

Development Committee

Tuesday, 20th August, 2013

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman Stalford);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Kingston);
Aldermen Ekin, McCoubrey and Stoker;
Councillors Austin, Convery, Garrett,
Hartley, Hussey, Keenan, Kelly, Kyle,
Mac Giolla Mhóin, Maskey, Ó Donnghaile,
Reynolds and Spence.

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

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Webb.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 4th and 20th June were taken and read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.

Mr. J. Watson

The Committee agreed that a letter of condolence be forwarded on its behalf to the family of the late Mr. Joe Watson expressing its deepest sympathy at the news of his untimely passing.

Request to Address the Committee

The Committee agreed to receive, at its meeting on 17th September, a presentation from representatives of Advice NI in relation to debt management issues in Belfast.

Bike Hire Scheme – Special Meeting

The Committee agreed to hold a special meeting on Monday, 23rd September, at 4.30 p.m., at which a presentation would be received from representatives of Dublin City Council in respect of its Public Hire Bike Scheme.

Departmental Plan

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th June, it had agreed to defer consideration of the Departmental Plan for 2013/2014 to enable party briefings to be provided to those parties who so wished to receive them. Accordingly, the Committee reconsidered the contents of the Departmental Plan for 2013/2014 and, after discussion, endorsed its contents, a copy of which was published on the Council's Mod.gov website.

Super Connected Cities – Demand Stimulation Activities

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Council has been awarded £13.7 million by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as part of its Super-Connected Cities initiative. This is one of the key Investment Programme initiatives that aims to develop Belfast's economic infrastructure, promote growth and attract inward investment for the city.**
- 1.2 A key objective of the Super Connected Cities initiative is to ensure that Belfast-based businesses have access to high speed fibre connections to enable them to do what they did before but more efficiently, and to allow them to explore new ways of doing business. The infrastructure provided under this initiative will also provide opportunities for new business development and will provide non-technical businesses with the opportunity to implement a broadband solution to support business growth and identify new markets.**
- 1.3 Many areas of Belfast have access to broadband with speeds of up to 24 Mbps (megabits per second). By mid-2015 (completion date of the Super Connected Cities initiative), we aim to enable city-wide access to a network providing speeds of at least 80Mbps. Speeds of at least 100 Mbps will also be available for businesses that require it, such as those in creative industries, that send large volumes of data.**
- 1.4 While the funding from DCMS can only be used for infrastructure costs, experience from elsewhere, and feedback from early engagement with local companies, suggests that businesses require support to help them maximise the potential of the infrastructure.**
- 1.5 As part of the Council's Investment Programme, we are committed to pursuing funding from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in support of the city's economic**

development plans. One of the key opportunities identified has been the need for a demand stimulation programme to supplement and support the investment in telecoms infrastructure, helping local businesses to improve their productivity and competitiveness.

- 1.6 An economic appraisal on the ERDF Super Connected Cities demand stimulation activity application is currently under way and is expected to be completed by September 2013. Subject to a positive outcome of the appraisal, a letter of offer is likely to be issued by October 2013.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 While the original confirmation of funding from DCMS was issued some time ago, a legal challenge to Birmingham's funding bid on the basis of State Aid issues meant that DCMS were forced to review the programme guidelines. The upshot of this is that the majority of the connections are now to be "demand-side" measures (i.e. the business has to make a direct application for support) as opposed to "supply-side" measures (i.e. the Council funds suppliers to provide connectivity at agreed locations across the city, without necessarily scoping out the demand in the area).
- 2.2 In order to test this approach, DCMS asked Belfast, along with three other cities (Manchester, Cardiff and Edinburgh) to become involved in a market testing phase. This meant rolling out a connection voucher scheme on a time-bound basis (1 August - 30 September 2013) with a view to testing the approach and ascertaining whether this would generate any further objections from the supplier base.
- 2.3 Under the terms of the connection voucher scheme, a sum of up to £3,000 can be provided to a business to enable them to access ultrafast broadband. Companies can choose from a range of potential suppliers.
- 2.4 Given the very short timeframe set by DCMS, as well as the need to demonstrate a significant level of demand, in line with our original funding approach, a number of target locations were identified for the market-testing phase. These include:
 - Cathedral Quarter
 - City East / East Belfast Enterprise
 - Ormeau Business Park
 - Ortus

- Argyle Business Park
- North City Business Centre
- Harbour Estate.

2.5 All SMEs and third sector organisations based within these locations are eligible to apply for a voucher during the market-testing phase. It is anticipated that the scheme will be rolled out city-wide from November 2013, subject to approval by DCMS.

2.6 In order to complement the infrastructure funding from DCMS, the Council previously agreed to make a funding application to European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to secure up to 75% of the costs of a demand stimulation programme. This would both raise awareness of the infrastructure investment and provide targeted mentoring support to help businesses get online or use the technologies to help them work more efficiently.

2.7 It is intended that the demand stimulation support will be available to all companies within the Council area, focusing on those availing of connection vouchers. Support will be tailored to meet the demands of the individual businesses. Outputs will include:

- Number of businesses developing an online presence for the first time
- Increase in percentage of sales / business generated through e-commerce, for those companies with an existing online presence
- Number of new products / services created by participating businesses.
- Level of funding leveraged (public / private? By participating businesses
- Number of businesses involved in international networks
- Number of companies active in new markets.

2.8 Outcomes will include:

- Enhanced profile of Belfast as a digitally connected business destination.
- Growth in scale of knowledge economy businesses in Belfast
- Improvements in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) levels in the city, from investments in new sectors
- Increased employment opportunities within the creative and digital sectors

- Enhanced opportunities to secure foreign investment (FDI) in new growth sectors.
- 2.9 Given that the market testing phase is already under way and that, subject to DCMS approval, the connection vouchers will be available city-wide from November 2013, it is considered essential that the development activity on the demand stimulation programme is put in place as quickly as possible.
- 2.10 Due to the specialised nature of the support, this work will be subject to public procurement. The funding application identifies the broad programme of work. However, this will now have to be developed into a tender specification and issued through the appropriate channels.
- 2.11 In order to facilitate this process, it is considered that some preliminary work may be required to progress at risk the demand stimulation support work, in advance of the letter of offer being issued by Invest NI.
- 2.12 As a means of minimising the risk to Council of this approach, it is intended that Invest NI will be asked to provide “prior approval” for expenditure of up to £150,000 incurred in advance of issuing the letter of offer. This means that, if the funding application is successful and the grant is awarded, any prior expenditure incurred on this work up to a value of £150,000 will be eligible for match funding from ERDF / Invest NI of up to 75% of the costs incurred.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Members are requested to:

- Approve expenditure of up to £150,000 on an at-risk basis on a demand stimulation programme to support the roll-out of the Super Connected Belfast programme, in advance of the letter of offer being issued by Invest NI (likely to be October 2013)
- Note the proposal to seek prior approval from Invest NI to cover the £150,000 expenditure
- Grant delegated authority to the Director and Chair of Committee to approve the most economically advantageous tender for the demand stimulation work, subject to a form of contract being developed by legal services.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Conference Subvention Scheme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Conference Subvention

Members will be aware that at the Development Committee Meeting of 10 September 2010 that the Council in conjunction with Northern Ireland Tourism Board (NITB) and Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) adopted a new Conference Subvention Scheme for Belfast which superseded the previous policy.

1.2 Aligned to priorities in the draft Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework, NITB, BVCB and the Council developed this Conference Subvention Scheme with a total funding budget of £435,000 over three years, with the Council contributing £70,000 per annum and NITB £75,000 per annum.

1.3 At the Committee Meeting of 22 May 2012 Members agreed to extend the Conference Subvention funding period from 31 March 2015, until 31 December 2018. Because of the considerable time-lags between subvention approvals and completion of payments, long lead times, and the trend of later booking of venues.

1.4 Members will be aware that at the Development Committee Meeting of 5 February 2013 it was agreed, in light of the recent disruption which the City had been experiencing, that Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau were given permission to use up to £30,000 within the sum allocated to it by the Council for the purposes of a subvention fund, to enable specific interventions to be made to secure any pre-arranged conference bookings in 2013 which might be placed at the risk of being cancelled as a result of disturbances.

1.5 The Conference Subvention Scheme was established in 2010 and to date, twenty two applications have been received, resulting in the issue of 14 letters of offer for total funding of £265,000 (£10k of this not subsequently required due to a lost bid) of which £36,788 has been paid. The economic impact of the 14 conferences supported through the subvention scheme to date is estimated at £14.5m, delivering a return on investment of 1:55.

1.6 The objectives of the Conference Subvention Scheme are;

- To raise the profile of Belfast and Northern Ireland as a leading business and conference destination
- To consolidate existing investment in Belfast and Northern Ireland hotel and conference infrastructure
- To increase the contribution of Business and Conference Tourism to Belfast and Northern Ireland economy
- To change the international perception of Belfast and Northern Ireland
- To encourage inward investment to Belfast and Northern Ireland
- To grow the number of leisure visitors by encouraging conferences to run partner and extender programmes
- To develop a partnership approach to promoting Northern Ireland as a business and conference destination

1.7 The criteria for subvention is summarised below;

- The conference should be based in Belfast and include use of overnight accommodation in the Belfast area.
- The conference should preferably have a minimum of 300 out of state delegates and accompanying partners staying for two nights in the Belfast area. However a conference with a smaller number of out of state delegates staying for multiple nights will be considered if there is evidence that this conference will lead to a larger associated conference coming to Belfast within the next 8 years. The level of subvention being sought against the potential economic benefit will be taken into consideration
- The conference should have an impact on and/or a potential for local businesses and organisations by providing opportunities for developing industry/sector links or to showcase local products, cultural, sporting or intellectual fields.
- The subject areas of the conference should relate to local economic and tourism strategies or specific priority areas for Belfast or Northern Ireland.
- The event, by locating in Belfast should enhance the areas international profile and as such the prestige value of the event will be taken into account i.e. media coverage, speaker profile
- Conferences must demonstrate strict financial project management, cash flows and projected income and expenditure account.

- 1.8 Governance arrangements were agreed by NITB and BCC to ensure transparent and effective delivery of the scheme on behalf of both funders.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Funding

- A number of issues have been identified regarding the Conference Subvention Scheme. These include;
- The growth in level of competition from other conference destination cities
 - The lack of subvention in other cities, e.g. Manchester has annual subvention budgets of £1m.
 - The recent impact of the civil unrest protest on Belfast's appeal as a conference destination.
 - The new waterfront extension is due to open in 2016, and the need for Belfast to compete globally for large scale international and national events with a higher economic return.
 - The importance of special case applications seeking funding which may include, but are not limited to, conferences which deliver significant strategic benefits for the city such as events with significant media coverage or of international significance within Northern Ireland's key economic sectors
- 2.2 It has been identified that there is a need to have a more flexible funding scheme to ensure the city can compete and secure these types of events.
- 2.3 Within the governance of the current scheme subvention funding awards are capped at a maximum of £25,000 for events delivering an economic impact over £1m. A flexible approach will allow the current scheme to offer a higher funding amount for conferences that deliver more than £1m in economic impact or bring significant strategic benefits to the city.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the current maximum cap of £25,000 subvention is removed. This would allow Belfast to increase its competitiveness as a conference destination.
- 2.5 The removal of the maximum cap would not require any additional financial commitment from BCC or NITB, within current budgets.

