

# Development Committee

Tuesday, 2nd October, 2012

## MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Stalford (Chairman);  
Aldermen Ekin and Stoker;  
Councillors Austin, Hendron, Hussey, Keenan,  
Kelly, Kingston, Kyle, Mac Giolla Mhín, Mallon,  
Maskey, McKee, McVeigh, Ó Donnghaile,  
Ó Muilleoir, Reynolds, 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.

(The Deputy Chairman, Councillor Ó Muilleoir, in the Chair.)

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 4th, 11th and 18th September 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 October, subject to the amendment of the minute of the meeting of 18th September under the heading 'Cultural Framework Strategy 2012/2015' to the effect that a letter be forwarded on behalf of the Committee to the organisers of the East Belfast Arts Festival congratulating them on the success of the event.

(The Chairman, Alderman Stalford, in the Chair.)

### Declarations of Interest

In respect of item 4f, viz., 'Erasmus Programme for Elected Members', Councillor Webb declared an interest in that he had been successful in his application to partake in the programme.

### York Street Interchange Consultation - Council Response

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Committee that the Council's draft response to the Department for Regional Development's consultation on the upgrading of the York Street Interchange was due to be considered at the meeting scheduled for 16th October. He pointed out that the Committee, at its meeting on 21st August, had agreed that an ad-hoc Cross-Party Working Group be established to discuss the issue in advance of the meeting to explore whether a consensus could be reached amongst parties in respect of the Council's preferred option for the redevelopment of the Interchange. He reported that a meeting in this regard had been scheduled for 4.30 p.m. on Monday, 8th October in the Conor Room.

Noted.

### **Belfast City Bike Tours - Presentation**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th June, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of Belfast City Bike Tours. Accordingly, it was reported that Mr. R. Martin and Mr. J. O'Loughlin were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Martin provided an overview of the range of tours which were organised by Belfast City Bike Tours. He emphasised that the company aimed to provide high quality, interactive and environmentally friendly excursions which were conducted by local guides who had a thorough understanding of Belfast's history and culture. He explained that most of the City's attractions were covered by the routes and that participants were afforded an opportunity to see, at first-hand, parts of the City which standard bus and taxi tours could not access. He added that the tours, which commenced in the Cathedral Quarter and lasted for approximately three hours, cost £15.00 per person and had proved to be popular and that further routes were being identified to enhance the service offered to tourists.

After discussion, during which Mr. Martin and Mr. O' Loughlin answered a range of Members' questions regarding the provision of cycle lanes in the City and various health and safety aspects of the tours, the Chairman thanked the representatives for attending.

Noted.

### **Gaeltacht Quarter Boundary**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 18 May 2012, the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed that in line with a previous decision by the Development Committee regarding city dressing, hoardings and signs relating to the delivery of the Investment Programme projects in the Gaeltacht Quarter should be bi-lingual and printed in both the Irish and English languages.**

**As work on the Investment Programme is now underway, it is necessary for the Council to define its understanding of the boundary of the Gaeltacht Quarter.**

**2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 There have been several studies completed on the Gaeltacht Quarter and a number of boundaries identified.**

- 2.2 In 2010, Deloitte were commissioned by An Cheathru Ghealtachta Teo (ACGT) and the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) to prepare plans for the development of Belfast's Gaeltacht Quarter and to progress recommendations made in the 2004 Dutton report. This report outlines the different boundary options.
- 2.3 The Plans expand the original boundary delineation of the Dutton Report to create a wider area, together with a core, identifying eleven differing zones and their neighbourhoods having recognisable roles and objectives within a greater Gaeltacht Quarter Area.
- 2.4 The Deloitte report states that the physical hub of the Gaeltacht Quarter is concentrated on an area around one square mile, with its focal point on the Falls and is bisected by the Falls Road, which provides the arterial route connecting Belfast City Centre to the wider West Belfast area.
- 2.5 In addition it defines the greater Gaeltacht Quarter boundary as:

*'that area bounded on its western edge by the Kennedy Way and Monagh By-Pass, continuing onto its Northern boundary at a line following the Upper Springfield and Springfield Roads on both sides as far as Springfield Park and continuing on one side on the Country-bound lane until its junction with Lanark Way. Then following the 'peace line' to connect with the start of its Eastern Boundary at Divis Street / John Street Boundary and from there to a Southern Boundary line running from Durham Street / Grosvenor Road on one side of road on its city-bound lane only until Grosvenor Road's junction with the M1 Motorway and then following the city-bound Lane of the Motorway as far as its junction with Kennedy Way.'*

### **3 Resource Implications**

- 3.1 There are no immediate resource costs associated with this consultation response.

