

Development Committee

Tuesday, 20th November, 2012

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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

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

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Webb.

Declaration of Interest

In respect of item 4c. viz., 'Events Update - St. Patrick's Day', Councillor Ó Donnghaile indicated that he was employed by Feile an Phobail, who had been referred to within the report, and indicated that, should the recommendations therein be adopted, that organisation would be working with the Council in the delivery of certain aspects of the St. Patrick's Day programme.

Routine Correspondence

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 16th October, it had endorsed the contents of a Council response to the Department for Social Development's consultation exercise on the redevelopment of the York Street Interchange. He reported that correspondence had been received that morning from the Roads Service inviting all Members of the Council to attend an event at the Ramada Hotel on Thursday, 6th December, at 10:30 a.m., at which the Minister, Mr. N. McCausland, MLA, would announce the Department's Preferred Option for the redevelopment of the Interchange.

The Committee noted the information provided and authorised the attendance at the event of any Member of the Committee who so wished.

Belfast Folk Town Initiative – Presentation

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 6th November, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of Belfast Folk Town. Accordingly, it was reported that Mr. J. Fox and Ms. S. Rasmussen were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. Fox thanked the Committee for receiving the deputation and stated that the Belfast Folk Town initiative sought to promote an area of the City which encompassed Castle Street, King Street, Berry Street, Marquis Street, Bank Street and Square and Chapel Lane. He indicated that the group's aim was to regenerate the area through a range of community-based arts and cultural events and by establishing a dedicated variety market. He pointed out that the initiative was being managed by a social enterprise company known as the Belfast Folk Town Community Interest Company which was comprised of representatives from local churches, public houses, restaurants, youth and arts organisations. Ms. Rasmussen outlined the extent of disrepair and dereliction within the area and gave an overview of the problems associated therein with antisocial behaviour. She indicated that the establishment of a variety market would act initially as a catalyst for future development and assist in the transformation and further regeneration of the area.

In response to a range of questions from Members, Mr. Fox and Ms. Rasmussen clarified the extent of the progress which had been achieved in the formulation of the business case for the initiative and provided an outline of the projected costs.

The Chairman thanked the representatives of Belfast Folk Town for attending and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that officers from within the Department would continue to engage with representatives of Belfast Folk Town to explore areas of mutual benefit.

Quarterly Departmental Plan – Update

The Committee considered a quarterly update report on the Departmental Plan for the period ending 30th September, 2012. The Director clarified a number of issues in respect of the report and undertook to update individual Members in respect of various aspects therein.

Investment Programme Bursary Scheme

A Member requested clarification on the progress which had been achieved in respect of the Council-sponsored education bursary scheme, which had been established as part of the Council's plans to support employability and develop skills under the Investment Programme. He pointed out that the launch of the scheme had been due to take place during October and expressed concern that that deadline had been missed.

In response, the Director pointed out that, given the time and resource constraints, the Committee had agreed that the administration of the scheme, in its initial year, would be undertaken on the Council's behalf by the Belfast Metropolitan College and the Prince's Trust.

A number of Members suggested that such an arrangement was not satisfactory and, as such, the Council should have sought to retain the management, promotion and administration of the scheme. The point was made that, in the absence of a formal launch of the scheme and in light of the decision to outsource its administration to outside bodies, the Council had not been afforded the recognition or credit it had anticipated.

The Director undertook to submit a report to a future meeting which would outline the Council's role in the promotion and management of the scheme in its second and third years. In addition, he undertook to provide information on the awards made, thus far, on the Council's behalf under the scheme.

Poverty and Social Inequalities Framework

In response to a Member's request, the Committee agreed that the Director submit a report to a future meeting which would outline the Council's progress to date in respect of the implementation of the Poverty and Social Inequalities Framework. In addition, in response to a further Member's request, the Director agreed to provide him with a copy of an update report on the Framework which had been considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team in respect of the initial consultation findings.

Community Services - Training and Development 'Toolkit'

In response to a Member's request, the Director indicated that a report in respect of development of a Community Services Training and Development 'Toolkit' would be submitted for the Committee's consideration at its meeting in January.

Forthriver Innovation Centre

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th October, it had been advised that, in order to secure assistance from the European Regional Development Fund towards the establishment of the Forthriver Innovation Centre, it would be necessary for the Council to undertake the construction phase of the project. The Director pointed out that, subsequent to the construction phase, the management of the facility would be sub-contracted through a separate agreement between the Council and a private company. He added that officers from the Council's Property and Projects Department had carried out preparatory work on the capital costs associated with the construction phase, a report on which would be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 23rd November.

The Director reported that discussions between Council officials and representatives of the Department for Education, Trade and Industry had been ongoing and that it was anticipated that the application for financial assistance from the European Regional Development Fund towards the project would be submitted in February, 2013. He indicated that it would be necessary for the Council to commission in advance an independent feasibility study to support any business case which would form the basis for the application under the Fund, the cost of which, he pointed out, would be in the region of £25,000.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and authorised expenditure in the sum of £25,000 towards the engagement of consultants to carry out a feasibility study and prepare a business case for the project.

Procurement Initiatives

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 4th September, he had undertaken to submit a report which would outline the measures which the Council could take to raise awareness amongst local companies on the procurement opportunities which would arise as part of the Investment Programme. Accordingly, the Committee considered the contents of a report, together with a programme of initiatives, which outlined the range of workshops, training and capacity-building events which would be delivered in this regard. He indicated that the programme would provide an insight into the Council's procurement processes and enhance the ability of local companies to compete for contracts. In addition, awareness would be raised on the range of contracts offered by the Council. The Director indicated that the costs associated with delivering the programme would be met from within existing budgets and that staff from across a range of Council departments would oversee its implementation.

The Committee endorsed the contents of the programme.

St. Patrick's Day 2013

(Mr. G. Copeland, Events Manager, attended in connection with this item and Councillor Ó Donnghaile left the room whilst it was under discussion.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 In January 2012 Council agreed to the annual programme of civic events to be delivered during the 2012/13 financial year. This included the staging of the 2013 St Patrick's event on Sunday 17th March. In August 2012 Members also agreed that Officers would look into the feasibility of the Council incorporating and promoting a specifically alcohol-free event within its St. Patrick's Day celebrations. In addition at October's meeting Members asked that Officers look at additional ideas and concepts for the 2013 event and beyond.**
- 1.2 The Council has developed a St Patrick's Day event over the last seven years (up to 2012) and this event has, since its inception, two elements – a carnival style parade from City Hall to Custom House Square, followed by a live concert at Department of Social Development's (DSD) purpose built performance space. In 2012 it is estimated that 15,000 people attended the event with participants in both the parade and concert coming from various cultural groups across the city. The proposed programme would see the event move from one day of activity to a possible three day festival.**

- 1.3 It should be noted that the elements of the proposed 2013 event will be primarily geared towards a family audience (with a range of events where no alcohol will be permitted) and would also contain significant elements to encourage out-of-state visitors to come to the city.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Parade Tender

The City Events Unit has consulted with the Council's Procurement in regard to up-scaling the parade tender. Feedback suggests that the process would leave little time for the appointment and subsequent engagement of an appropriately qualified contractor – the initial tender could not go out until after Council meets at the start of December 2012 and the earliest possible appointment date would be towards the middle of February 2013 - leaving possibly less than four weeks to develop themes and workshops for the event.

