

Development Committee

Tuesday, 17th September, 2013

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairman);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Kingston);
Aldermen Ekin, McCoubrey and Stoker;
Councillors Austin, Convery, Garrett,
Hussey, Keenan, Kelly, Kyle,
Mac Giolla Mhóin, Reynolds, Spence
and Webb.

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

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of the Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman Stalford) and Councillors Hartley, Maskey and Ó Donnghaile.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd September, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading 'City Centre Business Information Point' which was referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Forum for an Alternative Belfast

The Committee agreed to receive, at a future meeting, a presentation from representatives of the Forum for an Alternative Belfast in respect of the findings of its annual summer school.

City Centre Business Information Point

The Committee reconsidered the undernoted minute of the meeting of 20th August in relation to the above-mentioned matter:

"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 Mhin,
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."

The Director reminded the Committee that the proposal, if approved, would enable a Business Information Point to be established within central Belfast. He pointed out that the Council, as part of its Super-connected City project, had made a commitment to provide a City centre based resource centre to support small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and provide them with assistance to avail of vouchers to enable them to connect to ultrafast broadband internet. Therefore, an option would be presented, he explained, for the Council to avail of the ORTUS facility for that purpose and, as such, would represent a cost-effective option for the Council. He added that the Council would not be required, therefore, to establish its own premises, which would cost well in excess of £100,000 in rent, rates and staffing costs.

He stated also that, since the meeting of the Council on 2nd September, he had liaised with representatives of the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry to ascertain if that organisation might wish to provide the service which would be by delivered by ORTUS. However, they had indicated that the Chamber would not be in a position to do so. Having considered also the advice of Council's Legal Services and Procurement Units, the Director indicated that he was content to recommend to the Committee that it agree to allocate the funding, as outlined, to permit ORTUS to proceed with the pilot project, on the basis that there no other organisation was in a position to provide such a service for the Council within the City centre.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Mac Giolla Mhin,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,

That the Committee agrees to provide financial assistance in the sum of £39,000 to assist ORTUS in the development of a pilot business information point.

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

Advice NI

In accordance with its decision of 20th August, the Committee received a presentation from Ms. F. Magee and Ms. S. Campbell, representing Advice NI, in respect of its Debt Action Plan, together with an outline of the work which it carried out in providing advice and assistance to individuals in debt.

Noted

Study Visit to Bilbao

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th April, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the feasibility of the Council undertaking a study visit to Bilbao. It had been agreed also that, if deemed appropriate, the Lord Mayor, the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees), together with two officers, would be authorised to undertake the visit.

Accordingly, the Director outlined the contents of a report in this regard and indicated that the dates which had been proposed for the visit were 18th and 19th November. He pointed out that officers had been liaising with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to establish a list of key stakeholders in Bilbao which the Council's deputation could meet during the visit. In addition, he outlined the range of businesses and individuals, including the Mayor of Bilbao, who would host the deputation and he requested that the Committee authorise a sum of £3,000 to cover the costs associated with the visit.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and authorised the expenditure as outlined for the purposes of the study visit.

Circuit of Ireland

The Director reminded the Committee that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 23rd August, had agreed, in principal, that the Council would provide support in the sum of £25,000 to the Circuit of Ireland in 2014, 2015 and 2016. It had agreed also that the matter be referred to the Development Committee to permit it to examine its own budgets to identify whether it could provide the necessary funding.

The Director outlined the principal aspects of a report in this regard and pointed out that, given that Easter in 2014 would occur in April that year, the Department could make provision within its 2014/2015 financial estimates to support the event and, if deemed appropriate, similar provision could be made within its estimates for the following two financial years.

The Committee agreed that financial support in the sum of £25,000 be provided for the Circuit of Ireland within the Department's financial estimates for 2014/2015, and in the following two financial years thereafter.

Cities of the Isles Summit

The Committee was reminded that the Cities of the Isles Partnership was a network of six councils viz., Belfast, Cardiff, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Liverpool, which met to share urban regeneration experiences and develop projects of strategic importance. It was reported that the 2013 meeting of that group, which would be addressed by The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, would take place in Dublin on 23rd and 24th October, and that the theme would be entitled: 'Shared History – Smart Futures'. Discussions at the summit would consider how the member cities could promote, on a mutual basis, economic, cultural and educational programmes, together with the development of a range of projects linked to the digital economy.

The Committee agreed that it be represented at the 2013 Cities of the Isles Summit by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) and that two officers from the Department be authorised to attend also.

Global India Business Meeting and India Week

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report which outlined the key outcomes and achievements of the Global India Business Meeting and India Week, which the City had hosted in June. In addition, it was agreed the Council would consider bidding to host the Global China Business Meeting at a future date, subject to sufficient resources being identified for that purpose.

