

Development Committee

Tuesday, 18th September, 2012

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Ó Muilleoir (Deputy Chairman) (in the Chair);
Aldermen Ekin and Stoker; and
Councillors Hussey, Keenan, Kelly, Kingston,
Kyle, Mallon, Maskey, McKee, McVeigh,
Ó Donnghaile, Reynolds, Spence and Webb.

In attendance: Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development;
Ms. S. McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives;
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Development Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from the Chairman (Alderman Stalford) and Councillors Austin, Hendron and Mac Giolla Mhín.

Declarations of Interest

In respect of item 2 (f), viz., Integrated Economic Strategy, Councillor Webb declared an interest in this matter in that he was associated with a company which might bid for one of the contracts which would arise as part of the project.

HMS Caroline

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd July, had referred the undernoted Notice of Motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Kingston and seconded by Councillor McCarthy, to the Committee for its consideration:

“This Council recognises the historical significance of HMS Caroline as one of just two surviving First World War Royal Navy ships and the last survivor of the Battle of Jutland still afloat; notes the contribution which HMS Caroline has made to Belfast where she has been stationed for over 85 years; recognises the contribution which the development of this unique attraction can make to our tourism economy; and confirms its commitment and desire to work expeditiously with the Assembly Executive, the Ministry of Defence, the National Museum of the Royal Navy and other relevant bodies to preserve, develop and promote HMS Caroline as a key attraction and feature of maritime heritage in Belfast’s Titanic Quarter.”

The Director provided an overview of the options which were currently being explored by a range of agencies with a view to refurbishing the ship and retaining it in Belfast. He indicated that further reports, which would address the Council's future involvement in any project in this regard, would be submitted in due course when the position of the ship's future became clearer.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a letter be forwarded, in due course, to the Minister with responsibility for the Department of Education, Trade and Industry, Mrs. A. Foster, MLA, requesting that she meet with a cross-party deputation from the Council to discuss the future of HMS Caroline.

Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012/2015

The Committee considered the undernoted report which provided an overview of the outcome of an equality impact assessment of the above-mentioned Framework, together with final draft of the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012/2015, a copy of which was available on the Council's Modern.gov system:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 As Members will recall, the public consultation on the Council's draft Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15 and Equality Impact Assessment closed on 31 August 2012.

1.2 Seventy-one formal responses to the consultation were received. Officers also carried out a series of meetings with stakeholders, including with Members and the arts sector, the Heritage Forum, the Festivals Forum, the arts and disability sector, internal staff and general public in five community centres across Belfast.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The findings of the public consultation are summarised below. Copies of written responses and minutes of meetings are available from the Tourism, Culture and Arts (TCA) Manager on request. Copies of the Cultural Framework with tracked changes are also available from the Tourism, Cultural & Arts unit.

General findings

Consultees were generally supportive of the draft Cultural Framework. In particular, several consultees praised the open and inclusive approach to consultation.

Investment

45 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with this section. Of those who responded negatively, there were four main concerns.

Firstly, the requirement for a minimum turnover of £100,000 to be eligible for core funding was considered detrimental to small organisations and for the diversity of the overall sector. This has been removed.

Secondly, the cap on core funding at 10 per cent of an organisation's budget was considered not to reflect focus on Belfast or capacity to deliver on the Framework's objectives. This has been removed.

Thirdly, several consultees expressed demand for Council to fund individual artists. While the development of individual artists is considered to be a role for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) and would further reduce the amount of funding available to organisations, we have included an action to support employability and skills development under the Strengthening the sector theme. This will be facilitated in partnership with Creative and Cultural Skills and other stakeholders, and additional external funding will be sought.

Finally, consultees thought that the Framework was not deliverable of proposed budgets and that the council should provide funding equivalent to UK and ROI councils. The Cultural Framework is timely as we are agreeing budget estimates for 2013/14. We will take all feedback on board as part of this process.

Vision and aims

67 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the vision and aims. Some consultees noted that they struggled to find the aims or understand the connection between the aims, actions and targets. The layout has been changed as a result of these comments.

Several consultees considered that there was not enough emphasis on cultural diversity. While the Framework was always intended to be inclusive of 'everyone in Belfast' regardless of community and cultural background, we have amended the vision to explicitly refer to diversity.

Finally, several consultees considered that the reference in the vision to the city's culture and arts being 'renowned throughout the world' was too subjective and not measurable. This has been changed to 'recognised'.

Heritage

Consultees were not asked to respond specifically to this section. Where responses were received, some consultees considered that heritage was not fully integrated in to the Framework, while others considered that there was too much emphasis on heritage.

The Framework is based on a wide and holistic definition of heritage. Buildings are an important feature of this, and a large number of responses related to built heritage. Unfortunately, there was less recognition of the limited role of local government in controlling the built environment or enabling the physical aspects of economic development. However, the Framework does take Council up to 2015, when local government reforms under the Review of Public Administration are expected to take effect. This is likely to include the transfer of some planning functions.

As a result of this feedback, we have further integrated heritage across all four themes. The Open University strongly advocated for actions to support learning and skills development, which they are willing to develop in partnership, and this has been included under the Inspiring communities theme.

Finally, we have made explicit the intent to develop a heritage action plan.