Therefore, Officers are proposing that a quotation is used for 2013 and a tender is then issued for the period 2014 to 2017 (subject to review and renewal).

2.2 Revised Events Programme

On the direction of the Committee decision in October 2012, and in reference to 2.1 above, Officers have developed a larger event programme for 2013. It would be proposed that the festival would include:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Details</u>
Find your Belfast Roots - week leading up to the 2013 St Patrick's Day	The Council would work with PRONI in promoting this element of the programme.
St Patrick Themed Tours of the City and St Patrick's historical tours of city's cemeteries	Council officers would explore existing city and cemetery tours to adapt the tours during St Patrick's Festival.
Live at the Big Screen, Saturday 16th to Monday 17th March	This proposed element would run over three nights and involve the screening of classic family films with a Belfast, Ulster or Irish theme e.g. St Patrick – The Legend; Closing the Ring; etc.
St Patrick's Day	Events parade from City

**Parade, Sunday 17th
March**

**Hall to Custom House
Square. The appointed
contractor would manage
content and liaise with
community groups, from
across the city, in regard
to participation.
Expected participant
numbers circa 500.**

**St Patrick's Day
Concert, Sunday
17th March**

**Three hour live music
concert at Custom House
Square. This will entail a
broad range of
entertainers and will
culminate with a 'Pop'
act.**

**St Patrick – Myth and
Legend and The
History of St
Patrick's Day**

**This would be a series of
free to access talks,
possibly at City Hall.
An option to work with
the Ulster Hall to develop
heritage exhibition
showcasing the history
of day and past
celebrations.**

**Patrick and the
Bells – musical
showcase on 15th
March 2013**

**Performance of the
musical depicting St
Patrick's life story. This
event would be held in
City Hall, would be free to
access but would be pre-
ticketed.**

**St Patrick's Day
Ceili and Dance,
Sunday 17th March
Ulster Hall**

**This concept would be
delivered by the Ulster
Hall and involve an
afternoon and evening
event. The event would
be free to access, but
would be pre-ticketed.
Possible linkage with
community centres to
offer dancing classes a
few weeks prior to the
event.**

**BBC Radio Ulster
and the Ulster
Orchestra's
St Patrick's Day
Concert, Belfast
Waterfront, Sunday**

**This event would see the
Ulster Orchestra join up
with an international
artist in a celebration of
music tied to the St
Patrick's Day theme.**

17th March Big Screen St Patrick's Day (or weekend) Sports Coverage and Sports Activity Day at Ozone and/or Leisure Centres	Council Officers would explore the broadcasting rights issues in regard to the traditional soccer, rugby and Gaelic finals staged around this date. If permissions can be facilitated it would be suggested that an event, with input from partners, would also promote a 'healthy lifestyle' message alongside the screening of the games. Youth Blitz offer coaching and games competitions– GAA, Rugby, Soccer on Saturday 16th March.
St Patrick's Weekend Market and Food Fair at St Georges Market	The festival programme would promote the St Patrick's Day theme Sunday Market plus all day entertainment with dancers and musicians.
St Patrick's Day Services	The programme would highlight the various religious services
Schools Competition	Council Officers would explore option of links with local schools to run St Patrick themed colour competitions etc, showcase best 50 entries in City Hall during St Patricks Festival.
Street Dressing and City Hall Lighting	It is proposed, if budgets permit, that elements of the city centre branding would carry the 'brand' created for the St Patrick's Day festival. (This would be accompanied by the request to utilise the new colour lighting system and turn the City Hall green on the weekend of St Patrick's Day.)

**Belfast Féile's Féile
an Earraigh (Spring
Festival 11th – 17th
March 2013)**

The Gathering

**Council Officers would
propose to cross
promote and highlight
this significant festival in
the city's calendar as it
would coincide with the
proposed festival dates.
As per agreement from
October's Committee,
Belfast's St Patrick's Day
activities have been
registered as part of the
2013 Tourism Ireland
initiative.**

2.19 Meeting with Sober St Patrick's Day Initiative

On the 4th October the Council's City Events Manager met with the organiser, and instigator, of the New York City's Sober St Patrick's Day initiative, Mr Bill Reilly. Mr Reilly highlighted the raison d'être of the event. He also indicated how the event was delivered in 2012 and plans for the 2013 project. Part of these plans is to link to other key global St Patrick's Day events, Dublin, London, Belfast, etc. next year.

The Council's City Events Manager highlighted that the city already had a 'sober' St Patrick's Day event and the fact that all future plans, subject to Council yearly approvals, would operate in a similar manner. However, it was agreed that the 'brand message' of Sober St Patrick's Day could be integrated if agreed by full Council. It is also recommended that as part of St Patrick's Day event that pressure groups and organisations involved in addiction and recovery initiatives are requested to take part in the St Patrick's Day parade.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

It is estimated that the additional initiatives could be delivered, inclusive of street dressing, at an additional £70,000 on top of the current £140,000 which covers the annual St Patrick's parade (£30,000) and concert (£110,000). Total cost of the 2013 would be £210,000. However, to upscale the parade element in future years it would be recommended that a delivery of £250,000 is earmarked. Members are asked to note that the additional finances for 2013 are not within the current Department budgets. Therefore, it will require a realignment of current 2012/13 monies to accommodate.

In addition, any future increase 2013/14 and onwards, will need to be built into future budget planning and will require: an increase in future Department budgets and/or a curtailment of current work undertaken by the Council.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to approve the following recommendations:

- the issuing of a tender for the St Patrick's Day carnival parade from 2014 to 2017.
- the revised outline programme for 2013, with this format used in subsequent years. The content would contain: film screenings; concerts; a parade; sports related activities; tours; talks; food fair and market; links to Belfast's churches and possible joint initiatives with the Public Records Office, National Museums NI and Libraries NI.
- linking and cross promotion of Belfast Féile's - Féile an Earraigh (Spring Festival).
- that a 'Sober St Patrick's Day' brand message is integrated into future Council initiatives connected to this event. Along with 'healthy living' elements via partners in BCC's Environmental Health Department, Park and Leisure Department and Public Health Agency

- **linking Belfast's St Patrick's Day activities to Tourism Ireland's global campaign, 'The Gathering'.**
- **increasing the current draft budget for 2013 to £210,000 and for future years to £250,000.**

A prolonged discussion ensued in respect of the proposals to authorise additional expenditure to enhance the scope of the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in 2013 and in future years. It was suggested that it would be prudent for the Committee to agree only to enhance, on a trial basis, the programme in 2013 and that any decision regarding the extent of the Council's programme in future years could be considered thereafter. Further Members pointed out that, in view of the economic climate and its associated impact on the Council's budgets, it would be inappropriate to increase significantly the expenditure on the St. Patrick's Day programme.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Hendron,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations contained within the report and authorises the additional expenditure as outlined for the enhancement of the Council's St. Patrick's Day programme in 2013 only and notes that any further decision on the extent of the programme in future years would be made after the submission and consideration of a report which would assess the impact of the revised programme in 2013.