Tourism Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

- “1 **Relevant Background Information**
- 1.1 **Members will be aware of the current Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategic Framework 2010-2014 which has shaped Belfast City Council's approach to tourism over this period of time.**
- 1.2 **The fundamentals of the strategy have been delivered with some elements due for completion between now and the end of the current financial year. This document was developed and delivered in partnership with key agencies across the City. A full review of this will be brought back for Committee consideration early in January 2014.**
- 1.3 **Regular progress reports have been communicated throughout the lifespan of the strategy. One of the platforms responsible for monitoring progress against actions has been the Belfast Tourism Forum which includes representatives from Government Departments, NITB, Tourism Ireland, as well as industry bodies and the destinations across the City. The Tourism Forum has provided an invaluable role in assisting with delivery and oversight for the strategy.**

- 1.4 The strategy will be implemented by March 2014, so there will be a need for a new integrated tourism strategy to be developed in a partnership approach across the City and with relevant agencies.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 During the period of the current Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategic Framework the landscape of the City has changed considerably. Large scale developments including Titanic Belfast have transformed the City and the 2012 experience in the City has been widely acknowledged as a resounding success.
- 2.2 Belfast's position as a truly International City Destination is undisputed with a number of awards being achieved during the period of the strategy. The next strategy must keep Belfast developing along this path being realistic but also aspiring to make huge strides forward.
- 2.3 The Belfast Tourism Monitor indicates that the value of direct tourism spend during 2012 was £416million, with 7.59m visitor trips to Belfast.
- 2.4 While the Belfast figures appear healthy there is a cautionary note in that the overall Northern Ireland context has been fairly static in terms of visitor numbers and economic return from tourism. A recent statement by the Board of NITB has raised concerns as to whether the figures outlined in the DETI strategy for tourism can be realised by 2020. While figures for the ROI are showing resurgence with some commentators suggesting a 6% increase in visitor numbers in the last year this has not been the case for Northern Ireland. The GB market in particular has been in decline since 2005.
- 2.5 In 2011/12 NITB and Tourism Ireland undertook an extensive piece of work into the source markets for Northern Ireland. This research has provided very detailed market analysis and segmentation that will need to be fully integrated and acknowledged in any new integrated tourism strategy going forward for Belfast. This along with the Belfast Tourism Monitor will shape the discussions around all elements of the new strategy particularly product development, marketing and visitor servicing.

2.6 The strategy should look at a number of elements including some of the following issues:

- **Product Development;** One of the Council's core roles with respect to tourism is product development. This will be a mix of soft product development but potentially further large scale development. The strategy should identify these projects in line with customer demand.
- **Marketing & Promotion;** Taking on board extensive segmentation research developed by NITB and Tourism Ireland last year and ensuring delivery roles are clarified between Visit Belfast, NITB and Tourism Ireland.
- **Visitor Servicing;** a significant review is required of all elements of the visitor experience such as; positioning of the Welcome Centre; the Visitor pass phase 2; airport information provision; information provision at Titanic Belfast and across the destinations; cruise passenger management being mindful of new developments by the Harbour Commissioners; use of new technologies in enhancing the visitor experience.
- **Destinations;** ongoing analysis and work required to develop the designated destinations to ensure the economic impact of tourism is spread across the City.
- **Accommodation review;** If Northern Ireland 2020 targets are to be achieved there is a need for further hotel bedstock within the City. Over the period of the current strategy hotel bedstock has grown significantly, however the aspiration is for further developments.
- **Partnership working;** There is a need to review partnerships across the City in respect of tourism to provide clarity on roles. The NITB is currently undergoing a review and it will be important that this strategy makes consideration for this; Tourism Ireland's role for Northern Ireland specifically continues to evolve, this role too needs explored to maximise benefits; Visit Belfast's role in the City is currently focussed on visitor servicing and promotion. Visit Belfast as key delivery partner's role should be maximised; how we engage with the private sector to ensure every opportunity is taken to create business opportunities and to support future developments from the sector.
- **Business Tourism;** A fresh approach is required to ensure that the new developments at the Waterfront hall and the opportunity that gives to attract much larger conferences should be integrated into plans. Checking that the suitable support infrastructure is in place to deliver an integrated high quality experience for business visitors to the City.

- **Internal integration; ensuring all activity within the Council is aligned and specifically within the TCA unit ensuring that the cultural groups supported are fully integrated into the visitor experience.**
- **RPA; Looking at any potential opportunities and implications that RPA will bring.**
- **Targets and Monitoring**

The outlined list is not exhaustive but reflects a tourism landscape that has changed considerably and continues to evolve. It is important that Belfast City Council are shown to display leadership in respect of tourism and culture working to the optimum with partner agencies.”

The Committee agreed to initiate a tendering exercise, at a maximum cost to the Council of £40,000, which may be match funded by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, for the appointment of a consultant to work in conjunction with the Department to develop a new Integrated Tourism Strategy.

Renewing the Routes - Procurement of Contractor

The Committee agreed to grant authority for officers to invite tenders for construction-related design services and measured-term agreements for work associated with the future Renewing the Routes Programme and to award contracts on the basis of cost and quality, in accordance with the Council's procurement guidelines.