- 2.6 As a joint funding partner of the Conference Subvention Scheme, NITB are also currently considering the removal of the maximum capped award of £25,000.
- 2.7 The removal of the maximum cap of £25,000 to the current scheme will aim to:
- Increase Belfast's competitiveness as a conference destination and our ability to compete globally.
 - Maximise the return on investment from the city's investment in the Belfast Waterfront extension.
 - Ensure that the scheme has a degree of flexibility to consider applications in extenuating circumstances, as the dedicated conference subvention fund for the city.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Funding of £70,000 is currently available in the 2012/2013 Tourism Culture and Arts Budget.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members agree to the removal of the maximum cap of £25,000 to increase Belfast's competitiveness as a conference destination and our ability to compete globally. “

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Digital DNA Summit

The Committee was advised that the MBA Association of Ireland, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, Invest NI and the University of Ulster, would host a major Digital Summit, viz., Digital DNA, in Titanic Belfast on 13th September. The Director reported that the event would attract a wide range of renowned speakers, including representatives from Facebook, Google and the New York Stock Exchange. Those in attendance would include locally-based businesses, international companies, business support organisations and key bodies in the software, IT and digital media fields.

The Director reported that an opportunity existed for the Council to sponsor the event by purchasing a delegate package and he outlined the advantages which would be derived, including the securing of a number of delegate places, together with branding and networking opportunities. In addition, the Council's support for, and participation at, the event would promote its role in delivering the Super Connected Cities project to a wider audience.

The Committee agreed to provide sponsorship for the event in the sum of £2,500.

City Centre Business Information Point

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 **Members will be aware that under the Review of Public Administration, the responsibility for enterprise will transfer to local councils. With this in mind the Economic Development Unit has begun to scope out potential enterprise initiatives to pilot prior to the transfer. Demand from businesses has highlighted a need for greater access to Council’s services and easier access to the programmes and advice that are offered in the city.**
- 1.2 **One such pilot initiative is to provide a dedicated information resource in the city centre to deal with business start and development enquiries and to link businesses with council services including Building Control and Environmental Health as well as the suite of programmes provided by the Economic Development Unit. The space would also serve as an area to facilitate workshops, outreach development, showcasing venue and meeting space.**
- 1.3 **As part of our engagement with partner organisations on this issue, a number of organisations have confirmed that they would be supportive of this approach. In addition, one organisation has confirmed that it was also considering this approach and has identified the opportunity to collaborate on a pilot project in this field. This could provide an opportunity for Council to support a model to test a city-centre business information point.**

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 **Feedback from businesses and start ups in the city has identified that it can be difficult to obtain all the information needed to start up, grow and develop a business in the city. While there are numerous sources of information, there is not one central information point. As clients can have enquiries as wide-ranging as business planning, environmental issues, planning issues, recycling queries, building control matters and information on forming companies, it can be challenging for entrepreneurs to access all the information they require.**
- 2.2 **The recently commissioned Integrated Economic Strategy has identified a range of key issues facing Belfast post-RPA. Currently businesses in Belfast look to both BCC and Invest**

NI for advice, guidance and support. Post-RPA the great majority by number of businesses will look to the council alone. Forthcoming research suggests that many businesses are unaware of the breadth of services offered by the council or are unclear as to who they need to contact regarding the wide range of challenges that they face on a day-to-day basis in their business. The Council's 2013 business survey (report currently at draft stage) also notes that while businesses continue to be interested in programmes like business planning and sales development there is also significant demand for advice on Building Control issues, Health and Safety and Licensing.

- 2.3 A centrally placed information point could provide an opportunity for proactive outreach to the business community, facilitate engagement with potential start-up entrepreneurs and give council a visible presence with local communities.
- 2.4 As part of our discussions with enterprise support partners, ORTUS have identified plans to consider the opening of a pop-up business information resource in a city centre location (premises have been identified – unit is currently vacant). ORTUS was established in 1988 to actively promote sustainable social, economic and environmental regeneration by providing property and business development support. They are members of the Enterprise NI Network and deliver a range of business start and development programmes.
- 2.5 The proposed dedicated business information point would be staffed on a full-time basis and provide pre-start, start up and growth zones allowing clients to obtain information and signposting. The first floor of the premises will also be available as a space to facilitate enterprise outreach sessions including ideas generation, meetings and showcase space for businesses in a prime city centre location.
- 2.6 The resource could act as a signposting agent to the Council as well as other relevant bodies including: Invest NIRICS, NISP, HMRC, Advice NI, Banking sector, Labour Relations Agency, The Prince's Trust, UCIT/UNLTD, DEL, Universities and Colleges and HSENI
- 2.7 The business information point could provide an opportunity for those providing business advice services and support to work on a partnership basis providing a comprehensive and effective service for potential entrepreneurs and businesses in the city that is centred around the needs of the business –

as opposed to the business having to seek out the support from a range of sources and across a number of locations.

- 2.8 Within the council, there is considerable support from Building Control to look at this proposal on a pilot basis with a view to improving the way in which the council interfaces with existing and would-be businesses and to developing flexible and targeted support services to address business growth issues.
- 2.9 In order to minimise the risk to the council and to allow us to explore this approach, it is proposed that a partnership is developed with ORTUS to pilot this approach, sharing the financial commitment for the first year of the service. Progress will be reviewed on a regular basis and efforts will be made to bring on additional internal and external partners with a view to providing a comprehensive one stop shop for business information and support, in a city centre location.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

The total cost for operating the unit for one year will be around £80,000. ORTUS have committed resources of £41,000 and have asked whether the Council could make a commitment of £39,000 towards staffing, fit-out and overhead costs. These resources can be made available within the council's enterprise support budget.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 Approve the resourcing of a pilot business information point for one year, up to a value of £39,000 and to note the commitment to maximise the input from and referrals through to other business support agencies in the city and other council departments, in order to enhance the impact of this project."

A number of Members suggested that, rather than agreeing to accede to the request submitted to provide funding towards the establishment of the information point, the Council might have undertaken its own research to ascertain the market demand for the service within the City. In addition, it was suggested that, in order to achieve best value for the Council, an expressions of interest exercise could have been undertaken. A further Member expressed concern that the amount requested within the report had not been supported with a detailed breakdown of the associated costs.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Reynolds,
Seconded by Councillor Hussey,

That the Committee agrees to defer, until its meeting on 17th September, consideration of the report to enable further detailed costs in respect of the request by ORTUS to be submitted for consideration.

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

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor Mac Giolla Mhóin,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation, subject to the circulation to all Members, prior to the meeting of the Council on 2nd September, of a breakdown of the detailed costs in respect of the request by ORTUS.

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

Belfast Tech Mission 2013

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 **At the March 2013 meeting of the Development Committee, Members agreed to support a Council led trade mission for Belfast based digital and tech companies up to a maximum of £20,000, to the west coast of America.**
- 1.2 **The Belfast Tech Mission 2013 is aimed at providing an opportunity for up to 20 companies to travel to San Francisco and San Jose to showcase and network with leading companies, investors and venture capitalists from the West Coast of America. The Mission is aimed at Belfast based Digital Media, Software and Hi-Tech IT companies who offer a globally focused product or service and are considering expansion or increasing sales and investment opportunities in the west coast of America.**

- 1.3 The Belfast Tech Mission is designed to showcase the new technologies and products currently being developed by Belfast based companies and to promote Belfast as one of the leading digitally connected cities in Europe and a prime location for international investment.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Belfast Tech Mission is led by the Council in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland and will take place from the 14 October–18 October 2013.
- 2.2 Due to the interest and scope of the project, additional funding has been secured from Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund (£40,000) to help support up to 20 Belfast based companies attend and to procure additional event management and business support on the ground in the United States.
- 2.3 The main aim of the mission is to:
- Increase the number of Belfast technology companies selling and doing business in the US.
 - Increase the knowledge of Belfast Tech companies in what it takes to establish and secure VC funding in the US.
 - Improving the business networks and partnerships with companies in Belfast and the US.
 - Raise the profile of Belfast as an investment location and digitally connected city in the US.
- 2.4 The Council has been working in partnership with, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, Northern Ireland Science Park and Digital Circle in the recruitment and promotion of the Belfast Tech Mission, and over 45 applications have been received.
- 2.5 A selection panel made up of key staff from Invest NI, Northern Ireland Science Park and the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce has been established to help score and select the applicants, with the selection of the final 20 companies to be completed by the 12 August 2013. Council officers are working closely with Invest Northern Ireland staff based in San Jose to develop and co-ordinate the itinerary which will consist of three key strands – business to business, civic and city and university programme.
- 2.6 The programme will consist of a series of parallel strands made up of 3 days of showcasing and one to one meetings for

the participating businesses and those based on the West Coast, a civic and city programme between the Council and the City of San Francisco, Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG), City of Berkeley and the City of Portland and a University programme between Queen's, University of Ulster and the University of Berkeley. A draft itinerary is attached and additional details will be added once confirmed.

- 2.7 As requested by the Development Committee in March 2013, this report seeks approval for key Council staff to attend and participate on the mission. Due to the nature and scope of the mission and the additional resources confirmed for the project, it is recommended that the following representatives are in attendance.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Budget of £20,000 approved at Development Committee in March 2013. Additional financial support from Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund of up to £40,000 has been confirmed to support additional event management and business support on the ground in the United States.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Approve the attendance of the Lord Mayor, Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee (or nominees) and two Council Officers.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Women in Business Awards 2013

The Committee was advised that the third Women in Business Awards ceremony would take place in the Culloden Estate and Spa on 21st November. The Director indicated that an opportunity existed for the Council to sponsor, at a cost of £3,000, the 'Best Small Business' category at the event. He outlined the benefits which the Council would accrue should it agree to sponsor the award, which included significant publicity and the promotion of the Council's role as a supporter of small businesses in the City. He added that the sponsorship package would entitle the Council to avail also of a number of free places at the ceremony and he recommended that the Committee authorise the expenditure as outlined.

The Committee agreed to sponsor the 'Best Small Business' category at the event at a cost of £3,000.