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

The Gathering 2013

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 2nd October, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the feasibility of the Council marketing a number of its events as part of 'The Gathering' initiative. The Director reminded the Members that 'The Gathering' was an Irish Government-supported initiative which sought to attract visitors of Irish descent to Ireland during 2013 to partake in a range of events across the island. He pointed out that the Committee, at its meeting on 16th October, had agreed that the Council-supported St. Patrick's Day celebrations in 2013 would be marketed as part of the initiative.

The Director outlined a range of options which the Council could explore to enhance further the number of events which it could promote as part of the initiative. He indicated that other bodies and agencies, such as the Ulster Historical Foundation and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, could work in partnership with the Council to promote events or initiatives related to 'The Gathering' and, given the opportunities presented by the 400th anniversary of the founding of Belfast and the 2013 World Police and Fire Games, there existed significant marketing opportunities.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a range of Council-led events be registered with the organisers as part of 'The Gathering' initiative. In addition, it was agreed that Council officials would continue to work with key partners to promote the Belfast-related family research opportunities which would be presented by 'The Gathering' initiative in 2013.

Belfast Town Charter – 400th Anniversary

The Committee was reminded that the year 2013 marked the 400th anniversary of the awarding to Belfast of its Town Charter and the establishment of its Corporation. The Director reminded the Members that the original document was displayed in the entrance hall of the City Hall and, given the significance of the anniversary, he outlined the principal aspects of a programme of events which would mark the event throughout 2013, an overview of which is set out hereunder:

PROGRAMME				
24th January 2013	Belfast 400 Book Launch of ' Belfast 400' book. Formal start of the 400 Programme.	City Hall	TCA Unit	£800
January 2013	Talks Series of Seminars delivered in partnership with key institutions e.g. PRONI	City Hall and across the City	TCA Unit	£4000
Mid Feb 2013	Belfast Places Launch community competition for best ideas on how to discover and communicate place-related history. Best 5 across city quarters are facilitated to deliver their ideas.	On Line / in press	TCA Unit	£10,000
TBC	40 Towns A programme for all 40 towns in Ireland which received charters – 3 people representing each, plus VIPs – list to be agreed. Format would include a number of talks, city tour and dinner	City Hall and across the City	TCA Unit / external support MAGUS	£10,000 Income £10,000 MAGUS

<p>Easter Event</p> <p>'Belfast 400' will take place from 30 March-2 April 2013, 11am-5pm each day and will be free to attend.</p>	<p>Easter Events programme</p> <p>As part of the 4 day Easter event, the doors of City Hall will open to the public. Within the building, there will be an assortment of activities, from exhibitions, tours, films, talks and lectures, drama, puppetry and workshops. There are also plans to make use of the lawns and the live screen over the Festival period to further encourage citizens and visitors to come into City Hall to be part of the celebrations.</p> <p>The City Events Unit will be working alongside our colleagues in Tourism, Culture and Arts, Facilities Management and Corporate Communications as well as external partners, Titanic Belfast and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, with the key aim to develop coordinated activity to celebrate the anniversary of the charter and Belfast being granted town status.</p>	<p>City Hall</p>	<p>Events Unit</p>	<p>TBC – separate Events budget</p>
<p>From April 2013, all year</p>	<p>Charter Exhibition</p> <p>This becomes permanent; centres on the charter itself, properly mounted and in appropriate conditions. Also 1888 charter; maces; loans of LeSquire seal (NMNI; Chichester portrait (BHC); Town Book (private ownership).</p>			<p>£21,000*</p>
<p>May – June</p>	<p>Civic Governance Programme</p> <p>A major citizenship project centred on the council chamber, with the Youth Forum playing a major role. Would use a living history approach – one facilitator playing roles, the other managing the learning. Currently looking at three scenarios – starting with Chichester and 1613.</p> <p>There would be an opportunity for Members to link with their local schools and perhaps say something about their work now. The key stage 4 citizenship curriculum would be specifically targeted, but connection would also be sought with older young people through informal education contexts.</p> <p>Costs are based on 8 weeks = 40 days. The number of young people with whom engagement might happen is c. 2500. The</p>	<p>City Hall</p>	<p>TCA Unit and Record Manager</p>	<p>Civic Governance and Citizenship £30,000</p> <p>Income HLF £25,000*</p>

	involvement of the Youth Forum brings the opportunity to apply for a Heritage Lottery Fund 'Young Roots' grant of c. £25,000. This programme may have the capacity to become a regular, annual event, linking to the citizenship curriculum particularly at key stages 3 and 4, connecting with young people and starting a process of engagement with council at a relatively early age.			
27th April	The Big Dinner Charter date – The Big Dinner; entertainment for and showcasing of Belfast talent, as representing the future of the city 400 stakeholders invited from across the city		Lord Mayor's Office	£15,000

After discussion, during which the Director undertook to explore the feasibility of enhancing the programme to provide further outreach activities to local schools, the Committee endorsed the series of events and agreed that officers would continue to engage with outside bodies and agencies to secure additional funding to enhance the outward scope of the programme.

Bringing Our Heritage to Life

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th September, it had agreed 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. The Director indicated that the representatives of the National Museums had agreed, in principal, to attend a future meeting and he provided an overview of the initial discussions which had been held with a range of statutory bodies and businesses regarding the feasibility of displaying a range of artefacts associated with the history of Belfast. He indicated that additional discussions would be held with various stakeholders in the City with a view to a further report, which would outline any financial implications which might be incurred through the initiative, being submitted for the Committee's consideration in due course.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that an ad-hoc Member/stakeholder working group be established to progress the matter.

St. George's Market - Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the range of initiatives which had been introduced to attract additional shoppers to St. George's Market in the run-up to the Christmas period.

**Department for Social Development –
Community Support Programme**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 BCC has an annual grant contract with DSD for £1.57m under their regional Community Support Programme. The contract is conditional on our making contribution to the CSP overall aim defined as:

‘To 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 The Voluntary and Community Unit (DSD) has secured an additional £1 million for the Community Support Programme (CSP) in 2012/13 over and above the current allocations and this is to be allocated across local government in the region on the same basis as the original award which uses a combined index of population and deprivation.
- 1.3 DSD has issued a Letter of Variance to the Belfast City Council CSP contract to include an additional in year allocation of £362,599.55 towards general expenditure and subject to the same conditions of grant offer.
- 1.4 It should be noted that the additional allocation is conditional on the utilisation of full funds by 31 March 2013. There is no requirement on BCC to provide match funding. Any additional grant allocation will be subject to the normal DSD monitoring and compliance requirements.
- 1.5 The purpose of this late report is to seek committee approval to accept the offer of additional in year CSP grant and to agree expenditure options.

