

Development Committee

Tuesday, 21st October, 2014

MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairman);
Aldermen M. Campbell, Kingston,
Stalford and Webb;
Councillors Convery, Kelly,
Kyle, Magee, Mac Giolla Mhín,
Ó Donnghaile, Ó Muilleoir,
Reynolds, Spence and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development;
Mrs. L. Toland, Head of Economic
Initiatives and International Development;
Ms. C. Taggart, Community Services Manager;
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer; and
Miss. L. Francey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie, Keenan and Kennedy.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

Declarations of Interest

Regarding the agenda item 'The Tall Ships Races 2015 - Update' it was noted that both the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman were members of the Tall Ships Board.

The Rank Organisation - Request for Deputation

Further to the presentation by the Rank Organisation at the meeting on 16th September, the Committee was advised that a further request to address the Members had been received. It was reported that the purpose of that request would be to clarify a number of issues which had been raised at the original meeting.

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Spence,

Given that the responsibility for the granting of licences for casinos does not lie within the remit of the Committee, it is agreed not to accede to the request to receive a further deputation from the Rank Organisation.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to receive the deputation from the Rank Organisation at its meeting in December and agreed further to invite the Members of the Licensing Committee.

Departmental Plan - Update

The Committee considered a report which outlined the progress which had been achieved in respect of the Departmental Plan during the first six months of 2014/2015.

After discussion, during which the Director undertook to update a Member in respect of the Council's future 'powers of well-being' in respect of Local Government Reform and to examine the feasibility of strengthening the City's links with Nashville as part of the International Relations Framework, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Council Support for Employability - European Social Fund

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the overall strategic aim of the European Social Fund (ESF) is to help reduce economic inactivity and increase workforce skills by promoting access to employment, social inclusion and skills for growth.**
- 1.2 In Northern Ireland, the programme is administered by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). Funding is allocated by means of an open call for projects. Successful projects attract funding of up to 65% of the total project cost and project promoters are expected to find the remaining 35% funding from other sources. Currently, Belfast City Council provides match funding for five projects and supports its own programme (HARTE) – which is delivered by a partnership of local training providers.**
- 1.3 At the September Committee meeting, members were advised of the upcoming call for projects and noted that there was a potential that the council would be significantly over-subscribed for match-funding requests. The committee agreed to ten guiding principles proposed to steer future council decisions concerning support for employability and skills development activities. These were:**

1. Need for a citywide approach
 2. Need to consider targeted interventions and differentiated approaches
 3. Partnership between Belfast City Council, DEL and others
 4. Support is needed for older males, lone parents, persons with disabilities and minority ethnic communities
 5. The role of the private sector is critical
 6. Need to avoid duplication/local competition
 7. Need to improve data sources and information sharing
 8. Need to focus on outcomes and tracking progress
 9. Employability and skills cannot be considered as stand-alone interventions
 10. Need for transparency in decision-making around funding.
- 1.4 It was resolved by members that a report would be tabled to October Committee to help agree priority areas for council intervention in advance of ESF opening for applications in November 2014. It was also noted that there was an opportunity for the council to make its own submission for funding and, if successful in drawing down resources, we would then commission service delivery to address the key challenges highlighted in the research report presented to members at the September committee meeting.
- 1.5 Members acknowledged that, to date, the council has had limited resources to support employability initiatives. However successive reports have shown that economic inactivity is one of the most significant challenges for the city. As a result it is critical that the council gives consideration to how it can make a difference in this field.
- 1.6 The previous report suggested that the council resources could be substantially enhanced by accessing funding available as part of the transfer to council of responsibility for community development and regeneration powers from the Department of Social Development (DSD). At present, DSD provides match funding of around £700,000 to ESF projects in Belfast. At the August Transition Committee it was resolved that the council would agree in principle to retain this budget for employability and skills activity pending a further paper outlining the specifics of any aligned programme.
- 1.7 While there remains some uncertainty around budget transfer in advance of April 2015, and although there is a chance that the transferring budget will be reduced in line with overall

departmental budget cuts, there could still be in the range of £600,000 available through transferring budgets to allocate towards employability initiatives. This would be in addition to a smaller budget allocation available within the Economic Development Unit budget (subject to approval of current estimates).

