



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Economic Development Update
Date:	10 June 2009
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Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of a number of developments including:

1. Promoting the local economy and independent retail in South Belfast through the use of open space
2. Belfast Business Awards 2010
3. Business Development Programmes

Key Issues

1. Promoting the local economy and independent retail in South Belfast through the use of open space

At the September 2008 meeting of the Development Committee, Members agreed to support a range of activities to promote the development of the independent retail sector in the City. Since this time we have supported business and skills development initiatives and marketing and promotion activities to help many of the independent retailers in the City improve their products and services on offer. A paper detailing our activity over the past 12 months and a suggested action plan for the further development of the independent retail sector during 2009/10 will be presented to Members in due course.

South Belfast Partnership is currently planning to use open spaces and Parks within retail districts to host two events to encourage increased footfall and to market the areas more effectively.

The two events will take place within Council Parks: Crescent Open Space and Drumglass Park.

Botanic Arts Fair

South Belfast Partnership Board organised the first Botanic Arts Festival on Saturday 28 March 2009 in partnership with University of Ulster, Ormeau Business Park and Crescent Arts Centre. Council provided financial support of £12,633 towards the overall cost of organising the event.

The Festival brought together over 50 craft makers and artists from the Art College and provided a platform for them to exhibit and sell their products. In addition, a range of live entertainment and performance was provided and over 1,400 people attended the event during the course of the day.

Given the success of the Festival, South Belfast Partnership Board is planning a second event on Saturday 12th September 2009. The Partnership has been successful in attracting funding under the Community Festivals Fund to organise a community festival which will allow local artists and designers to showcase their products. They are seeking additional support in order to develop and deliver a PR and marketing campaign to raise awareness of the Festival and to cover the costs relating to the retailing on the day e.g. stall hire.

Drumglass Market

Previous work to support the development of the independent retail sector has identified the importance of the Lisburn Road as a unique location for independent retail in the city and one that requires further investment.

The Traders' Organisation in the area - Lisburn Road Business Association - has been recently formed and is focused on improving the amenity of the area as well as enhancing the retail offering. They have identified the importance of increasing footfall and the need to engage in a targeted marketing and promotions campaign. In order to support this objective, the traders' group has worked with South Belfast Partnership to develop a one-day event in Drumglass Park. The event will incorporate entertainment for families as well as an art exhibition and market.

It is hoped that, if successful, the market will become a regular event in a programme of animation and promotion across South Belfast's independent retail districts.

Resource Implications

At the May 2009 meeting of Development Committee a budget of £120,000 was approved as part of the Departmental Business Plan to support independent retail in the City.

The total cost of hosting the Botanic Arts Fair and the Drumglass Market events is £32,325. South Belfast Partnership have asked for a contribution of £25,000 towards the events.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the content of this report and approve the allocation of up to £25,000 towards the organisation of two markets to support the independent retail sector (budget already approved by Development Committee in May 2009 as part of Council's contribution to support independent retail in the City).

2. Belfast Business Awards 2010

Belfast City Centre Management Company (BCCM) in conjunction with Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce (BCTC) has delivered four annual Belfast Business Awards as a means of recognising and celebrating the efforts of businesses in the City. The event was first introduced in 2004 and since this time Council has been a key partner and major sponsor, providing funding towards sponsorship of individual award categories (2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008) and towards the hire of suitable venues (2007 and 2008 only). Additional sponsors in previous years have included the Department for Social Development, KPMG, Ulster Bank, Victoria Square and Westfield Castlecourt.

The scheme currently culminates with a high profile Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony in November and attracts between 350 – 450 individuals (depending on the venue).

For the first time in 2008 the concept of the awards was widened out to the 'Belfast Awards', retaining many of the popular business focussed categories but also including new categories aimed at making the awards relevant to larger parts of the City, as well as reflecting the wide goals of BCCM's funders. Some of the additional awards included "Best Regeneration Project" and "Belfast Champion".

Future of the Awards

The Business Awards is a successful event and represents an excellent opportunity for the Council to engage with the private sector. However, based on our engagement in previous years, there are a number of concerns regarding its current format that we feel should be addressed if it is to be delivered again in the future.

In the first instance it is proposed that the Council takes the lead in hosting any future scheme as existing award categories currently go well beyond BCCM/BCTC's competencies i.e., the awards are not only retail focussed but include categories such as "Best Business Growth", "Best New Start Business", "Creative Industries" and "Contribution to Education".

In addition the Awards are not only for businesses inside BCCM's geographical boundaries, but for businesses located across the greater Belfast area.

Finally it is not exclusive to BCCM members – anyone is eligible to apply. For these reasons it is felt the Business Awards should be Council-led, perhaps with Invest NI or at the very least the BCTC. The Council would however welcome the opportunity to work with BCCM and other third party organisations in the delivery of the Awards, contracting out certain elements of its organisation if required e.g., managing ticket sales and corporate sponsorship.

As well as the Council taking the lead in delivery of the Awards it is also proposed that a number of further changes be made to its existing format. These changes include:

Timing of the Awards

With approximately 10 other award ceremonies delivered across Belfast during the months of October, November and December (i.e., UTV Business Eye Awards, Go Belfast Awards and The Belfast Telegraph Northern Ireland Property Awards) it is recommended that a more appropriate time for holding the event may be earlier in the calendar year. For this reason it is recommended the Awards are delivered in spring 2010 as opposed to November 2009.

