

# Development Committee

Tuesday, 15th January, 2013

## MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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

Also attended: Aldermen R. Newton and Rodgers.

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.

### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Hendron, Keenan and Ó Donnaghaile.

### Declarations of Interest

- In respect of item 5c, viz., Integrated Economic Strategy, Councillor Webb declared an interest in that he was associated with a company which would be bidding for the tender which had been issued as part of the project; and
- Councillor Ó Muilleoir declared an interest in item 5b, viz., 'Belfast One City Conference' in that he was the Managing Director of the Belfast Media Group, which was organising the conference.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th January, subject to the following:

- (i) the amendment of the minute of the meeting of 4th December under the heading "Routine Matters" to provide that all Members of the Council would be invited to attend the meeting of the Committee on 15th January at which representatives of the University of Ulster would provide a presentation in respect of its proposals for the re-development of its York Street campus; and

- (ii) the amendment of the minute of the meeting of 4th December under the heading "St. Patrick's Day 2013" to provide that the Council agrees to host a St. Patrick's Day breakfast in the City Hall to which an invitation to attend would be extended to representatives of the Ullans Academy.

#### **Notice of Motion - Belfast as a Tourist Destination**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 7th January, had referred the undernoted Notice of Motion, which had been moved by Alderman R. Newton and seconded by Alderman Rodgers, to it for consideration:

"This Council welcomes the news that the 'Tripadvisor' website has ranked Belfast as a top 10 must-see attraction. This is very gratifying given the amount of energy which the Council has put into improving the City's image and physical appearance over recent years. Making the City an attractive place to visit and experience has been a major objective within the Council's strategic thinking.

The Council welcomes the efforts of its partners in this joint venture including regional government departments, the Titanic Signature Project, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau and the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce to name but a few. Our combined efforts have seen major improvements in our tourist offer over recent years. The number of visitors to Belfast has risen over the 6 years to 2011 by almost 1.5 million and the economic spend in the City has increased accordingly by almost £115million to £401 million. Overall in 2011 the tourism industry supported over 9,000 full-time equivalent jobs and the estimated economic impact of tourism was almost £506 million. It is also worthy of note that the hotel occupancy rate for September 2012 was 82.5%, up more than 10% from the previous September.

Although these figures show that Belfast is a dynamic city which is attractive to tourists, the Council will not rest on its laurels and commits itself to continue to build upon this success by working even harder to ensure that Belfast is a world class tourist destination."

The Chairman welcomed Alderman Newton to the meeting. Alderman Newton commended the work which the Development Department had undertaken to promote Belfast as a tourist destination. He outlined the challenges which existed for the Council and stated that, despite the adverse publicity which the City had received as a result of recent unrest, it would be an opportune time for the Council to build upon recent successes to maintain Belfast's reputation as a world-class tourist destination.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the steps which could be taken to enhance further the City's reputation as a world-class tourist destination.

**Estimates of Expenditure 2013 - 2014**

(Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report, which had been prepared by the Director of Finance and Resources, in respect of the Committee's estimates of revenue expenditure for the financial year 2013/2014. A copy of that section of the report, in so far as it applied specifically to the Development Committee, is set out hereunder:

**“Development Committee**

A spending limit of £19,229,488 is recommended for the department in 2013/14 which represents a decrease of £314K or - 1.61% on the 2012/13 budget.

The main budgetary intentions of the Department for the next year are set out below:

|                                     | £                        |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Community Services                  | 5,492,208                |
| City Events/Venues                  | 3,901,095                |
| Directorate                         | 2,834,683                |
| <b><u>Total Net Expenditure</u></b> | <b><u>19,229,488</u></b> |

**Community Services**

The amount provided for in the 2013/14 Community Services budget estimate has decreased by £27k. The estimate is based on the continuation of activity at a similar level to the previous years, with some re-focusing required in line with the newly developed BCC Community Development Strategy and the pilot Belfast Community Investment Programme which we are currently developing in partnership with DSD. It is also based on a consistent level of anticipated income from DSD through its regional Community Support Programme.