### **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 Members are asked to provide guidance on which boundary option Belfast City Council should use to determine the provision of bilingual signage in the Gaeltacht Quarter."

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th September, it had agreed to defer consideration of the above-mentioned report to enable a representative of the Gaeltacht Quarter Board to attend a future meeting to provide clarification on issues which had been raised by Members in terms of the proposed extent and boundaries for the Gaeltacht Quarter. It was reported that Mr. C. Mackel, Chairman of the Gaeltacht Quarter Board, was in attendance and he was admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Mackel tabled for the Committee's information a map which outlined the proposed boundary for the Gaeltacht Quarter. He indicated that the Gaeltacht Quarter Board was seeking the Council's endorsement for the revised boundary which, he pointed out, extended along the Falls Road from its Whiterock Road junction to Dunville Street in the lower Falls area and encompassed a range of streets and landmarks within that vicinity. He indicated that the boundary of the Gaeltacht Quarter could evolve as and when future projects, such as the proposed re-development of the former St. Comgall's School in Divis Street, were completed.

A Member indicated that it was his party's view that it had not been given sufficient opportunity to consider in detail the implications of the proposed boundary extension to the Gaeltacht Quarter. He pointed out that the map outlining the Gaeltacht Quarter Board's proposals had been tabled only at the meeting and, as such, his party would reserve its judgement in the matter to enable the proposals to be considered fully. A further Member stated that the issue of language in Belfast could be seen as divisive and indicated that caution should be exercised given that the boundary would incorporate areas which were considered to be shared community space, such as the Royal Group of Hospitals.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Ekin,  
Seconded by Councillor Maskey,

That the Committee agrees to endorse the revised boundary for the Gaeltacht Quarter as set out within the map tabled.

On a vote by show of hands thirteen Members voted for the proposal and none against and the proposal was accordingly declared carried.

In addition, in response to a Member's request and with the permission of the Committee, the Director agreed to submit to a future meeting a progress report on the proposed development of a Council Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the Gaeltacht Quarter.

### **Festive Lighting in the City Centre**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

**1.1 Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) is formally seeking a financial contribution towards upgrading the Christmas lighting stock in the City Centre.**

**1.2 The annual Christmas festive lighting scheme is managed and directed by BCCM within the City Centre with BCC taking responsibility for the City Hall and grounds. Over the last 10 years there has been investment of over £500,000 on the majority of main pedestrian and shopping routes in the City Centre.**

- 1.3 The manufacture of festive lighting has improved significantly over the years including the use of lighter aluminium frames and low wattage energy efficient led lighting. A large portion of Belfast's current stock is outdated, uses heavy galvanised steel frames and fluorescent lighting.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Having a vibrant city centre with quality festive lighting is considered to be an important part of the marketing package of Belfast over the Christmas season. Sustaining footfall and driving sales especially during this trading period is even more significant in the economic downturn given that this is when many traders trade up and balance their books which sustains them through the leaner months of the year. BCCM are formally seeking both BCC and DSD commitment towards upgrading and replacing some of the festive lighting stock for 2012.
- 2.2 In 2000, BCCM commissioned an evaluation of the existing festive lighting stock as most of the stock was obsolete or excessively costly to repair.
- 2.3 BCCM carried out an economic appraisal to identify costing and funding options for a major re-launch of the festive lighting initiative. As a consequence, BCCM secured £190,000 to install a new festive lighting scheme in the city centre.
- 2.4 Over the past 10 years, an additional £300k has been invested to roll out festive lighting to new areas and to replace damaged or obsolete features as required. The majority of this work took place over 8-10 years ago using filament lighting, this was prior to the introduction of low cost environmentally friendly led lighting.
- 2.5 Year on year, businesses within the city centre have been contributing directly for the installation of new festive lighting features. The past 4 years has seen a decrease in the level of contribution due to current economic climate.
- 2.6 In 2008, Belfast received a new city brand – the Belfast 'B'. The logo was launched by Belfast City Council and replaced the out-dated 'smiley face' which had been used for many years. To reflect this change, BCC asked BCCM to commission the design and manufacture of bespoke led festive lighting features to incorporate the new B Festive brand and provided £40k towards the costs.

