

# Development Committee

Tuesday, 6th March, 2012

## MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Stalford (Chairman);  
Aldermen Ekin and Stoker; and  
Councillors Austin, Hartley, Hendron, Keenan,  
Kelly, Kingston, Kyle, Mallon, Maskey, McKee,  
McVeigh, Mac Giolla Mhín, Ó Muilleoir, Reynolds,  
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; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 26th January, 6th, 7th and 8th of February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March, subject to the omission of the minute of the meeting of 7th February under the heading 'Consultation – Taxi Fare and Meter Regulations' which, at the request of Councillor Keenan, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

### Declarations of Interest

Regarding agenda item 5b, viz., 'Pride of Place Awards', Alderman Stoker indicated that he was a member of the board of the Greater Village Regeneration Trust, but pointed out that there existed no associated pecuniary or material conflict within the report. He suggested that further clarification be sought from the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor in respect of the requirement for Members to withdraw from a meeting whilst items in which they had declared an interest were being considered.

The Committee agreed that a request be forwarded to the Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor to provide further clarification to the Committee in this regard.

### Road to Economic Recovery - The Public Sector Role in Northern Ireland

The Democratic Services Officer reported that information had been received from the Royal Town Planning Institute in respect of the above-mentioned conference which would take place in the City Hall on 27th March. He pointed out that the theme of

the programme would be relevant to the work of the Committee since it would address issues pertinent to the decision-making process in so far as it related to economic development issues within the planning system. He stated that the Institute had provided the Council with five free delegate packages and, accordingly, he recommended that the Committee authorise the attendance at the event of any Member who so wished.

The Committee agreed to authorise the attendance at the conference of any Member who so wished and, in the event of more than five Members wishing to attend the conference, authorised also the payment of the appropriate conference fee of £100.

**Reconsidered Item - Consultation of  
Taxi Fares and Meter Regulations**

The Committee considered further the above-mentioned minute which had been taken back by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

Councillor Keenan, at whose request the matter had been taken back, tabled a number of proposed amendments to the Council's response and requested that the Committee defer the item until its meeting on 20th March to enable the Members to consider his proposals.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the item as requested.

**Correspondence re: Review of Community  
Development and Infrastructure Services**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th December, it had considered a report in respect of a proposed Review of Community Development Infrastructure and Support Services in Belfast. This review would consider the changes which might be implemented as a result of the Review of Public Administration and would be overseen by the Department for Social Development. For this purpose, a Steering Group, consisting of Council officers and representatives of the Belfast Regeneration Office and Voluntary Services Unit, had been established to oversee the Review.

At the meeting on 13th December, Members had expressed concern that no political representatives had been invited to sit on the Steering Group and, accordingly, it was agreed that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, or their nominees, be nominated to serve as the Council's representatives thereon. Subsequently, correspondence had been received from the Deputy Secretary to the Department for Social Development which indicated that, having briefed the Minister, Mr. Nelson McCausland M.L.A., in respect of the Committee's decision, the Minister had requested that the decision be reviewed with a view that the Council consider establishing a Members' reference group to consider any proposals arising from the Review. It was pointed out that this group would be independent of the Steering Group already established to consider the Review.

A Member pointed out that a meeting to discuss the development of the Lagan Canal had been arranged between the Minister and a cross-party deputation from the Council. He suggested that it might be appropriate to request that the Minister agree to place on the agenda also the matter of the Council's political representation on the Review of Community Development Infrastructure and Support Services in Belfast.

After discussion, during which the Committee affirmed its view that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, or their nominees, should be nominated to represent the Council on the Steering Group, it was agreed that a request be forwarded to the Minister seeking his approval to discuss the foregoing matter at the forthcoming meeting.

### **Land of the Giants - Presentation**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th January, it had agreed to receive a presentation from the Land of Giants organisation in respect of its plans for a major event to celebrate the Cultural Olympiad, which would be staged on the Titanic slipways on 30th June. Accordingly, the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed Ms. Kathy Hayes, Associate Producer with Land of Giants, and she proceeded to make a presentation.

