



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Review of Development Strategy for NI (Regional Development Strategy 10 Year Review)
Date:	12 November 2008
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Relevant Background Information

The August Development Committee considered a report on a range of planning and transportation Issues that included information in respect of the Regional Development Strategy review and proposed areas or issues of focus for the Council.

The Minister for Regional Development in his original announcement stated that this would be a “*fundamental review of the regional development strategy*” and that the new strategy would be different “*it will be relevant to key stakeholders and flexible enough to deal with changing circumstances, yet robust enough for decision-making; it will set priorities and list a selected number of key infrastructure projects that are essential for economic growth; it will take account of, and be relevant to, structures and functions that emerge from the review of public administration; and it will take account of the many changes that are happening around us*”.

The RDS is likely to become an increasingly important statutory document both for the continued development of Belfast within the wider region and in setting the strategic context for exercising local planning functions. Council engagement in the review process will be critical to ensure the document reflects the aspirations for the city and provides an appropriate context for the future development of local planning policy following the Review of Public Administration.

As previously identified a range of consultation and engagement mechanisms were being developed by the Department for Regional Development including investigation of the potential for public consultation sessions.

Key Issues

The RDS is proposed to become an increasingly important statutory document within the planning system in Northern Ireland. Council engagement in the review process will be critical to ensure that the importance and role of the city to the development of Northern Ireland continues to be recognised and that the potential remains for the development of local planning policies to support the sustainable development of the city. These two key aspects and associated local issues and trends were identified in the previous report as forming the basis for engagement in the process (**Appendix 1**).

These issues and trends will need to be addressed as part of a detailed response to the 10 year review of the Regional Development Strategy and should form the basis for the development of a robust position in response to the ongoing consultations . There will be both informal and formal opportunities to respond to the proposals, in the period leading up to the publication of the proposed consultation draft early next year, through the ongoing participation in the established working groups and any proposed consultation events.

A local consultation workshop to inform the 10 year review has been organised for the 4th December 2008 at the Northern Ireland Science Park (**Appendix 2**). The consultation workshop will form part of a series of eleven events across the province and will be facilitated by Charles Landry. These events are intended to provide the opportunity to influence the direction and emphasis within the Regional Development Strategy.

In the context of the potentially heightened role for the Regional Development Strategy post RPA and the integration with the Programme for Government / NI Investment Strategy it is critical that the Council participates in the workshops and highlights the importance of the continued sustainable development of the city as the driver of the region.

This Council participation and engagement will be critical to ensure there is balance to the pressure for the uncontrolled decentralisation of economic activity, which is emerging as an unsophisticated response to the aspiration for 'balanced' economic growth for the region. The representation at the workshop should include both officers and members from the Council to ensure that a common agenda, for the continued growth and development of the city, is presented at the workshop.

Resource Implications

Financial

There will be associated costs, ie travel and attendance, for those Members and Officers attending the consultation workshop at NISP.

Recommendations

- Committee endorse the information set out in Appendix 1 as the basis for the Council engagement in the ongoing Regional Development Strategy review process;
- Committee are asked to note the proposed consultation workshop and approve any travel and associated costs for any Members of the Committee and appropriate officers wishing to attend this event.

Documents Attached

- Appendix 1: Basis for Council Engagement in the RDS Review
- Appendix 2: Department for Regional Development Consultation Workshop

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