2 Key Issues

- 2.1** Members are reminded that previous presentations to the committee have noted that there are currently 44 ESF projects in the Belfast City Council area, with a further 18 projects based in Belfast but serving areas beyond the council boundary. This represents a cumulative financial allocation of almost £60million.
- 2.2** While many of the projects are very successful in their own right, it is extremely difficult to measure the overall impact of the intervention and there is a significant risk of duplication of effort while opportunities for collaboration and economies of scale are not necessarily explored. However there is a balance to be struck as many of these projects are looking at localised challenges and trying to develop sustainable solutions to those. Given the nature and scale of the challenge in many of those communities, it is clear that there is a need for some local flexibility.
- 2.3** The ten principles previously agreed by the Committee represent an opportunity to ensure that the council's intervention is measurable, targeted and aligned to other interventions that both the council and other partners will be undertaking. While the need for a city-wide approach is critical, the council recognises that this does not mean a generic approach across the city. It requires a degree of local flexibility within an overall support programme that has some visibility and consistency of approach, regardless of where the provision is based.
- 2.4** DEL is currently working on its call for projects which will be launch in mid-November 2014. In preparation for the calls, the department has organised a series of road shows in October and November to provide potential applicants with information on the ESF programme and its priority areas, along with details of their application process. Projects will be assessed by a range of selection panels and it is expected that approvals will be issued in late January or early February 2015. Projects will have a three year life span and match funding must be re-confirmed annually.

- 2.5 Although ESF is only one funding programme for employability and skills development, and its focus is primarily on those furthest from the labour market, it nevertheless presents a significant opportunity to make a positive impact on this target group – the numbers of which remain stubbornly high, particularly in some communities across the city.
- 2.6 The recent spate of job announcements in the financial and business services sector and IT industry are indicative of the future direction of the economy in Belfast. It will become increasingly service-sector focused, with the greatest job growth expected in administration, hospitality, IT and financial services. While many of these are high paid, highly skilled jobs, there are a range of entry level employment opportunities that provide an access point for individuals into the world of work. The challenge is to encourage employers to look at training opportunities for existing staff – with resources currently available from DEL for this activity – in order to move people through the grades and improve their employment status. This has the added impact of creating further entry-level opportunities.
- 2.7 In addition to the new investment announcements, there are a range of planned physical investments in the city in the coming years, as set out in the city centre regeneration and investment plan. It will be important to consider how any project can support the development and delivery of these schemes, thereby supporting not only the physical development of the city but ensuring greater social cohesion by putting in place interventions which will improve access to employment opportunities for those furthest from the labour market.
- 2.8 Research on skills in Belfast suggests that skills matter: the more highly skilled you are, the more likely you are to be in work. With just over 10% of future jobs expected to require no or low skills, there is a need to ensure that individuals can secure vocationally-relevant skills development support to improve their employment prospects.
- 2.9 Belfast is a micro business economy – with over 80% of companies employing 10 people or less. Conversely, less than 1% of the city's businesses can be considered as a large business (250+ employees). However these businesses support over half of the total employee numbers in the city – whereas the micro businesses provide 10% of overall employment. It is clear that differentiated approaches are required to employer engagement and, while many are actively

involved in employability support initiatives, others are more reticent to accommodate work placements or consider ring-fenced employment opportunities. Belfast City Council – as a key employer in the city – has a role to play in encouraging businesses to be more flexible in providing opportunities for those people trying to get into employment. The success of our outreach programme profiled through the Investment Programme has been widely acknowledged and puts us in a good position to encourage other employers to consider these approaches.

- 2.10 Taking into account the challenges and opportunities, and bearing in mind the relatively limited resources available to the council at this point, it is proposed that the council considers making an application directly to DEL for a citywide employability and skills development programme for the target groups identified within the ESF programme. This application will be based on the significant employability and skills research available to the council – with further work underway at present.
- 2.11 It is suggested that the council role is not that of a delivery partner – rather as a strategic oversight body ensuring focus on the areas and target groups requiring most support and ensuring alignment with complementary support provision (by us and other partners). Equally, we can provide a role in terms of employer engagement as well as considering specific and additional opportunities within our own organisation. From a governance perspective, we can ensure appropriate project management and compliance and can access the expertise of relevant financial and economic development staff.
- 2.12 Project delivery is likely to involve a consortium of partners from across the city with a range of specialisms, including community engagement, skills development, personal development, technical skills and training delivery. The overall objective will be to maximise the opportunities of finding employment for those engaged in the programme and to improve their experience of the engagement. This may include signposting them to further provision beyond the programme.
- 2.13 Members are reminded that ESF is a relatively small programme and represents only 7% of DEL's overall programme budget. In addition, there are commitments to a range of other schemes across the city through mainstream DEL provision (apprenticeships, further and higher education, Training for