Ms. Hayes explained that Land of Giants project would be the largest outdoor arts event to be staged in Northern Ireland and would combine acrobatics, aerial dance, circus acts and a carnival which would be seen by an audience of more than 20,000 people. She explained that the project had taken its inspiration from ancient and modern 'giants' which had contributed to the rich cultural history of Northern Ireland. In particular, special focus would be given to Finn McCool, Gulliver, the Harland and Wolff cranes viz., Samson and Goliath, and the Titanic, together with her sister ship, the Olympic. She provided an overview of the range of agencies, including the Council, which had provided support for the event and indicated that approximately 500 cast and crew would be employed throughout the project. She concluded by pointing out that the event would showcase Northern Ireland to millions of people across the world and would inspire and encourage people throughout Northern Ireland to get involved and create a lasting legacy for the region.

After discussion, during which Ms. Hayes addressed Members' questions in respect of educational outreach initiatives and cultural diversity matters associated with the project, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Belfast City Masterplan**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

##### **1.1 Purpose**

**The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current position with regard to the Draft Masterplan and process following the Committee request for the opportunity**

to have individual Party briefings and additional time to respond to the circulated documents.

- 1.2 A verbal update in respect of the ongoing Party briefings was provided at the 22 February 2012 meeting. This report seeks to summarise the comments received to date and outline the next steps in the proposed process for continued engagement and work to progress the development of the Masterplan.

## 2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The process of individual Party briefings has now been completed, although some parties have requested the opportunity to submit further detailed specific comments. As previously reported to the February Committee there were some common issues raised through the consultations with the individual parties which are summarised below:

- The need for further and sustained political engagement in the consultation and development of the Masterplan
- The adoption of a phased approach to the process for the proposed consultation ensuring engagement with the Executive (Departments) prior to public consultation
- Clear alignment between the Masterplan and the Investment Programme. This should be then be enhanced through subsequent alignment with Government priorities following consultation
- The Masterplan should have a greater emphasis on the need for direct intervention in the more deprived areas or neighbourhoods to address unemployment and disadvantage
- The connectivity challenges should be highlighted with additional areas prioritised to ensure the centre city is integrated with and accessible to the surrounding neighbourhoods
- The neighbourhood hubs or clusters concept and their role or development alongside the focus on continued growth of the centre city area requires further clarification.

- 2.2 The Committee at the meeting on the 22 February 2012 sought clarification of a number of issues including the definition of poverty and the approach to the proposed engagement with the Executive.

In relation to the reference to 'poverty', as referred to in the previously circulated Party Groups Feedback paper, it was confirmed that this would follow the definition already agreed by this Committee. The Committee also highlighted the need for the Chair and Deputy Chair along with Party Leaders to lead the engagement with the Executive in respect of the Masterplan element of any ongoing consultation with the Executive or Ministers.

- 2.3 The suggested approach to continued engagement with the Executive and broader consultation was outlined as a two stage process designed to address the first two points in the Party Groups Feedback paper. The wider process of engagement between the Council and Departments has been initiated and the first meeting has taken place with the DoE Minister and officials at which this issue was tabled along with other issues.
- 2.4 The more detailed list of responses and issues raised in the briefings are captured in an appended document under the Strategic, Specific and General headings. This document seeks to summarise the detailed feedback from the individual meetings and the subsequent Party submissions.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the Consultants are requested to address the comments raised through a revision to the current draft document that will also take account of any issues arising from the engagement with the Central Government Departments. This editorial work would be carried out under their existing contract to develop a draft Masterplan document.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the proposed two stage process for continued engagement with the Executive and broader consultation is beyond the scope of the existing consultancy commission. It is proposed that a further report is brought before the Committee to consider the next phases of the engagement and the initial finding in respect of those Masterplan recommendations that may require further exploration and additional consultancy support.

### **3 Resource Implications**

- 3.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

#### **4 Recommendations**

##### **4.1 Members are requested to:**

- (i) note the feedback received from the individual Party briefings and the intention to instruct the Consultants to incorporate the comments in a revised Draft of the Masterplan;**
- (ii) endorse the clarification in relation to the reference to 'poverty', as mentioned in the Party Groups Feedback paper, which it is confirmed would follow the definition already agreed by this Committee.**
- (iii) note the commencement of the engagement activity with the Executive as the initiation of a two stage process designed to address the first two points in the Party Feedback paper; and**
- (iv) note the proposal to bring a further report to Committee for consideration of the proposed engagement and any requirement of additional consultancy support to address the initial Masterplan recommendations."**

The Committee adopted the recommendations. In addition, it was agreed that a request would be forwarded to the Minister for Social Development, Mr. Nelson McCausland, M.L.A., seeking his approval to discuss the matter of the Council's Masterplan also at the forthcoming meeting between a Council's deputation and the Minister in respect of the re-development of the Lagan Canal.