**City Events and Venues**

The service budget for 2013/14 has been reduced by £242,450 to £3.90m

The estimates for 2013/2014 cover the net cost of operating the Belfast Waterfront and the Ulster Hall, the annual events and sports events schedule and Support for Sport grants.

During 2013/2014 both the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall will continue to provide world class entertainment and conference facilities that will promote the cultural and economic regeneration of Belfast and so contribute to the economic benefit of not only the City but the region as a whole.

The closure of the Belfast Waterfront Hall Studio, in late 2013, to facilitate the building of the extension and the associated negative impact of the building works will result in a loss of income of £82k. The reduction in income will be offset by other income generation/maximisation activities along with other service reductions and re-tendering exercises to reduce and control costs.

The City Events estimate reflects reductions as a result of the end of the 3 year contract in respect of the European Pipe Band Championships (£135,000). However there will be additional one off projects during 2013/14 which will be financed from reserves. A budget of £400k has been set aside for the World Police & Fire Games and £225k has been provided for the All Ireland Dancing Championships.

#### Economic Initiatives/Directorate

The 2013/2014 estimates are based on a continuation of activity at a similar level to previous years with additional activity and new areas of work to meet the priorities identified within the Council's Investment Programme.

The units within Economic Initiatives and Directorate have undergone a structural review in October 2012 and as a result a number of budgets have transferred from Directorate to the Economic Initiatives section.

To meet the increased revenue implications resulting from the Tourism, Culture and Arts Cultural Framework 2012-2015, £200k additional funding for grants has been included in the estimates. The net effect of all these changes is a decrease in the 2013/14 combined budgets of £44k."

**DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**MAIN ITEMS OF ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2013/14**

|  | Net Expenditure<br>2012/13<br>£ | Net Expenditure<br>2013/14<br>£ |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b><u>Community Services</u></b>                                     | <b>£5,519,610</b>               | <b>£5,492,208</b>               |
| Community Resource Unit  | £309,440                        | £294,334                        |
| Community Services<br>Management                                     | £279,215                        | £226,377                        |
| Travellers   | £52,829                         | £48,794                         |
| Area Support Unit  | £1,130,706                      | £1,168,674                      |
| Community Grants   | £1,014,251                      | £1,050,483                      |
| Community Facilities   | £1,987,219                      | £1,956,654                      |
| Children & Young People  | £745,950                        | £746,892                        |
| <b><u>City Events and Venues</u></b>                                 | <b>£4,143,548</b>               | <b>£3,901,095</b>               |
| Belfast Waterfront/Ulster Hall                                       | £2,478,057                      | £2,400,924                      |
| City Events  | £1,665,491                      | £1,500,171                      |
| <b><u>Economic Initiatives and<br/>International Development</u></b> | <b>£6,088,958</b>               | <b>£7,001,502</b>               |
| Tourism, Culture and Arts  | £4,102,291                      | £4,751,447                      |
| Economic Development   | £1,133,013                      | £1,327,790                      |
| Urban Development  | £875,284                        | £946,683                        |
| Markets  | -£21,630                        | -£24,418                        |
| <b><u>Directorate</u></b>  | <b>£3,791,418</b>               | <b>£2,834,683</b>               |
| Development Directorate  | £1,811,185                      | £1,806,960                      |
| City Development   | £876,746                        | £251,248                        |
| Business Research and<br>Development                                 | £509,951                        | £546,361                        |
| SNAP   | £357,688                        | -----                           |
| European Unit  | £235,848                        | £230,114                        |
| <b><u>TOTAL</u></b>  | <b><u>£19,543,534</u></b>       | <b><u>£19,229,488</u></b>       |

The Director of Finance and Resources outlined the factors which had been taken into account in the preparation of the estimates and highlighted the savings which had been identified which had contributed to a decrease in the Department's estimate of 1.61% from the previous year's figure. He informed the Members that, on 11th January, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed that the cash limit for the Development Committee should be set at £19,229,488. The Directors of Development and Finance and Resources then answered a number of questions which were put to them by the Members.

**Proposal**

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Stoker,  
Seconded by Councillor Reynolds,

That the Committee agrees to defer, until February, consideration of the revenue estimates for the financial year 2013/2014.