Research on the Factors Influencing Residency in Belfast

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 **Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 **Members will be aware that research was commissioned to identify the factors that influence people's decisions to live in the Belfast City Council area. The purpose of the research was to 'assess the attitudes of current and former residents, commuters and visitors on the attractiveness of the City'. It is widely recognised that a city's population is an important determinant of its economic and social success, as outlined in the impact of anchor institutions research, Belfast City Masterplan, BMAP etc. The intention was that the results would provide the Council with an insight into the reasons for population decline and enable it to develop plans/policies to boost the City's viability and attractiveness as a place to live.**

- 1.2 The initial findings from the market research were presented to Committee in June 2013. Members will be aware that this research encompassed a literature review looking at push and pull factors that have impacted on peoples choices about where they have chosen to live and an attitudinal study to investigate the current profile of current and past residents of Belfast City Council, those who live in the areas surrounding Greater Belfast, and commuters, who work in Belfast but live elsewhere.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The research indicated that population change in Belfast has resulted primarily from natural demographic change - an increasing ageing population with death rates exceeding birth rates and therefore a natural decline in population. The total population of Belfast City Council has remained fairly static since 1991, when 279,237 people lived in the area. Between 2001 and 2011, the city's population rose by 1.3% to 280,962. This contrasts with the population change for Northern Ireland as a whole which increased by 15.8% and compared to other cities in the UK represents a small growth in population (e.g. Manchester's population increased by 19%; Liverpool's increased by almost 5%).
- 2.2 Belfast also experienced a lower level of increase in the number of households than Northern Ireland and has a smaller household size (2.3) than Northern Ireland (2.5). Across all areas there has been a fall in household size since 2001.
- 2.3 Within Belfast, wards in west Belfast have experienced the highest levels of population decline in the last ten years. That is, the Upper Springfield and Andersonstown wards had an 11.1% and 14.7% reduction in population respectively. Contrastingly, wards in south Belfast were most likely to have experienced the greatest incidence of population increase - Rosetta, Shaftesbury, Windsor and Ballynafeigh increased by 28.3%, 24.7%, 14.8% and 12.8% respectively.
- 2.4 The following table, from the report outlines the push and pull factors likely to influence the choice of residency area.

The main social factors such as 'close to family and friends' and 'growing up in an area' were the dominant influencing factors; while the most prominent economic factors were 'good public transport' and 'being close to work'.

- 2.5 Encouragingly, the research showed that the majority of residents surveyed do not envisage themselves leaving the city (85%) and of those surveyed who lived outside the BCC area, those aged 18-35 years were also more likely to consider moving into Belfast. This has important implications for the wider marketing of the city. The main reasons why respondents may have moved from Belfast City Council were identified as house size and type, affordability of housing and cost of living, a sense of community spirit and being involved in the local community, influence of crime and anti-social and the political situation in Belfast. Conversely, the main factors that people reported as attracting them to move in to Belfast included physical factors, such as proximity to amenities and better public transport network.
- 2.6 The research identified a number of recommendations which have been categorised into the following themes, which are aligned to Council plans; principally, Investment Programme, Belfast Masterplan and Corporate Plan:
- Physical transformation – create an environment and infrastructure that connects people to opportunities and where people want to live
 - Transforming ambition / perceptions – developing and promoting Belfast as an attractive, safe and sustainable city
 - Transforming services – maximise the accessibility and availability of the city as a hub for employment and amenities
- 2.7 Belfast City Council has a role in providing city leadership, influencing and enabling the regional agenda as well as delivering core services such as the provision and maintenance of parks and open spaces. Principally the research provides an evidence base to help guide the delivery of a number of strands of work such as the Belfast Masterplan; building the city's rate base; neighbourhood working to promote safer and more cohesive communities; promoting the quality parks and open spaces and continuing the drive towards achieving 'Green Flag' quality award for parks. Importantly it will guide the wider marketing of Belfast, particularly at a local level and will directly inform the development of an integrated marketing strategy for the city, as agreed by Committee in August 2013. However, increasing the city's viability and attractiveness as a place to live requires effective partnership with a range of others, as no single agency has complete responsibility for city development and marketing.

2.8 In addition to the Council's strategies, there are a number of other key strategies that have an important influence on the recommendations to transform the city, its ambitions/perceptions and services; such as

- Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035
- Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Together, Building a United Community
- Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan - a ten year development plan
- Urban Regeneration and Community Development framework (DSD)
- Housing Strategy for NI (DSD)
- District Housing Plan and Local Housing Strategy- Belfast 2012-2013 (NIHE)
- Policing & Community Safety Partnership Plans (Belfast PCSP)
- Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012-2015

2.9 The review of the Belfast City Masterplan launched for consultation, which will run until November 2013, outlines a number of policy priorities and strategic projects to develop the city and its attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit. It takes a holistic approach to city development and acknowledges the importance of issues such as health, social inclusion, education, access to employment and services, community safety, neighbourhood quality and the environment which impact on quality of life. The population research reinforces the importance of many of these issues in influencing where people choose to live. The quality of life that a city offers, or is perceived to offer, is a key component to attract and retain its population.

