



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Economic Development Unit Update
Date:	9 December 2009
Reporting Officer:	Shirley McCay, Acting Director of Development, ext 3459
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Economic Development Manager, ext 3427

Relevant Background Information

The Economic Development Unit Update covers the following subjects:

1. North Belfast Partnership – Request for Funding
2. Collaborative Marketing Campaigns for Trader Groups
3. South by Southwest 2010 – Creative Industries
4. Cities of the Isles Conference
5. Committee Site Visits
6. Request for presentation by British Telecom (BT)
7. Update on review of Local Economic Development Plan

Key Issues

1. North Belfast Partnership – Request for Funding

In April 2009 Members agreed to provide match funding for year two of a three year project to four organisations who had been successful in securing financial assistance through the European Social Fund (ESF). These organisations were East Belfast Mission, North Belfast Partnership, Women into Business and Training for Women Network. This funding is for the 2009/10 financial year only and, as a condition of the funding, the four groups had to agree that they would not request any further money from Council in connection with the 2010/2011 aspect of their ESF projects.

North Belfast Partnership has recently requested that Council reconsiders the decision it took in April and to provide ESF match funding to the Local Employment Access Partnership (LEAP) project in the 2010/2011 financial year. Members are reminded that a similar proposal from East Belfast Mission was considered at Development Committee in November 2009 and at this meeting it was agreed that match funding would not be provided for East Belfast Mission's ESF funded, Work4U project.

North Belfast Partnership currently delivers LEAP, a collaborative group of agencies

from public, private and community sectors working to reduce barriers to employment and increase access to jobs for unemployed and economically inactive residents of North Belfast. The project was funded for year one and year two was also granted on condition that the organisation did not request support for year three. This condition was written into the funding agreements for LEAP and the other three organisations that had been successful in attracting year two support from Belfast City Council. For this reason the Development Department has not made provision in its revenue estimates for 2010/11 for groups participating in ESF projects.

One key reason is that recent research has identified a significant lack of coordination in respect of this field and the Development Committee has previously agreed that it is important not to add to this. As previously reported to the Committee, the Council is currently working with a collaborative grouping of public and private agencies as well as colleges and universities in the city in order to develop an agreed plan of action. This work is due to complete in January 2010 and it is anticipated that this will identify the most appropriate types of intervention for those agencies involved.

Members are asked to note that LEAP is one of 47 ESF projects operating in Belfast. Agreeing to support this project could mean that we are open to requests from these other projects who are finding it difficult to identify match funding in the current climate.

Members should also be aware that, given that ESF activity is funded by the EU, any agreement to co-finance these projects will preclude the draw-down of monies from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i.e. the money for co-financing will have to come from rates monies only).

Resource Implications

The public match funding required for LEAP in 2010/11 is £45,957.

Recommendations

It is recommended this proposal is not funded given that no provision has been made within initial estimates and also given the previous decision by Members in April 2009 that groups in receipt of match funding must not request further money from Council in connection with the 2010/2011 aspect of their ESF projects.

Decision Tracking

Subject to Committee approval of the recommendation LEAP will be advised of the decision by letter.

Timeline: January 2010

Reporting Officer: Lisa Toland

2. Collaborative Marketing Campaigns for Trader Groups

At the August 2009 meeting of Development Committee, Members agreed to continue development of Belfast's independent retail sector and to offer support to local trader groups to develop collaborative marketing campaigns to raise the profile of their retail offerings and increase footfall in their respective areas.

Through the development of collaborative marketing campaigns, the Council wishes to provide support to independent retailers by making potential clients aware of their unique retail offerings, within a limited budget. Campaigns will be aimed at promoting the clusters of independent retail businesses that exist across Belfast and improving recognition of the importance of the independent retail sector in the city. Marketing support may take the form of the design and publication of maps/leaflets which market a local retail district, the introduction of customer loyalty schemes, advertising banners or the production of business supplements, depending on the specific needs of the

local area.

It is proposed that, in this financial year, the support is focused on trader groups in West Belfast, Greater Shankill, Lisburn Road, parts of East Belfast and the city centre. Trader groups will be encouraged to work collaboratively to maximise the value of any award.

Resource Implications

No specific 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. In August 2009 £30,000 of this budget was approved by Committee to develop collaborative marketing campaigns with local trader groups.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and approve the proposal to implement collaborative marketing campaigns in West Belfast; Greater Shankill; Lisburn Road, parts of East Belfast and the city centre.

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking required if recommendation is accepted.

3. South by Southwest 2010 – Creative Industries

Members will be aware that at the Development Committee of 14 May 2008 Members agreed to support Council participation at the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference for 2009 and 2010. South By South West (SXSW) remains the key US showcasing, deal striking, networking and media forum for the international media industry and attendance at the event remains a key priority for all of those interested in the business of media and creativity.

Participation at SXSW in 2008 and 2009 generated over \$500,000 of new business for participants and profiled Belfast as a creative city to the global entertainment industry.

Given the contacts built up in the two previous years, it is considered that there is merit in examining the wider support infrastructure for the creative industries in Austin and to look at how this might be transferred to Belfast. In light of this, it is proposed that a civic itinerary be added to the business trip.