Capital developments

Consultees were not asked to respond specifically to this section. Where responses were received, they were generally supportive. Consultees stressed the importance of finding creative uses for the city's historical, underused or vacant buildings – including Council-owned assets – which is already included as an action under Distinctly Belfast. This included support from the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment in Northern Ireland, which offered to further advise and work with the Council.

Public art

Consultees were not asked to respond specifically to this section. Where responses were received, they were generally supportive. One consultee suggested that the council should operate a per cent for art scheme.

At May Development Committee, Members requested that a report on the potential for a per cent for art scheme be prepared and presented to Committee alongside responses to the public consultation on the draft Framework.

Creative industries

Consultees were not asked to respond specifically to this section. However, several consultees did respond. While responses were generally favourable, some consultees, including Invest NI and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, objected to the conflation of for-profit creative industries and not-for-profit culture and arts organisations. We have amended the figures cited in the final document to reflect the traditional distinction. However, we believe that the two sectors must work more closely together in the future and have retained the sentiment and associated actions.

This has been further reinforced by a supportive response from Creative and Cultural Skills, and we have further strengthened the actions to support employability and skills development, which will help cultural industries unlock their economic potential. This also addresses requests from a number of consultees for the Council to support individual artists.

Tourism

Consultees were not asked to respond specifically to this section. Some consultees considered that there was too much weight on tourism in the document. Other consultees suggested further initiatives to support tourism. No substantive changes have been made as a result of the consultation.

'Distinctly Belfast'

56 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with Distinctly Belfast. Consultees who indicated they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied included a relatively high percentage of arts organisations, Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities. Conversely, the heritage sector was broadly satisfied.

The Cultural Framework and Distinctly Belfast theme was always intended to be inclusive, as reflected in the vision. However, a number of consultees understood this theme to be prescriptive, parochial and exclusive of new and minority communities.

Following extensive discussions, this theme has been revised and renamed 'Connecting the city'. This includes replacing references to 'local talent' with attracting, retaining and nurturing artistic talent, and more reference to the international

context. While it was never intended that all activity funded would need to be themed around Belfast, we have stressed in the revised theme that all activity needs to be relevant to Belfast and resonate with Belfast audiences.

Inspiring communities

63 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with Inspiring communities. While hard-to-reach communities intended to be inclusive of disabled people and minority ethnic groups in the consultation document, this has been explicitly stated in the final document. Other consultees requested that the LGB&T communities be included. However, there is no evidence that this is a hard-to-reach community, as detailed in the EQIA.

While the role arts and culture play in improving good relations was also implicit throughout the consultation document, this has been made explicit in the final document, and a fifth underpinning Good Relations value has been added based on the Investment Programme.

The contribution of voluntary and amateur arts to the city and the sector has also been recognised, and Voluntary Arts Ireland has been included as a strategic partner. It is intended that they, not Council, will deliver on the associated actions.

Attracting audiences

70 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with Attracting audiences. More explicit reference to sustaining existing audiences and more reference to the importance of heritage has been included in the final document.

Strengthening the sector

78 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with Strengthening the sector. Further reference to the role of volunteering has been included in the final document.

Values

74 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the values.

A number of consultees, particularly from the arts sector, stressed the importance of quality and considered that this should be brought to the fore as a measure of success. This will be further considered in action plans in consultation with the sector, but the definition of quality has been amended to be more inclusive of the city's diverse sector in the final draft.

A fifth quality of Good relations has been added in response to concerns raised by Community Relations Council (CRC) and NICEM among other consultees.

Targets

64 per cent of consultees who responded to this question indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the targets. A lack of targets had been cited as a weakness under the previous Integrated Cultural Framework, and consultees commended this new, more strategic approach. However, several noted that it was not clear how the commitments, priorities, actions and targets interlinked, and the layout has been changed in the final document. Others queried baseline figures, and we will need to establish baselines and revisit targets in partnership with strategic stakeholders over the next six months.

Cultural diversity

Several consultees considered the definition of culture should be broader than arts and heritage and there should be more emphasis on cultural diversity. Other consultees considered that the Framework should explicitly support Irish language arts. While we have not differentiated between art forms in the Cultural Framework as the emphasis is on the impact, rather than the art itself, Irish language arts providers should be well positioned to demonstrate how they align with the four themes, in particular, Connecting the city and Inspiring communities. However, cultural diversity has now been further emphasised throughout.

EQIA

Four responses to the EQIA were received.

Arts and Disability Equality Charter (ADEC) asked that disabled people be identified within each of the four themes. They have been identified as a priority group under Inspiring communities, and further suggestions by ADEC will be considered in action plans to support the implementation of the Framework.

The CRC strongly supported the need to produce more robust monitoring data and further recommended that the council adopt the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Framework for Monitoring Minority Ethnic and Migrant People.

Disability Action submitted a 'nil' response. One further consultee responded confidentially, and their response was considered outside the scope of the Cultural Framework. We will continue to monitor and review the equality impacts of all actions as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework, and findings will be included in an annual review on progress to the Equality Commission.