#### **Consultation on Queen's Quay**

The Committee considered the undernoted report and the contents of the associated Council response.

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

- 1.1 Queen's Quay is located on the eastern bank of the river Lagan and is bounded by the M3 flyover to the north, the Queen's Bridge to the south, the river Lagan to the west and the Station Street Flyover to the east.**
- 1.2 The Masterplan consultation document prepared by DSD contains an analysis of the area, the main regeneration principles and the options for its future development.**
- 1.3 Following consideration of any consultation responses, DSD have propose that the adopted Masterplan will set out guidance on the proposed range, mix and location of uses for**

the Queen's Quay area. DSD may use the adopted Masterplan to formulate further development briefs to guide how parts of the site will be developed in the future.

- 1.4 The Queens Quay area has been the subject of various proposals going back to the Laganside Concept Plan in 1987. A development brief was issued for this area in 2005, however, neither Laganside Corporation nor DSD were able to proceed with developing this area at that time. The development of Queen's Quay is considered key to stimulating regeneration of the 'shatter zone' that lies to the east of the site.

## 2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Department for Social Development (DSD) is seeking to promote the regeneration plans for Queen's Quay in recognition of the potential to build on the significant recent developments that have taken place including: Titanic Quarter; Obel; The Boat; and Victoria Square.

### *Masterplan Proposals*

- 2.2 The draft Masterplan contains a number of proposals and identifies a phased approach to how the preferred development of the site could be envisaged.
- 2.3 The mixed use proposal in the document would if fully developed result in an 18 storey (4 star) hotel; 278 Residential units; and 8,000 sq m of leisure uses.
- 2.4 A key assumption taken in the Masterplan is that the Station Street flyover is removed. It should be noted that planning approval for removal of the flyover was granted in 2007 but is now approaching its expiry date. The removal would obviously require the rationalisation of the existing highway network in the area
- 2.5 The draft Masterplan for the site proposes a land mark tower which would offer views across the city and incorporate the zip-line, which has been installed in this area previously as part of charity events, on a permanent basis.
- 2.6 An upgrade to the weir crossing, public realm improvements, and an urban park beneath the motorway bridge are all included in the proposals and as part of the phased approach the sites awaiting development will be available for public use for example, parks and exhibition space.

*Key Issues for BCC*

- 2.7 The Queen's Quay site is in a key location between the City Centre and Titanic Quarter, however, in its current physical state the area acts less as a connection and more as a barrier to movement. In this context the Council would welcome the DSD focus on what is a pivotal waterfront area, being traversed by increasing numbers as the City Centre, Waterfront Hall and Titanic Quarter continue to develop.
- 2.8 Short term improvements to this site should address the neglected nature of the area through improved signage and more effective maintenance of the built environment and street furniture in the areas adjacent to the Weir. In addition short term actions to remove graffiti around the bridges and flyover could enhance the environment for existing users.
- 2.9 The draft document identifies the strategic importance of the site in terms of major roads, bus routes and the existing cycle network. However there is no reference to or recognition of the proposed rapid transit routes recently identified by the Department for Regional Development in their preferred route options paper.
- 2.10 The CITI Route preferred option runs adjacent to the Queens Quay site using the Queen Elizabeth Bridge, Queen's Quay and Queen's Road into Titanic Quarter, and returning to the city centre via Station Street , Bridge End and Queens Bridge.
- 2.11 In addition to the CITI Route the 'next best' option for the EWAY route utilises the Newtownards Road and the Queen Elizabeth Bridge to the south of the Queen's Quay Site, meaning that two of the three rapid transit routes initially proposed will be running adjacent to the Site.
- 2.12 The final Masterplan for this area must integrate the consideration of this major city development into the proposals for preferred development. The rapid transit route in addition to enhancing access could be a mechanism to kick-start development of this site.
- 2.13 The Masterplan makes the key assumption that the removal of the Station Street flyover will take place, based on an existing planning approval. However until the feasibility studies are completed, and agreement has been reached, the deliverability of this aspect of the overall scheme must be questioned. The document should provide alternative development options for the site which do not rely on the



removal of the Station Street flyover and incorporate proposals for rapid transit. There is also limited consideration of the connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians to the surrounding areas.