2.10 The Future City Conference in May secured commitment from city stakeholders on the policy priorities and to collaborate on the delivery of the key themes within the masterplan i.e. the

- city centre - accessible vibrant and dynamic centre city driving the regional economy
- physical infrastructure and neighbourhoods - engender confident, caring, cohesive and resilient communities
- digital city - ultrafast broadband and integrated smart city infrastructure driving innovation and supporting growth and efficient delivery of public services
- low carbon city - Clean technology, renewable energy and efficiency will drive further growth in the economy and reduce costs for businesses and households

Progressing the workstreams, in partnership with city stakeholders, will be vital for the future vitality, perception and ambition of Belfast as a city where people choose to live.

- 2.11 From the Belfast City Masterplan, and other strategies, there are a number of key opportunities to take forward the recommendations arising from the research to encourage population and city growth:

Physical Transformation:

- DSD plans for housing-led regeneration includes the selection of four pilot areas, including Belfast Lower Oldpark/Hillview, Tiger's Bay/Mountcollyer and Divis/Albert Street.
- Deliver the key projects identified in the Investment Programme 2012-2015
- Deliver the key strategic projects identified in the Belfast City Masterplan; including Rapid Transit and Royal Exchange
- Work with DSD and partners to capitalise on the relocation of the University of Ulster campus and its social and economic regenerative impact on the city centre
- Use the discussion document for student housing as a lever to reinvigorate the city centre and city centre living

Transforming ambitions/perceptions

- Develop a joint framework for delivery of the OFMDFM programmes: Delivering Social Change and Together Building United Communities
- Deliver the city's commitment to the World Health Organisation's age-friendly status to create an inclusive and accessible urban environment and encourage active healthy ageing
- Develop the city narrative and International Marketing Strategy to build a positive image of the city to attract tourists, investors, students and residents

Transforming services

- Work with partners to participate and take forward the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge in September/October 2013 which will result in a model/route map for decision-making on dealing with local disadvantage including better provision of services and facilities
- Deliver the Leisure Transformation Programme
- Progress the Integrated Economic Strategy for the city
- Work with partners to develop and deliver a city-wide employability and skills strategy and action plan

- 2.12 These actions are additional to the Council's programmes/plans of work which the research will help to shape, as indicated at para. 2.7. However, the development of the Integrated Marketing Strategy will be critical in conveying these messages beyond the city boundaries. Members have also raised the importance of housing mix within the context of growing the city's population and the research pointed to the desire for gardens/space. The Council will continue to lobby central government, within the context of the masterplan, Local Government Reform, including regeneration issues and ongoing work with DSD/NIHE in terms taking forward Strategic Study of Holylands and wider university area. It is also proposed that council officials meet with DSD to examine the pilot programme for housing led regeneration.
- 2.13 Research into best practice in other cities such as Liverpool that have experienced population decline emphasises the need to develop holistic approaches to tackle economic, social and environmental factors that affect population decline and growth. An integrated and planned approach to regeneration and planning policy will support sustained population and city growth. International research recommends a strategic framework for city development to take account of the wider social costs and benefits of different spatial development options and the inclusion of all stakeholders in the decision-making to encourage joint working, efficient use of resources and co-ordinated policy implementation. This approach would 'future proof' policies to enable the implications of demographic change to be built into all policy making processes at a local and national level.
- 2.14 Local Government Reform will result in an additional 50,000 citizens and an increased geography which will require services to transform but will also bring with it the transfer of planning and regeneration powers from central to local government. This provides an opportunity to integrate planning and regeneration policies to ensure that investment and decisions can be made to encourage the development of declining areas and ensure that accessibility and connectivity is maximised. The introduction of community planning will also bring together the various strands of governance in the city to encourage efficient use of resources and more co-ordinated implementation.

- 2.15 Population growth is a significant factor in the economic and social success of the city and as Local Government Reform moves forward it is essential that the city's infrastructure, amenities and services deliver for citizens and visitors. A co-ordinated and integrated approach to growing the city's population is required within the context of the various strategies referenced and particularly the Belfast city masterplan. Changes in the city's population will continue to be monitored and there is an opportunity to build on this research by aligning it to the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Survey which will provide an ongoing mechanism to assess the population and attitudes to city life.

5 Recommendations

5.1 The Committee is requested:

- to agree to utilise the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Survey as an ongoing monitoring mechanism for population change in the city
- to consider how best take this forward within the context of the strategies referenced
- to agree to Council officers meeting with DSD to consider the approach to housing led regeneration pilots in Belfast
- to note that consultation on the review of the Belfast City Masterplan will run from September-November 2013.