The Twelfth

At the May Development Committee, the DUP expressed concerns that the annual Twelfth of July celebrations had not been included within the Framework document. This was further considered by Officers from the TCA and Good Relations units. We have agreed that within the context of the Cultural Framework, potential support should be channeled via Orangefest as this represents the cultural and arts dimension of the Twelfth and meets funding eligibility criteria. Orangefest is currently supported by the TCA unit to develop culture and arts, audiences and deliver outreach activity through Development and Outreach funding and Peace III City of Festivals Funding. The TCA unit has experienced capacity issues with Orangefest as an organisation. Through the themes of the Cultural Framework, and in particular strengthening the sector and inspiring communities, capacity can be strengthened and Orangefest's role can be enhanced over the next 3 years.

Next steps

Following Committee approval, the new core funding scheme will open on 8 October 2012. Recommendations for funding will be brought back to Committee for approval in February 2013. A Cultural Forum will also be established to develop action plans and oversee the delivery of the Cultural Framework, and a further report on this will be submitted to Committee in October 2012.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

£1.5m per year is included under the Investment Programme for culture and arts. Feedback from the public consultation will be further considered in context of the rate setting process.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 A full EQIA was undertaken as part of the development of the Cultural Framework.

5 Recommendations

- **Agree the final draft of the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15**
- **Agree to open the Core Funding Scheme on 8 October 2012.**
- **Agree the final EQIA report**
- **Recommend a preferred option for a Per Cent for Art Scheme.”**

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the equality impact assessment and the endorsed the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012/2015, subject to the retention of the theme and term ‘Distinctly Belfast’. In addition, it was agreed that the associated Core Funding Scheme would open on 8th October.

It was agreed also that a letter be forwarded to National Museums of Northern Ireland requesting that representatives attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the feasibility of identifying additional space within the City where artworks currently in storage could be displayed in public.

Per Cent for Art Scheme

The Committee was apprised of the feasibility of the Council introducing a ‘Per Cent for Art Scheme’ which was an initiative which allocated a percentage, usually one percent, of expenditure for the purchase and commissioning of visual art within capital expenditure projects. It was explained that a range of the statutory bodies and agencies, such as the Royal Group of Hospitals, had introduced such schemes to promote the arts.

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor Maskey,
Seconded by Alderman Ekin,

That the Committee agrees that the Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be requested to introduce a ‘Per Cent for Art’ scheme which would allocate one percent of future Council capital project expenditure towards the purchase, commissioning and support of the visual arts in Belfast.

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

Health Hack Northern Ireland Event

The Director informed the Committee that the event 'Health Hack NI' would be held in the City Hall on Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th December. He reported that the event, which would support the Council's 'Super-Connected Belfast' initiative, sought to bring together practitioners within the health industry to explore the feasibility of enhancing healthcare provision through the design of Smartphone applications. He indicated that the event, which had been organised by Invest NI and the Northern Ireland Connected Health Innovation Centre, would be attended by a range of health practitioners, students, consultants, nurses, doctors and senior managers from the National Health Service. The Director indicated that the Council had been approached by the organisers requesting that it consider contributing towards the event in the sum of £2,000, which would cover the costs associated with the provision of wireless connectivity within the Reception Room and hospitality throughout the event.

The Committee agreed to provide £2,000 towards the hosting of the event.

Investors in People - Programme for Business

The Committee was advised that the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) had introduced a programme which sought to improve the performance of small businesses by assisting them to achieve accreditation under the Investors in People initiative. The programme enabled small businesses to engage with business professionals through a series of workshops to work towards the attainment of the Investors in People standard. It was reported that ten companies within the Council area would partake in the pilot programme and that DEL would contribute thirty percent, viz., £3,360 of the anticipated cost of £11,200, with the Council allocating £4,840 and the remaining amount of £3,000 being contributed by the participating companies. The Director provided an overview of the economic benefits which would be accrued by the Council should it agree to contribute towards the programme and, accordingly, he recommended that the Committee agree to endorse the contribution as outlined.

The Committee agreed to contribute £4,840 towards the programme.

Employer Engagement Support

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Investment Programme contains a range of commitment around employability and skills development. One of the key commitments involves collaboration with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and other partners on a city-wide employability and skills strategy.**
- 1.2 The aim of this proposal is to develop a collaborative, targeted approach to employability and skills development issues by creating a better understanding of the local welfare to work arena and enabling partners to align and pool funding**

and resources to reduce duplication of services and fill gaps in provision. The anticipated outcome of this approach is that additional people would be helped into employment and that those employment prospects would be more sustainable

- 1.3 Members will be aware that a skilled, flexible workforce is one of the greatest contributors to economic growth and city competitiveness. Ensuring alignment between the skills development and employment agendas is a major challenge for all cities. This alignment is recognised in the recently-published Northern Ireland Economic Strategy (NIES) which focuses on re-building and re-balancing the Northern Ireland economy. Promoting employment and employability is the key 're-building' theme in the strategy while the 're-balancing' themes include a commitment to 'improving employability and the relevance and use of skills.
- 1.4 In order to ensure that employability initiatives and approaches are in line with existing employer needs and future growth areas, it is important to ensure a structured dialogue with employers. One such avenue for engagement is through the Employers' Forum. This was established in 2003 as part of the Task Force initiatives in west Belfast and greater Shankill. It is managed by Business in the Community (BITC) and draws on the resources of this organisation's members to provide opportunities for skills development and employment opportunities, focusing on those furthest from the labour market.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Since their establishment in 2003, initiatives undertaken by the Employers' Forum have helped almost 1300 long-term unemployed people into work. While the focus of the initiative has been on those from west Belfast and greater Shankill, employers have also provided opportunities for those from all communities across Belfast.
- 2.2 As part of the city-wide strategy, there is an opportunity to explore how the Employers' Forum can be engaged to act as the employer conduit. This will ensure that ideas and proposals can be tested to confirm that they are in line with employer demands. Equally, employers can be encouraged to develop new and flexible approaches to recruitment and skills development, particularly engaging those furthest from the labour market.