- 2.14 The consultation document includes a new boardwalk and improvements to the weir along with design proposals for buildings that overhang the river edge. The Council is disappointed that the draft Masterplan has given no consideration to proposals for a new lock at this location. The Lagan corridor features in both the draft Belfast City Masterplan and recently published Investment Programme and discussions have been ongoing in relation to the studies and potential along the Lagan.
- 2.15 The Council would propose that the significant opportunity to add a new lock at Queen's Quay is included in the final Masterplan and that the preferred developments identified do not prejudice development of a new lock at this location.

### Council Response

#### Introduction

This document is a response from Belfast City Council to the Department of Social Development relating to the public consultation on the 'Queen's Quay Belfast Draft Masterplan Document'.

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Masterplan proposals for this strategically important site.

The Queen's Quay site is in a key location between the city centre and Titanic Quarter, however, in its current physical state the area acts less as a connection and more as a barrier. In this context the Council would welcome the DSD focus on what is a pivotal waterfront area, being traversed by increasing numbers as the City Centre, Waterfront Hall and Titanic Quarter continue to develop.

The Council acknowledges the past difficulties experienced in bringing development of this site to fruition and welcomes the progress the draft Masterplan represents. The Council has considered the content of the draft Masterplan and identified a number of issues in the response below.

#### The Site

The Queen's Quay site is located in an important location to act as a pivotal connection between not only the Titanic Quarter and City Centre but also between the East of the City and the City Centre.

Obvious physical constraints to the site include the River Lagan, M3 Motorway bridge, and the Station Street flyover. The numerous car parks in the area contribute to the experience of disconnection when travelling through the area.

The site currently suffers from poor environmental quality and a feeling of disconnect towards the rest of the city particularly in an easterly direction, identified in the consultation document as the 'Shatter Zone'.

Short term improvements to this site should address the neglected nature of the area through improved signage and more effective maintenance of the built environment and street furniture in the areas adjacent to the Weir. In addition short term actions to remove graffiti around the bridges and flyover enhance the environment.

To the south west of the site, on the western side of the river, sits the Waterfront Hall which is the subject of a funding bid by the Council to develop a £20million extension for provision of dedicated conference and exhibition facilities. This will help strengthen Belfast's offer to this market and further develop this wider waterfront area into a key location in the City Centre.

### Connectivity

The draft document identifies the site's strategic importance in terms of major roads, bus routes and the existing cycle network however there is no reference to the proposed rapid transit routes recently identified by the Department for Regional Development in their preferred route options paper.

The CITI Route preferred option runs adjacent to the Queens Quay site using the Queen Elizabeth Bridge, Queen's Quay and Queen's Road into Titanic Quarter, and returning to the city centre via Station Street, Bridge End and Queen's Bridge. The future development of this site must have cognisance of the proposed CITI Route and the potential benefits rapid transit can bring to areas along the route, yet the draft Masterplan does not make any reference to the potential impact rapid transit could have on the site insofar as investment opportunities or impact on road infrastructure.

In addition to the CITI Route the 'next best' option for the EWAY route utilises the Newtownards Road and the Queen Elizabeth Bridge to the south of the Queen's Quay Site, meaning that two of the three rapid transit routes initially proposed will be running adjacent to the Site.

The final Masterplan for this area should reflect the potential for this significant city development in its proposals for preferred development, both in the orientation of the proposed buildings and for the permeability of the site. The rapid transit route could be the mechanism to kick-start development of this site which in the past has struggled to attract development.

The Masterplan makes the key assumption that the removal of the Station Street flyover will take place, based on an existing planning approval. However until the feasibility studies are completed, and agreement has been reached, the deliverability of this aspect of the overall scheme must be questioned.

Considering the existing planning approval for the removal of the flyover is approaching its conditioned expiry date the final Masterplan should provide alternative development options for the site which do not rely on the removal of the Station Street flyover and incorporate proposals for rapid transit.

There is also limited consideration of the connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians to the surrounding areas particularly to the residential area to the south of the site.

The 'inward concave design...encouraging people to look away from the noisy and harsh environments....' described in the consultation document appears to have little regard to the existing permeability issues currently faced by east-west movements in this area and turns its back on the 'shatter zone' located further to the east. A preferable design would aim to ameliorate the impacts of the existing transport infrastructure whilst encouraging movements into, and through, this site in an east-west direction as well as a north-south direction.

The development proposals must take account of the existing walking and cycling routes throughout the site. A better connection to the walking trail to the south of the site along the eastern bank of the river, including a pedestrian crossing would improve access and contribute to the wider permeability of the waterfront area.

### Development Concept

Maximising the development potential of the site as a strategic link is a welcome element of the DSD vision for the area as are the aims to create a quality public realm with improved connections. The design concept must fully incorporate the theme of permeability for cycling, walking and public transport within and through the site.

Greater consideration should be given to the quantum of similar uses already proposed for this vicinity. Proposals exist for the

Scirocco site, City Quays on the west bank of the river, Titanic Quarter, and the land adjacent to the Odyssey complex all of which contain high numbers of residential units. The draft Masterplan proposals and the suggested density must be considered in this context. Whilst the Council acknowledge the proposed phased development of the site, uncertainty for developers through over-supply of mixed-use land should be avoided.

Short term action to secure public realm improvements could be achieved in this area, particularly around the pedestrian access from the weir. We would strongly recommend the public realm improvements of Phase 1 are implemented as soon as possible.

The Council would support more flexibility in the proposed uses to allow for viable alternative schemes to be developed for this site. A Masterplan which identifies potential developments is welcomed but the content should not prejudice the planning process of other suitable proposals on this site.

The Council are concerned that the 'inward concave design' proposed in the Masterplan will reinforce the shatter zone to the east of the site and not address the challenge of the M3 and other bridges.

The final design concept should recognise the increasing amount of cycling infrastructure in the area, for example the national cycle network, the comber greenway, and the cycle lanes being installed along the Sydenham Road and re-opening of Fraser Street and facilitate further cycle movement through the site. Belfast City Council would advocate the inclusion of cycle considerations in development proposals which including cycle access and safe cycle parking.

The site is located within the Belfast City Centre Fringe Area of Parking Restraint in the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and the Council would suggest that provision of parking at this site is kept to a minimum in consideration of the city centre location and proximity of existing transport options (Bridge End Rail Halt, Laganside Bus Centre, Central Station) along with the proposed rapid transit routes outlined previously.

The new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle bridge must be developed with involvement of key stakeholders including Belfast Harbour Commission, the Odyssey Trust, Belfast City Council and DSD. The design of this bridge must not limit or prohibit the use of this part of the river Lagan.

### Provision of a New Lock

The consultation document includes a new boardwalk and improvements to the weir along with design proposals for buildings that overhang the river edge. The Council is disappointed that the draft Masterplan has given no consideration to proposals for a new lock at this location. The Lagan corridor features in both the draft Belfast City Masterplan and recently published Investment Programme and discussions have been ongoing in relation to the studies and potential along the Lagan.

Belfast City Council had an economic appraisal undertaken in 2009 which concluded that the restoration of the Lagan would contribute to an investment which would drive the City's tourism/recreational and hospitality industries, and result in increased visitor numbers to Belfast, increased visitor spend and the creation of jobs. The development of the Lagan could stimulate further development of water-side properties, particularly in the tourism, hospitality, recreation and leisure sectors. The real economic impact of proposals to restore the Lagan Navigation would not be captured solely by projected lock receipts and mooring income, but would be realised by Belfast's wider tourism, health and well being activities, recreational and hospitality industries in terms of visitor spend, job creation, increased tourism expenditure/associated multiplier effects etc. Belfast City Council expects the reopened Lagan navigation would have a number of economic benefits, and according to the 2008 Lagan Gateway Scoping Report the impact of visitor expenditure on the opening of the entire Lagan Navigation (Lagan weir to Lough Neagh) could be £2.1m per annum which could support 60 full time equivalent jobs.

