
	<p>As a capital city, servicing the region, Belfast relies on 70-90% of its tourism footfall from GB, our biggest market. A UK hub airport is vital for the sustainability and growth of air traffic from GB. To further the increase in international tourism, leisure and business visitors, there is also a need for Belfast to develop additional international links to airports beyond the UK.</p>

5.11	<p>Are direct connections from the UK to some international destinations more important than others? If so, which and why?</p>
	<p>The direct US link is of vital importance to the regional economy. The business community has developed a concerted approach to ensuring its continued existence and has recently engaged with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this matter.</p>
	<p>Whilst there are a number of existing routes to holiday destinations in Spain, Portugal and France (and additional planned routes) as well as connections to Poland, which service the business and minority communities in the region, there is no direct connection with Brussels. This would provide an important business hub and significant use is made of the direct connection from Dublin.</p>
5.12	<p>How will the UK's connectivity needs change in the light of global developments in the medium and long-term?</p>
	<p>Belfast's connectivity needs will be governed by future economic global conditions and the growth of new and emerging markets. The key growth economies in recent years have been China and India, and it is predicted that this will continue to be the case in coming years. Therefore, the UK hub needs to be as close as possible to Northern Ireland and preferably a direct link from Belfast to these destinations. Sense of this statement?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Regional Connectivity and Regional Airports</p>	
5.17	<p>Can regional airports absorb some of the demand pressures from the constrained airports in the southeast? What conditions would facilitate this?</p>
	<p>Market conditions will clearly influence any decision on this matter. There may be scope for increasing direct flights into regional airports. However, consideration would need to be given to not only the financial viability but also the environmental impact of such a development.</p>
5.20	<p>How can regional airports and the aviation sector as a whole support the rebalancing of the economy across the UK?</p>
	<p>The discussion around devolving powers for APD to regional governments could make a significant impact on the regional economy in Northern Ireland. This would allow the further development of the air infrastructure in the region (within permitted parameters) to support wider economic activity.</p>

	<p>The draft Regional Economic Framework for Northern Ireland identifies the importance of export-led growth as a central plank of the region's future economic competitiveness. Viable air access routes are key to achieving this objective; particularly given the lack of trans-national rail linkages in Northern Ireland.</p>
<p>Climate change impacts</p>	
5.30	<p>General comments in respect of climate change and air quality considerations connected with the UK aviation</p>
	<p>It is acknowledged that regional and international connectivity provided by air transport is of vital importance to the Northern Ireland economy and to the population. However, it is considered essential that air travel is delivered in a sustainable manner, which both secures the country's long-term economic competitiveness and addresses adverse impacts upon the environment including issues such as air quality and climate change.</p>
	<p>With specific regard to climate change and air quality, it is noted that the Department for Transport scoping document has chosen to address these as distinct issues. It is acknowledged that there are different legislative and policy drivers for addressing these environmental issues, however, it should be noted that climate change and air pollution share many common sources and interdependencies. In addition, air quality standards for ambient air pollution have been established in order to help protect public health.</p> <p>Whereas greenhouse gases are typically most active in the tropospheric region of the atmosphere, air quality tends to address the impact of ambient pollutants nearer to the earth's surface. Nonetheless, tropospheric greenhouse gases such as ozone (O₃) can also act as, or be involved in the formation of ambient pollutants. By way of example, elevated summertime temperatures can lead to the formation of ozone, which in turn, may increase the frequency and severity of summer smogs. Furthermore, ozone is involved in the formation of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), which continues to be an ambient pollutant of concern for the United Kingdom government and the European Commission. Presently, it is the subject of an application by the Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to the European Commission for a time extension to compliance dates for the achievement of air quality limit values for nitrogen dioxide across the UK.</p>

	<p>Moreover, government research has indicated that, after many years of significant improvement, air quality benefits are becoming increasingly costly to achieve, making action difficult to justify on that basis alone. Accordingly, government is encouraging the development of policy and the assessment of the benefits of mitigation measures from both air quality and climate change perspectives. The current policy position is articulated in the DEFRA and devolved administrations March 2010 publication entitled 'Air Pollution: Action in a Changing Climate'.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that the 'Non-CO₂ climate impacts of aviation' section of the consultation document reflects these concerns and the particular complexities of atmospheric chemistry. Furthermore, the consultation document acknowledges that ongoing scientific research is likely to lead in coming years to an improved understanding of the non-carbon effects of air travel on the environment.</p>
	<p>Local impacts</p>
<p>5.40</p>	<p>What do you consider to be the most significant impacts – positive and negative - of aviation for local communities? Can more be done to enhance and / or mitigate those impacts? If so, what and by whom?</p>
	<p>In terms of environmental impacts, the most frequently reported adverse aspect is related to noise disturbance. This could be mitigated, however, through technical aircraft advances and improvements in airport operational procedures.</p>
<p>5.41</p>	<p>Do you think that current arrangements for local engagement on aviation issues, e.g. through airport consultative committees and the development of airport master plans, are effective?</p>
	<p>It has been suggested that local communities can feel that they are not adequately represented on airport consultative committees. However, airports can find it difficult to recruit representative community groups onto their consultative committees and it is difficult to get a balance between genuine representation and a workable management structure with accountability mechanisms.</p> <p>Could more be done to improve community engagement on issues such as noise and air quality? If so, what and by whom?</p> <p>It should be noted that Airport Master Plans are non-statutory documents and often strategic in nature. In addition, there is no statutory control over their contents or the degree of community and / or stakeholder consultation required as part of their development. Airports operations often vary from their published Master Plans.</p>

	<p>Better community engagement may result in more tolerance from affected communities but it is considered that the responsibility for better engagement should lie with the airport operator. It is acknowledged, however, that it can be difficult for airport operators to undertake meaningful engagement with local communities although the production of guidelines on this topic would ensure a consistent approach to consultative forums across the UK.</p>
5.43	<p>What are your views on the idea of setting a 'noise envelope' within which aviation growth would be possible, as technology and operations reduce noise impacts per plane?</p>
	<p>In principle, the setting of a noise envelope would allow for comparison of the airport's annual contour report and envelope contour, thus transparently demonstrating the airport's level of performance and / or compliance. This approach would encourage airport operators to make use of technological and operational advances in order to offset airport development.</p> <p>The decibel level chosen for the envelope perimeter will be fundamental to its effectiveness. A 57dB_Laeq (16 hour) level has been suggested but research suggests that this level fails to protect those living within the envelope against reported health effects of noise exposure below this level. In 2010, the European Environment Agency published a Technical Report by the Expert Panel on Noise (EPoN), in which the panel identified the effects of noise on health and well-being for which there was "sufficient evidence". This includes annoyance and self-reported sleep disturbance starting to occur at a threshold of 42 dB Lden, performance starting to be affected in terms of learning and memory at a threshold of 50 dB Leq, reported health effects and hypertension starting at a threshold of 50 dB Lden, and ischaemic heart diseases starting at a threshold of 60 dB Lden.</p> <p>It has been suggested also that the Laeq nomenclature may not be the best assessment criteria for annoyance, and it is possible that more frequent but less noisy flights would result in a similar Laeq but would be more annoying to the local community.</p> <p>If Laeq (16hr) is used, very busy and thus noisy times such as early mornings and before nighttime closure are 'averaged' into the rest of the day. Consequently, it may be necessary to use shorter Laeq measurement periods in order to prevent higher levels of annoyance at sensitive times. The use of weighted Lden, Lnight and Lday could help in this situation.</p>