Accessibility Support

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th December, 2012, it had agreed to commence a tendering exercise, to a maximum value of £25,000, to appoint a suitably-qualified organisation to provide City centre accessibility services for the Council during the financial year 2013/2014. It was reported that, subsequently, Shopmobility Belfast had been appointed by the Council to deliver the service.

The Director reported that one of the key components of the procurement exercise had been a condition that tenderers would submit also an evaluation report on the level of support required to enhance accessibility within the City and to establish a framework to collect and monitor information in this regard. The Director outlined the principal findings of the report which had been submitted by Shopmobility Belfast and recommended that, in light of the development of the Belfast City Access Strategy, together with the requirement to address further the full range of accessibility requirements within the City, the Committee would agree, in principle, to allocate a sum of £25,000 to support City centre accessibility services in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided in respect of the procurement exercise for 2013/2014 and agreed, in principle, that a sum of £25,000 be allocated to support City centre accessibility services in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.

Department Capital Projects – Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the progress which had been achieved to date in respect of the various capital programmes for which the Department had assumed responsibility under the Investment Programme.

Renewing the Routes – Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The ongoing Renewing the Routes Programme has delivered local regeneration projects at targeted locations across the arterial routes of Belfast since 2004. The Programme has facilitated the investment of approximately £6.5 million across these key routes and neighbourhoods.**
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide updates and seek approval for a number of proposals linked to the ongoing programme. The updates are in respect of:**
 - Progress of works under our current agreed programme in Ormeau and Newtownards Roads**

- Progress on the development of the DSD funded local regeneration programme on Lower Ormeau incorporating Cormac Street and Newtownards Road
- 1.3 Following on from the programme approved in February 2012, Committee support is sought in relation to the proposed local regeneration action plans for Andersonstown Road and Oldpark Road.
- 1.4 The support of the committee is also sought in relation to the approval of continued partnership working with Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) and Department for Social

2 Key Issues

2.1 Newtownards Road Update

The commercial improvement programme is the main emphasis of work on the Newtownards Road (from Bridge End to Witham Street). The Newtownards Road scheme is being delivered in two phases, the Council funded programme (£150,000) with over 40 units signed up for cosmetic updates is due for completion in Autumn 2013; and the DSD funded programme (£155,000) covering approximately 30 further businesses carried out in the period up to the end of March 2014. As part of the wider local regeneration activity on the road, a number of vacant sites have been identified and council is working with local stakeholders and statutory partners in developing projects to address the issues presented by the underutilised areas.

2.2 Ormeau Road Update

Work on the commercial improvement programme is underway on Ormeau Road (from Ormeau Embankment to Ravenhill Road Roundabout) with 35 properties participating in the improvement programme. The work to the commercial properties will be supplemented by environmental improvement schemes have been agreed with some of the road's prominent buildings including Ballynafeigh Orange Hall and Ballynafeigh Community Development Association.

2.3 Proposed Regeneration Action Plans for 2014/15 Programme

Since approval in February 2012, work has continued on the development of plans for the agreed target areas. Extensive scoping and engagement work with relevant statutory and community contacts, including elected representatives for the area was carried out as part of the plan development process. This activity has informed the development and prioritisation of the local regeneration work summarised in the regeneration action plans included with this report for endorsement by committee. The proposed plans also identify a longer list of

additional projects that could form the basis for further work should increased resources become available (through external sources currently being actively pursued with potential project partners) or modifications are required for existing plans.

- 2.4 The key common themes emerging from the scoping work with local Councillors and stakeholders were identified as:
- *Environmental improvements* - major issues facing the routes are dereliction or under used property and often poor general environments; requiring action to ensure improvements that can complement other developments;
 - *Heritage* – the roads contain elements of historical or cultural significance that offer the opportunity to develop these local assets through architectural lighting, interpretive signage and heritage projects;
 - *Commercial improvements* – focus areas have been identified along the routes; the areas are hubs of activity with local shops, services and facilities serving the community. The commercial improvements will focus on improving the environment within these areas for residents, businesses and visitors;
 - *Environmental works* - Targeted and sustained clean-up and graffiti removal campaigns working with local groups;
 - *Collaborative work* - essential in maximising finite budgets, particularly with a joined-up approach to external funding opportunities with statutory agencies. The underlying objective is to maximise the impact of the Council's own contribution through internal joint working and external partnership opportunities alongside community safety, parks and leisure, economic development, building control, tourism and the arts and cleansing services.
- 2.5 Members will note the relevant area and Regeneration Action Plans for the Andersonstown Road (Stewartstown Road) and Oldpark Road are appended for consideration. The additional longer list of projects is also provided for information and as a guide to the potential for further activity should additional resources become available.
- 2.6 The approved Oldpark node runs from Torrens Avenue to Cliftondene Crescent. However, feedback from our consultations highlighted the potential for collaboration between the council's programme and the proposed BRO Public Realm Environmental Improvement scheme scheduled for 2015. Scoping work and consultations have identified units outside the approved node that could be improved

under the 2014/15 programme which would not be part of the DSD PREI scheme.

- 2.7 On the basis of the further consultations with BRO the scoping activity was reviewed to explore the potential to take forward both commercial and environmental improvements between Oldpark Ave and Cliftondene Crescent. Whilst this approach would slightly extend the node and require the council to work on up to 5 additional units, it was considered that if approved the package of works could be successfully completed for the expanded node area. The project estimates indicate that the additional work would be accommodated within the current budget of £150,000 and if included would ensure that the whole route from Crumlin Road would benefit from environmental improvements on completion of the council and BRO initiatives.

2.8 Ongoing collaboration with DSD: Update on Cromac Street/Lower Ormeau Road and Newtownards Road

Construction work is due to commence in the autumn for the DSD funded units on the Newtownards Rd (Bridge End to Albertbridge Road). The initial condition survey for the Newtownards Rd is complete and proposed designs have been agreed. Consultation with shop owners will be undertaken over the next few months. The Council team will continue to work with owners/tenants to agree final designs for the properties.

- 2.9 The design team is currently being commissioned for the Cromac Street/Lower Ormeau Road programme (from Cromac Street to Stranmillis Embankment). The traders have responded positively to the proposed commercial improvement programme and it is anticipated works will commence in early 2014.

2.10 Joint working with DSD

On 21st May 2013, the committee supported a proposal for partnership working with DSD's Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) for Newtownards Road and Lower Ormeau incorporating Cromac Street on the basis of a funding offer from BRO of an additional £310,000. The Department for Social Development has recently approached the Council to explore the potential of partnership activity at Woodstock Road.

- 2.11 The request from BRO is that the Council assist with the development of a commercial improvement programme covering properties on Woodstock Road (Beersbridge Road up to Loopland). Members will be aware that the council

recently completed a partnership project with the DSD for the Woodstock Link, which is a section of Node 1.

- 2.12 The Department has requested initial development proposals outlining works and associated costs for additional regeneration works beyond the scope of the council's current Renewing the Routes programme. The Department has confirmed that all costs associated with the commercial improvement programme will be covered by their BRO budgets. Approval is therefore sought from Committee for staff assistance in the development and delivery of the potential complementary commercial regeneration projects.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 There are no additional resource implications arising from the proposed assistance to the joint working projects with DSD in the development and implementation of an environmental/commercial improvement projects for Woodstock Road.
- 3.2 The Department has confirmed that all capital costs associated with the commercial improvement programme will be covered by BRO's budgets and permission is being sought from Committee for staff assistance in the development and delivery of the commercial regeneration projects.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 Committee is requested to:
- To note the ongoing work in relation to the current programme on Ormeau Road (Ormeau Embankment to Ravenhill Road roundabout) and Newtownards road (Bridge End to Witham Street);
 - Endorse the proposed Renewing the Routes Regeneration Action Plans for the 2013/14 programme on Andersonstown Road (Hillhead Crescent to Suffolk Road) and Oldpark Road (extended area from Oldpark Ave to Cliftondene Crescent).
 - To note the progress with the DSD funded local regeneration programme on Lower Ormeau Road incorporating Cromac Street and on Newtownards Road
 - To approve staff assistance in the development and delivery of a DSD funded environmental/commercial regeneration improvement programme for Woodstock Road as detailed in paragraph 2.11"

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Lagan Canal Improvements – Request for Support

The Committee was reminded that the Council, in conjunction with Castlereagh Borough Council and Lisburn City Council, had, in 2007, established the Lagan Rural Partnership in order to secure funding from the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme to redevelop the Lagan Canal. The Director informed the Committee that a further application for assistance under the programme, which had been led by Castlereagh Borough Council, had been successful. He reported that the finance secured would enable enhancement work to be carried out to allow for the installation of bike docks at the Malone House, the Clement Wilson Park and the Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. Accordingly, he reported that Castlereagh Borough Council had requested a contribution of £9,475 from the Council towards the cost of the installation of interpretative panels and bike docks at those sites within the Council boundary.

The Committee acceded to the request.

International Marketing Framework

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that one of the key commitments in the Council’s Investment Programme 2012- 2015 is that the Council will work with city partners to promote Belfast proactively on the international stage to attract trade and investment, increase visitor and student numbers and build the networks necessary to support growth.**

- 1.2 Within Belfast, the Council is one of many city stakeholders with established connections across the world for a range of purposes. All of the city’s key stakeholders engage internationally to market their product and develop supportive relationships. There is considerable scope to co-ordinate the international promotional efforts within Belfast between stakeholders so that the city is presented positively, consistently and effectively. In order to win new investment, attract talent and visitors, push forward our indigenous businesses and connect our communities to the world, Belfast must present a united proposition that enables all stakeholders to fulfill their own goals - in short, city stakeholders must speak to the world as one city, with one voice.**

- 1.3 Over the last year work has been undertaken to develop a draft International relations framework that seeks to shape how city stakeholders can work together in a stronger and purposeful way to maximize the economic impact for Belfast as a whole. Following extensive research and analysis, stakeholder engagement and feedback from Committee and political parties, this report sets out the process adopted, the proposed market segments and the key geographical locations considered appropriate for Belfast. Further consultation with stakeholders is required to refine the targets and joint projects within the detail of the Action Plan which will follow formal adoption of the Framework by Council.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 During the last year significant consultation with over 20 key stakeholders has been undertaken to establish the international relationships that city stakeholders are already engaged in, to generate a common understanding of what Belfast has to offer and to identify opportunities to build on existing relationships. Based on this consultation, a draft international relations framework to position Belfast as a strong, attractive and competitive destination of choice for those who trade, invest, visit and study. This was initially considered by Committee in May 2013 and subsequently was discussed through party briefings. The appended Framework is now the proposed revised version following the political parties' feedback.
- 2.2 The feedback from Committee and party briefings highlighted
- the need for a prioritised and focused approach;
 - the inclusion of UK and Ireland links;
 - a short-term action plan for the period 2013-2014; and
 - an assessment of the potential to reignite Friends of Belfast
- 2.2 In summary, the proposed aims of the International Relations Framework are as follows:
- To maximise economic return of development for Belfast.
 - To increase the economic benefits of marketing Belfast internationally.

