



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Renewing the Routes Progress Report and Specific Project Updates
Date:	10 June 2009
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development ext. 3470
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Relevant Background Information

This report provides an update on the 2008/9 progress for the Renewing the Routes programme; seeks endorsement of proposed amendments to identified projects within the agreed action plans and provides details in respect of a specific project proposal for commercial improvements.

The first modification to the projects programme relates to the proposed reallocation of approved funding as a response to changed circumstances in respect of an increased funding made available from Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO) for Shankill gateway projects.

The second modification relates to the proposed reallocation of approved funding as a response to the growing popularity of the commercial improvement programme on the Springfield Road.

The specific project proposal being brought to the attention of Committee relates to a commercial improvement phase of works that would include the Republican Sinn Féin offices on Falls Road.

Key Issues

Overall project performance

Through its 'Renewing the Routes' programme, the Council continues to develop and lead targeted local urban regeneration. Renewing the Routes represents an innovative

inter-agency approach to enhancing the vitality of these roads by developing and implementing integrated regeneration plans. Working with the local community and statutory partners in adopting a phased approach, the programme initially concentrated on packages of smaller scale environmental or enhancement works. These interventions included new lighting, heritage asset refurbishments, tourism signage, mural removal and replacement, tree planting and landscaping, commercial façade improvements, boundary treatments and investment in open spaces. Financially the project remains on target, with finance provided through the Integrated Development Fund. With an overall capital budget of £3,798,000 the target expenditure for the end of the financial year for March 2009 was met with a projected claim of £1,772,577. The financial target for the current financial year (2009/2010) is just over £2m.

With the goodwill of local businesses and the support of both Elected Members and the community, statutory and voluntary sector, this programme has progressed and has an ambitious programme for 2009/2010. The appended summary (**Appendix 1**) outlines some of the key achievements during 2008/2009 and outlines the main elements of the programme for 2009/2010.

Shankill Road

The main emphasis for the regeneration on Shankill Road remains the commercial frontage improvements. Over 35 premises have now taken part in the scheme, with a further 80 businesses in line to benefit in 2009/2010. Completed heritage and conservation projects include feature railings and granite entrance details at the West Belfast Orange Hall, floodlighting to Woodvale Methodist Church and high quality railings at West Kirk Presbyterian Church. Ongoing works nearing completion include the restoration of the Shankill Rest Garden's perimeter wall, the cleaning of the stonework to Shankill Library and landscaping at Woodvale Presbyterian Church.

Upper Springfield Road

Works are now complete for the environmental project to improve the road frontage and green space area at Springhill Park 'funnel'; works have included new railings, paths, landscaping, planting and future artworks from the community. A project carried out in partnership with Groundwork. Further commercial improvement proposals have been developed from the previous pilot schemes in the area and will be presented to owners/occupiers for final approval in June with work scheduled to commence in July. Planting, public art and boundary improvements have also been completed and additional complementary public realm and landscaping works are at the final design stages.

Crumlin Road

Three phases of the commercial improvement programme covering 41 units at Lower Crumlin Road, Glenbank and Ardoyne are almost complete with a further six unit scheme planned for Carlisle Circus/ Gaol area in August 2009. The project to refurbish the Belfast Orange Hall has commenced on-site at Clifton Street along with the public realm improvement scheme at Agnes Street. Draft proposals have been developed for landscaping schemes in Glenbank Drive alongside public realm proposals at the Carlisle Circus and Ardoyne roundabouts.

Falls Update

Two phases of the Lower Falls commercial improvements are complete covering 61 properties. The third phase for 40 units at Mid Falls is also nearing completion and consultations have commenced for the two phase project at Andersonstown (50 units) for an on-site target of June/July 2009. The feature lighting projects have been completed at Carnegie Library, St Mary University College and the International Wall.

The refurbishment works to the listed railings at the St Comgall's site were completed in conjunction with additional landscaping carried out under a separate programme. The work to the entrance of Falls Park is in progress with all re-pointing elements already completed. Specialist refurbishment /repairs to the stonework will be carried out in July 2009 including reinstating the ornate finials on the pillars. Willowbank Youth Club Environmental Scheme has commenced with gate installation due for June 2009. Further environmental projects are planned for the St Peters Cathedral area and Bog Meadows entrance.

Programme Variations

Members are asked to approve the proposed variations resulting from the continued review of activity and refinement of the final project implementation for the renewing the routes programme.

Shankill Road

The variations proposed are in respect of four previously identified projects at Agnes Street, Tennant Street, Lanark Way and Woodvale Park gateway sites amounting to £32,935. The original allocations were intended to support small scale environmental projects in these locations. However, as a result of securing £300,000 of additional support from BRO Physical Development Branch, public realm improvements have been completed on Shankill Road's junctions and gateways. Approval is therefore requested for the reallocation of the gateway funds to supplement the successful Shankill Road commercial improvements projects.

Springfield Road

A reallocation of the agreed Springfield IDF Action Plan budget is proposed to supplement the work proposed for the commercial premises. The reallocation would allow the development of a comprehensive scheme for the implementation of the works in the area and it is proposed that £20,000 of the £35,000 environmental improvement budget be utilised for the planned commercial improvement programme. The commercial improvement works continue to be extremely popular and an increased budget would allow a comprehensive scheme covering all the properties and delivering improvement in a vibrant and commercial area on the Springfield Road.

It should be noted that the environmental improvements projects in the original IDF plan have been supplemented by additional works funded by external organisations including the Arts Council, Groundwork and Invest NI. The remaining budget of £15,000 for environmental improvements would be applied to targeted environmental schemes including graffiti removal; clearance of derelict spaces and public art.

Specific Project Proposal Information

The specific project proposal being brought to the attention of Committee relates to a commercial improvement phase of works that would include the Republican Sinn Féin offices on Falls Road. The Republican Sinn Féin offices are located in a block of premises from 229 Falls Road where it is proposed that a package of works would be carried out as part of the ongoing comprehensive approach to the frontage refurbishments.

The property, which is owned and occupied by Republican Sinn Féin, would benefit from refurbishment works that could include painting of existing windows and door, render and paint plinth to shop front, paint and service existing roller shutter, patch concrete coping and clean existing tiles and replace any broken tiles. The scope of the enhancement works would also normally include the replacement of any inappropriate

signage with more a traditional and coherent design.

Under s115A of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, the Council cannot expend monies for political publicity and legal advice, in light of this, is that refurbishment works should be restricted to the façade improvements and exclude any work to the building signage, as the signage relates directly to political publicity.

Resource Implications

There are no additional financial implications arising from the reallocation.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

1. Note the updates set out within the report;
2. Approve the reallocations of the previously agreed budgets of £32,935 in respect of the gateway areas to supplement the commercial improvement budget for the Shankill Road;
3. Approve the reallocations of £20,000 from the previously agreed environmental improvements budget of £35,000 to supplement the commercial improvement works proposed for the Springfield Road.
4. Note the proposed actions in respect of the Republican Sinn Féin offices on Falls Road.

Decision Tracking

Recommendations 2 and 3:
Following approval by Committee detailed designs will be produced.

Time line: March 2010

Supporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

BRO Belfast Regeneration Office

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Renewing the Routes projects/targets 2009/2010