	<p>Consideration should be given to the requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive and the need for Noise Action Plans and Noise Mapping exercises to be conducted and reported in Lden.</p> <p>It is anticipated that there would be difficulty in agreeing a suitable envelope size. Almost certainly, airport operators would consider the envelope too small whereas local communities and environmental groups would argue the reverse. In addition, Noise Envelopes should not be presented purely as a mechanism to permit the growth of an airport. They have an enforcement role and exist to enable authorities to require airports to manage effectively their operations.</p> <p>It would be necessary to have agreed guidelines and a clear regulatory framework around the establishment of noise contours and their enforcement. In addition, enforcement responsibility would need to be agreed and allocated between the various enforcement authorities and they too should be monitored to ensure consistency of approach. In Northern Ireland, in particular, a review of the number of enforcing authorities and their powers should be considered. A more transparent enforcement regime would improve public confidence in an airport's ability to manage its impacts and in the enforcement authorities themselves.</p> <p>It may be possible to set the envelope at an area smaller than the existing 57dBL_{aeq} contour and agree a time frame within which the airport would apply technical advances and improved operating procedures to reduce the 57dBL_{aeq} contour to a more appropriate envelope size.</p>
5.44	<p>Is it better to minimise the total number of people affected by aircraft noise (e.g. through noise preferential routes) or to share the burden more evenly (e.g. through wider flight path dispersion) so that a greater number of people are affected by noise less frequently?</p>
	<p>The location of an airport will dictate whether it is better to use preferential routes or not. At George Best Belfast City Airport, there is an obligation on the airport operator to maintain a bias in favour of approaches and climb outs over Belfast Lough. The purpose of the bias obligation is to reduce the effect of aircraft generated noise over the most densely populated areas of the city. However, it is acknowledged that this type of condition will not be applicable in all airport locations.</p>
5.45	<p>What is the best way to encourage aircraft manufacturers and airlines to continue to strive to achieve further reductions in noise and air pollutant emissions (notably particulate matter and NO_x) through the implementation of new technology?</p>

With specific regard to the air quality section of the consultation document and in particular, the issues connected with nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter emissions, it should be noted that within Northern Ireland, Part III of the Environment Order places a duty upon councils to periodically review and assess air quality within their districts against a series on national air quality objectives. These objectives reflect broadly health based limit values established latterly by the European Commission via Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe. Where, as a result of the review and assessment, a local authority determines that an air quality objective is unlikely to be achieved within the compliance year, it is required to designate the geographic location as an Air Quality Management Area and to develop subsequently an action plan in pursuit of the objective.

Belfast City Council has declared already four air quality management areas across the city connected with emissions of nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter from road transport and has published an Air Quality Action Plan for the city. Although these air quality management areas are not immediately in the vicinity of George Best Belfast City Airport, passengers travelling via the airport are likely, nonetheless, to contribute to background and roadside nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter concentrations across the city. As highlighted already, the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area is part of the government's application to the European Commission for a time extension to the deadline for achieving the limit values for nitrogen dioxide. It is essential, therefore, that these limit values be achieved by 2015 and maintained thereafter. Accordingly, the Department is advised that the Council will continue to monitor ambient pollution levels and to manage air quality in the vicinity of the airport. If it appears that air quality objectives or limit values are likely to be exceeded in the vicinity of the airport, then the Council may be required to declare the airport as an Air Quality Management Area and introduce appropriate control measures.

In order to cut emissions from road transport and to help protect public health, the European Commission has introduced a series of successive exhaust pipe emission standards for new vehicles sold in EU member states. As the contributions from road transport and other prescribed sources continue to be reduced, so the contribution from aviation may become locally more significant. Indeed, residents living in the vicinity of the airport have already expressed their concerns to the Council regarding ambient pollution and odours connected with airport operations. It is gratifying to note, therefore, that the Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CEAP) is continuing to work towards establishing NO_x and particulate emission standards for new aircraft types. It is considered that the introduction of successively tighter emission standards for aircraft will encourage manufacturers to develop and introduce technological advances leading towards reduced emissions of ambient pollutants.

5.46	What are the economic benefits of night flights? How should the economic benefits be assessed against social and environmental costs?
	'Night Noise Guidelines For Europe' and new World Health Organisations report 'The Burden of Disease from Environmental Noise', link unacceptable night time noise levels to ill health and economic burden.
5.48	Should extended periods of respite from night noise be considered, even if this resulted in increased frequency of flights before or after those respite periods?
	Night time respite has proven popular where introduced but it must be acknowledged that this approach may lead to busy periods directly preceding and immediately after the respite period."

**Department for the Environment –
Consultation re: Travellers' Accommodation**

The Committee endorsed the undernoted response in respect of consultation in respect of Travellers' Accommodation:

"Response to Consultation re Travellers' Accommodation

- 1.1.1 The Council is broadly supportive of the proposed changes and the flexibility they should bring to help address the issues of finding suitable Traveller sites.
- 1.1.2 However some areas of concern have been identified.
- 1.1.3 Firstly, experience from Wales and England has shown that Travellers sites are far more likely to be successful and avoid problems if they are set up and managed according to certain guidelines. These guidelines and good practice have been captured in design guides published by DOENI, ECNI & DCLG (Equality Commission *NI Minimum Standards for Traveller Sites*, DOE *Design Guide for Traveller Sites* and the Dept for Community and Local Government *Good Practice Guidance Publications*).
- 1.1.4 It may be sensible to make conformance to these guidelines a condition under the revised HS3. Clear reference to these guidelines at the planning stage would also be useful from the perspective of licensing sites under the 1963 Caravans Act.

- 1.1.5 Secondly, while we do support the flexibility of the changes, the ambiguity of the term 'countryside' may cause issues. In particular, the policy may benefit from guidance for the consideration of traveller accommodation on designated sites in the countryside, for example an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI).
- 1.1.6 It may be appropriate for the new policy to identify what areas of planning restraint will not be considered for traveller accommodation. This would have the benefit that planning applications that realistically would not be approved, will not be submitted. This in turn would save the Department and the applicant time and expense.
- 1.1.7 If this clarity cannot be included within the main policy itself it may be that the Justification section below the policy could elaborate on the treatment of protected areas.
- 1.1.8 In closing, and based on experiences seen in other places where attempts have been made to increase flexibility, we stress the need to ensure that this flexibility is then used. For example it might be beneficial to use an independent assessor to determine the suitability of sites and an inter-agency approach to assess the need for sites."