- 2.3 The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has also confirmed that it would be keen to work with Belfast City Council and the Employers' Forum to develop an agreed approach to employer engagement that will ultimately improve the quality of interventions and ensure greater alignment between skills supply and demand.
- 2.4 In order to progress this, it is planned that a meeting will take place between DEL, Belfast City Council and Business in the Community to look at:
- A draft terms of reference for the city-wide employers' forum
 - A proposed work programme
 - Areas of focus e.g. key sectors; geographical areas; target groups
 - Governance arrangements
 - Financial commitments and contributions.
- 2.5 Subject to member agreement, a report will be brought back to the second meeting of the Development Committee in October to agree the way forward.
- 3 **Resource Implications**
- 3.1 No specific resource implications to be agreed at this stage – to be outlined in the October committee report.
- 4 **Equality and Good Relations Considerations**
- 4.1 No specific equality and good relations considerations at this stage. The city-wide approach will take account of all relevant considerations.
- 5 **Recommendations**
- 5.1 Members are asked to:
- Note the proposed engagement with DEL and the Employers' Forum as part of the city-wide employability and skills plan; and
 - Agree to a further report to be presented to the October meeting, setting out a proposed way forward, and including financial commitments.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

F. G. Wilson - Redundancies

Arising from discussion in the foregoing matter, the Deputy Chairman, with the permission of the Committee, referred to the recent announcement of 760 redundancies by Caterpillar, which was the parent company of the Larne-based firm F.G. Wilson. He pointed out that the decision would impact adversely upon the company's four locally-based plants, including those employees based at its Belfast factory in the Springvale Business Park. The Deputy Chairman indicated that it would be prudent for the Council to be proactive in light of the redundancies and he informed the Committee that a meeting of local stakeholders, which had been organised by Invest NI, had been scheduled to take place the following day, viz., 19th September, in Larne and he suggested that it would be advisable for the Council to be represented thereat by Elected Members and officers.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the following course of action:

- That any Member of the Committee, who so wished, be authorised to attend, on behalf of the Council, the stakeholders' meeting scheduled to take place in Larne on 19th September;
- That a letter be forwarded to Caterpillar highlighting the Council's desire that the remaining jobs at F.G. Wilson, particularly those in the greater Belfast area, be protected and that further investment be made by the company in the region; and
- That a press release be issued by the Council to highlight its support for the workers and families of F.G. Wilson and to promote the future employment opportunities which could be provided by the establishment of a Council-supported Innovation Centre on the Invest NI site on the Springfield Road.

Integrated Economic Strategy

(Councillor Webb left the room whilst this item was under discussion.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Investment Programme contains a range of initiatives to stimulate economic growth in the city, while ensuring that social and equality issues are addressed.**
- 1.2 One of the key supporting principles of the Investment Programme is the commitment to partnership and integration, 'bringing together partners from all sectors and communities to develop innovative solutions to Belfast's challenges and to take advantage of all opportunities'.**

- 1.3 The Northern Ireland Executive approved the regional economic strategy in March 2012. This sets out a series of activities aimed at rebuilding and rebalancing the economy in Northern Ireland. The strategy's cross-cutting principles include 'balanced sub-regional growth', namely ensuring that all sub-regions are able to grow and prosper while recognising the importance of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry as key drivers of regional economic growth.
- 1.4 The Belfast City Council area is home to almost one third of all jobs in the region. The GVA per head in the city is almost twice the regional average. This can be explained by the fact that those jobs with higher value-added are attracted to city locations such as Belfast. The city is home to half of Northern Ireland's hi-tech manufacturing jobs, 3 in 5 computer and related service jobs and two-thirds of creative media and arts jobs located within the area. It has a strong software, financial services and telecoms base and attracts the largest number of software development projects in the UK outside of London.
- 1.5 However, on the other hand, Belfast is also home to some of the most deprived and segregated communities in the region. The unemployment rate in Belfast is the second highest of all district council areas (after Derry City Council area) and the level of incapacity benefits and inactive benefits claimed by Belfast is 10,000 above the regional average. The geographical concentrations of unemployment and low skills levels within the city itself are also significant: 73% of all income support claimants in the city live in north and west Belfast and 8.3% of those living in west Belfast are educated to degree level or higher while the proportion in south Belfast is 33.4%.
- 1.6 Therefore, while the broad parameters of the regional economic strategy provide a framework within which Belfast's growth can be planned, it appears that there is a need for a targeted, city-based strategy which take account of the regional drivers but which also identifies the specific city-level – and neighbourhood-level – issues that impact on the city's competitiveness.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Initial discussions have been undertaken with a range of partners – principally Invest NI – with regard to the potential for developing an integrated economic strategy for Belfast.