2.3 The following objectives are proposed to help increase the economic benefits of developing a city-wide approach to proactively market Belfast internationally:

- Deliver increased economic return to Belfast through collaborative international promotion.
- Develop meaningful international partnerships and civic relationships to support Belfast's growth.
- Promote the attractiveness of the city for business, education and tourism.
- Create the optimum mechanisms for international promotion of Belfast.

2.4 The framework sets out:

- targets for each of the three primary market segments – trade and investment, tourism, education & learning; and
- key actions for each of the geographical target areas - China, Europe, India, North America.

2.4 An outline action plan is appended for the period 2013 – 2015, which builds on the baseline work already undertaken. It furthermore identifies the suggested role of Council as a co-ordinating partner and presents proposed priority actions for Council at this stage. Joint Projects emanating from other stakeholders have yet to be added to this plan which will occur during the next phase of consultation.

2.5 Proposed outcomes and annual targets for BCC are outlined in the Framework, focusing on Business & Leisure Tourism, Education, Learning & Talent and Trade & investment. This includes longer term outcomes and annual targets which will be achieved most effectively by Council working with key stakeholders in the delivery of the Framework. As the regional driver, Belfast has a key role to play in helping to deliver a number of regional targets; however, it is important to recognise the targets and longer term outcomes need to be agreed with city stakeholders as they can only be achieved in partnership.

2.6 To help deliver on the targets for this year with respect to the current International Relations Framework, the following results have been achieved to date:

General: Development of the Framework and relationships

- Held stakeholder workshop with Lord Mayor

- Carried out stakeholder analysis
- Produced first International Belfast newsletter
- Joined NI Connections Diaspora
- Produced a shared International calendar with stakeholders
- Connection made to promote Belfast through HMS Duncan
- Developed Belfast civic welcome programme format

China

- Facilitated and supported Chinese New Year including Lantern display at City Hall
- Economic Conference
- Fashion Show
- Chinese Cultural day at Ulster Hall
- Produced China briefing
- Held stakeholder workshop
- Reviewed Sister City relationship with Hefei

India

- Secured and hosted Global India Business Meeting
- Developed GIBM programme and secured 300 delegates, 20 investment leads and 50 local companies connected to Indian opportunities
- Delivered 40 plus India in Belfast week events
- Delivered GIBM and India Week communications plan
- Undertook study visit to India
- Produced India country briefing
- Held 2 India stakeholder workshops
- Hosted Mumbai VIP on renewable energies

USA

- Undertook mission to Nashville, South by South West and Austin
- Reviewed Friends of Belfast network
- Produced country briefing
- Exploring September cultural/tourism visit to NYC
- Planning October trade mission to California
- Consulted with stakeholders

Europe

- Ongoing lobby to maximise EU funds for Belfast 2014-2020
- Leading on NI European Regional Forum in Europe

- Re-established cooperation links with Dublin, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh

2.7 Sister Cities

Reviewing and fully utilising the civic and sister city relationships that already exist has formed part of the development of the Framework. Members will be aware that BCC has a sister city relationship with Nashville, USA and Hefei in China. Sister cities relationships provide a formal civic link between Belfast and that city. In order to make it meaningful there needs to be actions attached to each relationship to deliver results for Belfast. At this point, it is considered valuable to continue developing the sister city link with Nashville given its importance in the creative industries and especially the music sector.

- 2.8 Hefei in China has always been a more difficult sister city link to develop and achieve tangible results. Strenuous efforts have been made to deliver trade and investment from this relationship and specific programmes of work have been put in place, however, securing a meaningful result in the short term remains a challenge. The Local Chinese Chamber of Commerce are still committed to Hefei and one of their members has recently been appointed by Hefei City Government as a special envoy to promote the relationship. This means that it may be difficult to withdraw fully from the relationship without causing offence. Our latest analysis would indicate that it would be more fruitful to develop a new relationship with Shenyang in China, which is the region visited last year by OFM/DFM, QUB, UU, Belfast Met, Invest NI and Bombardier. Exploratory work is underway to assess the full value of a formal link with Shenyang.

2.9 N. Irish Connections (NIC) Belfast Connections:

Council is now a member of the newly established N. Irish Connections body, which is a company set up under the auspices of Invest NI to link to Diaspora throughout the world. The work programme encompasses the creation of an active database of persons from NI, and persons with an interest in NI; the hosting of in market events to bring the Diaspora together to ask for their help in attracting investment and opportunities for NI and the establishment of the Diaspora network as an international marketing tool.

- 2.10 As a member of this network, Belfast has access to the named contacts and can be part of events and communications for

specific promotional purposes. Members asked that consideration be given to the reconvening of the Friends of Belfast network, which existed from the late 90s as a social capital network of business people, academics, political and community representatives with an interest in supporting the regeneration of Belfast. Whilst some of the original Friends of Belfast network members are still in contact with Council there is a need to refresh and relaunch a meaningful network aligned with our current objectives and priorities in the Investment Programme. It is considered that this can best be achieved by developing a 'Belfast Connections' subset within the NIC network. This will avoid duplication and confusion and ensure that Belfast has a specific identity of its own which links to NIC contacts with a particular interest in Belfast. Such a Belfast Connections network can be sustained with minimal cost if we are part of the wider NIC network albeit separate resources would be required for specific Belfast Connections events and marketing activity.

2.11 City Marketing

It is clear from the research, which has been undertaken, that each of the organisations involved in the marketing of the city tend to do this independently of each other. The marketing of the city has developed organically rather than through an integrated marketing strategy. Each organisation focuses on their own perception and experience of Belfast using their own narratives, communication channels, target audience and brands.

2.12 The development of the International Relations Framework demonstrates there is a high level of commonality in terms of the geographical locations where stakeholders are actively promoting the city and it is evident that there is the potential for more effective promotion and greater benefit if the city had a collective narrative and a brand which is understood and owned by all the city's stakeholders.

2.13 There is strong evidence that cities with a clear narrative, strong brand and a coherent city marketing strategy are successful in attracting investment, visitors and global talent. Such cities include New York, Berlin, Barcelona and closer to home, Manchester, Edinburgh and Dublin.

2.14 There is an urgent need for the city to develop an Integrated City Marketing strategy, which includes:

- The development of a city narrative, which is agreed by all stakeholders.

- A refreshment of the City Brand ensuring it reflects the city's ambitions, its values and narrative, which is collectively owned by the city's stakeholders.
- Agreed target audiences, product development priorities, marketing materials and communication channels, including a strong digital, on-line presence.
- Agree the optimum structures for co-ordinated marketing of the city.

2.15 The necessary resources or expertise to develop a city marketing strategy is not available in-house. It is, therefore, proposed that the Council engage the services of a City Marketing specialist to support the development of such a strategy. It is recommended that a stakeholder steering group is set up to oversee the development and implementation of the strategy under the chairmanship of the Council's Chief Executive.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Members have agreed a budget of £80,000, in the current financial year, for international relations, as well as a £150,000 budget specifically for the Global India Business Meeting.
- 3.2 Currently international relations work is being undertaken by staff within the European Unit. .
- 3.3 The cost of developing an International Marketing strategy should not exceed £50K and will be met from the existing City Development budget.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 There are unlikely to be any Equality and Good Relations issues attached to this report, although the International Relations Framework is currently undergoing equality screening.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that Members:
- i. approve the International Relations Framework for Belfast and the associated action plan;

- ii. agree to continued engagement with key city stakeholders and the approach to Belfast's sister city relationships with Nashville and Hefei;
- iii. Agree to the employment of a City Marketing specialist to support the development of a City Marketing strategy to include the elements set out in Paragraph 2.14 of this report;
- iv. Agree to the setting up of a stakeholder steering group chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and approved the contents of the Framework, a copy of which was made available on the Council's Mod.gov website.

International Relationship with China

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on international marketing opportunities that have been identified there. Key future actions are outlined for consideration and approval.
- 1.2 The implementation of our Investment Programme and commitment to develop an International Relations Framework provided the impetus to explore international marketing opportunities in China. This included a review of our Sister City relationship with the city of Hefei which BCC signed a Sister Cities Agreement with in 2005.
- 1.3 This agreement committed our two cities to a number of actions in relation to business development and investment, education and training. BCC's outward visits to Hefei provided local companies with opportunities to link up with counterparts there and a cultural delegation also participated in Chinese New Year celebrations.
- 1.4 Visits from Hefei to Belfast included student delegations and visits from officials who have been interested in learning about infrastructural developments such as Titanic Quarter and North Foreshore, the Waterfront, our cultural tourism offer and care for the elderly. The last visit from Hefei officials took place in September 2012.
- 1.5 However, our relationship with Hefei has not yielded anticipated results. Research and exploration of international marketing opportunities in China have identified other more

beneficial activity for our city to engage in. Findings to date are detailed in the following section.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1** Over the past 8 months relationships have been developed with a number of key stakeholders who have provided advice and guidance on international marketing activity and who have helped identify potential opportunities for our city. Stakeholders have advised that China is a very political country and that 'Guanxi' must develop to build relationships and this can only be done over time. There are no quick wins in China and a 5 year strategic plan has been recommended with a reasonable budget. Branding and communication also need to be considered with Belfast as the economic driver of the region. A plan of proposed actions has been developed with stakeholders.
- 2.2** Stakeholders have also highlighted the importance of understanding culture, language and customs. Support for cultural learning has been offered by the University of Ulster's Confucius Institute. The Institute can provide workshops for staff and Councillors as well as an opportunity for one or two people to take part in a study visit to Shanghai or Beijing. A Shanghai based company headed by Stephen McCartney (originally from Northern Ireland) has also offered a week long placement with his company to support cultural learning as well as the opportunity to develop contacts. Both organisations offer financial support to cover costs.
- 2.3** Support is also welcome for local activity promoting Chinese culture such as Chinese New Year. We have worked closely with the Chinese Welfare Association (CWA) and Chinese Chamber of Commerce to help co-ordinate a very successful Chinese New Year in 2013. Support and guidance has already been given to help with plans for 2014 and the CWA will present outline ideas to BCC for the 2014 Chinese New Year Celebrations by the end of September.
- 2.4** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has shared recent reports concerning the unprecedented growth of outbound travel from China and the potential for our city and region to attract Chinese visitors. It is recommended that this should be a focus of our international marketing activity for the 2014 Chinese New Year programme.
- 2.5** In relation to Hefei, it has been recommended that we retain our Sister City relationship. An invitation has been received for 1 – 3 representatives to attend a Sister Cities Seminar from 28 October to 2 November. All expenses in Hefei will be

covered including seminar attendance, hotel, meals, local transportation and a tour of the city. Flight costs need to be paid by ourselves. In 2014 our link with Hefei can be maintained by providing relevant contacts for local artists who have been invited to hold an exhibition in the city's art museum. However, the extent of our involvement with this city needs to be balanced to reflect other opportunities that are opening up for Belfast and the level of resources required.