- 2.7 In 2009, the Department for Social Development (DSD) initiated a £150k reStore Project in Castle Street. £28k was allocated to the installation of a new led festive lighting scheme for Castle Street.
- 2.8 In 2009, DSD contributed £31k towards new led festive lighting for Donegall Place and Ann Street as a substantial number of features could not be installed following the rationalisation of street furniture through the Belfast Streets Ahead project.
- 2.9 In 2010, DSD initiated a £150k reStore Project in North Street. £30k was allocated to the installation of a new led festive lighting scheme for North Street.
- 2.10 BCCM dedicates an annual budget of £75k towards the testing, installation, connection, dismantling, maintenance, insurance and storage of the Christmas lighting scheme for Belfast City Centre.
- 2.11 The specific objectives of the proposal to invest in new festive lighting within the City Centre area are:
- To achieve a consistently high standard of display across the city centre;
  - To replace incandescent lighting features with energy efficient LED lighting wherever possible;
  - To replace the heavy galvanised steel frames with light aluminium frames to reduce risk in high winds;
  - To minimise maintenance repairs and call-outs;
  - To produce a quality festive lighting scheme for visitors, shoppers and employees to enjoy;
  - To promote Belfast as a premier shopping and tourist destination; and
  - To complete the project within stipulated timeframes and financial budgets.
- 2.13 Whilst BCCM originally was pursuing funding towards a 3 year programme, due to budgetary constraints it is now seeking a 1 year commitment for 2012 with both DSD and BCC being asked for £50,000 each to match £50,000 already in the Belfast Chamber of Commerce budget. BCCM has completed the tender process and subject to securing of the finance they affirm they are in a position to implement the new lighting for 2012.

**3 Resource Implications**

- 3.1 BCCM is seeking a commitment of £50,000 from BCC for 2012 to match £50,000 which has been committed by Department of Social Development (DSD) for 2012 also. Belfast Chamber of Commerce has also committed £50,000 for this year.

**5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 Members are asked to approve £50,000 towards the upgrading of the Christmas lighting stock of BCCM for the City Centre.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Irish Technology Leadership Group**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that, at the 14 September 2011 meeting of the Development Committee, a proposal to host a delegation from the ITLG (Irish Technology Leadership Group) was approved. Six representatives from ITLG took part in a two day visit to Belfast on 4 and 5 November 2011.
- 1.2 A report was presented to the 13 December meeting of the Development Committee, outlining a review of the visit and confirming ITLG’s commitment to put in place a Memorandum of Understanding between Belfast City Council and ITLG for an agreed collaborative work programme. This draft MoU was presented to the 21 February 2012 meeting of the Development Committee.

**2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 The Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG) is a group of Irish and Irish American senior executives based in Silicon Valley who are active in the global technology industry. They work to promote industry linkages between USA and Ireland through a range of collaborative initiatives including trade visits, award ceremonies and events in both USA and Ireland.
- 2.2 As part of the 4 November programme, the delegation met a range of organisations and individuals involved in the promotion and development of the technology industry in the city. Representatives outlined their offer to maintain contact with the organisations and individuals that they had met in Belfast.

- 2.3 In order to formalise the linkages, a MoU was agreed between Belfast City Council and ITLG and was endorsed by the Development Committee in February 2012. This contained a range of activities including:
- Development of trade mission activity between Silicon Valley and Belfast
  - Development of an internship programme for up to 2 individuals from Belfast to be placed with leading Silicon Valley businesses
  - Development of international promotion activities in Silicon Valley to promote Belfast.
- 2.4 Members were particularly keen that progress would be made on the trade mission activity. Since that time, officers have met with Invest NI and they have confirmed that they are supporting businesses who wish to travel to specific trade events or as part of trade missions to Silicon Valley.
- 2.5 Since the November visit, two representatives from ITLG have been back to Belfast for a brief visit. They came to the city on the back of a visit to Dublin with their respective companies. Their key engagement was with University of Ulster and they explored opportunities to develop an ITLG office in Belfast, possibly based at the University. No further progress has been made on this issue.
- 2.6 With regard to international trade activity, ITLG is holding an 'Innovation in Entertainment' event and awards ceremony at Sony Studios in California on 27 September. Invest NI has not organised a specific group visit to this event but Brian Glynn, the Invest NI representative in San Jose, will be attending on behalf of the organisation.
- 2.7 ITLG has invited two companies from Northern Ireland to attend the event – both have been nominated for awards. These companies are Troll inc from Derry, and Inlifesize from Belfast. It is understood that another business from Belfast – Factory Pictures – will attend the event. Representatives from the University of Ulster will also be present. Company participation costs are being supported by Invest NI.
- 2.8 With regard to the proposed internship, it has proved very difficult to realise this initiative. It is understood that the calibre of interns that are being sought is extremely high. It has also been difficult to get ITLG to pinpoint these opportunities.