Committee will receive regular updates on the strategies and the efforts to grow the city's population, as outlined."

After discussion, during which it was agreed that the Council would seek to share the findings of the research with various statutory bodies and agencies, including the Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Committee adopted the recommendations. It was agreed further that a request be forwarded to the Minister for Social Development requesting a meeting to discuss issues in respect of future housing policy in Belfast.

City Dressing Plan 2013/2014

At the request of the Department, the Committee agreed to defer, to its meeting on 22nd October, consideration of the above-mentioned report to enable further information to be provided.

European Union Working Group

The Committee received an update on the work of the European Union Working Group and agreed that it be authorised to nominate a member of that Group to represent it at the Cities Supporting Youth Employment Seminar, which would take place in Glasgow from 21st till 23rd October.

Public Display of Historical Artefacts in the City Centre

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Discussions have been held over a period round the idea of displaying museum collections in non-traditional, publicly accessible locations. At present it has not been possible to progress this project. A report was taken to Committee in November 2012 on the project and current report provides an update and suggested ways forward.**
- 1.2 Between 1981 and 2008, 98 archaeological excavations were carried out in Belfast, and a substantial number have occurred between 2008 and 2013. While many of the excavations were passive monitoring of construction works, others have recovered interesting material, with a particular concentration in Cathedral Quarter. Most of the artefacts remain either with the excavators or in Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) stores, with a very small proportion on display in NIEA offices at Hill Street.**
- 1.3 The artefacts tend to have modest commercial value but provide real insights into the way people lived in Belfast from the seventeenth century forward. Initial discussions have suggested that there would be little opposition to making them available for display.**
- 1.4 It appears that there would be scope during a pilot stage possibly to mount up to four displays in Cathedral Quarter, one in Culturlann, another in the Spectrum Centre and one in the new Welcome Centre.**

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 As part of museum accreditation and general professional standards, there are understandably rigorous loan conditions to safeguard the museum collections, including provisions regarding security, insurance, environmental conditions and access. This makes it difficult for non-traditional venues to meet loan conditions and also certain organisational structures need be in place.
- 2.2 In the short term, however, there are strong arguments for progressing the making of the physical evidence for Belfast's history more accessible in public spaces, which include education, tourism and social inclusion. The new Welcome Centre has been designed with a display case already which could be used for changing displays of small objects.
- 2.3 Currently, most of the material recovered from excavations is in inaccessible storage. The book 'Hidden History Below Our Feet: The Archaeological Story of Belfast' in which Council was a partner, demonstrated both the richness and relevance of the archaeological heritage
- 2.4 Each display could consist of a simple, though robust case with integral lighting to hold one or more small objects, with appropriate labelling. There would also be an associated interpretative display panel to give the wider context. Displays would be in publically accessible places, which could either be commercial or publicly-owned premises, but either case visible from the street.
- 2.5 Beyond the pilot phase, if the approach is demonstrated to be viable, there may be opportunity for sponsorship and partnership support. The project might be suitable for a small-scale Heritage Lottery Fund application.

3 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 3.1 The material to be displayed will be selected to ensure that it represents our shared history and efforts will be made to maintain as far as possible a gender balance. Displays will be produced to follow best-practice accessibility guidelines.

4 Recommendations

- That suitable objects for display be identified and loans agreed
- That four locations are agreed with the Cathedral Quarter Trust, and that further sites in Culturlann and the Spectrum Centre and the feasibility of using the same approach in the new Welcome Centre be investigated.
- That a maximum budget of £10,000 is made available from the Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Unit existing budget."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Loop River - Lease Renewal

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 46, to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it authorises the extension of an existing lease and licence arrangement with the Scout Association for the use of premises at Courtney Hall, situated on the Cregagh Road, as alternative accommodation for the Loop River Play Centre for a further 24 month period from 1st November, 2013, at a cost of £190 per week.

Routine Correspondence - Volunteer Now

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from Volunteer Now requesting that the Council agree to write to the Minister for Social Development suggesting that he reconsider a reduction of funding which had been announced in May for volunteering infrastructure within the Volunteering Strategy.

The Democratic Services Officer advised the Members that, whilst the Minister had announced a reduction in the level of funding to volunteering infrastructure, he had merely streamlined the level of funding within the Volunteering Strategy to enhance the amount available for small grants and volunteering innovation programmes. This realignment of funding, he reported, had been endorsed by the Assembly.

The Committee noted the receipt of the correspondence and agreed that no further action be taken.

Children and Young People - Update

The Committee agreed to note the contents of a report which provided an update on the work of the Children and Young People's Service. In addition, it granted delegated authority to the Director to approve awards under the 'Ur City 2' grant aid scheme.