- 2.6 Opportunities have been identified to strengthen and consolidate the relationship between Belfast and the city of Shenyang. Both Queens University Belfast (QUB) and Bombardier have long established relationships with this city at political business and education sector levels. Negotiations are currently underway for QUB to establish a medical campus there.
- 2.7 Last month Councillor Reynolds had the opportunity to visit the Foreign Affairs Office and Mofcome in Shenyang. A number of similarities between our cities were identified. Shenyang is expanding its public sector work in areas of tourism, finance, care for the elderly and education, and the city is open to technical co-operation with potential UK companies. A number of actions were proposed:
- The Lord Mayor of Shenyang could visit Belfast during his UK visit in September/October and is interested in meeting relevant Belfast businesses.
 - Companies from Belfast are invited to participate in an IPR conference in Shenyang to be held on 25 and 26 September.
 - Co-operation and joint project working between creative design companies is welcome.
- 2.8 The China Britain Business Council (CBBC) helped to facilitate meetings in Shenyang for Councillor Reynolds. CBBC provides an excellent service to organisations wishing to build relationships and do business in China and have requested that BCC joins as a member. The cost of joining is normally £3,100; however CBBC has offered access to their services for 15 months for the same fee with the opportunity to agree specific objectives and deliverables with them.
- 2.9 A productive relationship has also been built with Stephen McCartney, Chief Executive of SIP Engineering based in Shanghai who is keen to work with us to promote business and other opportunities between Belfast and China. Stephen

has committed to bring together a group of business associates in Shanghai who are originally from NI and who are keen to lend support. He has offered to provide links to relevant contacts in Shanghai and to help with a financial contribution for this. We have made links for Stephen with the newly formed NI Connections.

- 2.10 The International China Investment Forum (ICIF) is also interested in carrying out a site visit to Belfast to assess the potential for our city to host a future meeting of the Forum. ICIF's objective is to assist Chinese companies to invest abroad, to create business and trade opportunities for host countries.
- 2.11 It has also been recommended that BCC plays a part in welcoming and receiving visitors from China to help profile our city. Staff from QUB recently accompanied a delegation of students from the university of Jilin (one of China's top ten universities) to visit the Lord Mayor. Feedback has been extremely positive and students will return to their city as ambassadors for Belfast which will help to promote our city as a place to live, work and study.
- 2.12 The Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce is also interested in working with us on export related activities, and opportunities for joint working are now being explored for the Chinese market.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Funding to support actions will come from the agreed international budget.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members approve the following key actions:
- To focus resources on Shenyang by hosting the Mayor of Shenyang in September/October and working with stakeholders to establish relevant meetings and exploring opportunities for co-operation between creative design companies in Belfast and Shenyang.
 - To liaise with Invest NI, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, Institute of Directors and Confederation of British Industry to inform their clients of the opportunity to participate in the Shenyang IPR conference in September which can be facilitated by the CBBC.

- To access support from CBBC via Invest NI (who are members) in the first instance and to review membership at a later stage depending on the level of support needed.
- To maintain our Sister City relationship with Hefei and consider invitation for representatives to attend the Sister Cities seminar in Hefei 28 October to 2 November 2013. In 2014 our link can be maintained by providing contacts for local artists to exhibit their work in Hefei museum of art.
- To support visits to Belfast for visiting teachers, professors, students and businessmen etc offering a tour and tea at City Hall and the chance to meet with the Lord Mayor.
- To work with Tourism Ireland, Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Titanic Belfast to focus on tourism as our international dimension for Chinese New Year 2014.
- To engage Councillors and staff in workshops on culture, etiquette etc and explore potential to participate in study visit offered by the Confucius Institute.
- To develop and agree a budget and resources to take work forward over the short, medium and long term.
- To bring together a second meeting of the China stakeholder group.
- To explore the opportunity to host the International China Investment Forum in Belfast.
- To explore opportunities for joint working with Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce on export related activities.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

HMS Duncan – Affiliation to Belfast

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th September, 2008, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed to accept an invitation for the Council and the City to become formally associated with the HMS Duncan, one of the Royal Navy's Type 45 Destroyers. It was reported that work on the ship had now been completed and the Council had received an invitation to attend the formal handover ceremony, which would take place in Portsmouth on 26th September. The Director outlined the promotional and marketing activities which would be undertaken to promote Belfast at the event and, given the significance of the City's maritime heritage, he recommended that the Committee agree to authorise the attendance at the event of the Lord Mayor, the Chairman of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, together with the Director (or their nominees).

Moved by Councillor Maskey,
Seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile,

That the Council agrees not to be represented at the handover event for HMS Duncan.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendation of the Director.

Belfast in Rio

The Director informed the Committee that Rock in Rio was one of the world's largest music festivals and would take place in Rio de Janeiro in September. He indicated that an opportunity existed for Belfast's music industry to be promoted at the event through a new partnership which had been established between Visit Britain and the organisers. He reported that a key element of that agreement had been the creation of 'Rock Street', which would showcase bands and promote music from throughout the United Kingdom.

The Committee was advised that Belfast and Northern Ireland would be represented at 'Rock Street' and, accordingly, a number of locally themed events had been proposed. These would include performances by Belfast bands and the promotion of Belfast Music Week. The Northern Ireland Bureau, which acted as the lead partners on the initiative, had confirmed financial support of up to £6,000 towards the event, whilst Tourism Ireland had agreed to sponsor a competition, with a first prize of a return trip to Belfast Music Week. The Director reported that the Council had been requested to make a contribution of £2,000 to assist in promotion and branding.

The Committee agreed to contribute £2,000 towards the event for the purposes outlined.

Sister City Initiative - Nashville

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"2 Key Issues

2.1 The programme of civic meetings included Mayor Dean of Nashville, Music City Council, Metro Council, Warren Center for the Humanities, Curb Centre for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy, Nashville Convention Bureau and meetings with the Director of Economic and Community Development and Sister Cities.

Outputs from the visit are as follows:

- Following an invitation from the Council Elected Members, a delegation of up to 15 industry professionals, elected officials and community members have confirmed**

attendance at Belfast Music Week (13–17 November 2013). There is further potential for Mayor Dean to attend with the confirmed Metro Council Members. Members will be aware that Belfast Music Week, which included over 250 events in 70 venues, had an economic impact of over £2.08 million for the city and is a celebration of local bands and venues, featuring live music performances, workshops, seminars and networking events.

The delegation will include the following who will deliver industry programmes:

1. Randy Goodman, Co-Chair (with Mayor Dean) of the Music City Council and former Global President of RCA Records with key US industry representatives from the Music City Council including Ken Levitan, founder and president of Vector Management (Kings of Leon and Emmylou Harris). The Music City Music Council is an association of business leaders charged by Mayor Karl Dean with developing strategies toward heightening the awareness and development of Nashville as a global music city and is a partnership between the Nashville Mayor's Office, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau. This includes the development of creative enterprises, publishing, artist development, technology, media and cultural tourism.
2. Key representatives from Google and YouTube to present Google for Creators, an initiative to empower cultural industries to better create, expose and promote their art, build bigger audiences and monetize content.
3. Nashville Industry businesses who support creative and cultural industries both in traditional and technology infrastructure. Further outputs include:
 - Queen's confirmed a plan to host a festival of creativity of the Creative Arts and Collaborative Humanities in relation to linkages between the two universities. This includes cultural tourism products developed in partnership with Belfast City Council, including the new Belfast Soundwalks project linked to Literary Belfast, Dept of English, Sonic Arts Research Centre, through the Institute of Collaborative Humanities.
 - New Creative Industry linkages with the Nashville International Film Festival who will include a Belfast premiere in their 2014 programme.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 A cost of no more than £5,000 for a Civic Itinerary for the delegation and reception at Belfast City Hall to be found within the Tourism, Culture and Arts 2013/14 budget.

4 Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- Receive a presentation from the Co-Chair of the Nashville Music Council
- Approve Officers putting together a Civic Itinerary for the delegation and to host a reception at Belfast City Hall at a cost of no more than £5,000
- Approve including key partners such as the US Consulate, DETI, DCAL, Invest NI, Arts Council NI, Creative and Cultural Skills, Visit Belfast, NITB and Tourism Ireland to ensure a joined up approach in relation to positioning Belfast as a Creative and Cultural City.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Giro d'Italia 2014

The Committee was reminded that Belfast would host the opening stages of the Giro d'Italia in May, 2014. It was pointed out that the international launch of the event would take place in Milan on 7th October. The Director reported that an invitation to attend the ceremony had been extended by the Mayor of Milan to the Lord Mayor.

The Committee agreed that it be represented at the event by the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (or his nominee) and that one officer would be authorised to attend also.

Belfast Community Investment Programme – Update

(Mrs. C. Taggart, Community Services Manager, and Mr. C. Campbell, Principal Solicitor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 This paper is to seek Members' approval for:

- A revised governance structure for the Belfast Community Investment Programme (BCIP)

- The approach to be taken in the provision for Community Services grant aid for the period 2014 to 2015.
- 1.2 The *'Building Better Communities - Belfast Community Investment Programme'* (BCIP) began in 2012 as a joint project between the council and DSD to create a single £5.4 million community development fund for Belfast. Under the original plan BCIP would have opened for applications in October 2013 and make awards for the period 2014 to 2015.
- 1.2 At Development Committee on 25 March 2013 Members approved a draft BCIP programme as a basis for public consultation and asked officers to prepare:
- A draft equality impact assessment on the proposal (EQIA);
 - A report considering the approach to budget allocation; and
 - Finalised materials for the public consultation to begin in May 2013.
- 1.4 Following this meeting (and reflecting concerns raised by a number of community organisations regarding the BCIP timeline) it was agreed there was not sufficient time to deliver the project by 2014. As a result DSD recommended to their Minister in June that DSD withdraw as a joint partner in the project. This was based on the argument that, by moving BCIP's start date to 2015 the project had become a transfer under RLG and was thus the sole responsibility of council.
- 1.5 A paper explaining the situation was presented to Development Committee on 23 April. A subsequent options paper in June provided Members with alternative timelines for the implementation of BCIP. Members approved April 2015 as a revised timeframe for delivering BCIP, while noting that resourcing for the option was still a matter of discussion between council and DSD.
- 1.6 It was also brought to Members' attention that all of council's existing grant schemes for community development are scheduled to end in March 2014 and were due to be superseded in 2014 by BCIP. However, with BCIP's start date being deferred, interim arrangements now have to be established for the financial year 2014 to 2015.
- 1.7 At June 2013 Committee, Members agreed to receive a further paper in August once officers had discussed the issues with Legal Services.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The key issues considered below are:

- The revised governance arrangements for the BCIP project
- Implications for 2014/15 grant awards

2.2 Revised governance arrangements

As BCIP is no longer a joint DSD/Council initiative the project's governance structure will need to be reconstituted as a council-only project. A new project board will be established comprising appropriate Council officers.

