



## Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Bank Square-Forum for Alternative Belfast, Proposals
Date:	8 February 2010
Reporting Officer:	Shirley McCay Acting Director of Development ext. 3459
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### Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the Committee agreed on 13 January 2010 to receive a presentation from the Forum for an Alternative Belfast.

The request followed visits by both the Lord Mayor and the Director of Property & Projects to the Ulster Reform Club whose premises back on to Bank Square. The Reform Club has postponed further planned development of their premises until something serious is done about the poor environment in the Square and anti-social behaviour issues.

In October 2009 the Chairman of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, Councillor Tom Hartley, called a roundtable meeting of interests regarding Bank Square at the request of a number of the business people located in the Square.

The roundtable meeting was attended by a range of interests from across the Council, Department for Social Development (DSD), local businesses, Police Service of NI (PSNI), Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) and the Forum for an Alternative Belfast (FAB).

DSD 's Westside Masterplan identifies the redevelopment of Bank Square as it currently exists as a priority in the shorter term ahead of the redevelopment of the Castlecourt Shopping Centre envisaged as part of the North West Quarter Part 1 masterplan.

RPS has been appointed by DSD to produce designs for the Square to planning application stage. DSD will bid for funds to implement the designs at the next spending round. Belfast City Council is participating on the DSD Stakeholder Group reviewing the options prepared by RPS and providing feedback to the consultants. Members have been invited to a presentation of RPS's proposals on 12 February 2010 at DSD's offices in Lesley House, Wellington Place, Belfast at 10.30am.

FAB, a group of local architects, have been working up an alternative proposal for Bank Square. They have been invited by DSD to discuss their proposals with Westfield Shoppingtowns Ltd, owners of Castlecourt, and to present an affordable option to DSD for consideration.

**Key Issues**

FAB's proposals feature rationalisation of the Castlecourt Service Yard and introduction of semi-permanent retail units around the Service Yard boundary.

DSD updated the stakeholder group on 20 January 2010 that they had received from FAB no indication at this stage of strong support from Westfield Shoppingtowns Limited to implement FAB'S ideas.

FAB's proposals are complementary to RPS's proposals and could form part of a phased regeneration of the Square.

DSD are holding a Public Consultation week from 15-19 February in Berry Street Presbyterian Church Hall.

**Resource Implications**

There are no major resource impacts regarding this report.

Officers across the Council have been consulting with RPS to ensure that the redevelopment provides a safe, welcoming, secure venue for both those attending events and those passing through the Square.

**Recommendations**

Members note the content of FAB's presentation and agree to Officers reporting the Members' comments to DSD.

**Decision Tracking**

Further to agreement, Members comments to be given to DSD via the Stakeholder Group.

Timeline: February 2010.

Reporting Officer Shirley McCay.

**Key Abbreviations**

DSD – Department for Social Development

PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland

BCCM – Belfast City Centre Management

FAB – Forum for an Alternative Belfast