Markets Community Centre - Keyholder Access

The Committee agreed to defer, to its meeting on 22nd October, consideration of the above-mentioned report to enable further consultations to be undertaken

Poverty and Inequality - Way Forward

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Following the Council Notice of Motion on ‘social deprivation’ in February and party briefings to test the idea of establishing a city-wide poverty forum/taskforce and the development of a citywide strategy, Committee agreed that poverty should form a key theme within the Council’s community planning process and the need to align to the regional Delivering Social Change agenda.

1.2 The Committee will be aware that Council’s framework to tackle poverty and social inequalities was completed prior to the implementation of related regional and citywide developments. The multi-faceted and complex nature of poverty and deprivation means that any future Council approach needs to align with policy and programme developments such as

- Welfare Reform Bill
- Delivering Social Change and Together Building a United Community
- Social Investment Fund
- Local Government Reform, particularly the transfer of functions (regeneration) and the introduction of Community Planning
- Belfast Strategic Partnership’s Framework for Action to Address Life Inequalities
- Investment Programme priorities to invest in the city, create jobs and improve skills

1.3 The outcomes from the party briefings were considered by Committee in June 2013. All parties agreed on the importance of tackling poverty and that Council has a key role in influencing central government, providing a critical connection to issues at a local level. It was noted that to address poverty required a focus on increasing educational levels and aspirations, skills and employability along with increasing employment opportunities to create wealth to contribute to improve quality of life and to secure sustained improvement in the local economy. The community planning process offers an established governance mechanism and the opportunity to engage with a range of stakeholders.

2 Key Issues

2.1 A recent report by the Child Poverty Action Group (2013) reported that the cost to the economy of dealing with child poverty in Northern Ireland has reached £1bn, with around 97,979 children in Northern Ireland defined as living in poverty. In Belfast around 21,186 children are considered to be living in poverty with an estimated annual cost of 230 million. As is the case across the UK, there is also a growing trend of in-work poverty in NI, particularly with the increase in part time employment and various contractual arrangements.

- 2.2 A review of how other cities have tackled poverty has been carried out, including Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission, Greater Manchester Poverty Commission, Glasgow's Poverty Leadership Panel. These bodies vary in structure and focus but share a common aim, to establish a partnered approach to reducing poverty locally. The recommendations and priorities focus on early family interventions to improve education and life chances, increasing parental employment opportunities, maximising incomes and affordable warmth. It also indicated the importance of engaging with those experiencing poverty to understand the issues and identify potential interventions through co-design.
- 2.3 Council is already taking forward a range of actions to tackle poverty as outlined in the Framework document. There are a number of partnerships/groups in Belfast that Council is involved with that aim to tackle poverty-related issues such as Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships, Belfast Outcomes Group, Bryson House, Belfast Strategic Partnership etc. Council is already developing two key strands of work which includes actions / considerations that should help tackle poverty:
- Tackling health/social inequalities – focusing on food, energy, maximising incomes, family and living conditions. High level milestones have been developed and agreed by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, including the establishment of an interagency forum on poverty.
 - Development of the Integrated Economic Strategy - this recognises the need to support economic growth and create employment opportunities, including enhancing the skills / employability, creating links with the education sector and connecting those from disadvantaged areas to economic opportunities.

As raised during the party briefings, a strategic and inclusive approach is essential to maximise the level of impact and resources required to deliver, therefore this twin track approach will help to ensure that economic growth can benefit those experiencing poverty and that those experiencing poverty are in a better position to avail of the opportunities created.

- 2.4 Members will be aware that Council has agreed to a joint meeting at political and officer levels between council and OFMDFM to discuss how we can work together on programmes aimed at improving good relations and addressing social/economic problems following the release of Delivering Social Change combined with the Together, Building a United Community Strategy. This is a key strategic opportunity for Belfast in terms of delivering the strategies at a local level and highlighting the significance of the city in delivering this agenda.
- 2.5 DSDs Urban Regeneration & Community Development Framework includes policy objectives to tackle area based deprivation; improve linkages between areas of need and areas of opportunity and; to develop more cohesive and engaged communities – all of which will play an important part in tackling poverty related issues. The Council's preparations for Local Government Reform and the transfer of regeneration functions has an important role in shaping a future Belfast approach to the poverty agenda and Delivering Social Change.
- 2.6 Council officers from Development and Health & Environmental Services have been working to identify the next steps to take forward the poverty agenda within the context of community planning and developments already underway. The proposed next steps are therefore:
- Joint discussion at officer and political levels between BCC and OFMDFM to discuss opportunities for joint working and Belfast's importance in delivering on the regional ambitions, as agreed by Council.
 - Assess the scope, resource and feasibility of the practical interventions that have been announced, or are being developed, to address poverty related issues.
 - It is planned that BCC form an interagency forum on poverty. It is proposed that this be initiated by hosting a broader facilitated workshop session which would include those working directly in the poverty field. This will provide a current assessment of the realities of life, including working life for those experiencing poverty as well as the current constraints in supply and demand in the labour market. The aim of the workshop would be to create greater co-ordination and integration as well as the identification of practical interventions that would make a real difference to existing efforts to tackle poverty at a city level.