2.0 Key Issues

2.1 The limited timeframe attached to the additional funding will not allow for monies to be administered competitively so it is crucial to find a speedy but robust way in which to allocate the funds to service providers and for community benefit.

2.2 Given this requirement to allocate and fully expend the additional monies within the current financial year, officers have identified a number of potential in-year funding opportunities. In doing so, we have also considered the following

- DSD Community Support Programme funding criteria and target outcomes
- BCC Investment Programme priorities and opportunity for alignment
- Priority needs related to current financial climate
- Feasibility of proposal to support compliant assessment, committal and expenditure of funds by 31st March 2013
- Efficiency considerations to ensure related officer resources

2.3 Four initiatives have been identified which support a number of the priorities outlined above:

2.4

i. Generalist Advice Grant: Support to extend the volunteer training

Belfast City Council is a major funder of Advice & Information Services via a consortium model based on geographical providers. This approach to funding and advice delivery was established in 2005/06 and involves over 20 organisations which include both Citizens' Advice Bureau and Independent Advice providers. Essential criteria for receiving BCC Advice funding are that organisations need to give generalist advice and be associated to Citizens Advice or Advice N.I. Any requests for BCC funding from specialist advice providers are signposted to the relevant Government Department.

2.5 The current ongoing economic downturn and resultant uncertainty facing many households has resulted in an increase in the numbers of people accessing the services of advice agencies particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to debt and money advice services. The advice sector is experiencing difficulties in responding to this increased demand.

- 2.6 The BCC administered total financial support for Advice Services in Belfast last year was £825,619. This allowed the sector to process 191,085 enquiries of which over 26,569 were debt related. Monitoring returns demonstrate the funds levered an additional £41,947,284 in claimed benefits.
- 2.7 In December 2009 the Development committee approved a proposal from CAB to increase the capacity of the Belfast Advice consortia by providing debt relief training. As a result, 30 advice volunteers from across the 5 consortia received the training. This helped the Advice organisations to both clear the previous backlog of debt enquiries and help grow the capacity of the organisations to cope with the ongoing level of debt enquiries that have resulted from the latest economic downturn.
- 2.8 Given the continued demand for generalist advice support, committee are asked to support the allocation of £31,050 in additional resources to build the capacity of advice services at both a strategic and operational level. The proposal represents a high-level overview of the key activities necessary to assist advice services and which would not happen without the help of additional resources.
- 2.9 Any offer of additional funds will be conditional on the related training and support programme including participants and volunteers from across all 5 Advice consortiums, offered initially on an equal basis per consortia with any places not realized being offered to other consortia.
- 2.10 Belfast Tribunal Representation Service: Stage 1 Set up costs
Representatives from the 5 Advice consortia are also seeking BCC support in identifying an additional funding source to support their proposal to deliver a Tribunal/Appeals Service across the city that clients can avail of at any BCC funded advice service.
- 2.11 This Belfast Tribunal Representation Service would represent clients who wish to appeal SSA decisions on benefits including Employment Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independent Payment, Universal Credit and any other SSA benefit. This service would enable clients to challenge decisions, assisting them through the process and representing them at hearings.

- 2.12 Since the introduction of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in 2011, the need for tribunal representation has steadily increased, as the number of claimants being disallowed benefit has grown, due to continuous changes to benefit criteria and constant periodic reviews of ESA claimants by ATOS, a commercial medical support service.
- 2.13 The advice consortia network indicate that this trend is likely to accelerate with the introduction of Welfare Reform, which represents the most significant change to the benefit system since the foundation of the Welfare State.
- 2.14 At present, advice services across the city are stretched, with advisors not only having to accommodate increasing numbers of clients, but also dealing with more complex cases, which are more time consuming because of the need to more actively monitor and progress claims on behalf of clients, and secure supporting evidence to submit with those claims.
- 2.15 While this proposal outlines a 2 year service plan with an anticipated start date of April 2013 and a total cost of £426,209.60, the consortia have also identified associated set up costs of £11,250.
- 2.16 They suggest these costs would cover Stage 1 of the service and include:
- Establishment of the Belfast Advice Group, lead partner identified, initial set up and recruitment, all taking place between January/March 2013, with staff recruited, agreement around referral processes, and familiarisation of staff with workload, protocols and generalist services.
 - Meet with the Appeal Service, SSA and other agencies that would positively contribute to delivering a citywide tribunal service.
 - Promotion and launch of service across Belfast.
- 2.17 The proposed programme to establish a city wide Tribunal Representative service will therefore see the five area consortia come together to establish a Belfast Advice Group, comprising of a representative from each consortium. This group will be the mechanism to develop this service; it will nominate a lead partner as employer to oversee the

administration of finances. Phase I would see the constitution of the group, establishing a terms of reference with clear objectives, decision making processes and roles/responsibilities.

- 2.18 Stage 2 of the proposal has an overall estimated cost of £426,209.60 and seeks to employ 5 Tribunal Representatives inclusive of 2 existing posts as both posts do not have funding beyond March 2013. One of the posts would be a Senior Tribunal Representative, overseeing the daily operational side of the service, providing a support and mentoring service to the tribunal representatives.
- 2.19 In line with the Welfare Reform – Notion of Motion passed by Council on 1st November 2012, officers are working with the advice providers to identify potential funding sources for Phase 2 costs.
- 2.20 Committee are therefore asked to agree in principle to seek to resource the programme from a reallocation of funds as part of any identified under spend in the BCC Quarter 3 finance report forecast. Committee are further asked to support a parallel bid for the city wide programme to the Social Investment Fund.
- 2.21
iii. Super Connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access
Through a variety of historical initiatives, a number of BCC community centres have identified external funding to install ICT suites for public access. While located at six centres, all the suites were funded by the efforts of Community Centre Committees and therefore are not BBC owned. Without a related revenue tail, the suites have not been maintained on an ongoing basis and most are now dated and experiencing technical difficulties which are compromising citizen access and our ability to deliver meaningful support programmes.
- 2.22 Members will be aware that Belfast City Council, with the support of a number of organisations, has successfully bid for funding to become a Super-connected City by March 2015. £13.7 million will come from the Urban Broadband Fund to provide a major boost to the city's infrastructure. In addition to this, the Council also intends to contribute an additional £3 million, as part of its Investment Programme, and the private sector will contribute £8 million towards the Project.

