



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Donegall Pass Community Centre
Date:	12 May 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Catherine Taggart, Community Development Manager, ext. 3525

Relevant Background Information

Donegall Pass Community Centre is situated on Apsley Street in the Donegall Pass area of the city. The centre was constructed in 2001 in direct response to community need in the area and has provided much needed services and facility access to the entire community since then.

BCC support for the centre construction was approved by the Community & Leisure Sub-Committee at its meeting on 12 March 1996. Members agreed that the Council would part fund the construction together with some associated running costs. The total capital cost being £244,500: 75% of which was grant aided by 'Making Belfast Work.'

Under the original terms of its development the responsibility of managing the centre was undertaken by BCC, however this was viewed as a short-term measure with the ultimate aim of transferring this management to the community. Therefore the meeting of the Sub-Committee in August 2000 agreed that provision be made within the revenue estimates to enable the centre to operate as a full time directly managed facility for a period of two years with a view to building local capacity to adopt the local community management model at the end of an agreed period. This arrangement was further extended at the meeting of the Sub-Committee of 7 January 2003 and again in 2007 on the basis that both the local community and BCC officers felt the capacity had not been adequately developed to support local independent management arrangements.

Donegall Pass Community Forum have developed a master plan for the Donegall Pass area. The Community Centre is considered to be a vital part of the Donegall Pass master plan which will enable the strengthening of community infrastructure and facilities.

Within this context officers have met with representatives of the Donegall Pass Community Forum in order to assess the potential of the Forum to assume management responsibilities for the Centre. The Development Committee of 10 June 2009 agreed to support a full economic business plan which included detailed stakeholder consultation, extensive desktop research and benchmarking analysis. The study considered a range of options for the management of the centre, considered associated risk and made have recommendation. The report, which was completed by Copius Consulting, is attached as Appendix 1.

Key Issues

The Community Centre represents a significant financial investment by the Council in an area of social need.

The Donegall Pass Community Forum (DPFC), as the lead community organisation for the inner city urban village that is Donegall Pass, has local community support and is either involved in or is delivering a range of services/projects of benefit to local people.

While the DPCF recognises the value in community management of the centre, they are mindful of undertaking this function in the current economic downturn and more importantly the uncertainty of a diminishing funding environment. The Forum has also taken account of the comments from elected representatives relating to their experience in facility management.

The feasibility report was presented to the Donegall Pass Community Centre Committee on 20 January 2010. It has also been subject to discussion at the DPFC meeting on 11 February 2010. The outcome being a unanimous decision in support of recommendation one of the feasibility report :

'The Donegall Pass Community Forum should seek to explore the possibility with Belfast City Council of conducting a period of transition which would allow it to fully examine the practicalities of assuming the management of the Centre. This would allow the group to fully examine all aspects of management as well as build further its capacity to undertake the management successfully. This recommendation would see the Forum undertake the management of the Centre after a period of one year with agreement of all parties'.

The DPCF have agreed on the membership of a sub-committee to take the initiative forward if agreed by Council.

Resource Implications

There is no resource implications connected to this request in 2010/11.

Recommendations

Donegall Pass Community Forum has notified Council that recommendation 1 of the feasibility study (to undertake management of the Donegall Pass Community Centre) is their preferred option.

The Committee is requested to consider the content of the report and the DPCF position and to:

1. Agree the request of a 'transition period' of one year which would involve members of the DPCF 'shadowing' Council staff with management responsibility at the Community Centre. This transition period of one year would allow the DPCF to carry out a number of exercises / activities that would allow it to fully assess the practicalities of undertaking the management of the Centre with the ultimate aim of progressing with the management transfer post the period.
2. To further agree that, at the end of this transition year, the Forum and council officers would undertake a robust assessment of the position and the capacity of the organisation to undertake community management of Donegall Pass Community Centre.

Decision Tracking

Further to approval and ratification that the recommendations be implemented.

Time line: June 2010

Reporting Officer: Catherine Taggart

Key Abbreviations

DPCF – Donegall Pass Community Forum

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: DFCF Feasibility Study to Undertake Management of the Donegall Pass Community Centre