

Extract from minutes of –

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

27th FEBRUARY, 2008

“Renewing Communities Local Masterplans”

The Head of Economic Initiatives reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 21st February, it had considered a report regarding Strategic Regional Frameworks. She informed the Members that the presentations to be made to the Committee on the local Masterplans would operate within these Strategic Regional Frameworks.

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

‘Relevant Background Information

The Development Committee at the meeting in December agreed to receive presentations in relation to the development of the five local area Masterplans within Belfast, by RPS on behalf of the Department for Social Development, and a spatial regeneration plan for West Belfast & Greater Shankill being developed by consultants on behalf of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council.

The proposed presentations seek to provide an update on the work that has been carried out by various consultants since their appointment last year to develop the proposed documents.

Key Issues

Local Area Masterplans

The Masterplans are being developed by DSD as part of the Renewing Communities Agenda and are intended to identify strategic action required to address areas of major dereliction. The documents are intended to ‘provide a vehicle to coordinate and orchestrate public sector investment and leverage in private sector investment’.

RPS since appointment has been engaged in consultations and data identification, across all of the areas, to inform their work and provide a context to any future recommendations. As part of this process they have met with representatives from a range of organisations including Council Officers and Members.

The consultancy team is currently drawing up draft masterplans to capture the economic opportunities identified. This work will include development of investment options, proposed street environmental works, proposed site acquisitions, early wins and longer-term aspirations. The proposals will be included within the draft plans, which are projected to be completed sometime after Easter.

West Belfast & Greater Shankill Spatial Regeneration Plan

The establishment of the Enterprise Council was a key recommendation of the Task Forces' reports, published in February 2002. It was envisaged that the Enterprise Council could assist in implementing the recommendations of the Task Forces which pertained to the local small business sector bringing greater coherence to the promotion of and support for local businesses. The aim of the Council is 'To release the productivity and economic potential of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Force area and their inhabitants through education, enterprise and investment - both indigenous and foreign direct investment - thereby boosting local incomes and employment opportunities and facilitating the renewal and regeneration of the area'.

One of the six core objectives for the Enterprise Council is to develop a spatial regeneration plan for West Belfast & Greater Shankill from the perspective of business and entrepreneurial development, consistent with our vision of the area as a vibrant economic area within the Belfast region. This proposed spatial plan for West Belfast and Greater Shankill is therefore being funded and undertaken on behalf of the business community in area. During initial consultations with the appointed consultants it was suggested that it would be beneficial for the Committee to be made aware of the work which this privately funded organisation was undertaking.

The approach being adopted in the spatial regeneration plan is to focus on the identification of the primary regeneration drivers for the area and to develop more detailed concepts around these priority projects. The Enterprise Council in making the presentation to the Committee is seeking to both raise awareness of the initiative and if appropriate endorsement of the approach by the Council.

Resource Implications

Financial

No additional financial implications involved with these recommendations.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the information in respect of the presentations; and
- Consider the endorsement of the spatial regeneration approach for West Belfast and Greater Shankill.'

The Committee was advised that deputations on behalf of the Department for Social Development and the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council were in attendance to address the meeting regarding their plans.....

West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council

Messrs. Padraic White, Chairman and Tony Morgan, Chief Executive Officer with the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council, together with Mr. Richard Griffin, Colin Buchanan and Partners, and Mr. Michael Doherty, Mackle Doherty Associates, were admitted to the Meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. White thanked the Committee for the opportunity to address it and indicated that the Enterprise Council operated on behalf of the small and medium-sized enterprises in the West Belfast and Greater Shankill areas. He informed the Members that the residents of these areas had been demoralised due to the two major regeneration projects which would have benefited both communities, namely the development of the former Mackies site and the proposal to develop a university at Springvale, had not materialised. There was therefore, at present, no major investment project which would provide employment opportunities for the residents in those areas. The Enterprise Council believed that it could develop projects which would interest investors and, having raised £40,000 from the private sector within a two-month period, had funded the Spatial Regeneration Plan for the West Belfast and Greater Shankill area in order to provide:

- (i) a coherent development view from the small and medium-sized enterprises located within the areas;
- (ii) a business input to the Strategic Regional Frameworks for the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Partnership Boards; and
- (iii) an informed basis of dialogue with the Council as it developed its City-wide plans.

Mr. Doherty, with the assistance of visual aids, addressed the Committee regarding the various economic drivers, assets and inhibitors to the proposals contained within the Masterplan. He indicated that it was the Enterprise Council's intention to promote projects which would reduce the physical severance between the City centre and surrounding neighbourhoods and referred to examples of similar schemes in Barcelona and Paris which had done so successfully. He pointed out that current planning restrictions which prohibited the construction of office blocks outside the City centre acted against the development of the economy in the West Belfast and Greater Shankill areas. He informed the Members that the Enterprise Council was of the view that the Belfast Hills were a resource which should be developed, particularly from a tourism perspective. However, there were no access points to the Hills from the West Belfast or Greater Shankill areas and this would require to be addressed. He pointed out that the areas had considerable tourism potential and had much to offer visitors. However, since no hotel was located currently within these areas, 'visitor spend' was limited.

During discussion on the presentation, the representatives from the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council answered various questions which were put to them by the Members. Mr. White indicated that the Enterprise Council was keen to identify five regeneration projects for the area and indicated that the developers of the Titanic Quarter had taken an interest in the organisation's proposals. He pointed out that the Enterprise Council had been impressed by the commitment of entrepreneurs to its proposals and that the aim of the Masterplan was to encourage potential investors, thereby resulting in people staying and spending money in the West Belfast and Greater Shankill areas.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from the Enterprise Council for attending and the latter then retired from the meeting.

Following discussion on the presentation and the comments thereon, the Committee agreed to endorse the Spatial Regeneration Plan proposed by the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Enterprise Council.”