- 2.23 The total investment of nearly £25 million means this is one of most significant announcements for Belfast for some time as it will provide a world class digital infrastructure that will attract major foreign investment, create jobs and provide a platform for local business start ups. It also brings major benefits and major improvements in quality of life for citizens of Belfast, for communities, tourists and public sector organisations.
- 2.24 There are two key strands to the Programme: investment in infrastructure; and capability development and community outreach which will maximize the benefits of the programme. The UBF funding secured will help provide city wide access to ultrafast digital infrastructure, both fixed and wireless. However if it we are to ensure maximum uptake and maximum economic, community and social benefits, we must identify and secure additional funding to support a demand stimulation and digital inclusion programme which will target both consumers and local businesses.
- 2.25 The department is currently finalising a funding application to resource a programme for business sector.
- 2.26 To increase levels of community engagement, access and knowledge, officers suggest that an element of the additional CSP funds could be utilised to invest in a network of public access computer suites across our BCC community centres. These quality ICT suites would then facilitate a community focused capacity programme, designed to promote and enable social inclusion amongst our citizens by enhancing access to broadband services and providing training for individuals who lack digital literacy. Working with the community sector and other training providers, these suites could facilitate the development and delivery of knowledge-based skills to help people get online; carry out more transactions online; use the internet to find employment and develop basic skills required for the current market place.
- 2.27 Working with ISB it is anticipated that the allocation of £162,780 would resource the hardware, software and networking set-up costs of twelve quality ICT suites, that is, the upgrade of the current 6 out of date suites and the identification of a further 6 to ensure equity of access across the centre network
- 2.28 Officers will need to quantify and identify a related budget to cover programme costs, ISB service support costs, insurance costs and replacement liabilities for the 2013/14 financial period.

- 2.29 These items however are the subject of an application to the Social Investment Fund for a demand stimulation programme for consumers under the Super Connected Belfast umbrella. It is envisaged, if successful, this application would resource the above expenditure items.
- 2.30 Any subsequent revenue requirements would be identified in the budget revenue estimate process. To facilitate full utilisation of the DSD offer of additional in year CSP grant income and to permit the capital expenditure to support the Super Connected Belfast – Community Centre Public Access option, we will need to amend the expenditure profile attached to the letter of variance to demonstrate council contribution at the same level but a rebalancing of BCC / DSD contribution across the expenditure areas.
- 2.32
iv. Large Grant Uplift
Under the Community Support Plan, BCC currently provides revenue grant aid to 86 community organisations across the city and capacity grant to 19 support organisations. The revenue funding is used towards the running costs associated with operating a community building and the capacity grant contributes to the core costs of larger area based community development support agencies. Officers are aware, via the monitoring process, that funding awards do not currently meet full costs. There is also evidence that, within the current funding environment, a significant number of community organisations are struggling to meet these costs.
- 2.33 Committee are asked to consider an in-year limited offer of additional funds to support programmes in community buildings or those of community development support organisations. The fund could be expended in one of two ways: through either small scale building repairs and maintenance, or programme equipment.
- 2.34 If we are to meet the requirement to allocate and fully expend the additional monies within the current financial year, it is suggested that any agreed uptake of these funds be administered to those organisations currently in receipt of a revenue or capacity grant from BCC in 2012/13.
- 2.35 A small number of organisations have not yet completed the monitoring requirements in regard to this grant, and eligibility would be dependent upon compliant submission.
- 2.36 If members agree to the proposals as outlined above, the total remaining allocation would be approximately £157,519.55

- 2.37 If agreeable, officers will invite organisations to submit proposals on how they propose to utilise the potential funding and to indicate a budget: bands of £1000, £1500 and £2000. After assessment and confirmation of available budget, recommendations for grant uplift would be presented for the Director's approval via delegated authority. Subject to approval, a letter of variation on existing contracts will be issued and, as per current arrangements, all successful groups will submit monitoring returns to report progress against targets.
- 2.38 Officers believe the proposals outlined above represent a balanced opportunity to allocate the additional CSP funds, if available.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Allocation</u>
Generalist Advice: Volunteer Training	31,050.00
Belfast Tribunal Representation Service: Stage 1 Set up Costs	11,250.00
Super Connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access	162,780.00
Large Grant Uplift	157,519.55
<u>Total</u>	<u>£362,599.55</u>

3.0 Resource Implications

- 3.1 The additional DSD allocation will cover all grant or associated project costs. Related assessment and administration resource requirements will be subsumed into current staff work programmes.
- 3.2 Officers are supporting the Advice Consortia to identify funding source for the city wide Tribunal / Appeals programme proposal.
- 3.3 For the Super Connected Belfast: Community Centre Public Access project, officers will need to quantify and identify a related budget to cover programme costs, ISB service support costs, insurance costs and replacement liabilities for the 2013/14 financial period. This is the subject of an application to the Social Investment Fund. Any subsequent revenue requirements would be identified in the budget revenue estimate process.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Agree to accept the additional DSD offer of £362,599.55 Community Support Programme funds for 2012/13;**
- ii. Consider the proposals to utilise the potential additional allocation of CSP funds and prioritise these dependant on the total funds available;**
- iii. Agree that, where uptake within any of the proposed elements are under-utilised, officers can reallocate funding based on the committee agreed priorities in order to maximise the uptake of the additional CSP funding allocation.**
- iv. Agree in principle to seek to resource Stage 2 of the Belfast Tribunal Representation Service from a reallocation of any under spend identified in the BCC Quarter 3 finance report forecast. Committee are further asked to support a parallel bid for the city wide programme to the Social Investment Fund.**
- v. Agree to re-state CSP expenditure profiles accordingly.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Consultation Responses

Department of Education– Priorities for Youth

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

“Draft Response DE Priorities for Youth

- 1. *Do you agree with the vision, aims and principles of youth work supported by the Department of Education as proposed (see Section 3 of the consultation document)?***

Mostly Agree

While the Aims are acceptable in general terms, we have some concerns. In particular, the aim to closing the performance gap may be too simplistic. Firstly, your supporting evidence highlights the problem of not achieving minimum standards, which is not the same problem as a performance gap. Secondly, your supporting evidence does not benchmark results to non-north of Ireland results. Therefore it is impossible to determine how much the performance gaps are due to inequalities in the system rather than just natural variation in human ability. Finally, the evidence is education focused rather than looking at the wider quality of life issues and/or non educational achievement. We would not like the approach to a) deliberately or indirectly hamper the higher level performers and b) remove support for children who may

be achieving academically yet still have emotional, physical or family issues.

2. *Do you agree that youth work supported by the Department of Education should be strategically aligned with the education priorities (see paragraph 2.17 of the consultation document)?*

Mostly Agree

Though we have the same concerns as mentioned in Q1. There is a danger that alignment could be seen as prioritising activities that more directly support traditional academic educational achievement as the expense of practical and social learning and development. Additionally, we are concerned as to how this attempt, to forge a more robust strategic fit and operational relationship between the formal and informal education sector, will differ from previous unsuccessful efforts of the past? How will DE get beyond the rhetoric of integration and complementarity to the fusion of differing professional methodologies and practice paradigms?"

Q2: Is there convincing evidence of a recognition and willingness within both sectors to affect closer working relationships and adding value to each others' functions?

3. *Do you consider that there is sufficient emphasis in the consultation document on enhancing participation for young people in the youth service?*

Agree

Yes and we support efforts to encourage participation. Our only concerns would be that to encourage and include participation may require additional resources to be effective. Recognition needs to be afforded by DE as to how and where DE supported provision sits along a continuum of wider statutory and voluntary provision, so that the overall effort in any area can be maximised. With reference to examples of good practice in the participation of young people, we would be happy to share our experiences of youth involvement through the Belfast Youth Forum.

Additionally, many youth workers and youth work organisations use arts and heritage to develop enhanced social and cognitive skills and overcome barriers to learning. Arts and heritage activities also encourage a culture of active participation that can have a legacy in to adult life.

Currently, nearly 40 per cent of audiences and participants taking part in culture and arts activities funded by Belfast City Council are under 25 years old, and the Council's Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15 identifies children and young people as a priority target group. Culture and arts can help them become more confident and accomplished. They can develop skills and experiences to become valuable employees and accomplished entrepreneurs. They will be our future artists and audiences.

Furthermore, the Cultural Framework is underpinned by the values of access and equity and will target in particular 'hard-to-reach' audiences and participants, including children and young people with disabilities, from minority ethnic backgrounds and living in areas of deprivation.

- 4(a) *Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 1 (see paragraph 4.5 of the consultation document)? (See Question 4(b) which seeks comments specifically on proposed age bands.)*

Mostly Agree

We would likely further details as to how ESA will relate to other structures such as CYPSP (5.4-5).

While the example outcomes framework is useful, we would also like to see some headline targets. For example, an XX% reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training by 20XX; an XX% reduction in the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour involving young people by 20XX, an XX% reduction in absenteeism levels by 20XX; an XX reduction in teenage pregnancies by 20XX; an XX reduction in suicides involving young people, etc. Of course these are only examples and any final list would have to align to the overall outcomes expected by the DE.

- 4(b) *Do you agree with the proposed age bands for youth provision, as set out in action 7, paragraph 4.5 of the consultation document?*

Mostly Agree

Though we would class the 4-8 age group as children rather than youth. This is not a transitional category. For early years there is a preventative emphasis but other actions may be more beneficial in terms of educational outcomes e.g. reading recovery.

- 5(a) *Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 2 (see paragraph 4.7 of the consultation document)? (See Question*

5(b) which seeks comments specifically on the action on additional targeted provision).

Agree

- 5(b) *Do you agree that additional targeted provision should be supported to help meet the needs of specific groups of young people assessed as facing barriers to learning, as proposed in action 3, paragraph 4.7 of the consultation document?*

Mostly Agree

We would appreciate some clarity as to what is meant by 'Young people who are newcomers or have English as an additional language.' We assume it means children of first generation immigrants and would approve that. However, the second clause could be applied to any English speaking bilingual young person, which is clearly too wide a definition.

6. *Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 3 (see paragraph 4.11 of the consultation document)?*

Mostly Agree

We would like to see more information on what the DE will do to encourage and support volunteers in the sector. The approach as outlined appears to place the responsibility solely on Youth Service providers.

7. *Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 4 (see paragraph 4.17 of the consultation document)?*

Mostly Agree

Point 4 states that prescriptive guidance is no longer needed and so the 1979 guidance will be withdrawn. However, the evaluation method used is very likely to become the defacto guidance as practitioners will modify their approach to pass the evaluation. Therefore it is important that the evaluation approach is developed with this consequence in mind. It should also include input from young people.

8. *Do you agree with the proposed actions in Priority 5 (see paragraph 4.21 of the consultation document)?*

Mostly Agree

We hope that the application and monitoring processes are not too onerous. While we appreciate that it is difficult to get the right balance in any funding processes it is important to remember that smaller organisations can be unfairly disadvantaged by complex application and monitoring processes especially where they are not proportionate to the amount of money being offered.

9. *Please use the space below for any additional comments you wish to make about the Priorities for Youth.*

We note the comments about the changes to funding for Youth work. In general terms we approve of the move to funding based on a needs assessment. However, we would like to see more information as to how this is likely to change the levels of funding from area to area. We would also be firmly against any system that penalised an area because of the availability of other funds or support. That is, downgrading the need score of an area because another funding source was contributing to that area or another agency was providing additional services. Such an approach would ultimately reduce the total funding available as it would discourage other agencies and philanthropists from contributing to an area.”

Department of Education – Traveller Child in Education Action Framework

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

“Draft Response - Principles of the draft Action Framework

The Traveller Child in Education Action Framework was drafted by the Department of Education (DE) in response to the recommendations of the Taskforce on Traveller Education which agreed a number of fundamental principles as outlined below.

Q1. Do you agree with the principles of the draft Action Framework, which are as follows:

a) Every child is an equal child.

Yes

b) The expectations for Traveller children should be the same as for all others.

Yes

c) Outcomes for Traveller children should parallel the range of outcomes for all children.

Yes

d) Traveller parents have the same entitlements and responsibilities as all other parents.

Yes

e) All schools should be open to and welcoming of Traveller children.

Yes

f) Parents of Traveller children should have access to any school of their choice.

Yes

Additional Comments:

We welcome the principles as set out though would have thought that the Department already has robust processes in place to deliver their services to the traveller community. The Race Relation Order (NI 1997) provides the legislation framework to ensure equality in the delivery of services to the Travellers community.

Q2. Do you think that, overall, the actions outlined in the Draft Framework will:

(a) Increase engagement with Traveller children, young people and their families?

No

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.

Before this can happen, there needs to be an inter-agency mapping exercise carried out on a regional basis to formally establish the location of Traveller families and their communities across NI. This will provide the basis for the comprehensive consultation and engagement that is required. It could be driven by the Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) that covers ALL of the traveller community throughout NI.

(b) Promote inclusion of Traveller children, young people and their families?

Yes

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.

It is very worrying that the attendance and achievement statistics still show such an extreme difference between what Traveller children can expect compared to the general population. While we appreciate that target dates have been set for specific actions in the plan, it would be more reassuring to see definite time-based targets to achieve the desired outcomes together with details of the resources that will be used. For example, to increase Traveller attendance or achievement by XX% by the year XXXX. Considering equality for the Traveller community has been in law since 1997 the plan should be more specific about how and when these inequalities will be addressed.

(c) Increase the commitment to education among Traveller children, young people and their families?

Yes

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.

As b) above.

(d) Improve educational achievement of Traveller children and young people?

Yes

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.

As a) above, plus clear performance targets need to be set to demonstrate the ambition of DE and what it expects from its departments. Targets will also help to measure DE's progress in achieving equality of services and, eventually, achievement.

Strategic Delivery and Partnership

A number of actions have been proposed for strategic delivery and partnership in the draft Framework in order to promote a more consistent and co-ordinated approach in all aspects of Traveller education, including:

- Establishing a regional Traveller Education Support Service (TESS).
- Development and implementation of a delivery plan by TESS, based on good practice, addressing the recommendations of the Taskforce and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).
- Consultation by TESS, in collaboration with other bodies, with the Traveller community in relation to the delivery of the Framework and Delivery Plan.
- TESS undertaking a process of joint planning with the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) and Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) policy to align and integrate practice on inclusion.

