



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Update of Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
Date:	13 October 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council supports the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) to implement an annual marketing and visitor servicing plan for Belfast. Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau manage the Belfast Welcome Centre (BWC) at Donegall Place and Members are aware that location is being reviewed. This report provides Members with an update on key issues in relation to BVCB and the BWC.

Key Issues

Funding and Performance

Members agreed to award £1,865,465 funding to Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau for 2010/2011 at the January 2010 Development Committee. To date, £1,060,732 has been paid and we are due to release the rest of the funding in October 2010. It was agreed that BVCB would provide quarterly reports against performance measure and indicators. The report documenting year to date progress (up to September 2010) is attached as Appendix 1.

Members should also note that BVCB has revised sales targets for the Belfast Welcome Centre in 2010/2011 due to a number of factors impacting on performance this year including the ash cloud, wider economic climate and the streets ahead programme of works. The board of BVCB, made up of both private sector representatives and Councillors, has agreed to these revisions and are currently delivering against these new targets as part of their 2010/11 Business Plan.

The revisions are as follows:

- Merchandise sales – reduce by 25% from £445,000 to £333,750
- Ticket sales – increase by 10% from £590,000 to £649,000

- Accommodation commissions – reduce by 40% from £12,000 to £7,200
- Other commissions – reduce by 35% from £33,000 to £21,450

Lease Agreement at Donegall Place/Fáilte Ireland

Belfast City Council's lease at Donegall Place ended on 31 July 2010. As no agreement was reached with the landlord prior to lease end (for an extension for a further year, whilst consideration by BCC was given to the possible relocation of BVCB), an application was made to the Lands Tribunal.

Fáilte Ireland entered into a Licence Agreement with Belfast City Council for the temporary use of a small area within the Belfast Welcome Centre for the period 1 June 2010 to 30 July 2010. Members agreed to the temporary occupation at the Development Committee of 14 April 2010.

The Landlord has offered BCC a new lease for ten years commencing 1 August 2010 and currently discussions are ongoing with the landlord and the Tribunal to reach agreement on the term of the lease. BVCB and Fáilte Ireland continue to occupy the premises in Donegall Place.

Members are asked to confirm whether Fáilte Ireland may continue to occupy the premises alongside BVCB on a temporary basis. The BVCB board had indicated that a licence agreement for nine months to Fáilte Ireland was preferable however that was not possible due to BCC's own lease end date of 31 July 2010.

Relocation of BWC - Economic Appraisal

Consultants, ASM Horwath, have been appointed to undertake the economic appraisal of the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre. The draft report is due at the end of October and there will be an opportunity for the consultancy team to present the draft report at the Development Committee in November before finalising.

Resource Implications

No further resource implications at present.

£1,865,465 was approved in 2010/2011 budget and agreed by Committee in January 2010.

Up to £11,500 has been included in Departmental Budgets to carry out the economic appraisal

Recommendations

Funding and Performance

Members note the performance of BVCB during the last 6 months and agree that the final payments are released.

Lease and Fáilte Ireland

Members permit Fáilte Ireland to occupy the Belfast Welcome Centre on a temporary basis until 31 March 2010 at the current licence fee of £25,000 per annum pro rata, subject to BCC continuing to have a lease for the premises.

Relocation of Belfast Welcome Centre

Members receive a presentation from ASM Horwath on the draft economic appraisal for the relocation of the BWC at the November Committee.

Decision Tracking

Presentation on Economic Appraisal for Belfast Welcome Centre

Time frame - November

Reporting Officer – Kerrie Sweeney

Outcome of Lands Tribunal

Timeframe – November

Reporting Officer - Pamela Davison

Key to Abbreviations

BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau

BWC – Belfast Welcome Centre

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Project Document for Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau 2010-11