Success, Steps to Success) as well as employability projects supported through the Social Investment Fund (SIF). These include:

- Belfast North Zone: employment fuel poverty project (£2m)
- Belfast South Zone: employment programme training in catering, hospitality, retail and IT (£2.2m)
- Belfast West Zone: integrated employment programme supporting people back to mainstream employment (£3.3m)

2.14 There is also an employability project in Belfast East Zone which is awaiting approval and there are a number of other projects across the zones that will have an impact on employability support including childcare and family support and early years interventions.

2.15 The council ESF project needs to take account of existing provision and support only interventions that can add value to the current offer, focusing on securing positive employment outcomes, in line with the guiding principles approved at September Development Committee.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Under the current NR Programme, DSD currently provides around £700,000 to match-fund 11 employability related projects part financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). If this funding transfers, it is likely to be subject to budget cuts, in line with other departmental transfers. At present, there is an indicative funding allocation of around £200,000 within the EDU budget estimates – which are still subject to approval.

3.2 Given that this funding will not be incurred until the 2015/2016 financial year, budgetary decisions will be subject to consideration by the Shadow Council.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 Equality and Good Relations considerations will also be factored into the project application and will be monitored as part of the application process (in line with DEL requirements).

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that members:

- **Note the pending call for proposals under the ESF programme**
- **Endorse the council’s proposed commissioning approach, based on extensive research and taking account of specific local needs while ensuring city-wide coverage and focusing on maximising positive outcomes for participants.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

City Centre Business Information Point

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th September, 2013, it had agreed to provide funding in the sum of £39,000 to enable the establishment of a pilot City Centre Business Information Point. That Information Point, known as the City Business Hub, was located in Castle Lane and provided information services and networking opportunities to prospective businesses. The Hub was managed by Ortus, a Belfast-based enterprise agency. The Committee was informed that, since its opening, the Hub had:

- dealt with 1792 businesses and individuals, 949 of which had requested logistical support;
- hosted 140 networking events which had been attended by 840 individuals; and
- provided digital information to over 1,100 individuals on the services and support offered.

The Director reported that a further request for financial support, in the sum of £23,370, had been received from Ortus. That figure would enable the project to be extended until April, 2015. The Committee was apprised of an associated budget which had been submitted and which outlined how the Hub would utilise the additional funding. The Director pointed out that the Council would assume responsibility for local enterprise functions on the implementation of Local Government Reform.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to grant funding, in the sum of £23,370, to the City Business Hub to enable the extension of the pilot project, subject to a legal agreement being formulated and targets being agreed between the Council and Ortus.

Digital DNA - Request for Support

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 its third Digital Summit in Titanic Belfast and in the City Hall from 3rd till 7th November. The Director reported that the event would attract a range of renowned

speakers, including representatives from Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter and Deloitte Digital.

He informed Members that Digital DNA had requested funding in the sum of £7,500 from the Council. However, given budget pressures and the short lead-in time for any associated benefits to be accrued, he recommended that a contribution of £2,500 be endorsed.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed:

- to provide sponsorship for the Digital DNA event in the sum of £2,500; and
- to note a proposal to undertake a review of the economic impact of supporting such events and to consider a revised eligibility criteria in order to determine whether any sponsorship provided would represent value for money to the Council.

City Marketing Activity

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will be aware that in the lead up to the Christmas period in 2012 and 2013, the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce approached the Council for emergency funding to support a promotional campaign to overcome negative perceptions of the city which had built up around Belfast on the Move implementation and protests the following year.

1.2 In November 2013, Members asked that there would be no repeat of last minute requests and that funding for such initiatives be adequately planned for. As a result a budget of £70k has been allocated to support this activity within this year’s Development department budgets.