- 2.2 Draft terms of reference have been produced and there has been broad agreement by Invest NI on the scope of the work.
- 2.3 The terms of reference note the need for collaborative working on this initiative in order to ensure shared ownership of the outcomes and a shared commitment to achieving the objectives set. In order to create this shared ownership, it is proposed that a consultant be appointed to carry out the research and strategy development work. Their role will be to create a framework for discussion, support progress towards prioritisation and shared objectives and establish an action plan to ensure deliverables against target.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the strategy will include the following key elements:
- Updated socio economic analysis of the Belfast economy based on both the city's economic footprint as well as the new forthcoming Council boundary. This information should be provided at a number of geographies in order to illustrate the variances across the city
 - Assessment of key contextual environment and associated strategies to identify opportunities for engagement and alignment with wider developments
 - Proposed focus on business growth and entrepreneurship whilst reflecting the wider conditions necessary for successful and sustainable economic development. Consideration should also be given to the proposed transfer of urban regeneration powers and responsibilities from DSD and proposed transfers from Invest NI to Councils (acknowledging that the actual breadth of these transfers are still under review)
 - Establishment of a vision for Belfast's future economic development and evolution, identifying the city's USPs (unique selling points) – principally the priority sectors that demonstrate the greatest growth potential
 - Consideration of recent and proposed investments in Belfast's infrastructure, both physically and digitally, with an assessment of how these can maximise economic regeneration
 - Articulation of Belfast's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) proposition considering how to set Belfast apart from competitors and to boost our attractiveness as an investment location

- Assessment of future funding options for the city's economic regeneration, from both public (EU/national) and private sources
- Focus on delivery, including a clearly articulated action plan with measurable outputs and outcomes attributed to the relevant responsible bodies for execution and agreed by them as part of this process.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Based on an assessment of the work required, it is proposed that the budget for this work should be £60,000 maximum. Belfast City Council is asked to provide £30,000 maximum with additional contributions coming from five of Northern Ireland and/or other partners.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 No specific equality and good relations considerations at this stage. The finished strategy will be equality proofed.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to:

- I. Approve the proposed approach to be taken in developing the integrated economic strategy; and
- II. Approve the allocation of up to £30,000 from Belfast City Council towards the overall budget for the work, estimated to be £60,000 maximum."

After discussion, it was

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations within the report, subject to the formation of a Project Steering Group comprising of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, together with a representative from each of the remaining parties on the Council (or their nominees), to oversee the development and implementation of the Integrated Economic Strategy for Belfast.

International Marketing and Relations Strategy

The Committee was reminded that one of the key aims of the Council's Investment Programme was to enhance and develop the City's international linkages with a view to improving its ability to attract commercial investment, secure European funding and to encourage tourists to visit the City. Accordingly, it was reported that the Council had convened a series of meetings with a range of Belfast's key stakeholders with the intention of establishing an agreed framework for the future marketing and promotion of the City at an international level. The Director reported that, in order to garner further

support for the Council's initiative, the Lord Mayor would, in early-October, host a stakeholders' dinner at which the future direction of the International Marketing and Relations Strategy would be discussed with the intention of agreeing a way forward. The costs associated with hosting the dinner would be approximately £1,000, provision for which had been included within the Department's budgets.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Economic Initiatives agreed to investigate the feasibility of enhancing the Council's relationship with Silicon Valley within any agreed strategy. In addition, she undertook to submit a report to a future meeting which would outline the feasibility of the Council participating in an economic fact finding mission to Heifei, China, in 2013.

The Committee agreed that it be represented at the aforementioned dinner by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman and authorised the expenditure as outlined.

Business Improvement District (BIDS) Bill

The Committee endorsed the undernoted written submission which would be forwarded to the Committee for Social Development at the Northern Ireland Assembly as part of the secondary consultation exercise on the Business Improvement District Bill.

- "1 The Council is very supportive of the Bill and the concept of Business Improvement Districts. During these difficult economic times, it is important that businesses are given every possible support to improve their trading environment. Many of the businesses we work with and support and their representative groups have confirmed that they are keen to pursue the option of a BID. We have been made aware of three potential BIDs in the Belfast area alone. As such we would like to see this legislation enacted as soon as possible.**
- 2 We do have some concerns that were raised in the original consultation exercise in February 2011. In particular, we feel that it would be very inefficient for Councils to develop a BID levy collection mechanisms, which would in effect be a duplication of the existing rate collection process operated by Land & Property Services (LPS). While the notes that accompanied the Bill do say that LPS will collect the BID levy, we would be happier if this was in the Bill itself.**
- 3 To address this issue, while still allowing for any changes to rate collection that may occur in the future, section 13(4) could be changed to say 'Any amount of BID levy for which an eligible ratepayer is liable will be collected through an amendment to the existing rates.'**

- 4 Another particular concern was that the time length of BIDs may mean that any baseline level of service agreed by the Council or the cost for additional services may change over the length of the BID. Hence we would need reasonable flexibility.
- 5 Section 4 could be amended to give this flexibility. For example, '4) Where BID arrangements are in force, the district council which made the arrangements must make reasonable efforts to comply with them. In the event of significant changes in circumstances, the Council may appeal to the Department to renegotiate the arrangements.'
- 6 Most of our concerns that were expressed in the original consultation exercise have not been directly addressed in the Bill. These include:
 - That our role and responsibilities in organising any ballots is not clear.
 - That our role in terms of oversight and guidance on the development of BIDs is not clear.
 - Our power to veto is mentioned but no guidance is given as to when we would reasonably be able to veto.
 - We appreciate that it is the intention to use secondary legislation to address these issues and would therefore request that we be consulted on the development of this secondary legislation."