- 2.7 The Committee is asked to note that a series of engagement events are taking place during the autumn to follow-on from the Future City Conference; continuing the conversation to develop city-wide priorities and a community plan. These include engagement with the anchor institutions and participation in the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge. The proposed facilitated engagement on poverty would also align to this process of engagement with key stakeholders to agree how best city issues can be tackled and progressed in a practical, integrated and realistic way.
- 2.8 The advent of community planning and transfer of regeneration, including neighbourhood renewal, as a result of Local Government Reform provide the opportunity to take a more co-ordinated approach to planning for the future of the city. Tackling poverty will be an integral component of a community plan and will influence the Council's future approach to regeneration, employability, social and quality of life issues. The Integrated Economic Strategy and Tackling Health/Social Inequalities programme of work, along with the efforts to integrate with Delivering Social Change provide an opportunity to connect strategy and programme delivery in Belfast.
- 3 **Resource Implications**
- 3.1 Resources for the engagement event will be met within the current departmental budgets. A cross departmental approach will be adopted to take forward the proposed next steps.
- 5 **Recommendations**
- 5.1 Members are asked to agree to the proposed next steps to consider the proposed interventions and to broaden the participation in a facilitated workshop which would support the planned interagency forum on poverty"

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

First Steps Early Years Group - Request for Funding

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 This paper is being tabled at the request of Councillor Keenan asking the Committee to consider interim funding for the First Steps Early Years' Group. The request has the support of a number of elected Members from West Belfast.**
- 1.2 The First Step Early Years' Group is based in Lenadoon and for the past 16 years has delivered Early Years provision to pre-school children. In addition, it manages a parent and toddler group for local families and provides family support to parents.**
- 1.3 The Group received funding from the BELB for the provision of Pre-School Education Advisory Group (PEAG) places. This funding is made available to support final year pre-school children.**
- 1.4 The Group originally operated out of Horn Drive Community Centre, however, for the last 3 years demand has meant that it was able to expand its services to the Glen Community Centre as well.**
- 1.5 Each location must have a demand for at least 8 places and is allowed to cater for up to 18 children. If the full allocation of 18 places is not met by PEAG recipients, the remainder of the places can be filled by children in their penultimate pre-school year.**
- 1.6 This year there has been a reduction in the number of applications from final pre-school year children who are the target group for the PEAG funding. As a result, the BELB have decided that the requirement for this age group can be fully met by the Horn Drive Community Centre which has resulted in no allocation of funding for Glen Community Centre. As a result of this there will be no provision for children in the younger age bracket.**
- 1.7 The request, therefore, is for emergency interim funding to continue to deliver a service at Glen Community Centre on 2 mornings per week from 9.00 am - 1.00 pm for 12 families with children aged 2 and 3 years old with special or additional needs.**
- 1.8 The interim funding requested is £8,000.00 over 20 weeks and covers salary costs historically sourced from PEAG's funded places.**

1.9 The Group has a block booking for free usage of both Horn Drive and Glen Community centres from September to June (approximately 55 hours per week.)

1.10 The funding request is to provide interim cover funding pending identification and securing alternative funding sources.

2 Key Issues

2.1 In the consideration of the request Members may wish to consider the following:

- The statutory provision for Early Years and Education Services rests with both Belfast Health and Social Services Trust (BHST) and the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB). The Council does not fund services like this in any other location in the City;
- The Council's policy position, agreed as part of the last Play Review, is to focus its resources on primary school age and upwards and outreach programmes to support existing groups. Surestart is one provider of services for the age range noted in the proposal;
- Although the initial request is for short term funding to bridge an immediate gap there is no evidence of how the service will be sustained after that and Council may well receive a further longer term request to support the project.

2.2 The changing financial climate would suggest an increase of this type of request and Members previously expressed a concern that there was a perception within certain bodies and agencies that the Council, would accede to requests for assistance when all other funding streams had been exhausted.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 The cost to the Council if it were to meet this request would be £8,000.

4 Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that Members do not agree to this request on the basis that:

- Statutory provision for Early Years' Services rests with Belfast Health and Social Services Trust and BELB;
- There is no budgetary provision to meet the request;
- The request lies outwith the Council's policy framework;
- Agreement could create a precedent and a demand from similar groups which the Council could not meet."

Councillor Keenan, at whose request the item had been placed on the agenda, pointed out that, whilst the Committee was limited in its power to accede to the request, it could consider exercising its discretionary powers, as set out within Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011. The Committee was advised that under the aforementioned Act, the Council could meet requests for financial assistance in exceptional circumstances should it agree that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the District and the inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payment to be made.

After further discussion, it was

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

That the Committee agrees to provide financial assistance in the sum of £8,000 to the First Steps Early Years' Group under the specialised powers as set out within Section 37 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the District and the inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payment to be made.