Officers are aware of one internship opportunity that has been presented for local students but this has been organised through UU staff direct contacts in USA, as opposed to through the ITLG contacts. The student offered the internship has won prizes in global animation competitions and therefore is considered to be very experienced.

- 2.9 It is understood that other bi-lateral working is taking place between individuals who are part of the ITLG network and local, Belfast companies and individuals. However managing the organisation-to-organisation linkages between Belfast City Council and ITLG has proved more difficult to do and the progress in this field to date has been hampered due to the structure and workings of ITLG.
- 2.10 It was confirmed at the February 2012 Development Committee that this MoU would be reviewed on an annual basis. Members are therefore asked to add their assessment as to the effectiveness of the MoU with ITLG over the last year.

### 3 Resource Implications

#### 3.1 Financial

A financial allocation of £40,000 towards MoU activities was approved at the February 2012 Committee meeting.

### 4 Recommendations

#### 4.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the update on the ITLG MoU and working linkages
- Add any other information which may be relevant as part of this review.
- Consider how to proceed with the ITLG relationship.”

A range of Members expressed disappointment that the benefits which had been anticipated from the Memorandum of Understanding had not, thus far, been realised, especially with regard to the introduction of the internship programme and the undertaking of a reciprocal trade visit to the United States. The point was made that the Council's future relationship with the Irish Technology Leadership Group would need to be re-examined within the context of the emerging International Relations Strategy.

The Committee noted the information provided.

### **Sister City Linkages - Heifei**

The Committee considered the contents of a report which provided an overview of the recent visit to Belfast by representatives of the City of Heifei. In addition, the report outlined a number of options regarding the Council's future linkages with Heifei within the context of the emerging International Relations Strategy.

Arising from discussion, a Member referred to the Irish Government-supported tourist initiative known as 'The Gathering' which would take place in 2013. He explained that the initiative sought to attract tourists of Irish descent to visit the island of Ireland to partake in gatherings and events throughout the year. He requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the feasibility of the Council hosting an event in this regard.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report which would outline the feasibility of the Council hosting an event to mark 'The Gathering' be submitted to a future meeting.

### **MIPIM Conference 2013**

The Director reminded the Committee that the MIPIM Conference was considered to be one of the most prestigious property exhibitions and took place each year in Cannes, France. The Council had, since 2000, been represented at the event and had hosted a promotional stand in conjunction with Lisburn and Derry city councils, together with a range of government departments and private sector companies. The Director reminded the Committee that, in 2011, it had agreed that the Council would not partake in the 2012 conference, given the associated costs and within the context of the emerging International Relations Strategy.

The Director reported that the Council had received an invitation to partake at MIPIM 2013 and he provided an overview of the costs and potential benefits. He acknowledged that, whilst the Council had participated at MIPIM for a significant number of years, it had been somewhat difficult to identify the specific benefits which the City had accrued. He recommended therefore that, in light of the ongoing development of the International Relations Strategy, that the Committee agrees not to be represented at the MIPIM Conference in 2013.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

### **World Travel Market**

The Head of Economic Initiatives informed the Committee that the World Travel Market, which was the leading international travel and tourism industry event, would be held in London from 5th till 8th November. She pointed out that attendance at the event, in partnership with the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, would provide an ideal opportunity to promote the new Belfast brand and to sell the City as a tourist destination. Accordingly, she recommended that the Committee authorise the attendance at the event of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman, together with the Director (or their nominees). The costs associated with attending the event would be approximately £1,000.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Erasmus Programme for Elected Members**

(Councillor Webb left the meeting whilst this matter was under consideration.)

The Committee was advised that Councillor Webb had been successful in an application to partake in the European Commission-supported 'Erasmus for Elected Members' programme. It was reported that the programme sought to enhance participants' knowledge of strategic planning issues, encourage cooperation and discussion and enable the sharing of best practice models amongst political representatives within the European Union. The Director outlined the range of activities which Councillor Webb would undertake as part of the programme and indicated that, whilst his participation was funded through European grant-aid, the Council might be required to pay additional costs which would be incurred in Councillor Webb's flights from Belfast to London, given that the City had no direct flights to Brussels.

After discussion, during which Members expressed congratulations for Councillor Webb, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to meet the travel costs as outlined.

**Belfast Waterfront Hall - Future Development**

The Committee noted the contents of two reports, which had been endorsed previously by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, which outlined the Council's options for the redevelopment and future management of the Belfast Waterfront Hall.

Chairman