Women in Business Northern Ireland - Awards

The Committee was advised that the second Women in Business Awards ceremony would take place in the Ramada Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, on Thursday, 22nd November and would be sponsored by Invest Northern Ireland and the Irish News. The Director indicated that an opportunity existed for the Council to sponsor, at a cost of £2,000, the 'Best Small Business' category at the event. He outlined the benefits which the Council would accrue should it agree to sponsor the award, which included significant publicity for the Council and the promotion of its role as a supporter of small businesses in the City. He added that the sponsorship package would entitle the Council to avail also of a number of free places at the ceremony and he recommended that the Committee authorise the expenditure as outlined.

The Committee agreed that the Council would sponsor the 'Best Small Business' category at the event at a cost of £2,000.

Eurocities Annual Conference

The Director informed the Committee that the annual Eurocities conference would take place in Nantes, France, from 7th till 10th November. He explained that the theme for the event would be 'A New City Politics' and it would examine how cities could use innovative methods to engage with its citizens and encourage them to partake in local politics. He provided an overview of the keynote speakers, together with the range of topics which would be explored at the various sessions and workshops. He added that the highlight of the conference, which would be attended by over 400 delegates, would be the mayors' debate which would explore the issue of political renewal in cities. He indicated that the conference would provide valuable opportunities for the Council's representatives to discuss with key partners the range of funding opportunities which could be applied for through future European initiatives.

The Committee approved the attendance at the conference of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, together with the Director (or their nominees), and approved also the associated travel, accommodation and conference fees, the cost of which was approximately £3,840.

Gaeltacht Quarter Boundary

The Committee deferred, to enable a presentation to be provided by representatives of the Gaeltacht Quarter Board, consideration of a report which sought to establish an agreed Council definition of the extent and boundaries of the City's Gaeltacht Quarter.

Departmental Finance and Business Plans - Quarter 1

The Committee noted the contents of two reports which provided an overview of the Department's financial performance during the first quarter of the financial year and which outlined the progress made against the key targets of the business plan during that period.

Waterfront and Ulster Halls - Quarter 1

The Director provided an overview of the performance figures for both the Waterfront and Ulster Halls for the period 1st April till 30th June, 2012. He outlined the programme of events which had been staged at both venues during that period and provided figures in respect of the income derived through conference and box office sales.

The Director indicated that despite the current economic conditions, the performance figures for both the Waterfront and Ulster Halls had been encouraging. He reminded the Committee that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 24th August, had agreed to explore both an internal and external model for the future management of the new conference facilities at the Waterfront Hall which would enable the Council to identify the most cost-efficient and effective model which would be applied to the venue. He indicated that the Committee would be updated in due course once this exercise had been completed.

The Committee noted the information provided.

Belfast Community Investment Programme

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the progress which had been achieved to date in the development of the Belfast Community Investment Programme and agreed that a Members' workshop be held on a future date to explore in detail the aims, objectives and anticipated outcomes of the Programme.

Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership - Action Plans

The Committee endorsed the undernoted response to the above-mentioned consultation exercise which had been organised by the Eastern Health and Social Care Board, subject to it being strengthened to reflect the following:

- That the consultation document, as circulated, was somewhat unclear in that it did not establish clear and measurable outcomes for any future plans established as a result of the exercise; and
- That there existed gaps within the document in respect the issue of the future funding of the schemes and as to where responsibility would lie for their implementation and administration.

“1.1.1 Thank you for asking us to comment on these plans

1.1.2 Children and young people are a priority for the Council as can be seen by the substantial resources allocated to play and leisure services. In terms of play alone, Council invests some £1m annually in the inspection, maintenance and equipment replacement in 78 playgrounds across the city. Council deploy 16 play workers in 6 dedicated play centres and other sites across the city, representing a further investment of £650k per annum. Council also employ a Play Development Officer (PDO) to co-ordinate and develop play work practice; provide training, support and resources and manage a city wide play service. The PDO has links both nationally and internationally, being on the board of the International Play Association UK branch. In addition we operate and maintain 10 leisure centres and all the City's parks.

1.1.3 The Plan's objectives also align with the 3 key thrusts of the European Active Inclusion Strategy- Opportunity, Access and Solidarity, which in relation to CYPSP would provide quality public services and an inclusive labour market.

1.1.4 Therefore we welcome the development of these action plans.

1.1.5 Many of the plans refer to volunteering opportunities. Belfast City Council (BCC) and particularly its Community Services have many volunteering schemes in place and may be able to contribute in these areas.