2.3 As Members will note that, given its fairly unique position in being one of the earliest transfers under LGR, and the fact that it includes a significant re-design of a function, the BCIP project presents a microcosm of the much larger project around the transfer of functions. It is suggested that this learning will continue to prove invaluable to other parts of council over the coming weeks and months. Consequently it is proposed that the council's Programme Managers for LGR and for the Development Department are both given reference status on the board. In addition it is proposed an observer from DSD's Reform of Local Government Business Continuity Unit also be invited.

2.4 The original project steering group included a representative from the community and voluntary sector, Avila Kilmurray from CFNI. Unfortunately due to other pressing time commitments Dr Kilmurray resigned from this role. Feedback from the sector was that a single representative was not adequate and far from best practice. Consequently, it is proposed that consideration be given within the new project governance structure to establish a "reference panel" made up of representatives from the community and voluntary sector. No such structure currently exists within Belfast and Members may wish to consider if there may be merit in its development for other aspects of council's work (e.g. community planning, area working groups etc). It is proposed that an options paper be brought to a future Committee meeting.

2.5 Political reporting structure: As a result of the revised timeframe of April 2015, BCIP will be implemented across the new Belfast local district area which will then include the transferring areas of Lisburn and Castlereagh. BCIP is a

design and transfer of function and there are specific implications for the areas of Castlereagh and Lisburn councils merging into Belfast. Consequently, it is likely that once established, the BCIP project board will need to seek political approval from the Statutory Transition Committee (STC) rather than Development Committee.

- 2.6 As the STC has not yet been established the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will oversee the strategic business of the Reform of Local Government, (RLA) and given the time-critical nature of decision-making around BCIP, it is recommended that, as an interim arrangement, approval is sought from this Committee with the expectation that decision-making around the project moves to the STC later in the year once its processes are fully established.
- 2.7 Development Committee will continue to receive update reports on the project.
- 2.8 Implications for existing grant funding 2014/2015

Given that BCIP will not now be introduced until April 2015 both Council and DSD will need to consider the management of its existing community development grant schemes. These are all scheduled to end in March 2014 and, without BCIP in place, an interim measure will have to be established to bridge funding for the community and voluntary sector for 2014 to 2015. DSD will need to establish its own solution for community development funding under both Neighbourhood Renewal and its Community Investment Fund.

- 2.9 Informally, DSD officers have suggested that BRO and VCU are likely to extend their current contracts for Neighbourhood Renewal and the Community Investment Fund over the same period. It will be important for council and DSD to continue to co-ordinate the communications around these extensions. the council will be emphasising that the 2014/15 arrangements are in preparation for BCIP for 2015. We will be encouraging DSD to do likewise.
- 2.10 Within council, meetings have taken place with Legal Services to discuss the options available and, in particular, the viability of extending our own grant schemes for a further twelve months. (These funding streams include the Capacity Building Grant programme, the Revenue grant for community facilities, the City's Advice Services funding to the 5 local consortia and our Small grants funding.

2.11 From discussions regarding the rolling forward of the existing large grant programmes, Legal Services have advised that in order to mitigate the possibility of any challenge to Council on the grounds of openness and transparency a limited open call is run for the Revenue grant only given this has not been open for a number of years.

2.12 In consideration of this advice the proposal is to:

- Roll forward the current funding arrangements with regard to Advice, Capacity and Revenue for 2014/15. Any extension will be subject to normal monitoring requirements and the submission of appropriate work programmes.
- Ongoing management of the Small grants programme (which includes project and summer scheme grants) in its current form through open advertisement.
- Invite applications to a restricted open call limited to potential new revenue grant applicants. This additional Revenue fund would open in the autumn and allow new organisations to apply for some revenue support. It is proposed that the scheme be of a total value of £50,000.
- Offer a small one year development fund to support capacity issues in the sector. The proposed one-year development fund would allow organisations to receive capacity support arranged by community services officers and aligned to our BCIP Sector Support programme. It is proposed the fund be of the value of £50,000

2.13 This option will allow both the council and the sector to primarily focus its time and resources preparing for the introduction of BCIP. If members support the proposed option, a report will be presented to the Statutory Transition Committee recommending that £100,000 is allocated from the £2m fund set aside by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to resource the implementation of Local Government Reform.

2.14 All of the grant programmes will continue to comply with the four council wide grant eligibility criteria and the additional core community development eligibility criterion for our Community Services Grant programme. These were reviewed and agreed at committee in October 2012 following a series of party briefings.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Financial mitigations may need to be implemented to ensure there is a low risk of council being challenged if Members agree to roll over the majority of grants in 2014/15. It is anticipated this will be in the region of £100,000 pending uptake, the cost of which will be met from the fund set aside to resource Local Government Reform.

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 4.1 Equality and good relations implications, in relation to this policy, are still under consideration. Further updates will be sent to the Equality and Diversity Officer in due course.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree to the proposed revised project governance
- Agree to the proposed approach to the Community Service grant programme in 2014/15.

A prolonged discussion ensued, during which a Member made the point that the steering group which would be established as part of the revised governance arrangements would contain no political representatives. It was suggested that input from Elected Members would be essential to ensure that any proposals forthcoming had been subjected to prior political scrutiny.

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Alderman Stoker,
Seconded by Councillor Convery and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations contained within the report, subject to the inclusion of one Member from each of the Political Parties on the Council on the steering group which would be established as part of the overall revised governance arrangements.

Bursary Scheme – Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th May, it had agreed that the Prince's Trust be authorised to administer the Council's Bursary Scheme during its second year on the basis that a sum of £30,000 be made available initially and that the remaining sum of £20,000 be withheld pending a request to that organisation to review its estimated administrative costs of £9,484, which would be met from within the fund.

The Director reported that officers had since met with the Trust to discuss in detail the costs for the administration of the fund.

The Director outlined the principal aspects of a report which outlined the work which the Prince's Trust had undertaken, together with the projects and programmes which it would deliver on behalf of the Council through the Bursary Scheme in 2013/2014. He reported that the Trust remained confident that it would meet its 2013/2014 target by delivering support to 200 young people. However, the Trust reemphasised had that, whilst it had identified a sum of £3,962 from within its own resources to assist in the administrative costs associated with the delivery of the Scheme, it would be necessary to address the remaining funding shortfall of £9,484 from within the fund. The Director indicated that that figure represented an overhead cost of approximately 19% of expenditure, which was in adherence with standard governmental guidelines.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a sum of £9,484 be utilised from within the fund by the Prince's Trust for administrative costs.

Lord Mayor's Belfast Day

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the initial plans which had been formulated for the hosting of the second annual Lord Mayor's Belfast Day, which, it was agreed, would take place in the City Hall and its grounds on Sunday, 29th September.

Culture and Arts Flagship Fund

The Committee noted the contents of report which provided an update on Culture and Arts Flagship Fund which would be opened to applicants from 3rd September until 29th November, recommendations in respect of which would be submitted to the Committee in February, 2014. In addition, the Committee endorsed an associated terms of reference and draft funding criteria to oversee the administration of the Fund, copies of which were made available on the Council's Mod.gov website.

Teenage Kicks Mural

The Committee was reminded that a mural at Bridge End which had depicted the opening line of The Undertones' 1978 debut single Teenage Kicks, viz., "Teenage Dreams, so hard to beat", had been removed in June by the Department of Social Development (DSD). The removal of that mural had been the subject of widespread criticism and the DSD had indicated that it would consider replacing the mural, together with providing an additional mural on the opposite side of the bridge.

The Director reported that officers from the Department had, in conjunction with local community groups and representatives from a range of agencies, developed a proposal to bring together teenagers from the Short Strand and Newtownards Road areas to design alternative community artwork at the site of the former mural. It was

anticipated that a small project would be established also to enable local young people to learn about Belfast's musical heritage and to attend professional workshops which would provide an overview of the music industry. In addition, young people from the area would be afforded free access to a number of events throughout Belfast Music Week in November.

The Committee agreed to contribute a sum of £2,000 towards the project as outlined.

Belfast City Marathon - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 BCM has operated for over three decades and 2014 will see the 33rd staging of the biggest mass participation event in the city. In 2013 just over 18,000 marathon and relay runners took part in the event. Since 2007 the event has been managed by a limited independent not-for-profit company set up by the Council. The company is overseen by a board with representation from Council (two Councillors), Sport NI, and Athletics NI and with input from the Council's City Events Unit and Corporate Communications section. Currently the Council funds the Belfast City Marathon to the sum of £42,000 per annum.

2 Key Issues

2.1 There are two BCM full-time and one fixed-term contract staff who oversee the planning and delivery of the race. There has also been a significant level of input from the Council's City Events Unit since the creation of the limited company.

2.2 The skill set and knowledge of BCM staff involved has developed extensively since the creation of the company. In fact the level of experience has reached a point where it is evident that there is no longer a requirement for Council direct input to the planning and delivery of the event.

2.3 Therefore, it is suggested that the Council's input from the City Events Unit and Corporate Communications would cease come September 2013, while annual funding would continue as normal. This would allow BCM to plan towards 2014 and beyond.

2.4 The rationale for such a move is threefold: the delivery and planning structures of BCM are such that direct input from

Council is no longer required – Officers have discussed this with the Chair and Manager of BCM. BCM now have in place experienced and knowledgeable staff to deliver the event and the freeing up of Council staff will allow them to work on significant event related projects such as the Giro d'Italia 2014, Tall Ships 2015, the annual events programme and bidding for future international events.

- 2.5 In addition BCM company intend, in the near future, to develop a strategy document that will see the development of the marathon alongside amendments to its delivery structures and the development of a series of new initiatives.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial

Currently the Council fund BCM to the sum of £42,000. Members are asked to note that this sum of finance is essential to the operation and delivery of the event and without this the company and event could not function.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 Members are requested to approve the withdrawal of Council personnel from the delivery of BCM. This will free staff to work on significant event related projects, such as the Giro d'Italia 2014, Tall Ships 2015, the Council's annual events programme and bidding for future international events."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

External Market Applications

(Ms. N. Largey, Solicitor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was advised that the Council had received two applications from external organisations to hold variety markets in the City, the details of which are set out hereunder:

1.1 Folktown CIC.

Folktown CIC, is registered as a 'social enterprise' not-for-profit organisation who wish to encourage and facilitate the revitalisation and regeneration of Folktown in Bank Square, Belfast City Centre.