BCC has plans to undertake a number of restoration and development works that would facilitate the reopening of 9km of the Lagan from Belfast Harbour to Lock 3 at Shaw's Bridge.

The £7bn Titanic Quarter phased development includes the development of the Abercorn Basin into a busy marina a development that will attract boat and river users up the River Lagan. The Lagan Weir currently acts as a barrier preventing navigation up the river dependent on the gates being lowered and certain tidal conditions as Belfast embraces its maritime heritage and seeks to build on the past the need for a new lock at Queen's Quay to bypass the Lagan Weir ought to be a part of the restoration of the Lagan.

A fully navigable Lagan could facilitate the creation of an all island East-West waterway, allowing boat users to travel from Belfast Lough to Limerick via the Ulster Canal, the Shannon-Erne waterway and the Shannon. This is dependent on the reinstatement of the

**Ulster Canal. Boats would also be enabled to travel north to Coleraine via Lough Neagh and the Lower Bann navigation and west to Belleek via the Ulster Canal and Erne Waterway.**

**The Council believes that the restoration of the Lower Lagan as proposed by the 2009 economic appraisal and 2008 scoping study would mark a key milestone in the campaign to reopen the entire lagan navigation and would play a significant part in raising the profile of the waterway's restoration potential and ultimately the creation of an all Ireland network.**

**The Council would propose that the significant opportunity to add a new lock at Queen's Quay is included in the final Masterplan and that the preferred developments identified do not prejudice development of a new lock at this location.**

### **Conclusion**

**Belfast City Council welcomes the creation of a Masterplan for the Queen's Quay area that promotes an animated waterside area with improved environmental quality, suitable developments, and pedestrian links to surrounding areas.**

**This response identifies a number of issues which the Council believe should be addressed before the final Masterplan is published.**

**Our main concerns include the lack of recognition of the proposed Rapid Transit routes; the absence of the potential for a new lock; and the absence of alternative options which do not rely on the removal of the station street flyover.**

**There is an emphasis throughout the document on pedestrian connectivity but provision for cycling infrastructure through the Queen's Quay area could be incorporated into the design to a greater extent with clear connectivity to the surrounding area including a connection to the existing path to south of the site.**

**The Council is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this important Masterplan and would be happy to further discuss any of the issues contained within this response with DRD officials."**

During discussion, a Member stated that there existed currently a wide range of consultation documents in respect of the development of the City. The point was made that there was a perception that there was a lack of coordination in the delivery of these projects at a strategic level. It was suggested, given the perceived lack of leadership in this regard and the changes which would arise as part of the Review of Public Administration, that the Council should seek to explore the feasibility of leading on the delivery of certain projects, especially those which would enhance the aims and objectives as set out within the Council's Investment Programme.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to endorse the response to the consultation and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the Council's potential role in leading on City-wide regeneration issues in partnership with other bodies and agencies.

### **Christmas Lights and Signage**

The Committee deferred consideration of a report in respect of the Council's Christmas Lights and Signage. However, it was agreed that the management and delivery of the Christmas Lights and Signage Programme would transfer from the Development Department to the Property and Projects Department in the financial year 2013/2014, and that Committee reporting lines would be transferred also to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

### **Belfast Tattoo - Request for Assistance**

The Committee deferred consideration of this item to enable further information to be obtained.

### **Community Support - Public Consultation**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 Through its Community Support programme the Department for Social Development (DSD) offers support to all of Northern Ireland's local authorities to deliver Community Services that *'... strengthen local communities, increase community participation and promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups, community activity and local advice services.'*
- 1.2 Under the programme DSD made £3,435,293 available to Belfast City Council for the period 2008 to 2010 and a further £1,584,286 for the period 2010 to 2011. This represents a contribution of approximately 23% to the Community Services' total annual budget.
- 1.3 To be eligible for funding each council must prepare a Community Support Plan (CSP) that describes how it will deliver community services in support of the programme. A Belfast City Council draft Community Support Plan for 2011 to 2014 was approved by Development Committee in April 2011. (This followed delays on the part of DSD in confirming its submission requirements and procedures).
- 1.4 Members should note that DSD have already issued a contract to the council for our 2011/12 CSP prior to its submission to

them. The contract was subject to the submission of monitoring returns, budgets estimates, the draft plan, and a commitment to complete the twelve week public consultation.

