



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Quarterly Update of the Departmental Plan
Date:	20 April 2009
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Relevant Background Information

The Development Department's Departmental Plan 2008-2009 was approved at Development Committee on 14 May 2008, with agreement that quarterly update reports would be presented to Committee at later dates. This update is for the last quarter of 2008-2009.

Key Issues

Service and unit managers were asked to provide a list of key achievements in 2008/09 which are presented in this report. The unit managers were also asked to provide updates on the status of their unit's projects and initiatives under each of the strategic aims of the departmental plan, providing commentary if necessary. The classifications used to provide updates are outlined below and progress is monitored using the flagging system:

- Complete – the action is complete and targets met;
- On Target – action has begun but is not yet complete;
- Delayed – project is delayed.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee note:

The overall achievements of the Development Department 2008-2009, and the update of Development Department's plan for the last quarter of the financial year 2008-2009

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Key achievements of the Development department 2008-2009.

Appendix 2: Quarterly update of the 2008/09 Departmental Plan for the last quarter of the financial year 2008-2009

Appendix 1

Key achievements of the Development department 2008/09

Although the Development department has been understaffed (40 posts are currently vacant), many significant achievements were realised in 2008/09. One of the highlights of the year was the reopening of the Ulster Hall after a two year £8.5 million refurbishment programme, with a Civic Gala Concert and a month-long opening festival. The reopening of the Ulster Hall generated significant positive publicity for the Council and improved our engagement with the residents of Belfast.

Development has also been successful in securing substantial funding. Overall, the department secured £9.82 million through applications for EU and UK central Government funds.

The aims and objectives of the departmental plan have successfully shaped and influenced a large number of projects and activities, many of which are now coming to fruition and others which have been successfully completed. The key departmental achievements are outlined below under each of the services.

In 2008/09 Community Services:

- Officially opened new and improved community centres at Ardoyne (April 2008) and Woodvale (May 2008);
- Attracted more than 820,000¹ attendees at its 22 community centres;
- Started work on the community and leisure amenity at the BCC owned facilities at Roden Street and Lower Ormeau where the managing community organisations secured over £3m of external funds;
- Delivered a citywide programme for Children and Young people including 27 summer schemes and a series of events attended by over 2000 children;
- Worked at this year's summer schemes through the play team to include children with disabilities within mainstream services;
- Helped improve services for older people by introducing specialist training for Community Development Assistants;
- Rolled out a Good Relations programme across all community centres;
- Extended community support into four disadvantaged areas in East Belfast in partnership with the East Belfast Community Development Agency;
- Provided training and recognised the efforts of volunteers who support Community Services and give up almost 70,000 hours of their time each year;
- Provided information and advice, themed workshops, family support services and therapy sessions through themed information events in a number of centres;
- Recruited 32 new young people for a second term of the BCC Youth Forum, and agreed a new action plan;
- Delivered a development support and awareness programme for the Traveller community in partnership with An Munia Tober;
- Distributed £2.3million of grant aid to 350 community projects;
- Carried out a structural review of Community Services, which is ongoing.

¹ This figure includes repeat visits

Economic Initiatives (including Culture and Arts, Economic Development, Estates, North Foreshore, Planning and Transport, Markets and Tourism units)

Economic Initiatives led the Council's response to the economic downturn in order to help local businesses and the wider economy in these difficult times. It has also been working on the citywide employability and skills agenda to ensure that local businesses benefit from the right workforce and to equip unemployed citizens with skills necessary to get back to work.

Over the past year, Economic Initiatives also:

- Received match-funding for economic development from DETI for six applications worth £1.5 million over two years;
- Implemented 50 business development programmes, attracting around 600 businesses;
- Created around 150 jobs through business development support;
- Organised ten Belfast Entrepreneurs' Network (BEN) meetings attended by 346 companies;
- Funded 17 Neighbourhood Economic Development projects;
- Launched the HARTE (Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment) project to provide training and access to employment for unemployed people;
- Managed five culture and arts funding schemes, providing financial assistance of £1.35m to a total of 107 organisations across the city;
- Commissioned a new public art sculpture known as 'Rise' for the Broadway Roundabout from Wolfgang Buttress;
- Developed the city's cultural tourism offer and sustained the Sister City link with Nashville;
- Successfully participated in the formal enquiry processes for BMAP;
- Completed local regeneration projects (arterial routes) on Antrim Rd, York Rd and Lower Ormeau Rd in partnership with other agencies;
- Launched the Late Night Art Initiative on the first Thursday of each month in city art galleries;
- Completed a Draft Master Plan for the North Foreshore;
- Entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with DSD for the management of former Laganside assets;
- Successfully ran the Christmas Continental Market which saw an estimated 625,000 people visiting, with an estimated economic impact of over £20 million;
- Organised the Belfast Food and Drink Festival; an evening economy conference and the marketing campaign for late night trading Wednesday–Friday;
- Won the NITB Partnership Award 2008 for cultural tourism initiatives;
- Introduced cultural tourism visitor signage for outer areas of Belfast;
- Helped implement the new city brand;
- Set up a joint venture partnership with Renewable Power Systems to generate "green electricity" at the North Foreshore;
- Was awarded runner-up in the 'Best stakeholder/community engagement' category in the national Brownfield Briefing Remediation Innovation Awards for the Giant's Park consultation.

Waterfront and Ulster Hall (including City Events Unit)

The reopening of the Ulster Hall on 6 March was a major milestone. The project cost £8.5 million and it was completed on time and under budget. There was widespread media coverage of the highly successful reopening. The Belfast Waterfront meanwhile retained its top ten placing in the AIPC Apex World's Best Congress Centre competition.

In 2008/09 the Waterfront and Ulster Hall (including City Events Unit) also:

- Hosted four international conferences at the Waterfront;
- Achieved 50% repeat business and sales, representing high customer satisfaction;
- Achieved attendance figures of 440,682 people up to January 2009 in the Waterfront;
- Organised 24 large scale civic events attracting around 650,000 people;
- Generated £7.5m additional revenue for the city during the 08/09 period through civic and sports events;
- Developed an 'access to heritage' strategy for the Ulster Hall;
- Negotiated a reduction in the Waterfronts' annual rates bill for 2008/09 of £68,000; and
- Secured funding of £54,000 from Heritage Lottery Fund to support the 'trans' event programme.

Directorate Support (including Business Support, the European Unit, the Policy and Business Development Unit and the SNAP Unit)

Directorate Support has been leading the structural review in the department and through this review managed to realise savings of £80,000 for the council. As previously mentioned some of the recommendations are yet to be implemented.

In 2008/09 Directorate support also:

- Prepared 12 Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan responses;
- Undertook an external audit of 4,000 local organisations which deliver services in City Places areas;
- Held the 5th annual Opportunity Europe event, attracting 6,000 attendees;
- Secured the only UK fast track Urbact II project – Open Cities – which addresses economic migration;
- Facilitated 111 inward European study visits and held two EU business information seminars;
- Undertook a review of the State of the City initiative;
- Held the fifth annual State of the City conference which attracted around 120 key decision makers in the city; and
- Was highly commended for research on Poverty by the Local Authorities and Intelligence Association.

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