- 1.2 It wishes to hold 42 weekly markets per year in Bank Square. These will take place every Thursday, from 5 March to 17 December 2015, opening hours will be from 12pm to 8pm. There will be a minimum of 25 stalls up to 31 stalls each week.

1.3 Fine and Dandy

Fine and Dandy is a new company and recently operated a small market of 18 traders on Sunday 30 June 2013 in The Crescent Arts Centre, University Road, Belfast. Permission for this small market was granted under 'Delegated Authority' by the Director as there were less than 20 stalls, thus classed as 'deminimus'.

- 1.4 Due to its success, Fine and Dandy has requested permission to hold some additional markets. Two will be in July and August and will be under the 20 stalls limit and so can be granted under Delegated Authority. However, demand for extra stalls has been made for markets that will run from September to December 2013. These will have between 25 and 30 stalls, which is over the 'deminimis' level and requires Council approval.

2 Key Issues

2.1 Folktown - Bank Square

The Regeneration of the Bank Square area by the Department of Social Development (DSD) should be finished by November 2014. The market will have a mixture of crafts and food and in year 1 they plan to have between 25 and 31 stalls in attendance. Folktown CIC hopes to start their markets on Thursday 5 March 2015 and operate the 42 markets weekly taking them to 17 December 2015 and then operate approximately at least 42 markets each year thereafter.

- 2.2 Discussions have taken place between Folktown CIC, DSD, Department of Regional Development (DRD) Roads Service and BCC Officers on the regeneration of Bank Square and ideas such as underground electrical power points have been planned as part of the refurbishment. These power points will assist in feeding electric not only to any planned market but also other forms of entertainment. Folktown have received verbal and written support for this market from retailers, restaurants and churches in the immediate vicinity.

- 2.3 As part of assistance in a start up of this market, the DSD have agreed to make a £8400 contribution in kind; offering free rental of Bank Square (in light of the CIC's not-for-profit status). There is also an estimated contribution of £10k (which DSD might be asked to contribute for the promotion of community related activities, including the markets in the

Square), although this has not been secured at this point. Folktown CIC is not a registered charity but is registered with the CIC Regulator and is a not-for-profit organisation.

2.4 Folktown aim to charge a fee of £30 per stall per market but in year 1 as an incentive to get traders involved they aim to charge traders £20 per stall. Year 1 is estimated to bring in income for Folktown CIC between £21,000 and £26,040, depending on final number of traders attending each week.

2.5 Folktown have made three requests:

- A. To have a market licence
- B. To have their licence application and stall fee waived and
- C. To receive financial support to set up their market, including first year administration and running costs. These costs include.
 - 1. Public and Employee liability Insurance,
 - 2. Sundries such as telephone, internet, stationery and postage
 - 3. Market management and event team wages
 - 4. Waste collection
 - 5. Portable toilet facilities and cleaning of same,
 - 6. Street Cleansing
 - 7. Electricity costs
 - 8. 2 x Security personnel
 - 9. Office rent
 - 10. Electricity and heating of office
 - 11. Accountant and legal fees

2.6 Capital outlay costs include:

- 1. Purchase of 35 Market stalls
- 2. Purchase of Waste bins
- 3. Business plan, research and consultancy fees
- 4. Design and architect fees
- 5. Purchase of a computer and printer,

2.7 Recommended responses to Folktown CIC Application

2.8 A. To have a Market licence:

Granting a licence is proposed as acceptable due to the following:

- The potential of developing and regeneration of the area
- It has support of local retailers
- Their aim is to work with local producers and suppliers

- They aim to provide, (in year 2 and in partnership with the traders) workshops and educational events for the general public, in healthy cooking and eating
- They will seek to reduce anti-social behaviour
- It provides job and work opportunities
- They provided an acceptable business plan and other relevant paperwork as required in markets policy
- No other request to operate a market in this area

2.9 B. To have Licence and stall fees waived:

Folktown Community Interest Company has, as part of their application, requested that they have any payable fees waived on charitable grounds. Within the charitable application from Council can make concessions and waive fees on a case by case basis. However Folktown CIC are not registered as a charitable organisation but are registered as a not-for-profit social enterprise organisation. Therefore it is recommended that the licence and stall fees are not waived as it is not a charitable organisation.

2.10 C. Funding Support:

Folktown CIC has asked BCC for financial support of £70,078 to cover start up costs and year 1 running costs for this new business venture. the Council does not currently operate any grant scheme that could be applied to this request and there is no policy for dealing with these situations. Approving the funding could lead to further requests of support from other CIC's and Social Enterprises across the city. Therefore it is recommended that Council does not accede to this request.

2.11 Recommended responses to Fine and Dandy Application:

2.12 Fine and Dandy Market

Fine and Dandy held their first market on 30 June 2013 in The Crescent Arts Centre, where 18 stall holders attended. Such was the success that they have requested to operate this Sunday market once per month from July to December 2013. These markets will be held on the last Sunday of each month except December where a date has to be finalised.

2.13 The markets in June and July were under 20 traders (as will August market) and classed as 'deminimis'. Permission to hold these was granted under 'delegated authority' by the Director of Development. They have used this market to allow

some art/craft students to trade to help promote their new goods.

- 2.14 Fine and Dandy have paid the £100 multiple market application fee and the £6 per stall fee for the small market in June. Due to demand from some craft traders, Fine and Dandy wish to increase the size of their market to over 20 (between 25 and 30) from September until December 2013. As this is above the 20 stall limit, permission is required from Committee.
- 2.15 Fine and Dandy have supplied the relevant details such as insurance and any food traders' food safety registration details. Therefore it is recommended that Council agrees to the granting of a licence to Fine and Dandy until December 2013.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Members are asked to approve on the following:

- 1. To grant a market licence to Fine & Dandy Market up to December 2013**
- 2. To grant a market licence to Folktown CIC**
- 3. To not accede to the request of Folktown CIC to waive all of the application and stall fees"**

The Director outlined the principal aspects of the report and answered a range of Members' questions in relation thereto. A Member suggested that, whilst there existed no provision within the departmental budget to meet the request for financial support which had been submitted by Folktown, the Council should endeavour to continue to support the work of that organisation and, as a gesture to encourage the growth of the Bank Square market, consider agreeing to waive the stall hire charges for traders thereat.

A Member reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 4th June, it had agreed to waive the stall hire charges for the traders at the market which had been established at the Conway Mill. It was pointed out that that decision had set a precedent which had placed the Council in an unenviable position, given that a further request to waive stall hire charges had been submitted by the organisers of the Folktown market. He pointed out that the applicant, in this case, was not a registered charity and, therefore, not entitled to have the stall hire charges waived. Since the Council was duty bound to protect its income streams, he added that it would be prudent to adhere to its agreed Markets Policy and to not accede to the request to waive the stall hire charges.

The Council's Solicitor provided an overview of the Markets Policy and pointed out that, whilst the Council could exercise its discretion in the waiving of stall hire fees for registered charities, or ad hoc markets which were held solely for charitable purposes,

there existed a level of ambiguity regarding the charitable status of 'not-for-profit' or 'community interest companies', which would require further consideration. She suggested, therefore, that it might be prudent for the Committee to defer for a month consideration of the request by Folktown to waive the stall hire charges to enable clarification to be obtained regarding that particular applicant and in respect of 'community interest companies' generally.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed to the following:

- to grant a market licence to Fine and Dandy until the end of December, 2013;
- to grant a market licence to Folktown, but to not accede to its request for financial assistance in the sum of £70,078; and
- that officers from the Department would continue to provide guidance and assistance to Folktown in respect of the establishment of its market in Bank Square.

In respect of the request by the Folktown to waive all or part of the stall hire fees at the Bank Square market, the Committee agreed to defer, until its meeting on 17th September, consideration of that matter to enable further clarification to be provided on the Council's Markets Policy.

St. George's Market – Strategic Review

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an overview of the progress which had been achieved to date regarding the strategic review of St. George's Market. In addition, it was agreed, as part of the ongoing consultation process, that briefings would be provided to those parties who so wished to receive them.

Consultation Responses

The Committee endorsed the undernoted responses to consultation exercises as outlined:

Department for Social Development – Business Improvement District Regulations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department for Social Development's (DSD) consultation on Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).**
- 1.2 The Council recognise that BIDs have been a positive mechanism for the promotion and regeneration of town centres and other business areas. The Council has active experience of supporting businesses across the City, most recently in the "Backin' Belfast" initiative in early 2013, but**

also through our support for Trader's Groups and from our physical regeneration programme "Renewing the Routes". the Council welcome the introduction of BIDs as a further way to enhance the partnership between the public and private sector; and will support any business area that comes forward to lead and develop BID proposals.

- 1.3 However, the Department will be aware that a significant period of Local Government Reform is currently underway. Elections to Shadow Councils will be held in May 2014, with new Councils taking legal form on 1st April, 2015. It is unclear at present as to how the Shadow Council will be administered and how decisions will be taken. The existing Council will, at that stage, be winding down, and it is questionable if the outgoing or Shadow Council will be best placed to deal with any BID proposals during that time.
 - 1.4 Evidence from England and Scotland suggests a 12-18 month timeframe to fully develop a BID. If a business body starts their development work now, then the electoral procedures could take place within, or towards the end of, the Shadow BID period. This will be an extremely demanding period for Local Authorities – in particularly our democratic, financial, and legal services. DSD may therefore wish to stipulate in the Regulations that the commencement of electoral procedures will not occur prior to the 1 April 2015, at which point the Shadow Councils will take legal form.
 - 1.5 If this stipulation is not made, then the Council would welcome further guidance and legal assurance around the process for Shadow Councils to respond to BID proposals, and administer relevant procedures.
2. Is there an adequate level of prescription in the Regulations to ensure effective governance while still allowing for local flexibility in putting together a BID process?
- 2.1 As part of the previous consultation in Feb 2011, the Council suggested that ratings information should be provided by DFP. The Council welcome the fact that DSD have incorporated this suggestion at Regulation 2, and are content that this approach is a sensible way to initiate the development of BID proposals. the Council is also content at the concept of a BID proposer drawn from the business community, which is outlined at Regulation 3.
 - 2.2 The Council are also content with subsequent processes, outlined at Regulation 5, which require a business and

financial plan, and evidence of appropriate stakeholder consultation, before any commitment to an electoral ballot is made.