Q3. Do you agree that the actions proposed will ensure strategic delivery and partnership working?

Yes

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions.

It is important that TEES is seen as a regional body and not associated solely with any particular group such as the Southern Area Action Team. Consultation must be broad enough to include all interested stakeholders such as councils and NGO groups. The process must be transparent and accountable.

Access to Educational Opportunities

The Framework outlines how DE proposes to improve understanding among Traveller families of access to educational provision and opportunities, namely by:

- DE and TESS working together, with stakeholders to identify a suitable range of communication methods.
- ELBs/ESA agreeing an inter-Board Traveller attendance strategy, including transitional support programmes for use across all educational sectors.

Q4. Do you agree with the Framework proposals to provide additional support for Traveller children when they move from:

a) Pre-school to Primary

Yes

Please give reasons.

To maximise the likelihood of success, it is critical that there is transparent engagement with Traveller families and stakeholders. We approve the suggestion that monitoring will be conducted by a group that will have representation from NGOs, as we feel that it might be difficult to build trust, and hence the process may be compromised, if processes are policed solely in-house by TESS or the DE without any external scrutiny. It is also important to keep processes simple and have them set out in plain English.

b) Primary to Secondary

Yes

Please give reasons.

As a) above plus the statistics for this sector (attendance, achievement, etc, which are both a factor of ten worse than the average) are unacceptable and therefore require specific immediate attention.

Improved School Attendance

Action 4 in the draft Framework aims to improve attendance at school by Traveller pupils through detailed analysis of attendance data to inform an inter-Board strategy and also by reviewing the current legislation which allows the children of a parent travelling on business to attend school only 100 days per year.

Q5. Do you agree that the legal school attendance requirement for Traveller children should be reviewed?

Yes

Please give your reasons.

Our experience with traveller families and feedback from those concerned strongly suggests that, if the set criteria of the 100 day rule were strictly applied, the number of traveller in compliance would actually be an extremely low number. Failure to assess those families and compliance may be seen as a serious flaw in the DE recording of attendance statistics (and by inference the reliability of its equality monitoring statistics). Therefore we agree that the 100 day rule and Traveller attendance in general should be reviewed urgently.

Ambitions and Expectations

Action 5 proposes that DE and all relevant bodies such as TESS schools, Traveller Support Groups (TSGs), Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) work together to increase the ambitions, progress and prospects of Traveller pupils by:

- encouraging Traveller pupils to effectively utilise careers services
- evaluating the quality of school development planning, including processes for target setting and improving outcomes for all children
- consideration of a linkage programme with all schools to review the performance of Traveller pupils throughout the year and whether a Personal Education Plan for each Traveller pupil would be beneficial
- promoting parental involvement and assisting parents to support their child's learning.

▪
Q6. Do you agree that the range of actions proposed will increase the ambitions, progress and prospects of Traveller children and young people?

Yes

Please give reasons.

Although we would also like to see greater reference to and the future adoption of examples of best practice that have demonstrated successful results for many years across the ROI (particularly in south Dublin) and GB. DE and TESS may consider establishing formal linkages with identified areas of good practice areas.

Q7. Are there any additional actions which you feel would help to raise ambitions, performance and prospects among Traveller pupils?

Yes

Please provide suggestions.

Traveller children and parents need to consider themselves to be an equal part of the education system. This may require innovative solutions. For example, Belfast Health Trust have employed two traveller women to work within their community as Traveller Liaison Health Workers. This has proved very successful in breaking down barriers and improving confidence within the Health Trust and Traveller community. The DE/TESS may consider a similar approach as engagement and communication are key factors if success is to be achieved.

We are cautious about the proposed overseeing arrangement via the OFMDFM Race Forum Traveller Thematic group. The apparent lack of progress against the 33 recommendations in the 1999 PSN/PSI Working Group Report may, however unfairly, undermine confidence in this group among the Traveller community and key partners. Any overseeing forum that was used would need to be comprised of senior level officials from statutory organisations and NGOs and be Chaired independently. This would provide the required transparency and accountability. Considering the inequalities shown in the statistics, any overseeing group may also benefit from representation from the Equality Commission and Human Rights Commission.

Any approach taken should be kept as simple as possible and focus on the key target areas of attendance, achievement, school availability, and staff training. These key areas need to be outcome driven and given a tight timeframe.

Inclusion, Integration and Interculturalism

Under Action 6 of the draft Framework, one of the DE proposals is to review the current practice in one Board area of providing Traveller specific school transport.

Q8. Do you agree that the practice of providing Traveller specific transport should be reviewed?

Yes

Please give reasons.

In terms of the greater Belfast area, it is essential that there is an appropriate consultation process with the families who currently use the service. Our concern is that the removal of the service will result in a further reduction in attendance.

Additional Comments

Q9. Do you have any additional suggestions or comments on the Traveller Child in Education Action Framework?

Response.

Our main concern is that the document suggests that there is 'very limited additional investment' to deliver the improvements. This raises questions as to whether the actions can actually be delivered. Considering the extreme inequality for the Traveller community, as shown by the statistics, and the apparent lack of improvement within the education field since the RRO in 1997; we would have thought that resources would be prioritised to deliver this framework.

It may also help to agree priorities in the framework if current performance and practices could be benchmarked against educational statistics from the ROI and GB. This would be especially useful in the key areas of attendance (authorised and unauthorised); achievement (primary and post primary); links between education and training; employment plus achievements; and Staff training. It would also be useful to identify the current recommendation, priorities, and overseeing arrangement that exist in ROI and GB.

DE and TESS may also consider establishing a specific traveller education and welfare officer team to work with families across the region. This team could, as necessary, provide support and make recommendations to help Traveller parents comply with their responsibilities and the changing face of traveller education.

We are also surprised by the comments in the equality screening document that states that the framework did not need to have a full equality impact assessment. Due to the serious issues raised by the statistics and apparent inequality, we would have expected a full impact assessment, even if this concluded that the overall impact was positive."

Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure – Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The Committee endorsed the undernoted response to the above-mentioned consultation and agreed that an invitation being extended to representatives of the Arts Council to attend a future meeting to discuss a range of issues in respect of the Council's Culture and Arts Strategy for 2012/2015:

**“Belfast City Council Consultation Response
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure’s Review of Arts
Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI)**

Question 1: Need for functions delivered by ACNI

Are the services/functions currently delivered by ACNI required?

Yes/No

Comments: ACNI provides a very valuable service to the arts sector, including the provision of funding to arts organisations, the majority of which are in Belfast. The Council believes that these services are not just required, but essential in supporting a healthy arts sector and creative and cultural city.

In particular, we welcome recent ACNI initiatives raising awareness of the opportunities available in Europe. We also look forward to working further with ACNI around creative uses for vacant and underused sites across the city.

With reference to the functions currently delivered by ACNI outlined above, Belfast City Council also delivers on the majority of these. In particular, we would draw attention to the amount of funding the Council invests in arts organisations – currently £1.35 million per year. It is therefore critical, in particular with the transfer of functions under the Review of Public Administration, that ACNI works closely with local councils to streamline their processes and future services.

Question 2: Additional services ACNI could deliver

Are there additional services you would like to see ACNI deliver?

Yes/No

Comments: We would welcome further consideration of the role of ACNI in the international arts market, including support for export and touring.

The Council is currently exploring the feasibility of a per cent for art scheme in line with the Council's Investment Programme. We would welcome the opportunity to work with ACNI to develop this initiative across the city. In particular, under the Council's new Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15, we commit to developing a public art strategy for the city, and we would like this to be developed jointly.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with ACNI in the development of a major gallery in the city.

The Council would like to bring a major cultural event to Belfast and would welcome the opportunity to work with ACNI on this.

Question 3: Value for money

Does ACNI provide value for money? Does the current investment by ACNI in the arts sector achieve effective outcomes for the level of expenditure incurred?

Yes/No

Comments: We consider that the current investment by ACNI in the arts achieves effective outcomes for the level of expenditure incurred. Research reports such as the Digest of Arts Statistics are particularly welcome. However, more advocacy of the impact of the investment is to be welcomed.

We would encourage that these advocacy messages are not just in economic terms, such as employment and return on investment, but social benefits. Care should be taken not to confuse advocacy of creative industries and arts. Arts are about more than job creation and entrepreneurship. The arts can help people become more confident and accomplished. They encourage participation in civic life, create enjoyment, social interaction, build confidence and create opportunities for lifelong learning. They can challenge pre-conceived ideas of ourselves and of others, helping us re-imagine contested space – both physical and emotional – becoming more united, inclusive and outward looking.

There is a perception among some arts organisations that ACNI should invest more of its budget in to arts organisations, rather than in to its own operation – they have less budget but more staff than other arts councils in ROI and the UK. Organisations have also raised concerns about the level of bureaucracy and paperwork required by ACNI, in particular, its 2012/13 annual support for organisations funding scheme. While ACNI has recently consulted on and changed its processes, the Council has received very positive feedback on its own consultation and revised processes. We would be happy to share our learning with ACNI.

ACNI also provides substantial funding to support agencies such as Audiences NI and Arts and Business NI. While the Council recognises that these agencies provide an important service, some arts organisations have raised concerns about their value, quality and representativeness.

Finally, we would request that the level of expenditure is increased, in particular in Belfast. In particular, we would welcome the opportunity to jointly fund projects and programmes and would highlight the opportunity for joint working presented by the Council's Flagship Fund, which is a Cultural Framework initiative. £150,000 is included in the Council's draft budget estimates, and we would like ACNI to match fund this.

Question 4: Effectiveness and efficiency

Does ACNI deliver these functions / services effectively and efficiently? In your experience as a customer, does ACNI provide quality advice / guidance?

Yes/No

Comments: While the advice of ACNI is welcome, there must also be acknowledgement that Belfast City Council is an expert in the city. Care should be taken to recognise our leadership role. We can also provide ACNI with advice and guidance.

In particular, we would welcome recognition of the Council as a partner in the delivery of services and functions that affect the city. We would encourage a closer working relationship with ACNI to ensure that our services and functions are distinct but complementary. This is both at a strategic and operational level. Working together to streamline grants processes will avoid duplication and reduce unnecessary burden on ACNI, councils and the arts sector. This could be a formal agreement through a memorandum of understanding, and some discussions with Council have already taken place.

Question 5: Communication with stakeholders

Please provide your views on how effectively ACNI communicates with its stakeholders.

We would encourage ACNI to work more closely with local councils, in particular Belfast City Council, which is home to the majority of NI's arts organisations and two thirds of creative media and arts jobs.

Belfast City Council currently invests £1.3 million per annum in culture and arts organisations. Most other councils across Northern Ireland invest in the arts through purpose-built council owned venues – they do not run culture and arts funding programmes. However, while we consulted with ACNI in the development of our new Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15, the Council is not always consulted in the development of new ACNI policies and initiatives, for example, the Intercultural Arts Strategy. This is particularly important as we come to the end of ACNI's five-year Creative Connections strategy and start to implement the Council's Cultural Framework.

ACNI's activities would also benefit from closer engagement and recognition of the general public as stakeholders – the actual or potential beneficiaries of their work – not just artists and organisations. This is particularly relevant with the implementation of community planning. Again, local councils can play a vital role in this and already have considerable expertise in this area.

Question 6: Future delivery model

The Arts Council is an executive Non-departmental Public Body with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure as its sponsoring Department. It receives its principal core funding through public expenditure line. The Arts Council is also a National Lottery distributor.

Is this the most appropriate model for the delivery of ACNI functions?

No comment.

Comments

The Council recognises the importance of ACNI being a Non-departmental Public Body as this requires an independent board of experts/specialists in the arts.

Question 7: Future delivery model

Do you think some or all of the functions, currently delivered by ACNI, could be delivered more effectively by an alternative model?

No comment

Comments: While we support the NDPB delivery model, we would like to highlight concerns in relation to the proposed transfer of local arts under the Review of Public Administration. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure wrote to Belfast City Council on 18 January 2010 proposing:

1. Funding for local arts to be transferred to the new district council by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland
2. Allocations for Belfast and Derry to be weighted to take account of their strategic positions; however, it is also the intention is to disburse funding for local arts more equitably across the new councils
3. A potential requirement from new councils to match allocation of funding for local arts as per the Community Festivals Fund
4. ACNI current allocation in 2009–2010 for local arts in Belfast is £628,024 and the proposed allocation under RPA is £322,372 (a 50% reduction). This figure is based on allocation by population with a 10% deprivation weighting to Belfast and Londonderry/Strabane.

The proposed definitions for local, regional and national arts are as follows:

- Local arts is operating within its own boundary
- Regional is operating beyond its own council boundary but within Northern Ireland
- National is operating within Northern Ireland and touring/offering programmes to the rest of the United Kingdom and/or Republic of Ireland

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland will lead on regional and national arts. However, Belfast's unique position is not addressed in this proposal. Belfast City Council plays a unique role in Northern Ireland's culture and arts infrastructure as many of the regional and national arts are based in the city and are currently supported by both Belfast City Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Belfast-based arts organisations run programmes in Belfast. However, they also extend these across Northern Ireland (in the case of theatre productions and other performances, this means that they often pay other councils for the use of their local arts centre). In many instances, the audience attracted to Belfast-based events are from outside of the Belfast area.

While the move to assign local arts responsibility to Belfast City Council is welcome, the level of funding should remain consistent with that previously given to the local arts sector in the city.

Question 8: Any other issues/comments

We would appreciate any other general comments or suggestions you may have (taking into account the current economic climate, any reform programs / government initiatives or other relevant issues).

Comments:

Belfast City Council has recently published a new cultural strategy for the city, the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15. Both ACNI and DCAL were consultees, and we look forward to working closer with ACNI across a range of areas.

We would welcome a full review and formal consultation on ACNI.”

Chairman