



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Update on OECD Economic Review of Belfast
Date:	12 November 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Anne-Marie Campbell Policy & Research Manager ext. 3620

Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) performed an economic review of Belfast commissioned by Council. Members will also be familiar that the reports of the study update went to Committee on two occasions: 8 August 2007 and 07 March 2008.

The OECD team, led by Debra Mountford, a manager of Cities and Regions in Local Economic and Employment Directorate of OECD, visited Belfast five times in the last year to meet with the key decision makers in the city (consisting of Council members and officers, ministers and the representatives of the main leading organisations in the city - from public, private, university and voluntary sectors). The team presented their interim findings to the State of the City Conference in May 08 where they received great interest.

The review is now finalised and the OECD report can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Key Issues

This Belfast review aims to provide the Council with recommendations on how to move forward economic and regional development agenda.

The main recommendation of the review is to:

Establish a City wide Development Agency, proposing a name of **Belfast Investment Development Agency (BIDA)** with the aim to enhance the economic growth of Belfast as a capital city and ensure that all its residents share the economic growth benefits.

The OECD believes that Development Agency model option offers strong advantages as the best vehicle with which to take forward the economic development of Belfast at the present time.

There is an urgent need for some form of new delivery vehicle that can bring together the required delivery agents and thus seek to overcome the highly fragmented and confused position that exists at the present time.

Moving to a new delivery vehicle quickly may provide the necessary catalyst and momentum required for change. Thus, instead of seeing the creation of the new delivery vehicle as an administration burden, it might be the very means by which reform is more speedily achieved.

The proposed BIDA would be charged to:

“enhance the economic growth of Belfast as a capital city in a way that contributes to the Executive’s economic growth targets for Northern Ireland as a whole and which ensured that all of Belfast’s residents shared in the benefits of its economic growth.”

It would have at least six areas that its remit needs to cover (the proposed structure of BIDA is illustrated in Figure 4, page 47 of the attached document):

- Planning, sites and strategic infrastructure;
- Investment facilitation and securing funding major projects;
- Knowledge economy (including skills, enterprise, higher education and innovation);
- Economic inclusion;
- Promotion; and
- City centre management.

OECD also identified further recommendations to take forward the necessary framework:

1. An integrated city centre development strategy;
2. Establishment with local and central government of a single and integrated joint venture between the key universities, colleges and institutes and the BIDA to promote and develop the Belfast knowledge economy;
3. A city-wide full employment promotion strategy and programme;
4. Based on the NI Investment Strategy prepared by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), the BIDA, working with SIB, local and central government, Invest NI (INI) and business partners should prepare and implement:
 - A plan for optimising the impact of the NI Investment Strategy
 - Support for greater leverage of public sector land assets
 - Support for greater speed and certainly in facilitating foreign and corporate investment in support of INI.
5. Better use of existing instruments, particularly focused on land and property development and encouragement of business investment.

After many years in which the pace of institutional change and economic reform has been relatively slow, OECD believes that now would seem the opportunity to drive forward the economic development of Belfast in a way that will secure its rightful place as one of the world’s leading cities.

The OECD is currently finalising publication of this document as part of their official Local Economic Strategy Series which will be available in January 2009. Approval is sought to formally launch this publication in NI Science Park, on 27 January 2009 at 09:30am. OECD will invite all Council Members and appropriate officers to the launch.

The OECD would like to use the opportunity to have further discussion on the recommendations and practically showcase other examples of good practice such as Barcelona. This formal launch will allow the Council to further engage with other main decision makers in the city for further discussion and possible actions leading from the OECD recommendations.

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of the formal launch of the publication is covered in the current budget.

Recommendations

The Committee members are asked to:

- Note the content of this report
- Consider the recommendations from the review as detailed in the key issues section of this report
- Approve the date of the OECD review launch on 27 January 2009 in NI Science Park and approve the associated costs for the attendance of invited Council members and appropriate members.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1. OECD LEED Programme – Review of Belfast

Abbreviations

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
LEED - Local Economic and Employment Directorate

BLANK PAGE