In addition to attendance at the Belfast SXSW music showcase and the Belfast/Austin business networking event, meetings will be organised with a range of key contacts in areas of interest, including the following:

- Kevin Johns, Director of Economic Development, City of Austin
- Dave Porter, Senior VP/Economic Development, Austin Chamber of Commerce
- Jim Butler, Music, Film and Technology Industries Development, City of Austin
- Governor Rick Perry, Texas Music Office
- Vincent Kitch, Cultural Arts Programme Manager, City of Austin

In order to maximise the impact of this visit and to raise its profile, it is proposed that the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee (or nominees), Head of Economic Initiatives, Creative Industries Officer, Assistant Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager (or nominees) attend SXSW in 2010.

Resource Implications

No additional resources required. £40,000 approved by Development Committee in May 2008.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree to attendance at the event by the Chair and Deputy Chair (or nominees), Head of Economic Initiatives, Creative Industries Officer, Assistant Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager (or nominees).

Decision Tracking

Post event feedback report to be presented to Committee by June 2010

Time line: August 2010

Reporting Officer: Lisa Toland

4. Cities of the Isles Conference

The 'Cities of the Isles' (COTI) Partnership is a small network of six City Councils in the UK and Ireland (Belfast, Cardiff, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Liverpool). Since 2000 these cities have come together annually to share urban regeneration experiences, develop joint projects and establish a co-ordinated approach to issues of strategic importance.

In October 2009 Council representatives attended the annual COTI conference in Edinburgh, visiting the BioQuarter Development, and harbour development, and contributed to a presentation session on "Managing the Impact of the Recession". Belfast was proposed as host city for next year's conference.

Given that the cities in the COTI network take turns at hosting the event, it is proposed that next year's COTI conference is hosted in Belfast on 25 and 26 October 2010. Approximately 30 representatives from all COTI partners are expected to attend. The two day event will include a welcome lunch, tour of Belfast regeneration sites, civic dinner at City Hall, individual Council presentations and the COTI Annual General Meeting.

Resource Implications

It is anticipated that the costs associated with hosting the event will not exceed £3,000.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve the proposal to host the COTI conference in Belfast in October 2010 and agree a budget of £3,000 towards the hosting of this event.

Decision Tracking

Subject to Committee approval of the recommendation a report will be presented to Committee outlining a proposed programme for the event.

Timeline: May 2010

Reporting Officer: Lisa Toland

5. Committee Site Visits

Members will be aware at Development Committee of 11 November 2009 it was agreed that, as part of a process of relationship building with the local business community, Members would undertake a programme of company site visits to Port of Belfast, Stena, George Best Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport and the Northern Ireland Science Park.

In order to ensure maximum benefit from and attendance at these visits, it is recommended they be held over two days as opposed to one visit per month. It is

proposed the visits to Port of Belfast, Stena, George Best Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport and the Northern Ireland Science Park take place during February/March or April, and between 10:00am and 4:00pm. Members will be given a minimum of six weeks notice of the date and times of these meetings.

Resource Implications

Minor expenditure in connection with the hire of a small coach and the provision of refreshments which can be met from within existing budgets.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the content of the report and agree to the proposed course of action.

Decision Tracking

No decision tracking required if recommendation is accepted.

6. Request for presentation by BT

Members may be aware that BT has recently invested in superfast Broadband which is now available in the Belfast City Council area. The company has made a request to make a presentation at a future meeting of the Development Committee to give an overview of the infrastructure and its potential impact on businesses.

Greater Belfast – incorporating mainly the Belfast and Lisburn City Council areas – will be one of 29 pilot areas across the UK to benefit from BT's new superfast broadband. It will allow residential users to watch films, play games or work with complex graphics at the same time. From a business perspective, the infrastructure will enable companies to utilise more complex and leading edge technologies and applications, thereby underpinning the further growth of the digital and creative sectors in the city.

Resource Implications

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree to receive a presentation from BT at an upcoming meeting of the Development Committee.

Decision Tracking

Subject to Committee agreement, BT be invited to present at a future meeting of the Committee.

Timeline: March 2010

Reporting Officer: Lisa Toland

7. Update on review of Local Economic Development Plan

Members will be aware that, at the September 2009 meeting of the Development, it was agreed that the current LED plan be revised and that a programme of structured discussions with key partners take place.

A number of meetings have now been organised. This will involve small businesses, organisations involved in business development support, council officers from a range of departments, large businesses and developers. As agreed at the October 2009 meeting of the Development Committee, party briefings will also take place and these will be organised early in 2010 before a report on the proposed strategy and associated resourcing issues is brought back to Committee.

Resource implications

No specific resources required for the review of the plan. Resource commitments for proposed activities within the plan will be met from existing Council and external funding sources.

Decision Tracking

A draft of the plan will be brought back to a future meeting of the Development Committee.

Time frame: March 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

COTI –Cities of the Isles

ESF – European Social Fund

LEAP – Local Employment Access Partnership

SXSW – South By South West

NIMIC – Northern Ireland Music Industry Commission