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

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Maskey,  
Seconded by Councillor Ó Muilleoir,

That the Committee agrees that its cash limit for the financial year 2013/2014 be set at £19,229,488.

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

**University of Ulster - York Street Development**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th December, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the University of Ulster in respect of its proposals to re-develop its Belfast campus at York Street. Accordingly, the Chairman welcomed Mr. A. Adair and Mr. P. Donnelly to the meeting and they proceeded to provide an overview of the proposals, together with the anticipated timescale for the development, and answered a number of Members' questions in relation thereto.

The Committee was unanimous in its view that the development would act as a catalyst for the further regeneration of the City centre, together with creating valuable employment opportunities and revitalising existing neighbourhoods within the inner north Belfast area. However, concern was expressed that there appeared to have been a delay in the processing of the planning application which had been submitted by the University to the Planning Service. Given the importance of the development to the City, the Committee expressed a desire that the application should be processed without delay and submitted for consideration to the Council's Town Planning Committee at the earliest opportunity. Accordingly, it was suggested that a letter be forwarded to the Minister with

responsibility for the Planning Service, Mr. Alex Attwood M.L.A., requesting that he meet with an all-party deputation to discuss the concerns which had been raised. It was pointed out that such a meeting should take place at the earliest opportunity and, if possible, before the end of January.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a meeting be sought with the Minister as outlined.

### **Belfast City Centre Management**

The Committee agreed to receive at a future meeting a presentation from representatives of Belfast City Centre Management in respect of its business plan for 2013/2014.

### **Belfast One City Conference**

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

The Committee was advised that the Belfast One City Conference, which would be hosted by the Belfast Media Group, would take place in various locations across the City on 9th and 10th May, 2013. It was reported that the theme of the conference would be 'Lifting the City' and it would examine how Belfast could promote itself to a world-wide audience as a shared and inclusive City.

The Director outlined the range of speakers who would address the conference and informed the Committee that a request had been received for the Council to purchase a 'Platinum Business Package' for the event at a discounted cost of £2,500. He explained that this package would entitle the Council to sponsorship of a session at the event, speaking rights, significant advertising exposure and two delegate places thereat.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to purchase a 'Platinum Business Package' at a cost of £2,500 and agreed further that the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) be authorised to attend the event.

### **Integrated Economic Strategy**

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

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th September, 2012, it had agreed to establish a Project Steering Group to oversee the implementation of a Council-led Integrated Economic Strategy. It was reported that, in addition to Council's contribution of £30,000, officers from within the Department had secured a sum of

£25,000 from Invest NI towards the development of the Strategy and that a tender in this regard had been issued in December. The Director indicated that a draft report on the outcome of this process would be submitted for the Committee's consideration in due course.

Noted.

### **Sister City - Nashville**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the arrangements which had been put in place for the visit in March to Nashville by a Council deputation as part of the Sister City Initiative.

### **Review of Council-led Tours**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**"1 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 The Council annually provides approximately £20,000 to fund a series of walking tours at peak times across the city. The format and delivery of these tours was established over 10 years ago and they are delivered through Blue Badge Guides and in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tour Guide Association (NITGA).**
- 1.2 Tourism in Belfast has grown over the last decade and this has resulted in a high number of small/medium size enterprises and businesses offering tour based products. In general visitors are satisfied with the quality and quantity on offer, although as Members are aware, there have been some issues around some of the Bus Tour operators.**
- 1.3 Current tours supported and delivered by Belfast City Council include Historic Pub and Historic Walking tours and Late Night Art. Tours delivered in partnership between Council and other organisations/individuals include CS Lewis, Literary, Belfast Bred and Music tours. The latter has been through low levels of seed funding.**
- 1.4 In February 2012 the Tourism, Culture and Arts unit sought an independent review and analysis of Belfast's Guided Tour products to:**
  - ~ establish the current position**
  - ~ assess the potential and challenges faced**
  - ~ produce an action plan to drive the sector forward**
  - ~ agree role and remit of Belfast City Council**