- 2.3 The Council note that many BIDs in the UK and Ireland, as part of their Governance procedures, have included formal Boards, both in Shadow form during the development stage and as part of ongoing best management practice. Many of these Boards include appropriate local stakeholders, which could be business and community leaders, and Members of the Local Authority. While we are not suggesting that membership details of any Board should be prescribed, the Department may wish to consider if the creation of a BID Board, which is distinct from the executive and management function, should be included within the Regulations.
- 2.4 As part of good governance we also suggest that the executive of the BID produce an annual report to their Boards, reporting progress against the business and financial plan set out in the original BID proposals. This report should be made available to local stakeholders and the wider public (this duty could be discharged by placing a copy of the report on the BID's website).
- 2.5 The concept of a formal Board carries further importance should the Council's suggestion that the levy receipts are passed directly to the BID (see para 4.4 and 4.5 below) be adopted.
3. In Regulation 10 and Schedule 2, are the timescales, e.g. for issuing ballot papers, appeals, vetoes etc, set at the correct level? If not please be specific about which ones you think should be changed.
 - 3.1 Under Regulation 6 the Council has a duty to appoint a Ballot Holder, for the purposes of running the initial Ballot, or any renewal ballots, alternation ballots, or re-ballots. Save for the concerns raised at para 1.3 and 1.4 above, the Council is content with this obligation, and the mechanisms and timescales to challenge a ballot covered in Regulation 10, and of administering the ballot covered at schedule 2.
4. In Schedule 4, is it sufficient to provide the power for councils to enforce the payment of unpaid levies and leave the specifics of how to go about it up to the Councils? If not, please provide further information.
 - 4.1 The Council have significant concerns over the proposed financial regulations, covered at s15, s16 and schedule 4, which places the duty for the collection, enforcement and

administration of the BID levy onto the Council. While we note the ability to devolve these matters to a billing body, Regulation 16 clearly states that the legal duty rests with the Council.

- 4.2 In NI the collection of business rates is undertaken by the Land & Property Services Agency (LPS). Local councils have no previous role in this field and it does not appear appropriate to engage them in this work. It is our proposal that the business levy should be collected by LPS. To do otherwise will mean different billing, collection and enforcement systems causing both duplication and confusion. The preferred and most cost effective approach is therefore collection and enforcement by LPS.
- 4.3 Our concerns are further reinforced by the fact that, following consultation on the primary legislation, DSD issued a memorandum dated 25 June 2012, stating that, on this matter, they had received a number of concerns relating to billing, collecting and enforcing the BID levy. In the memo (para 10) they stated they had discussed this issue with DFP and had agreed that LPS would be responsible for the administration of the BID levy. This has not been reflected in the Regulations, and no reference to LPS has been made.
- 4.4 In addition we see no value in Local Authority management of the BID Revenue Account, which appears to create an unnecessary administrative tier. Involving Local Authorities in the administration of accounts may also suggest that Councils are imposing an additional tax on business. This could undermine the intention of the Department, as outlined in the introduction to the consultation, that the levy is best viewed as a collective investment by businesses for specific additional services.
- 4.5 In addition to transferring the billing, collection and enforcement of the Levy to LPS, the Council would also propose that the Levy is passed directly to the BID rather than coming through Council accounts. Appropriate financial controls are best achieved through the Governance of a BID Board, as recommended at para 2.3 above, and by requiring the BIDs to produce an annual report, recommended at para 2.4 above.

5. Is more clarity required on any of the processes?

- 5.1 As highlighted in these responses, further clarity is required in relation to:

- The possibility of local authorities administering electoral procedures from May 2013 to March 2014, when Shadow Councils are in force and a significant period of local government reform is underway (para 1.3 and 1.4)
- Should the duties to collect, enforce and administer the Levy remain with Local Authorities, over which the Council has registered significant concern at para 4.1 and 4.2, then further guidance on the practical management of these responsibilities will be required.
- Further clarification would be useful on the obligations on businesses that start trading in the BID area after it has been established. It is assumed that these businesses will be legally liable for the Levy, even though they did not have an opportunity to vote on the proposals, but it may be sensible to make specific reference to this.

6. Any other comments?

- 6.1 While our intention will be to fully support the development of BID proposals, Council welcome the powers of veto outlined at Regulation 13, and view these as a sensible measure that can help focus minds and secure stronger agreement.
- 6.2 In terms of the BID conflicting with Planning Orders listed at Regulation 13, it is important to recognise that the Council also have a number of statutory and non-statutory improvement plans for areas. This can include area plans, corporate plans or other strategic initiatives. Regulation 5(4) recognises the potential for conflict or an overlap between the BID and existing plans published by the Council. However, there is no power to resolve these potential conflicts, save through a more loosely defined power to veto BID proposals due to lack of consultation with the Council (Reg 13(3e)). The Council suggest that the more specific conflicts mentioned at Regulation 5(4) are also included in the power of veto.
- 6.3 DSD are no doubt aware that the Planning (NI) Order 1991, which is referenced at Regulation 13(2), will be superseded by the Planning Act (NI) 2011, and elements of the Planning Act (NI) 2013. While the final BID legislation must be consistent with current legislation at the time of enactment, it may be appropriate to reference these changes, including the proposed Council powers of area and community planning. The role of Council will increase in volume as a result of the proposed transfer of planning and regeneration functions.”

Airports Commission - London Hub Airport

The Council understand that a number of plans have been submitted which explore the development of a new airport capacity in London. The Council wishes to comment in relation to the longer term proposals as these are considered to offer the greatest potential to resolve the long standing issues around the guaranteed connectivity for the Belfast and the wider region.

The Northern Ireland Context

In a geographical context, the city of Belfast occupies an isolated and peripheral location from the rest of the UK and the wider European region. With no options for direct surface travel between Belfast and cities/ markets in Great Britain, Belfast city and the wider region are more heavily reliant on the two regional airports (George Best Belfast City Airport and Belfast International Airport) for connectivity to within the UK, Europe and other International destinations.

Air travel remains the most common means of entry into Northern Ireland, with almost three quarters (74%) of overnight visitors and a third (34%) of day trippers arriving by plane (PWC, 2011). Belfast also differs from other regional cities, across Great Britain, in that largest neighbouring airport at Dublin is operated within a separate tax regime with different operating targets linked to the development of its own national economy.

Whilst the proximity of Dublin can offer access to a broader long haul market this provides a greater direct competitive advantage to businesses operating in the airports own local economy.

The development of a new UK hub airport could offer longer term benefits to Belfast by way of convenient and integrated access to Northern Ireland with smoother transfer through a common UK gateway, the development of stable inter-connection services and potentially quicker transfer arrangements.

The current capacity constraints at the main London hubs have resulted in increasing pressure on fixed landing slot allocations and competition between regional and long-haul services. This competition and the longer term uncertainty in relation to the availability of sufficient access to support regional access from Belfast to a full range of long haul connections could limit the potential for future economic growth.

The Council would welcome the introduction of short and medium term measures to maximise capacity as an interim to the adoption of a longer term solution that would provide the potential for growth that meets the needs for the expansion of secure regional connectivity alongside the increased capacity for long haul routes. This balanced approach to the development of future capacity is critical for Belfast and local region to be able to compete and secure the potential for recovery and longer term growth.

Economic Growth

The continued enhancement and refinement of Belfast's potential for connectivity must be linked to the future economic opportunities arising from the changing global conditions such as the growth of new and emerging markets. A significant element of the future growth potential for the local economy has been linked to the emerging economies, many of which are only accessible through long haul flight connections.

To maximise accessibility and reduce the adverse impacts of our peripheral location any primary UK hub needs to have the capacity to offer guaranteed preferential regional connection from Northern Ireland to service these long haul destinations. The Council along with other agencies continue to address the need for the enhanced economic competitiveness and the capacity to respond to the challenges of the changing world economy.

In September 2011, Frontier Economics published a report on 'Connecting for growth: the role of Britain's hub airport in economic recovery'. As the UK's current hub airport, Heathrow connects Britain to the global economy and is recognised as playing a vital role in the economic success of the country as a whole. The report highlights that successful hub airports play a special role in an economy by underpinning a country's connectivity to long haul destinations around the world.

UK trade with the rest of the world has increased significantly over the last 10 years. Trade with Emerging Market Countries has been a major contributor to the increase. The 'Connecting for growth' report notes that UK businesses have the opportunity to grow their revenues by trading with businesses in these countries. However, the regional markets are not always well connected to these destinations and this lack of connectivity makes it more difficult for the UK as a whole to do future business with Emerging Market Countries.

While Heathrow could serve far more destinations, it is constrained by a limit on air transport movements per year. It is estimated that the value of UK trade could be increased by approximately £1.2 billion a year, if there were capacity to accommodate viable Emerging

Market routes. With no available connections available through London, other European hubs have become more attractive. The report notes that there are 21 Emerging Market destinations with daily flights from other European hubs that are not served from London.

Passengers flying to and from hubs, as destinations in their own right, also benefit from better connectivity as many routes would not be viable without the transfer traffic generated through the long haul routes. Consequently passengers can not only benefit from a wider range of routes but also lower fares.

Tourism in many ways exemplifies the challenges and opportunities faced by the broader economy as Belfast and the wider region seeks to achieve a degree of rebalancing both in terms of the general competitiveness and the unique local circumstances. The importance of tourism to the city is highlighted in the Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism 2010-2014. Developed in partnership with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and in consultation with local stakeholders, the Framework recognises that improved access to the city is essential if it is to attract more international visitors and if Belfast is to realise its local Gateway potential. The Council regard the framework as crucial to the city's development as a globally competitive sustainable tourism destination.

Reliable and frequent air connections are vital to the development of the tourism sector and to attract broader investment into Belfast and the regional economy. The total value of direct tourism spend in Belfast by GB and overseas visitors was £418 million in 2012, representing an increase of 3% from 2011. At December 2012, it was estimated that tourism and leisure industries accounted for 54,270 employee jobs in Northern Ireland. In 2012, the total number of GB and overseas visitors staying at least one night in NI was estimated at 1.55 million.

In Belfast's the tourism growth targets is set at a 40% increase in overnight visitors over the next 5 years. The ability to achieve this level of growth will be dependent on the enhancement of air connections and integrated access, alongside continued activity to support the development of local tourism infrastructure. The Council is committed to developing tourism exemplified by the contribution to the £97 million development of Titanic Belfast, a world class visitor attraction. This facility alone attracted 807,340 between April 2012 and March 2013. In total, 471,702 visitors to Titanic Belfast came from outside Northern Ireland highlighting the dependence on international accessibility.

Northern Ireland's tourism GDP is approximately 4.9% whereas ROI is 6%. The regional routes and the ability to secure integrated long-haul connections are critical to the continued development of the tourism sector and the achievement of growth targets over the medium to long term. Tourism is forecast to be the 4th fastest growth area in the UK over the next 10 years. NI tourism demand in terms of revenue, is forecast to increase by 2.8% per annum, in real terms over the next 10 years (Deloitte 2010). To meet and exceed these longer term targets Belfast and NI needs to secure additional international links through both direct short haul connections and integrated service via a long haul London hub airport with the capacity to offer guaranteed regional accessibility."

Chairman