Award Categories

It is recommended the Council reverts to delivering the Belfast Business Awards as opposed to the more general Belfast Awards which were delivered in 2008. In doing so this presents a great opportunity for the Council to streamline existing categories and to introduce a number of additional awards reflecting some of the goals of the Economic Development Unit e.g., Independent Retailer of the Year or Best Film and Best Digital Media Product Award. A list of suggested award categories for 2010 is contained in Appendix 1.

It is recommended these new Awards would be open to all businesses across the greater Belfast area.

In the longer term the Council could explore widening the categories further to reflect the work of the organisation as a whole and host the Belfast City Council Awards.

Sponsorship

Consideration should be given to asking sponsors of individual award categories to offer tangible benefits to the winning businesses e.g. X hours of pro bono support.

Media Partner

Media coverage of recent events has been disappointing. In creating additional publicity, a press partner must be sought to help promote and report on the event.

Resource Implications

The cost of hosting the Belfast Business Awards in 2010 will be approximately £90,000. A budget of £20,000 was approved as part of the Departmental Business Plan at the May 2009 meeting of the Development Committee. Other sources of income will include private sector sponsorship and ticket sales.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and agree the proposal for Council to take the lead in delivering the Belfast Business Awards 2010.

Decision Tracking

An update report on progress will be brought to Committee.

Time line: January 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

3. Business Development Programmes

At the Development Committee meeting in May 2009 approval was given to develop a series of business development programmes aimed at helping businesses in Belfast enhance their own competitiveness and growth potential. These programmes include The Franchise Initiative, Sales Growth, Strategy In Business and Business Improvement through Environmental Solutions (BITES).

Individual tenders for the delivery of these initiatives will be issued in the Spring and Summer of 2009. Members are asked to delegate authority to the Director of Development, in association with the Chairman of Development Committee, to approve the most economically advantageous tenders, subject to a form of contract being drawn up by Legal Services.

Resource Implications

The budget was approved by Committee in May 09 and is included in the Departmental Plan.

Recommendations:

Note the contents of the report and approve the proposal to appoint the most economically advantageous tenders for the individual programmes following a competitive tendering process and subject to an appropriate legal contract.

Abbreviations

BCCM	Belfast City Centre Management Company
BCTC	Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Belfast Business Awards 2010 – Suggested Award Categories

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Belfast Business Awards 2010 - Suggested Award Categories (17)

<p>Best New Start Business Open to all businesses that, during the last two years, are new to the area or have undergone a significant change <i>Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors</i></p>
<p>Best Social Economy Business Recognises the outstanding work carried out by social entrepreneurs and marks the contributions they have made in changing the future of their communities <i>Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors</i></p>
<p>Best Business Growth Open to all businesses that, during the last two years, have demonstrated growth in all areas including products, services, staff, customers, profit, markets and market share <i>Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors</i></p>
<p>Best Marketing Initiative Open to all businesses that, in the last year, have implemented a marketing event or campaign <i>Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors</i></p>
<p>Young Business Person Open to young entrepreneurs (under the age of 30) who are enjoying success in building their own business. Best demonstrates ambition, energy, skill and vision, as well as tangible business success <i>Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors</i></p>
<p>Business Innovation / Best New Product Open to businesses that, during the last two years, can demonstrate a proven ability to create, grow and develop innovations or processes that substantially improve the commercial performance or prospects of the company <i>Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors</i></p>
<p>Contribution to Sustainability or Best Environmental Practices Open to businesses who have, in the last two years, a green invention/product development and/or have implemented environmental management policies or principles <i>Link to Corporate Objectives: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors <u>and</u> Reduced the city's impact on climate change and improved air quality</i></p>
<p>Best Small Manufacturer or Excellence in/Contribution to Manufacturing Designed to recognise the contribution of this sector to the economy and excellence achieved within manufacturing <i>Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors</i></p>

Independent Retailer of the Year

Recognises the contributions of independent retailers to the local community and Belfast's retail industry and rewards the smaller/owner operated type businesses that succeed in this highly competitive market

Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors

Best New Film / TV Company

Open to businesses that, during the last two years, have demonstrated growth in all areas including the development of new project slates, commissions, staff, profit, and markets

Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors

Best Digital Media Product

Open to businesses that, during the last two years, can demonstrate a proven ability to develop an innovative and commercial digital media product utilising mobile, web, or gaming platforms

Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors

Best New Band / Singer Songwriter

Designed to recognise the contribution of Belfast based musicians to the economy and excellence achieved within the music industry

Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors

Best Use of Design (either graphic, fashion etc)

Recognises the outstanding work carried out by the design community and marks the contributions they have made in changing the image and profitability of a client company

Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors

International Trade

Recognises excellence in import, export and international trade achievement

Link to Corporate Objective: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors

Civic Leadership

Recognises an individual who, through their civic leadership, has made significant long term contributions in the greater Belfast area

Link to Corporate Objective: People enjoy living in a vibrant, shared and diverse city

Corporate Social Responsibility

Open to organisations who can demonstrate excellence in a company wide commitment to corporate social responsibility

Link to Corporate Objective: People enjoy living in a vibrant, shared and diverse city

Best Regeneration Project

Open to all organisations who have been involved in the development of a regeneration project which has significantly improved and revitalised an area in the city

Link to Corporate Objectives: Stimulate growth and competitiveness in key sectors and Supported regeneration activity and Growing the city's rate base in line with Council's objectives