1.3 Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce (BCTC) is currently working on a city marketing campaign for the Christmas period, in conjunction with Visit Belfast, Castlecourt and Victoria Square.

2 Key Issues

2.1 While footfall and spend figures have improved slightly in Belfast over the past year, the economic climate is still relatively precarious. Retailers, the hospitality trade and attractions are keen to ensure that there is active promotion of the city as a key retail, hospitality and visitor destination, given

the competition which will come from other destinations in the crucial Christmas period.

- 2.2 The proposed Christmas campaign – while still under development – is likely to include a range of promotional activities such as online promotion, television advertising, partnerships with Translink and other carriers and promotional events at key locations. The principal aim will be to maximise footfall and consumer spend in the key trading period in the run-up to Christmas.
- 2.3 In addition to promoting the shopping offer in the city, there will be a focus on encouraging people to stay longer – availing of Belfast’s vibrant hospitality offer and visitor attractions, and increasing the spend in the city. The campaign will focus not only on the city centre but will also include images and information on other parts of the city. In this regard, it will support the locally-based action plans being developed by trader groups across the city – most of which include a series of Christmas events and activities.
- 2.4 The four partners – namely BCTC, Castlecourt, Victoria Square and Visit Belfast – have already allocated a total of £130,000 towards the campaign. This along with a proposed Council allocation of £70k would allow for a campaign totalling £200k.
- 2.5 Members are reminded that, when previous requests for marketing support of this nature have been presented to the committee, there has been concern that activities will be piecemeal and that, because of the lateness of the request, the expenditure will have limited impact. Given that there has already been some development work undertaken on this campaign – and that there is significant commitment from the private sector partners – it is proposed that this represents a more consolidated approach from city partners that will have a greater opportunity of meeting its objectives in terms of enhanced visitor numbers and additional spend.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 It is anticipated that the full campaign will cost £200,000. £130,000 has already been secured from private sector partners. £70,000 has been allocated within Departmental budgets to support the campaign.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 No specific equality and good relations considerations.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members:

- **Note the proposed city marketing campaign for the pre-Christmas period**
- **Agree to match funding of £70,000 from council towards the campaign.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

The Tall Ships Races 2015 - Update

(Mr. G. Copeland, City Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the contents of a report which provided an update on the arrangements which had been put in place for the hosting of the Tall Ships Races in 2015. The City Events Manager indicated that, due to budget constraints, there was a possibility that the Tourist Board would not be able to provide its full allocation of funding towards the event. He outlined the impact that this might have on the hosting of the event, but emphasised that the races would proceed as proposed in 2015.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment outlining its concerns in respect of the suggested cut in funding for the event.

World Pipe Band Championships

(Mr. G. Copeland, City Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was provided with an outline of the feasibility of the Council submitting a bid to host the World Pipe Band Championships during the three-year period from 2016 until 2018. The City Events Manager indicated that a sum in the region of £2 million would be required to secure the event for Belfast for that three-year period, £1 million of which would be sought from central government departments. The Committee was informed that, despite sponsorship and income associated with the event, the Council would be required to contribute approximately £250,000 in each of the three financial years in which the event would be hosted by Belfast.

The Committee was reminded that it had been the practice that corporate funding for large-scale events had been financed through a specified reserve. However, that reserve would be exhausted following the hosting of the Tall Ships event in 2015. Accordingly, the Committee was requested to note that no funding had been identified to mount a bid to host the championships. However, should the Committee deem it appropriate, a request to set aside sufficient funding to support a bid would need to be made to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, so as such funding could be addressed as part of the rate setting process in the financial years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

In response to a Member's question, the City Events Manager confirmed that bids to host the championships would be required to be submitted to the organisers by 15th November at the latest.

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Reynolds,

That the Committee agrees, in principle, to prepare a bid to host the World Pipe Band Championships in Belfast during 2016, 2017 and 2018.

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

Accordingly, it was agreed that the Council would not bid to host the championships in the years as specified. However, it was agreed further that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would provide an overview of the large-scale events which the Council might consider bidding to host for in future years.