- 1.1.6 However Belfast City Council (BCC) thinks there may be some additional issues to include. For example, BCC regards the arts as a vital tool to improve the quality of life – promoting enjoyment, learning and achievement – and for economic wellbeing. The contribution of arts should be acknowledged in the action plans.
- 1.1.7 The draft action plans are missing direct linkages to the contribution that physical activity, sport and recreational activities has in achieving the six high level outcomes of:
- Healthy
 - Enjoying, learning and achieving
 - Living in safety and with stability
 - Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing
 - Contributing positively to community and society.
 - Living in a society that respects their rights
- 1.1.8 It is evident and well documented that the: usage of parks and leisure facilities and sites; participation in sporting and physical activities; and participation in health and outreach programmes or events contribute towards healthy living, and improved mental wellbeing while also enabling enjoyment, learning and a sense of achievement. This is missing from each of the draft action plans.
- 1.1.9 The plans may also benefit from further and ongoing dialogue with experts in the public and voluntary sector (hence this consultation is welcomed). In particular we feel that there are existing mechanisms that have not been fully considered in how they could support these plans (for example the BCC Youth Forum).
- 1.1.10 Reference is made in the plans to young people expressing their wish to be seen for the potential contribution they can bring to society rather than focusing on the negatives. While we appreciate the difficulty of getting the balance right in these actions plans, we feel that the balance is still slightly towards the medical model of supporting young people with disabilities.
- 1.1.11 We appreciated that the action plans very detailed though some staff sometimes found them a bit hard to follow. We suggest that high level priority areas are identified for each of the outcomes, which may help focus and streamline activities.

1.1.12 Delivery dates for most of the activities are not clearly defined as they just state 2011-2014. This would not be effective for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Additionally it would be useful to know how achievement of the outcomes will be measured, as this is not always clear from the action plans.

1.1.13 The quantitative information at the start of each section illustrates performance indicators. These would be more useful if performance data was provided. There is some useful information detailed within the qualitative information but it would be useful to know how this information was collected.

1.2 Children and Young People with Disabilities

1.2.1 While the research in the Children and Young People with Disabilities Draft Action plan demonstrates that there is a need for more accessible arts provision, there is no response to this in the priorities.

2.1 Healthy

1.2.2 It is not clear as to how some of the actions detailed within this section of the action plan will contribute to attaining the outcome of healthy.

1.2.3 This section is missing direct linkages to how the usage of parks and leisure facilities and sites; participation in sporting and physical activities; and participation in health and outreach programmes or events contributes towards healthy living. For example a total of 80% of 'Grow your own' respondents have cited increased health and wellbeing benefits from working on their allotment plot.

2.2 Enjoying, learning and achieving

1.2.4 There is perhaps too much focus on the medical/integrated model.

1.2.5 More use might be made of voluntary organisations with disability specialism.

1.2.6 Reference is made to access for early years and local activities organised through the community. We would like to see more information on how this will be measured and whether there are any partnership already established or proposed new structures.

1.2.7 In relation to the action of promoting the ‘enjoying’ aspect, the Parks and Leisure Department ensures that children and young people with disabilities are able to enjoy using its facilities and sites, actively participate in sport and physical activities and participate in health and outreach programmes and events. This is evident through the following services and facilities that the Parks and Leisure Department provides:

2.2.1 Parks and leisure facilities and sites

1.2.8 Our leisure centres, parks facilities and sites, playgrounds, playing pitches, cemeteries and the Belfast Zoo, community gardens and the City’s Therapy Garden are DDA compliant and accessible to all.

1.2.9 When installing or replacing play equipment from playgrounds we identify and address the needs of children and young people of all abilities, installing equipment that can be used by all children and not specifically for children with a disability therefore providing ‘inclusive play equipment’. We currently have 216 items of play equipment suitable for inclusive play. It is also our policy when replacing broken play equipment, where practical to replace it with ‘inclusive play equipment’.

2.2.2 Activities and programmes

1.2.10 We have run a number of programmes at the Urban Sport Parks involving the Harberton and Clarawood special needs schools.

1.2.11 Our summer schemes are accessible to all and we will make reasonable adjustments to support all children and young people with disabilities who wish to take part.

1.2.12 Our ‘Make a Splash’ swimming programme and all our swimming classes are inclusive.

1.2.13 Our ‘Watch this Space’ Parks Education Programme in parks is accessible to all and we will make reasonable adjustments to support children with disabilities who wish to take part.

1.2.14 We also run a Bike Club which has targets to provide cycling participant opportunities for young people with limited mobility or a disability e.g. Special Schools Bike Club at Ormeau Park, a central resource shared by Fleming Fulton, Glenveagh, Tor Bank and Park Schools

- 1.2.15 Our Active Communities Programme is a Sport NI lottery funded initiative that aims to increase participation in sport and physical recreation in Northern Ireland. As part of the programme, 20 coaches are employed, 3 of which have a specific remit for the provision of activities for people with disabilities. The current participation rate for people with a disability is 18%.
- 1.2.16 The Parks and Leisure Department is currently working with Sport NI Disability to provide 2 full time multi skills coaches plus a further 2 in the coming months
- 1.2.17 We also run a Teenage Kicks programme with participation from 2 special needs schools – Glenveagh and Harberton and wheelchair tennis for young people twice a week at the Ozone Tennis Centre.
- 2.3 Living in safety and with stability
- 1.2.18 Bullying is referenced in terms of schools but it is not clear if other areas have been considered – play and leisure facilities, playgrounds, etc.
- 1.2.19 Reference is made to rolling out training in local communities and ensuring that there are consistent standards. We would like to see more information about how this will be done and whether any consultation has been undertaken with current providers and stakeholders. For example, all our parks and leisure centres are DDA compliant and all our staff receive mandatory disability awareness training which is refreshed every 2 years. The Parks and Leisure Department also has a Disability Action Plan which is updated and reviewed annually.
- 2.4 Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing
- 1.2.20 For the indicator '*% of children attending play and mainstream leisure services*' we would like clarity as to whether all services will be measured or just those registered with H&SS. We suspect the latter but this should be made clear. There were 116 children who attended summer schemes in BCC community and play centres in 2011.
- 1.2.21 Reference is made to the difficulties of accessing and participating in mainstream play and leisure services. We think there is value in further talk with providers who have addressed these issues.