Eurocities - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Belfast City Council has been a member of the Eurocities network since the early 1990's. The network now consists of over 140 large European cities and work is focused around the following for:

- Economic Development
- Social Affairs
- Culture
- Mobility
- Knowledge Society
- Environment

- 1.2 The Secretariat for the network is based in Brussels with a staff of 22 and an Executive Board of elected members from cities throughout Europe. Meetings are held three times a year in rotated venues around Europe and each forum has a maximum of eight working groups. An AGM is held each November and is attended by Belfast City Council's Chair and Deputy Chair of Development along with the Director of Development and the EU Manager.
- 1.3 Eurocities allows Belfast City Council to develop and strengthen its role in city leadership, reflecting the values and messages contained in the Corporate Plan. This platform has consistently opened avenues of policy development, funding opportunity and legislation dissemination, allowing Belfast a stronger voice both regionally and in Europe.
- 1.4 During 2011 Belfast City Council has been active in the following fora:
- 1.5 Economic Development Forum

Belfast City Council attended the April Munich meeting focussed on lifelong learning approaches in cities and attended the following working groups. We are a member of the Urban Regeneration Working Group – this has led to interest by the Director of Property and Projects to engage in the new working group emerging around Integrated Local Urban Development in cities. BCC and DSD and NIHE also benefited from the research paper done by the group on a practitioners view on neighbourhood regeneration.
- 1.6 We are a member of the Metropolitan Area Governance Working Group where BCC has contributed its experience of leading the Comet Partnership. The research undertaken by this working group around models of Metropolitan Governance will be of interest and use to BCC as RPA re-emerges. It is also being used to enhance cities' lobby re: Post 2013 funding being directed to 'functional urban areas and neighbourhoods'.
- 1.7 We are also a member of the Creative Clusters Working Group – initial engagement by BCC to learn from other city strategies on Creative industries.
- 1.8 In anticipation of 2012, BCC is currently considering joining the upcoming Employment/Lifelong Learning Working Group.

1.9 Social Affairs Forum

Belfast City Council attended the Spring Forum meeting in Grenoble in May which focussed on social innovation. Contact was made with the Head of the Commission's new Unit (Migration, Demography and Social Innovation) which will be useful for our lobbying work with regard to the National Reform Programme, in which BCC was active. This may help to increase the emphasis on social inclusion in future national Reform Programmes which typically tend to focus on economics.

1.10 Belfast City Council maintains a watching brief of the ESF taskforce and inputted in the Group's ESF Statement which is to be presented to the European Commission and Parliament. This encourages recognition to be given for cities roles in combating exclusion and encouraging employment. It recommends that the European Institutions explicitly mention cities in the regulations governing the future ESF for the 2013-2020 Programming period and introduce an obligation for Member States to be able to demonstrate that cities were involved in defining priorities and operational programmes.

1.11 Belfast is also represented via the South Belfast Roundtable on the Roma Inclusion taskforce. Attendance at these meetings is financed through the EU Progress Programme. Currently it is undertaking a peer review of how cities include Roma. Learning from this exercise will be fed back to Council's Good Relations Unit and the Interdepartmental Traveller Liaison Group. This group has also completed a EUROCITIES Statement on Roma inclusion.

1.12 Culture Forum

Belfast City Council will re-engage in this Forum in the Autumn. The theme of this meeting is young people and heritage which is of interest to the Culture Arts and Tourism Unit. The work of this forum links with the role of this Unit in particular as it undertakes a review of its funding streams. Work is ongoing between the Culture Arts and Tourism and European Units in relation to the development of a 2012 Culture Programme bid. This Forum will be critical to securing partners.

1.13 In the past the Council engaged in the Culture and Young People and Resources for Culture Working Groups. The Young People's Working group is of interest as it feeds into a number of Unit workplans across Council and has also enabled Council to access partners for the Youth In Action Programme which is still a feasible funding stream for Belfast City Council.

1.14 It is BCC's aspiration to invite the Culture Forum to Northern Ireland for a meeting in 2013 which would disseminate Belfast's good practice in promoting cultural and tourism activity in the city.

1.15 Environment Forum

Chair of the Clean Cities working group - Belfast chairs the Clean Cities working group, leading the way in Europe on innovative ways of managing cleanliness within cities to include a reduction of cost to Councils and social marketing to change citizen behaviour.

1.16 Member of the Noise working group - Belfast remotely engages in this working group, however it is becoming more prevalent given the new noise levels for the City Airport and citizen concerns.

1.17 Member of the Greening Local Economy working group - this working group is useful in for the bio economy consultation for the North Foreshore as well as the green industries work that BCC engages in.

1.18 Member of the Waste working group - BCC remotely engages in this working group. It is especially useful for interpreting EU directives, responding to policy and managing waste in Belfast.

1.19 Member of the Task Force on the 7 Environment Action Programme (7EAP) - BCC is one of four members on this group, responding on behalf of Eurocities on the development of the 7th EAP. This will be useful for future directives and targets for Belfast.

1.20 Knowledge Society Forum (KSF)

Belfast City Council staff sit on 3 working groups of the KSF, these are Services Directive, Open Data, Smart Cities and we have a watching brief on the e-Inclusion group. We have attended 3 meetings so far this year and reports learning, links and contacts made at all meetings have been shared with colleagues and BCC stakeholder organisations.

- 1.21 **Services Directive:** We are contributing to a review of the Service Directive. The findings from this will inform a review to be carried out by the Commission later this year. Other EU cities are using the Services Directive as a means of achieving economic growth by simplifying processes involved in business start up. We are bringing learning from this back to Council and to our stakeholders.
- 1.22 **Open Data:** We are also benefiting from the work of the Open Data group and learning from the experience from different cities. ISB are now considering data sets suitable for open data publication and links have been made with DETI to support this work. Publication of open data is a means of making BCC information more transparent and easily available to the public. It can help to reduce the number of freedom of information requests received and information can be re-purposed to create new business opportunities. This work links with the new Digital Strategy that is being developed for the city.
- 1.23 **Links with DETI** have also enabled us to access information on pre-commercial procurement which we have shared with economic development and procurement.
- 1.24 **Smart Cities:** As members of the Smart Cities working group we have had the opportunity to learn from other cities and have passed this information to relevant staff within the Council who are involved in developing our own Smart City Strategy.
- 1.25 The KSF forum has asked if Belfast is interested in hosting a forum event in 2012. A report will be drafted to gain approval for this and a report will be brought to the Development and SP&R Committees before we respond formally to this request in October.
- 1.26 Information on 14 project opportunities has been shared so far this year with BCC colleagues and with Belfast in Europe members. The PSNI have been following up project opportunities and BCC will be involved in 2 projects which have been successful in being awarded funding. The first project Networking for Intelligent Cities (NICE), funded through the ICT Policy Support Programme begins in September. This funds technical expertise to help us improve our work in reducing ICT emissions. The second project ILLUMINATE funded by FP7 will allow us to refit the outside of the City Hall with energy efficient lighting. It is estimated that this project has the potential to reduce electricity usage in the City Hall by approximately £13,000 per annum.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Each year Belfast City Council experiences very positive gains from participation in the Eurocities network. Importantly, the council contributes to policy influencing at the EU Commission and Parliament levels and is currently engaging actively to ensure maximum EU funding for cities and an enhanced delivery role with respect to structural fund spend post 2013.**
- 2.2 The Council is using this lobbying experience to translate into a domestic lobby for 2011/12, to try and shape EU funding in NI post 2013 to have a strong urban dimension.**
- 2.3 The council also engages in European projects within the network and sources best practice that can be transferable to the city of Belfast. Critically the council works with other cities to track EU legislation and lobby heavily to influence this and ultimately create savings for the city e.g. EU Services Directive.**
- 2.4 Appendix 1 outlines the intended work plans specifically for Belfast City Council in 2011. Each area has been discussed and deemed appropriate at relevant directorate levels within council departments.**
- 2.5 Members should note that all Eurocities work engaged in by Belfast City Council staff is coordinated by the European unit. On a bi-monthly basis an officers meeting is held to track and appraise the level of activity and related outputs with respect to Eurocities participation, ensuring that all work is aligned to the council's corporate objectives.**
- 2.6 Members should also note that Belfast City Council will have the opportunity to attend the 2011 Eurocities Annual General Meeting in Genoa from 2-5 November 2011. The theme of the 2011 AGM will be 'Social Dimension of Urban Planning'. Council has also has an annual opportunity to submit priority council projects for the Eurocities awards under the categories of: Innovation, Participation and cooperation. Following a council search for an appropriate project, the councils' Economic Development Project 'Titanic Quarter' supporting environmental businesses in Belfast was submitted under the awards. Council currently awaits the outcome of this submission. Belfast City Council also ran a photographic competition offering Belfast youth the opportunity to submit a photograph of Belfast which will be profiled in the Eurocities 25 year anniversary publication and AGM exhibition.**