Culture Arts and Leisure Committee - Arts in Working-Class Communities

The Committee agreed that the Director, or his nominee, would deliver a presentation to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee at the Northern Ireland Assembly on 13th November. It was noted that the presentation would outline the role of the Council in promoting arts within working-class communities.

Community Festivals Fund

The Committee noted the contents of a report in respect of the Council's Community Festivals' Fund for 2014/2015 and agreed to accept the proposed funding from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to administer the Community Festivals' Fund for 2015/2016.

Consultation Exercises

Northern Ireland Bicycle Strategy

The Committee endorsed the Council's response to a consultation exercise which had been overseen by the Department for Regional Development in relation to a future Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland. It was noted that the response would be amended to emphasise the following comments:

- that the Council would request that the Department would consider creating 'safe spaces' for bicycles, particularly to enhance that ability of children to cycle to and from school;
- that the Department would explore the feasibility of extending 'cycle to work' schemes across Northern Ireland; and
- that the Department would agree to review the criteria for the 'cycle to work' scheme to enable a greater number of local bicycle shops to be deemed as suppliers.

Bank Square Access

The Committee endorsed a proposal by Transport NI to introduce revised access arrangements which would enable public hire vehicles to access Bank Square on evenings and weekends.

Ainsworth Community Centre

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a request to reallocate a pre-agreed support grant, in the sum of £11,000, to the Ainsworth Residents Group to enable it to develop a community house at premises at 369 to 371 Springfield Road. It was noted that the deferral would enable consultation to be undertaken with the relevant authorities and neighbouring communities in respect of the proposal and allow for a business case to be presented to the Committee.

Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre - Lease Renewal

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it would extend, for a further five-year period from 1st October, 2014, a lease agreement with Connswater Community and Leisure Services for the use of the Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre, subject to a rent of £10,775 per annum.

Glen Road Travellers' Site

The Committee agreed, subject to the endorsement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, to enter into a lease agreement with An Munia Tober, until 30th September, 2017, for the locating of an additional port-a-cabin, fenced compound and car park at the Glen Road site for the use of the Council's Traveller Liaison Officer at a yearly rent of £2,315.

North Queen Street Community Centre - Holy Family Amateur Boxing Club

The Committee agreed to extend the lease, for a five-year period commencing on 1st February, 2014, with the Holy Family Amateur Boxing Club for the use of the North Queen Street Community Centre at an annual fee of £1,075, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Denmark Street Community Centre - Rent Review

The Committee agreed to a revised rent of £3,786 per annum for the use of the Denmark Street Community Centre by the Denmark Street Community Association. It was noted that the revised rate would be backdated to 1st April, 2013, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders.

Children and Young People - Update

The Committee noted an update in respect of the Council's activity in promoting services for Children and Young People.

Cancellation of Committee Meeting in November

The Committee was reminded that the Shadow Strategic and Resources Committee had, at its meeting on 26th September, agreed that it would be necessary for two party briefings to be provided during November for each political party. Those briefings would enable each of the parties to consider in detail the future governance arrangements for the Council and the rate-setting process for 2015/2016. Accordingly, in order to free-up Members' time, it had been proposed that meetings of the Principal Committees of the City Council be cancelled in November.

The Members were informed that Chief Officers had been requested to defer until December any business which would have been submitted to Committees in November. Should any urgent decisions be required during November, the Chief Executive would be requested to exercise her delegated authority. However, such decisions would be taken only after consultation with the Party Leaders, in conjunction with the relevant Committee Chairman. Alternatively, should it be deemed appropriate, the matter would be referred to the appropriate Committee in December, or, if necessary, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in November.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to cancel its scheduled meeting in November.

Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014/2020

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided information in respect of the Council's future participation in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Rural Development Programme for 2014/2020, particularly in respect of the Council's involvement in the Lagan Rural Partnership.

The Committee agreed, in principle, that it would participate, in conjunction with the newly-formed Lisburn and Castlereagh Council, in the Lagan Rural Partnership, subject to a further report being submitted for consideration in due course.

Visteon Site

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th September, it had considered the contents of a feasibility study regarding the future development of the former Visteon factory off Finaghy Road North.

The Director advised that further correspondence had been received from local residents setting out their views on the feasibility study, copies of which had been circulated to the Members of the Committee.

Noted.

Chairman