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

Departmental Finance Report - Quarter 1

The Committee considered the Department's quarterly finance report for the first quarter of the financial year 2013/2014.

Noted.

Waterfront and Ulster Halls - Performance Report

The Director provided an overview of the performance figures for both the Waterfront and Ulster Halls for the period 1st April till 30th June, 2013. He outlined the programme of events which had been staged at both venues during that period and provided figures in respect of the income derived through conference and box office sales. The Director indicated that the performance figures for both venues had, given the economic climate, been satisfactory and he provided an update on the current status of the capital project which would oversee the provision of enhanced conference facilities at the Waterfront Hall.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Waterfront Hall Operating Costs

The Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the operational costs for the Waterfront Hall in 2012/2013 and noted further that staff overtime costs for the venue during that period represented 2.66% of overall expenditure.

Waterfront Hall Catering Contract

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 9th April, it had authorised him to undertake a tendering exercise for the provision of catering, bars and restaurant services at the Waterfront Hall for a two-year period commencing in September, 2013, and ending in September, 2015. He reminded the Committee that, as an interim measure, it had been agreed to extend the contract with Mount Charles Catering to provide the service at the Hall until 30th September, 2013. However, given that the completion date for the extension to the Waterfront Hall was not now expected until the mid-2016, coupled with a delay which had been encountered in the completion of the tender specification, he sought the Committee's authority to issue the tender for the service for a two-year period commencing on 1st January, 2014, and to extend the contract with Mount Charles Catering until 31st December, 2013.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

Waterfront Hall - Sales Schedule

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 As we prepare for the opening of the new extension planned for Belfast Waterfront in 2016, it is important that there is a proactive marketing and sales programme in order to ensure business success for the new facility.**
- 1.2 During 2013-2016 the sales team intends to work in partnership with Visit Belfast, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Tourism Ireland to maximise existing sales platforms and identify new market opportunities for Belfast and the Waterfront. At this stage it is envisaged that our annual programme for 2013/2014 will include attendance at a number of key UK, European and International tradeshows and targeted meet the buyer events.**

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 In the past the Waterfront's conference sales team has attended on average three tradeshows/destination showcases per year, this activity has for the most part been concentrated in the United Kingdom. As a result of the planned extension, we are able to offer conference and meetings planners an enhanced proposition and can confidently target the European and International marketplace now that our physical capacity is increasing.**

2.2 Execution of the activity outlined in the sales schedule aims to:

- Raise awareness and interest in the new extension planned for Belfast Waterfront in 2016
- Identify and target new large-scale national and international conference opportunities for the venue
- Position the city and the Waterfront as a leading conference destination
- Reinforce the Waterfront's position as a top-tier European conference centre
- Support central and local government strategies to enhance business tourism development, job creation and socio-economic growth

2.3 In terms of peer group analysis it is worth noting that the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) recently increased its sales resource and doubled the number of European tradeshows it will attend this year in order to win more business from European corporate and associations. Many of our UK competitors are already established in the international market place and attend the main Meetings, Incentive, Conference and Exhibitions (MICE) industry tradeshows such as IMEX America, IMEX Frankfurt, EIBTM in Barcelona and International Confex in London.

2.4 International conference business lead times on average range from 2-6 years. In order to attract conferences to the new extension it is imperative that we plan ahead and engage with international conference planners now if we are to secure bookings for 2016 and beyond. Working with Visit Belfast and NITB, we've identified a number of key sales platforms for the incoming year, these include:

- 1 x NI industry event launch (September/October – timing subject to project funding announcement)
- 2 x Belfast Ambassador Events –October and December presentation (timing subject to project funding announcement)
- 3 x extension launch events in London (November depending on funding announcement), Washington (October 2013), Brussels (February 2014)
- 6 x sales missions – GB x4 (one per quarter), Europe x 1, Kenes International HQ x 1
- 3 x tradeshows - IMEX America in October 2013 and in 2014, International Confex in March and IMEX Frankfurt in May
- x super familiarisation trip (January – March 2014)

2.5 Given the significance of the Waterfront extension project and the level of financial investment from Belfast City Council, NITB and the European Regional Development Fund, there may be ministerial representation at a number of these key business tourism launch events, namely the Washington Business Tourism event on 6 November and the Brussels launch planned for February 2014. It is recommended therefore that the Development Committee also considers representation at events where the DETI Minister may be present. Please note at the time of writing this report we understand that the Lord Mayor will be in attendance at the Belfast Business Tourism event in Washington.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Participation fees to attend all of the national and international activities are estimated to come in at a cost of £20,000. This does not include officer travel, accommodation and subsistence costs however if Members approve the units participation at these events then the team will look to book their travel and accommodation requirements well in advance of each trip to secure preferential rates.

5 Recommendations

- **Approve the participation of one Council Officer at each of the sales missions outlined in the sales calendar**
- **Consider political representation at events at which the DETI Minister may be present”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that the total cost of the programme would be £11,600.

Chairman