- 2.7 Members should note that due to austerity resources across Europe, the annual fee has been frozen for 2011/2012 and Eurocities has increased the level of virtual online working to reduce travel and to ensure as wide engagement of cities as possible in the network. Members should also note that Derry City Council has recently joined the Eurocities network as an Associate Member beginning with Membership of the Culture Forum and aiming in 2012 to join the Knowledge Society and Environment Forums. It is intended that Derry and Belfast City Council staff will work well together.
- 2.8 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees at the Eurocities AGM along with the Director of Development and EU Manager or their nominees.

3 **Resource Implications**

The anticipated approximate cost overall for attendance at the AGM covering accommodation, flights and subsistence is £3840.

The cost of Belfast City Council's engagement in Eurocities is covered within the Development Department's European Unit budget and through the relevant budgets of the participating departments."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

European Unit - Review and Recommendations

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 **Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the European Unit was established within the Development Department in September 2003, following the production of a Business Case and Economic Appraisal agreed by Council. The Unit was the only dedicated EU resource in local government on the island of Ireland until June of this year, when Derry City Council took the decision to establish a similar unit which will be fully operative between October-December 2011. Donegal County Council now also has a small Unit within its Development Department.

- 1.2 BCC'S European Unit has a staff structure of one Manager and three core permanent staff and two time bound Units, one to secure Interreg cross border funding for the Greater Belfast area (on behalf of the six Comet Councils namely; Belfast, Lisburn, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey, North Down and Carrickfergus) and the OpenCities Unit will deliver the economic migrant project which is due to close Mid October 2011.
 - 1.3 The Unit has existed to support all departments within BCC, to influence and disseminate relevant EU Policy and to maximise EU funding. The Unit provides a similar support to the five other Comet Councils through a Service Level Agreement and also provides hands-on advice and support to City Stakeholders including the business and academic and other public sector agencies. Much of this outreach work is directed through the Belfast in Europe group which is led and Chaired by BCC'S EU Unit.
- 2 **Key Issues**
- 2.1 **Independent Review of the EU Unit**

In February 2011, the Development Department appointed FGS McClure Watters in association with PMG - Consulting to review the Unit and to develop an evaluation framework to be used in the Unit over the next three years.
 - 2.2 An overview of the findings of the review along with the ten recommendations, are highlighted in the Executive Summary attached as Appendix 1 of this Report.
 - 2.3 In outlining the above findings and recommendations and following extensive consultation with internal and external Stakeholders, the Consultants acknowledged that the EU Unit has a strong reputation for delivery. This reputation is set out in a number of NI Consultation responses and in submissions made by Stakeholders to the NI Assembly Meetings on Europe and is mentioned in the OFMDFM Inquiry and Task Force on Europe as best practice.
 - 2.4 **Unit Recommendations**
 - 2.5 That BCC continues to fund and support the EU Unit, in line with the opportunities identified.
 - 2.6 That the Unit makes accessing funding the top priority objective at least in the short term to support any gaps in funding within the Council. Other objectives should also be included such as influencing Policy across Europe and promoting Europe in Belfast, but these should be secondary.

- 2.7 With regard to funding; that consideration is given to the Environment, Development and Interreg monies available (as outlined in the EU funding Scan 2007-2013 under taken by the EU Unit). These are all real opportunities for the Council up to 2013 and have the potential of offering an impact on the quality of lives of those living in BCC.
- 2.8 To date the Unit has been providing a service across all departments of the Council however, this does not link to the priority needs of the Council and/or the NI area. There is a need and opportunity for the BCC Members and Corporate Management Team to provide the EU Unit with clarity on the priority needs for the City and in turn for the Unit to provide feedback on the best opportunity for funding. The process needs to work both as a top down and bottom up approach to marking local and EU funding opportunities.
- 2.9 The policy areas need to be worked on and need to be clearly defined by Council and the outcomes agreed at a political level and via the Corporate Management Team.
- 2.10 The Unit has a number of systems in place at present which are appropriate to their current work. However with the focus moving to putting accessing funding as the top priority for the unit there will be a need for operational systems to be developed slightly further: The unit needs to have a pipeline approach to measuring the progress being made regarding sourcing EU funding against Council needs (N.B. – details of a pipeline template have been included in the evaluation for use in the Unit hereafter).
- 2.11 That the staff within the Unit should be reorganised to focus only on those departments with priority projects. That management retain the right to move staff onto short term projects in pursuit of specific funding applications should it be needed, to ensure that the Council maximises its chance of winning the bid.
- 2.12 That the Unit moves away from having two of the officers' salaries paid partially for by departments and instead, that all Unit salaries are paid for corporately so that resources can be utilised against the best opportunities, regardless of the department. The change in focus with these recommendations will mean a change in emphasis regarding the work area for the team. It is expected that they will review all areas it is involved in, such as providing information to Stakeholders and running awareness events and that they will spend 65-75% of their time in the pursuit of funding with the balance of time being invested in the agreed areas such as policy.

- 2.13 Unit objectives and targets set through the Council Performance Management process should reflect a focus on accessing funding with SMART objectives being set in wherever possible. These should be set in line with the logical framework which the unit is now using and has been developed as part of this review.
- 2.14 That the Unit will have a strategy of focusing on bringing in funding and will ensure that a minimum of 65% of their time is more or less spent on accessing funding.
- 2.15 That the team sets up a process that all funding opportunity need to go through in order to ensure that only those likely to have the best chance of winning and that fit corporate priority are provided with resource. Also it is recommended that a monitoring system is set up to monitor the opportunities as they move through the different stages.
- 2.16 As part of the external review of the EU Unit, a logical evaluation framework was developed in collaboration with the European Officers. This framework closely challenged and reviewed the Unit objectives and set out agreed refined objectives and tools for regularly monitoring and challenging the output and impact of the Unit's work
- 2.17 The reviewed and agreed new EU Unit vision and objectives are now as follows;
- 2.18 Impact of Unit
- To secure European finance, insight and relationships, that enables BCC to enhance citizen's quality of life, i.e.
 - To maximise EU Funding
 - To interpret, influence and disseminate EU Policy
 - To maximise participation in EU networks
 - To promoting Belfast in Europe
 - To Raise awareness of EU affairs in the region
- 2.19 A third and final output from the evaluation of the Unit was a review of the Belfast in Europe Platform. It recommended That Belfast in Europe – the current EU Stakeholder group coordinated by the unit – develops to become a greater asset for Council by taking on a more strategic role as the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum.
- 2.20 It is recommended the Forum has a key liaison role with the European Commission Task Force, the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and European Commission office in Belfast to enrich and support its work. Contacts and networks such as EuroCities to influence EU policy development.

- 2.21 To ensure the Forum operates at a more strategic level, new organisations will be asked to join and existing organisations have been asked to review their representation. Forum members need to be decision makers within their organisations who can authorise action. They will be required to meet four times a year to plan the work of the Forum. We ask that the Director of Development write to appropriate organisations to invite appropriate representation on the Forum to ensure its strategic direction and impact.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 There is no cost to Council to implement the review findings.
- 3.2 Implementation of the Unit recommendations will mean:
- Increased EU funding leverage for BCC
 - Fundamental changes to how EU Unit Staff salaries are paid i.e. at a corporate level as opposed to departmental percentage.

4 Recommendations

Members are asked to approve the following recommendations;

- To consider and note the content of the EU Unit and Belfast in Europe reviews.
- To agree to the recommendations within the report.
- To agree to adopt the new logical evaluation framework structure for monitoring the impact of the EU Unit.
- To agree that the EU Unit undertakes an annual programme of work agreed by the Corporate Management Team and Committee's relevant to meeting corporate priorities.
- To agree that the EU Unit will rename the Belfast in Europe as the NI European Regional Forum, continue to chair it, provide the secretariat and manage the budget, and seek reviewed membership at decision making levels within the member organisations."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Local Tourism Destination Projects

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

- "1 Relevant Background Information
- 1.1 **Members will be aware that the Belfast Integrated Strategic Framework was launched in March 2011. One of the key themes within the framework is to develop local tourism destinations in order to extend the tourism offer outside the city centre, spread the benefits of tourism and in general lift the standard of visitor experience across the city.**
- 1.2 **The development of local tourism destinations will support the council and city wide tourism agencies such as Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau to keep abreast of new developments and address gaps in infrastructure, product and services as well as involving potential new members.**
- 1.3 **The initiative will also allow local destinations to better support existing city wide initiatives and identify new city wide themes based on product strengths across the city. At a local level, it will allow local businesses, attractions and communities to influence and be part of shaping the city's product development, visitor servicing and marketing strategies and more importantly promote local clustering to target agreed segments/visitors. It will provide the opportunity to share research and intelligence to ensure local destinations better understand the target visitor and their needs and requirements to enhance and maximise potential return of a premier visitor experience.**
- 1.4 **The local destinations identified in the framework are based on their potential to add to the Belfast tourism offer. They are, in alphabetical order;**
1. **Belfast Hills**
 2. **Connswater Community Greenway**
 3. **Cathedral Quarter**
 4. **Gaeltacht Quarter**
 5. **Lagan Corridor**
 6. **Lisburn Road**
 7. **North Belfast Cultural Corridor**
 8. **Queen's Quarter**
 9. **Shankill Quarter**
 10. **Titanic Quarter**

- 1.5 A description of each of the local destinations is attached as Appendix 1, together with an overview of where the destination is in respect of its product life cycle.
- 1.6 The framework outlines a number of key steps to developing local tourism destinations;
- Engage with local stakeholders
 - Audit of tourism related assets
 - Establish appropriate vehicle
 - Develop and implement local tourism plan
- 1.7 It should be noted that considerable work has been undertaken across Belfast on tourism audits and identifying local strengths, weaknesses and therefore development of the plan will not be an extensive task; the aim is to focus on delivery. However the opportunity is to ensure that local plans fit with the city's tourism framework and therefore the audits may require more specific information e.g. food tourism is one of the cities priority products and therefore local audits will identify local food offering e.g. pubs which serve food, cafes, restaurants etc.
- 1.8 Having reviewed destination development models in other cities and regions, there is an opportunity to introduce an independent assessment of each local tourism destination via a 'mystery shopper' type exercise. This will also set a baseline for future performance.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework spans a period of three years, and a bid has been made for £120,000 per annum to support the implementation of local tourism destinations (subject to the approval of annual budget estimates).
- 2.2 Splitting the budget evenly across 10 tourism destinations each year will not create the critical mass in either budget or product to make a difference at a local level. It is therefore proposed that delivery is phased and destinations are prioritized for initial support based on their readiness to deliver visitor experiences.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 explains how some of the destinations are heavily reliant on other sources of external funding for capital development e.g. Lagan Corridor, Belfast Hills and Connswater Community Greenway and the North Belfast Cultural Corridor. It would therefore seem appropriate that any funding towards these areas is delivered within the timescale of their capital programmes to maximize the impact.

2.4 Titanic Quarter is the subject of considerable investment to date, including a series of tourism initiatives driven by NITB, and in some instances supported by BCC aimed at clustering the local tourism assets on site. Due to the nature of this being a brown field regeneration site with an agreed masterplan for development, Titanic Quarter does not need financial support via the local tourism destination initiative, as there is a current plan and funding is available through other sources.

2.5 The Lisburn Road is included in the council's retail support programme and the Lisburn Road Traders Association is availing of this current opportunity. The timescale of delivery is in this current financial year.

It is therefore recommended that the Local Tourism Destination programme is delivered in two phases:

2.6 Phase 1 will kick start with immediate effect and the focus will be on Cathedral Quarter, Gaeltacht Quarter, Shankill Quarter and Queen's Quarter. All have witnessed recent investments in new tourism developments and offer an immediate opportunity to link with Titanic Quarter in developing and packaging products for 2012.

2.7 Phase 2 will kick start in 6 months time, and will focus on Belfast Hills, North Belfast Cultural Corridor, Connswater Community Greenway, Lagan Corridor and Lisburn Road.

2.8 The local tourism destination toolkit will be uploaded on the council's website as a step by step guide for any local area with an interest in developing tourism to audit their product and develop a local plan.

2.9 The Economic Development Unit and Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit are also in the process of securing ERDF funding towards an industry development programme "Destination Belfast", aimed at the visitor experience economy. This programme will recruit Tourism Ambassadors, support customer care training, sales growth programme and skills and one on one mentoring.

2.10 Targets include;

- 1. Recruiting 16 tourism ambassadors.**
- 2. Deliver 5 Tourism Ambassador workshops**
- 3. Welcome Host training**
- 4. 6 Customer service masterclasses**
- 5. A series of Meet the Buyer events**
- 6. Online customer service toolkit**

2.11 Destination Belfast has been specifically designed to support the Local Tourism Destinations and therefore a suite of training and skills support will be available over the next two years.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

A breakdown of the budget is attached as Appendix 2. £360,000 will be allocated to the development and delivery of the destination plans.

4 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- note the proposals to support the Local Tourism Destinations prioritised.
- committee £360,000 towards the development of delivery of the destination plans.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

European Regional Development Fund Projects

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members are reminded that, in February 2011, a report to this Committee identified a range of potential funding opportunities under one of the key EU Structural Funds initiatives – the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme.

1.2 The programme can fund a range of economic development initiatives with the aim of promoting sustainable enterprise and entrepreneurship. Tourism development is also a key component of the programme.

1.3 Funding under this programme can be used towards a range of activities including:

- Direct aid to investments in companies (in particular SMEs) to create sustainable jobs;
- Infrastructure linked notably to research and innovation, telecommunications, environment, energy and transport; tourism development;

- Financial instruments (capital risk funds, local development funds, etc.) to support regional and local development and to foster cooperation between towns and regions.
- 1.3 Projects that are supported under this programme are required to find 50% match funding from another public source. This can be made up by councils or other public bodies. Some in-kind match funding is also possible.
- 1.4 The programme contains a number of priorities and measures. Many of these are subject to open calls for projects, with a range of deadlines for each of the measures.
- 1.5 The current programme runs until 31 December 2013. This in effect means that for a project to be eligible for funding, all approvals must be obtained and match funding committed by 31 December 2013. However actual spend on the project can be incurred beyond this date so long as all expenditure is completed by end June 2015.
- 1.6 There are also a number of additional sources of funding for capital schemes which are available to council at present and which could be used – along with council resources – to bring forward a range of projects identified by members as being of strategic importance to the development of the city.

2 Key issues

2.1 Local Economic Development funding

The European Sustainable Competitiveness programme includes a measure which is nominally ring-fenced to support Council-led local economic development (LED) activity. This measure has a budget of around €25million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It is expected to be match-funded by a similar amount from councils (or by councils in conjunction with other match-funders). The programme is managed by DETI (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment) through its European Programmes Branch.

- 2.2 To date, 14 councils are in receipt of letters of offer totalling around €3.3million. Of this amount, Belfast City Council has 13 letters of offer totalling £1.4million ERDF, operating over a number of financial years and has four applications at economic appraisal stage for a total of £1million EDRF. This support is match-funded by council resources to deliver a range of enterprise development support initiatives.

- 2.3 **DETI and Invest NI have been engaging with councils in recent months to highlight the potential underspend in the programme and to identify how the commitment might be delivered through a range of capital and revenue expenditure at both individual council level and also through collaborative initiatives at a sub-regional/regional level. Councils were asked to provide profiles of their intended commitments over the next three years.**
- 2.4 **In order to address the potential underspend, Invest NI has indicated that, where the project meets its objectives, it would be prepared to offer 25% match funding. This would mean that the Council commitment would be 25% of overall project costs, with the remaining 50% coming from the EU funding.**
- 2.5 **The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment has recently written to Councils setting a deadline of 30 October 2011 for applications to the European Sustainable Competitiveness programme which would require programme spend before December 2013. The letter requires proposals to be 'clearly defined, robust and fully costed'. The letter also makes it clear that any deficit on the £11m profiled for expenditure in that period will be reallocated to other economic development activity. A similar deadline of 30 September 2012 been set for expenditure of £10m profiled for 2014 and 2015.**
- 2.6 **An opportunity clearly exists to draw down substantial funding towards programmes which meet with the economic development priorities identified by elected members and are aligned to Invest NI corporate objectives. In addition to this there is the potential to obtain match funding of up to 75% for economic development related capital projects which the Council might wish to invest in, either through its Capital Programme, City Investment Fund or Local Investment Fund.**
- 2.7 **At the Place Shaping Workshop on 17 August 2011 members prioritised a number of capital projects, two of which have been the subject of discussion with senior officials in Invest NI, namely the development of a Green Economy Business Park at the North Foreshore and an Innovation Centre at Springvale/Forth River. Invest NI have expressed a willingness to financially support both of these projects subject to the Council submitting viable proposals for their development and their being no displacement issues for existing premises and businesses.**

- 2.8 A business case for the development of an environmental resource and recovery park at the North Foreshore is to be completed by mid-September 2011. In addition, a number of complementary schemes including a university research centre on environmental management technologies have expressed a significant interest in locating on the site. At this point the cost of any potential project is not yet known however the Economic Appraisal could form the basis of a project proposal, with associated costs, for submission to Invest NI by the 30 October 2011 deadline.
- 2.9 Invest NI have also had an expression of interest for the development of part of their site at Forthriver Business Park as a social economy development and an innovation district. Invest NI staff have indicated that they would be keen to look at the potential of leasing this site for the agreed development and that they could also consider making a contribution towards the capital costs involved in the development of the scheme, should it be supported by council. A business case for this project is currently under development and concept designs have been produced. It is anticipated that a submission could be made in time for the October deadline.
- 2.10 Invest NI have also indicated that they would be keen to work with Belfast City Council to explore the potential of a 'digital hub' as a focal point for the growth of the digital media sector in the city. The hub would act as a catalyst for 'hothousing' innovative businesses with growth potential and would support collaboration between companies, providing support to lever investment capital and access new markets. This would be done along the lines of similar facilities which have been developed in other cities such as the Digital Hub, Dublin, the Match Factory in Liverpool and the Custard Factory in Birmingham. Each of these facilities has been hugely successful in promoting digital technology based enterprises in their respective cities. The promotion of the creative industry sector has been identified as a priority by members of the Development Committee at their workshop on 12 August and an area of competitive weakness in Oxford Economics comparative analysis of Belfast with other cities. A number of partners including Invest NI, NI Screen and Northern Ireland Science Park have committed to working on a detailed scoping exercise for this development and a terms of reference to establish the most viable format, location, focus and specification is to be commissioned in the coming weeks. It is proposed that Belfast City Council makes a contribution of £5,000 towards the cost of this work.