- 1.5 Members agreed to a twelve week public consultation on the plan to run in parallel with the consultation on the council's draft Community Development Strategy. (A re-drafted Community Development strategy and equality screening are currently being prepared and will be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March 2012).
- 1.6 The structure and content of the draft CSP was greatly informed by work and evidence emerging from the council's draft Community Development strategy. In the development of both documents officers held pre-consultation workshops for Members, community development staff in the council; with thematic co-ordinators (including those with responsibility for Equality, Older People, Children and Young People, Good Relations); and with Policy Officers.

## 2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The twelve week public consultation on the draft document included the following activities:
- All party briefings for Members
  - Workshops with officers from across the council including the thematic co-ordinators and the policy officers group;
  - Substantial analysis of the wider socio-economic and policy context;
  - Direct mailing to over 300 organisations from the community and voluntary sectors including all community grant recipients;
  - Mailing copies of the document and a questionnaire to all organisations on the Section 75 list and two briefings to the council's Equality Consultative Forum;
  - Presentations to the Belfast Area Partnership Boards; the twelve Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships; and Youth Forum;
  - We held five public workshops in north, south, east and west Belfast, which were advertised in the media and an additional workshop for representatives of the statutory sector.
  - The document and questionnaire were also available for download from the council's website.



2.3 There was broad support for the CSP and its contents and a number of organisations identified opportunities for joint working with the council on a number of areas. There were no equality issues raised during the consultation. Officers worked with the council's Equality Officer to finalise an equality screening on the planned CSP. The recommendation, based on the results of the consultation, is that the CSP be screened out and not subjected to a full equality impact assessment.

2.4 Following approval by Members the results of the consultation, together with the screening decision and the final draft of the CSP will be submitted to DSD as part of the requirements of their contract.

### **3 Resource Implications**

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

### **4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations**

4.1 Following the twelve week public consultation and discussions with the Council's Equality Officer, the evidence suggests that the plan has no substantial equality impact and has been screened out.

It will not require a full Equality Impact Assessment.

### **5 Recommendations**

5.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. Agree to endorse the decision to screen out the CSP and not carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment;
2. Agree to the submission of the CSP to DSD to finalise the contractual requirements under their Community Support programme."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Pride of Place Cities Competition 2012**

The Committee was reminded that the Pride of Place Cities Competition provided Community Groups from the island of Ireland with an opportunity to showcase initiatives which would have a lasting and positive impact upon their communities. Since 2004, the Council had sponsored, with considerable success, the participation of several groups in the Competition. The 2012 Pride of Place Cities Competition permitted a maximum of six entries per Council, subject to defined categories and rules. Accordingly, the following four groups had been identified by the Council as being suitable for entry in the competition:

- Bridge Community Association – this organisation provided a wide range of services to the community in south and east Belfast which addressed social isolation among older persons and vulnerable adults;
- Suffolk Community Forum – this organisation sought to promote the concept of community gardens as a method of building community relations, healthy lifestyles and work skills;
- North Belfast Senior Citizens' Forum – this organisation represented the interests of 30 older persons' groups and sought to improve the physical and mental well-being of older persons; and
- Upper Andersonstown Community Forum – this Forum aimed to develop an effective network for community groups and others working for the benefit of the area. It aimed also to raise awareness of the needs of communities and to attract investment and resources.

It was pointed out that the Council had been invited also to nominate a fifth organisation for a special category for previous winners. It was reported that two groups had been short-listed viz., the Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group and the Greater Village Regeneration Trust. It was suggested that, rather than choosing between the two groups, officers should seek to contact the organisers with a view to having both groups short-listed in the special category award and it was noted that the Committee would be updated in this regard at its meeting on 20th March. It was reported that the cost of entry, per project, was £500 and the awards ceremony would be held in Co. Meath on 3rd and 4th November, at a venue as yet to be confirmed.

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

#### **Waterfront and Ulster Halls Staffing Arrangements**

The Committee noted an update by the Director in respect of interim management arrangements at the Waterfront and Ulster Halls and noted that further updates would be provided in due course.

Chairman