- 1.5 **Business Tourism Solutions (BTS) were appointed and they undertook a series of consultations with guided tour operators and stakeholders including Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, independent tour guides, tour guide operators and Area Partnership Boards and venues.**
- 1.6 **The consultations and business survey proved useful in understanding the importance of product development whilst taking into account the wide variety of independent commercial tours and excursions which operated by the private sector without Council support. Some of these tours are innovative, entrepreneurial and commercially self-sustaining.**
- 1.7 **The tour review benchmarked Belfast against five international destinations including Dublin; Edinburgh for its market maturity; Glasgow and Cardiff for their emerging tourism markets; Bilbao for its visitor attraction the Guggenheim Museum and Rotterdam as a port city.**

**The benchmarked cities highlighted that most funded tours were provided through competitive funding (application based) or collaborative marketing initiatives.**

## **2 Key Issues**

- 2.1 **In summary, the work undertaken by BTS confirmed that due to the strong range of commercial tours now on offer across the city, there is no longer a requirement for Belfast City Council to intervene in the provision of city tours directly. However BTS does identify a number of areas for Council to lead on so as to support the overall tour product across the city and provide a catalytic role to new product development. This includes:**
- 2.2 **Council to establish an industry-led tour guide group for the city; the group will explore areas of common interest, facilitate workshops and develop a code of conduct.**
- 2.3 **Undertake generic marketing of tours in the city. In partnership with BVCB, Council will develop consistent creative and promotional materials to promote the broad range of tours that are available across the city (to include the use of mobile technology)**
- 2.4 **Establish a business development programme to support existing individuals / organisations to grow existing tours or develop new tours. This may target geographical gaps in the city to drive footfall into the local tourism destinations or target thematic gaps whereby tours may be used to support new product development themes.**

- 2.5 Council delivers tours linked to specific festivals/events or themes only if there is no uptake from the market.
- 2.6 It is therefore recommended that we stop the Blue Badge guided tours directly delivered by the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit for 2013 and where we are working in partnership with other organisations agree an exit strategy whereby partners will be signposted to the business development programme once established. Members should note that these likely changes were raised with organisations as part of the consultation process.
- 2.7 Late Night Art will continue once a month, however again officers will scope an exit strategy to transfer delivery and ownership to the participating art galleries.
- 2.8 The budget (£20,000) previously used to deliver tours directly will be reinvested into the areas identified above under paragraphs 2.2 – 2.5.
- 2.9 BTS within their report also refer to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's review of tour guiding in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) are recommending a new accreditation scheme to accommodate guides working in individual visitor attractions, city wide tours and regional tours. It has long been recognised that to become a Blue Badge Guide is time consuming and costly. There needs to be a more flexible system to accredit a whole range of guides that visitors will interact with and ensure consistency of quality. The scheme is still under review however once agreed, it will provide a framework of training and quality assurance for guiding across Northern Ireland.
- 2.10 In the interim, the Northern Ireland Tour Guide Association has identified an immediate gap in language provision and they are working with NITB to pilot an Introductory Guiding Course for students with languages. Language provision has been a regular concern raised at the Belfast Tourism Forum and with an increase in cruise visits and the World Police Fire Games taking place in 2013; it is becoming a significant issue for the city. The objectives of the course will be to bring a group of 25 language students up to a professional standard in guiding. NITB has secured funding for this and whilst at this stage there is no financial commitment from Council, we have been approached for in-kind support to promote the scheme, support the recruitment process and supply materials for training purposes on Belfast's tourism product.

**3 Resource Implications**

- 3.1 £20,000 has been included in the annual Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit over a number of years to support tours directly and is included in the budget estimates 13/14. It is recommended that this budget is retained but allocated towards establishing an industry led tour group, co-operative marketing and business development.**

**4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 Members are ask to note the contents of the report and;**

- **agree that we stop Council-led tours for the year 2013**
- **agree an exit strategy with partner-led tours and Late Night Art where appropriate**
- **invest the existing tour budget into support the collective offer of tours across the city**
- **support the sector to develop/address gaps through business development programmes**
- **provide in-kind support and endorse the Introductory Guiding Course for language students.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Play Centre Licence Renewals**

The Committee was reminded that, since the closure of Ballysillan Play Centre in 1998, the Council had leased facilities within the independently-owned Benview Community Centre to deliver a range of play service development projects in that area. It was reported that the licence agreement for the Council's use of the facility was due to be renewed at a cost of £6,038.35, which would cover the period from 1st July, 2012 till 1st January, 2014.