- 2.11 Potential locations include Crumlin Road Gaol, Carlisle Memorial Church and Conway Mill amongst others. This is a project for which we would intend working up a proposal in partnership with Invest NI between now and the deadline of 30 October. Until such a proposal is fully developed it is not possible to establish the full costs of such a project however an indicative cost of £4m would not seem unreasonable. It is expected that the contribution required from the council would be around £1m.
- 2.12 In addition to the capital projects identified above Economic Development Officers are anticipating that the Council will receive requests for financial support for capital projects from other third parties in the near future. These include North City Business Park which is considering the development of an Enterprise Centre at the former Grove Baths Site and the Argyle Business Centre which is seeking to expand its facilities on the Shankill Road. It is unlikely that these proposals will be fully developed in advance of the 30 October 2011 deadline but there may be a further opportunity to make bids in advance of the 30 September 2012 deadline, subject to resource availability and dependent on a successful application for funding.
- 2.13 Tourism Development Scheme funding
- The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) is responsible for the Tourism Development Scheme (TDS). Under the TDS, funding is provided towards key tourism capital projects that can demonstrate that they will increase tourism activity to and within Northern Ireland.
- 2.14 The next call for projects under the Tourism Development Scheme will open in late September 2011 with an October 2011 closing date. Initial discussions with NITB suggest that they would be open to considering funding applications from key Belfast-based projects, namely the development of conference and exhibition facilities at the Waterfront Hall and the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre.
- 2.15 An economic appraisal of the proposed conference and exhibition facilities is under way at present and is likely to be completed by end September 2011. It is likely that the total capital commitment for this scheme could be £20million. This might require a financial commitment from council of £8m, with £2m potentially available from Tourism Development Scheme and £10million coming from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

- 2.16 A number of independent studies have recommended that the Belfast Welcome Centre be relocated to ground floor premises. Potential sites have been identified however no decision has been reached on the location. ASM Horwarth are currently finalising a business plan to determine the most appropriate business model for Belfast Welcome Centre to maximise footfall and to sustain and grow income. Indications at this stage suggest that the cost of relocation could be around £1.6million. It is likely that Belfast City Council would be asked to provide £0.8m with £0.8m potentially coming from the Tourism Development Scheme, if a successful application was submitted.
- 2.17 Given the deadlines set out above it is clear that if the Council wishes to maximise the potential for external funding for the above projects it will require business cases to be completed and applications submitted to Invest NI and NITB by the end of October 2011.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

Until the business cases in relation to each of the above projects are complete, it is not possible to state with certainty the financial contribution required from the Council towards these projects. However, at this point, it is estimated that the following funding could be required from council:

Project	Total Cost	Funding Expected	Council Contribution
North Foreshore	£8m	£6m	£2m
Springvale/Forth River	£8m	£6m	£2m
Conference Facilities/ Waterfront Hall	£20m	£12m	£8m
Digital Hub	£4m	£3m	£1m
Belfast Welcome Centre	£1.6m	£0.8m	£0.8m
Total	£41.6m	£27.8m	£13.8m

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to:

- Consider supporting applications for each of the projects outlined above and agreeing in principle to meeting the council contribution from the Council's City Investment Fund and/or Capital Fund for the purposes of the application.
- Note that any commitment by the Council would be subject to each project obtaining a positive economic appraisal, demonstrating a positive economic benefit to the city and being awarded the projected grant funding
- Agree to provide £5,000 towards a business case for a digital hub, to be carried out in partnership with Invest NI, NI Screen and Northern Ireland Science Park."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Neighbourhood Renewal - Progress Report

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report which provided an update on the progress to date of a range of neighbourhood renewal action plans throughout Belfast.

Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that at the Development Committee of 14 November 2007, approval was given for Belfast City Council to cluster with Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council for the delivery of Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP).
- 1.2 Axis 3 of the NIRDP contains a funding allocation (£1,240,000) for the delivery of a programme of Village Renewal for rural settlements across the eligible cluster area of Belfast, Castlereagh and Lisburn. The purpose of the measure is to support animation and capacity building within and between villages and their surrounding rural areas.

- 1.3 A total of 17 eligible villages/rural settlements exist within the three council areas. Within Belfast, the only eligible village/settlement is Hannahstown. The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) required potential village renewal projects to produce a village development plan, identifying priority projects which can be resourced from the available funds. This is a compulsory step required before any further funds can be drawn down. However, DARD funding for this activity is up to a maximum of 75% of costs incurred.
- 1.4 At the Development Committee of 9th March 2010, approval was given for Lisburn City Council to lead a funding bid (including Belfast and Castlereagh Councils) to DARD to draw down funding for the development of a discrete number of deliverable Village Renewal Plans.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Following a competitive tendering process, The Paul Hogarth Company was appointed to develop a village plan for Hannahstown and the selected villages in Lisburn and Castlereagh council areas.
- 2.2 The village plan for Hannahstown has identified a number of a priority projects which are eligible and could be resourced from NIRD P funding. An extract from the plan is attached as Appendix 1. Through a competitive application process villages can apply for up to £250,000 of grant funding under the Village Renewal measure.
- 2.3 Match funding of around £80,000 is required to enable the village to draw down the maximum amount of funding from NIRD P. Of this amount, at least £16,000 must be provided as cash while the remainder can be provided through in-kind contributions, if possible. This can include technical design work etc.
- 2.4 The development of the village plan for Hannahstown has identified that the geographical coverage of the village extends into the Lisburn City Council area. Identified projects within the plan reflect the cross council boundary with projects spanning both council areas, albeit that the footprint of the village lies predominantly within the Belfast boundary and the majority of the occupants of the village also live within the Belfast boundary. In light of this, Lisburn City Council have indicated that they may consider some of the eligible activity that relates to their boundary e.g. pathways/walking trails.

2.5 In order to support the local community in bringing forward the development, it is proposed that Belfast City Council provides up to a maximum of £25,000 plus some officer support time to draw down the maximum level of resources possible.

2.6 It is also proposed that the Council should act in a technical support role to the project with the Community Development Association taking the lead in this application.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The maximum budget available to villages under the Village Renewal measure is £250,000. In order to support the community association in drawing down these resources, it is proposed that the Council provides up to £25,000 of in kind support as well as technical support in the form of officer time.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the proposed village renewal plan for Hannahstown
- Agree to provide up to £25,000 cash support as well as technical officer support to assist the community development association in drawing down the optimum available resources under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme, up to a total of £250,000.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Donegall Pass Community Centre

The Committee was reminded that the Donegall Pass Community Centre operated as a full-time locally-managed facility on behalf of the Council. It was pointed out that, at its meeting on 12th May, 2010 the Committee had agreed, in conjunction with the Donegall Pass Community Forum, to explore the feasibility of the Council permitting the Community Forum to manage the Centre on its behalf on a full-time basis. It was reported that it had been anticipated that an associated feasibility study on the management of the Centre by the Forum would take a year to complete. This, it was felt, would be a sufficient period to enable the Community Forum to examine all aspects related to the full-time management of the Centre.

The Community Safety Manager reported that the Community Forum had requested that the Committee extend, for a further six months, the period permitted for the Forum to develop its business plan and to undertake additional community consultation and research into funding issues prior to the Council considering whether it felt that the facility should be managed on a full-time basis by the Donegall Pass Community Forum.

After discussion, the Committee acceded to the request.

Taxi Act Northern Ireland (2008) Consultation

The Committee was advised that the Department of the Environment's Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division intended to introduce updated regulations and requirements regarding the Taxi Operative Licensing in Northern Ireland. The Director outlined the changes which had been proposed and pointed out that comments and responses were due to be submitted by 30th September.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that it had no formal comment to make in relation to the proposed changes to the Taxi Act Northern Ireland (2008).

2011 Christmas Lights - Switch-on Event

(Mr. G. Copeland, City Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd August, it had agreed to provide £138,000 towards an overall programme of events for the 2011 Christmas lights switch-on. However, at that meeting, the Committee had deferred consideration of the holding of a traditional pre and post event reception in the City Hall on the evening to enable further information to be provided.

The City Events Manager reported that, subsequent to the meeting on 23rd August, he had made arrangements for the hosting of the reception on the evening of 19th November in the East Entrance area of the City Hall and in the Bobbin Restaurant. He reported that the provision for the costs associated with the reception had been made within the budget for the overall event.

Further discussion ensued in respect of the Christmas lights to be displayed in and around the City Hall for the forthcoming festive season and it was

Moved by Councillor Ó Muilleoir,
Seconded by Councillor Mallon,

That the Committee agrees that an additional sign be erected, as part of the Council's overall Christmas lights display, which would contain the message 'Happy Christmas' in Irish and Ulster-Scots.

On a vote by show of hands eight Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was declared carried. In addition, the Committee noted the arrangements for the hosting of a pre and post Christmas lights switch-on reception.

Maritime and Titanic Signage Project

(Ms. K. Sweeney, Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

- “1 Relevant Background Information
- 1.1 **Members agreed at the last meeting to defer a decision on Titanic / Maritime Heritage Signage until maps were provided showing where the signs would be located.**
- 1.2 **Three maps have been circulated to Members showing the current signage across the city (blue), proposed new signage (yellow) / replacement signage (red/green) and how the signs will support trails/orientation across the city.**
- 2 **Key Issues**
- 2.1 **The Titanic / Maritime Signage is divided into four main themes.**
- 2.2 (1) **TQ Direct – coded red on the map - this links Titanic Quarter to the City Hall. It also includes upgrading the level of welcome in the train and bus terminals. Whilst there will be some new signs introduced to reinforce to visitors where Titanic Belfast is, the opportunity of drawing down 50% match funding from NITB will allow the council to upgrade a number of hubs and blades (installed in 2006) to show not only Titanic Quarter but other new products e.g. the MAC in Cathedral Quarter.**
- 2.3 (2) **Titanic Trail - coded orange - Belfast City Council has already invested in visitor signage in Titanic Quarter, shown by the blue dots on the maps. There is a need for some additional signage for new products such as PRONI building and orientation point at the new rail link, Titanic Halt. There will be some updates to existing signage to show Titanic Belfast, the new plaza area and fingerposts to drive pedestrians towards the Northern Ireland Science Park and the Titanic Dock.**
- 2.4 (3) **City of Merchants / Lagan, Clarendon Dock and Sailortown – coded green - to support Belfast being positioned as a maritime destination and not just Titanic, the final proposal for signage is to link a series of buildings and sites e.g. The Entries, Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church, MV Confiance, Harbour**

Commission, Clarendon Docks and Sailortown. Part of the purpose of this trail was to encourage visitors to leave TQ and spend time (and money) in the city centre, Cathedral Quarter and North Belfast. The majority of this investment is in relation to finger posts.

- 2.5 (4) The final proposal is for white on brown tourism signage from the motorway for Titanic Belfast due to the volume of visitors anticipated in 2012. DRD Roads Service is still reviewing this and final sites have not yet been agreed. Once these are agreed, BCC will be discussing costs with both Titanic Belfast and NITB to explore funding options.
- 2.6 Members should note that the Titanic /Maritime Heritage project was developed as NITB had funding available to support a Titanic Trail in the city. It was a priority identified in the Belfast Maritime Heritage study on the 15 February 2011. The opportunity of 50% match funding has been used to develop a scheme that will enhance and update existing signage provision and link less well known assets relating to maritime heritage. It is targeted at pedestrian users with the exception of brown and white signage from motorways.
- 2.7 NITB does not generally fund tourist signage. In recent years they have made provision for signing trails linked to their signature projects e.g. Causeway coastal Route, St Patrick's Trail.
- 2.8 BCC's Tourism, Culture and Arts unit and Planning and Transport Unit work collectively to integrate tourism signage into the Renewing the Routes programme and other public realm schemes where possible. The Titanic / Maritime Heritage signage will be funded from 2011 / 2012 budgets; however there will be opportunity to extend signage in other areas every year.
- 2.9 In relation to linking visitors at Titanic Belfast into other areas of the city, the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit is liaising with Titanic Belfast to ensure there are connections within the storyline content of the attraction to other parts of the city as well as an information point in the main reception area on other places to see. A visitor pass has also been funded, developed by BVCB, to link all other visitor attractions together via public transport. BVCB and NITB are also developing a suit of publications around the Belfast Titanic / Maritime Heritage theme. Sites such as City Cemetery will be included in such material as a key site to visit linking to the overall Titanic story.

- 2.10 Members should further note that signs for An Cultúrlann are currently in storage awaiting the completion of the building works. This includes a primary hub and blade. Project Management have been instructed to commence the erection of this as soon as possible.

3 **Resource Implications**

3.1 **Financial**

- 3.2 The total costs for this project is £385,394. NITB is currently undertaking an appraisal of the figures and this figure may reduce.

- 3.3 Development Department has ring fenced a maximum of £190,000 towards this project. Any shortfall of funding will be applied for from NITB Tourism Development Scheme and Titanic Belfast.

4 **Recommendations**

- 4.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and:

- Commit no more than £190,000 towards this scheme subject to the match funding being secured.”

A Member expressed concern that the proposed location of the signs was too heavily focused on the City Centre and did not address the rich history which linked the Titanic to communities across the City. The point was made that the signage ignored the rich cultural and social history of Belfast and it was suggested that the Director should consult with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to relay the Members' concerns in this regard. In response, the Director noted the concerns raised and pointed out that the Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager's proposals reflected guidance as provided by the Tourist Board as to the type of proposals which their funding scheme was likely to support. However, he indicated that he would draw the Members' concerns to the attention of Tourist Board and agreed to bring back a future paper on the matter, including how the proposals interrelated with other tourism development initiatives being taken forward by the Department.

After further discussion, the Committee deferred consideration of the matter and noted the comments of the Director.

MTV Europe Awards

(Mr. G. Copeland, City Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report in respect of a request which had been received by MTV requesting that the Council consider providing an additional sum of £100,000 towards the hosting by the City of the MTV Europe Awards in early November. The City Events Manager provided an overview of the benefits which would be accrued in economic and tourism terms, together with an outline of the additional events which would be staged should the Council agree to meet the request.

During discussion, a number of Members expressed concern that the proposal for additional funding was being brought forward as an additional item at late notice. Members did however recognise the benefits which the proposed concert would bring to the city and its ratepayers.

The Committee agreed to authorise the additional expenditure.

Chairman