- 1.2.22 A link is suggested to Early Years to improve access to mainstream services while supporting parents to continue in employment. It is important to balance a child care focus with that of play for play's sake.
- 1.2.23 The Council's Community Services has an established approach to volunteering and may be able to support the efforts to provide volunteering and mentoring for young people with disabilities.
- 1.2.24 The Parks and Leisure Department would be keen to know how the qualitative information presented on Page 16 was gathered, in particular the following information: "Play and leisure opportunities available to children and young people are limited because of difficulties associated with accessing and participating in mainstream play and leisure". More effort is needed to empower service providers to accommodate these children and young people and provide extra support.
- 1.2.25 The Council's shared space agenda means that our leisure centres, community centres, parks facilities and sites, playing pitches, playgrounds, cemeteries and the Belfast Zoo are shared spaces accessible for all and we encourage participation by everyone in our range of local activities and programmes, this is evident above in the previous section where we listed some of our 'Activities and programmes.'
- 1.2.26 We also support children and young people with disabilities to play outdoors e.g. in parks so that families can use a local park and tackle the 'invisibility' of disabled children. A Therapy Garden has been created in Musgrave Park which is a landscaped area incorporating planted and built features aimed at addressing the therapeutic requirements of children with physical disabilities and severe learning difficulties within a healthy play environment. When designing the Therapy garden we consulted with a range of schools including Fleming Fulton, Glenveagh, Harberton, Forest Lodge Respite Centre and Oakwood Assessment Centre. A range of workshops were held with teachers and pupils including art and horticulture workshops. We have also put a new path in the adventurous playground to allow wheelchair access to the lower children's level.
- 2.5 Living in a society that respects their rights
- 1.2.27 The qualitative information says that young people need to be recognised for their potential contribution to society. The plan still seems to be biased towards the medical model and what young people with disabilities can't do.

1.2.28 BCC agree with the action of establishing a self checking mechanism for the participation of children and young people. Formal structures already exist within the Council including consulting with the Council's Youth Forum and the Section 75 Consultative Forum when developing strategies such as Playing Pitches and Growing Communities Strategies. As part of the refurbishment of parks and open spaces we carry out consultation and engagement with the community and we encourage and seek the active involvement from all sections of the community.

1.3 Transition to Adulthood for Young People with Disabilities

1.3.1 More use could be made of existing mechanisms such as the Belfast City Council Youth Forum.

1.3.2 With regard to diversity and disability awareness training, we would like more information on how this will work and who would provide the training. Has there been any consultation or proposed working agreements and has reference been made to the relevant professionals or the community sector? It may be that BCC may be able to contribute to this area.

1.3.3 It may be worth identifying how organizations currently include consideration for disabilities within their plans.

4.1 Living in safety and with stability

1.3.4 The Parks and Leisure Department would be keen to be involved in the training for service providers and policy makers on how to communicate effectively with adolescents with disabilities in order to help them identify their needs and aid participation, which will help complement existing formal mechanisms and structures that exist within the Council.

4.2 Experiencing economic and environmental wellbeing

1.3.5 BCC currently employs people with learning difficulties through the New Horizons Programme in Woodvale Park, Waterworks, Musgrave Park and the Belfast Zoo. The Council would be keen to explore the development of further employment opportunities with the CYPSP.

4.3 Contributing positively to community and society

1.3.6 All our parks and leisure centres are DDA compliant and all our staff receive mandatory disability awareness training which is refreshed every 2 years. The Parks and Leisure Department include persons with a disability in our annual planning cycle, by developing a Disability Action Plan which is updated and reviewed annually and sent to our Equality Officer within the Council.

1.3.7 The Parks and Leisure Department would consult with the Council's Youth Forum and the Section 75 Consultative Forum when developing strategies such as Playing Pitches and Growing Communities Strategies. As part of the refurbishment of parks and open spaces we carry out consultation and engagement with the community and we encourage involvement from all section of the community.

4.4 Living in a society that respects their rights

1.3.8 BCC would be keen to know how the qualitative information presented on Page 20 was gathered, in particular the following information: Recreational services are often inaccessible to young disabled people in their local area. This information is highlighted but yet there are no specific actions to help address these inadequacies.

1.3.9 BCC believes that its leisure centres, community centres, parks facilities and sites, playing pitches, playgrounds, cemeteries and the Belfast Zoo, etc are shared spaces accessible for all and we encourage participation by everyone in our range of local activities and programmes, this is evident from the information detailed in the earlier Section '*Activities and programmes*'.

1.4 Children and Young People with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

1.4.1 There is a focus on learning and early intervention. Perhaps more emphasis could be placed on the child's need to play and the positive benefits this can bring.

1.4.2 The Council may be able to support the work on Family Support Hubs.

1.5 Young Carers

- 1.5.1 The Parks and Leisure Department would like to highlight that as part of our current pricing policy, carers are admitted free to our facilities when accompanying a person with a disability.”**

Chairman