The Committee agreed to the payment of £6,038.35 to extend the licence agreement, subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 46 and subject also to the drawing-up of an appropriate legal agreement.

**Pride of Place- 10th Anniversary Celebration Event**

The Committee was reminded that the Pride of Place Cities Competition provided community groups from throughout Ireland with an opportunity to showcase initiatives which would have a lasting and positive impact upon their communities. The Community Services Manager reminded the Committee that the Council had been awarded Best Local Authority in the 2012 awards ceremony and over the years had enjoyed success in

all categories. Accordingly, the Director recommended that, to mark the 10th anniversary of the awards, and in recognition of the achievements of previous Belfast-based award winners, a celebratory dinner, which would be hosted by the Lord Mayor, be held in the City Hall in February. It was reported that the costs associated with the dinner would be approximately £1,500.

The Committee agreed to contribute £1,500 towards the costs associated with the celebratory dinner.

### **Community Development Toolkit**

The Committee noted the progress which had been achieved to date in the development of a Community Development Toolkit which would provide educational, training and resource guidance to groups working in the community sector.

### **Council of European Municipalities and Regions - Meeting in April 2013**

The Committee was advised that a request had been received from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions to host a meeting of its Secretaries General and Directors in the City Hall in April. The Director outlined the benefits which the City would accrue in hosting the event and outlined the range of delegates who would be attending the meeting. He gave an overview of the networking opportunities which would be afforded in hosting the event and reported that the costs associated with providing catering for the delegates would be £1,000.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to host the meeting; authorised the attendance thereof of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) and authorised expenditure in the sum of £1,000 towards catering.

### **Irish Technology Leadership Group - Leaders' Summit**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 Members will be aware that at the meeting of the Development Committee of 21 February 2012, a draft MOU to advance the relationship with the Irish Technology Leadership Group on a permanent basis, was approved.**
- 1.2 The Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG) is a group of Irish and Irish American senior executives based in Silicon Valley, California, 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 Key Issues**

**2.1 ITLG have announced that they will be hosting their Silicon Valley Comes to Ireland summit in Cork, on 22 and 23 January 2013.**

**2.2 The summit is a two day gathering of top executives, entrepreneurs, and venture capital investors operating in Silicon Valley, Hollywood, and US East Coast, who are travelling to the event to meet with Ireland's top technology and innovative companies.**

**2.3 It will comprise a series of keynote presentations, panel debates, and company showcases that will provide delegates with an inside look at cutting-edge technology, business, and political trends that are creating new exciting and profitable business opportunities. The confirmed schedule and content is being finalised at present.**

**2.4 Indigenous companies in the fields of mobile technologies, cloud, biotech, and convergent pharma, nanotechnology and renewable energies, among others, will be invited to pitch their business ideas to international investors and entrepreneurs.**

**2.5 This is set to be a major summit of global business leaders, high level executives, entrepreneurs and investors from the US and Ireland, and will take place in Cork in January as part of The Gathering. It will be one of the first major business events of the year-long tourism initiative, the Gathering Ireland 2013. The meeting is being organised by the Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG) in conjunction with Cork City Council, Cork Chamber, University College Cork (UCC) and Cork Institute of Technology (CIT). Hosted in venues across the city, the event will be led by former Intel Chairman and CEO, Craig Barrett.**

**2.6 To build on the Council's relationship with the ITLG, it is proposed that Council participates in the ITLG "Silicon Valley Comes to Ireland" event in Cork. This will provide BCC with the opportunity to review the MOU relationship and review links with key individuals from ITLG whilst they are in Ireland. Members will be aware that this relationship needs to be refocused and clarified as part of Council's International Marketing Framework.**

**3 Resource Implications**

**3.1 Financial**

Registration, travel and accommodation will not to exceed £1,000.

**4 Recommendations**

**4.1 Members are asked to:**

- Note the contents of the report.
- Agree that Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee or their nominees participate in the ITLG Event in Cork along with 2 officers.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairman