



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Measuring our impact: Regeneration and European Evaluation Frameworks
Date:	10 November 2010
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Relevant Background Information

The Development Committee is committed to improving services and developing policy based on rigorous research and evidence. This ensures we meet the needs of customers and respond to their requirements for service improvement. Research is used across the department to improve services but also to measure the positive impact of our work on the ground. Some examples of the work commissioned by the Development Committee include the 2009 Capital Flows research which has been used to prove the key role of Belfast as a regional economic driver; the 2009 Belfast Tourism Monitor which measured the economic impact of increasing tourist numbers and the effectiveness of Council tourism interventions and economic forecasting research and the Annual Attitudinal Survey of Businesses in Belfast which have been used to develop the current Local Economic Development Plan and will be used to develop the new Integrated Economic Strategy.

Members will be aware that the 2010/11 Development Departmental plan was approved by Committee on 9 June 2010. This identified some of the key pieces of research needed to support the development of the Integrated Economic Strategy and a review of the Masterplan, including a bench-marking analysis of Belfast's competitiveness.

We are mindful that Members wish to ensure that our work has a positive impact on Belfast and the lives of its citizens. We measure the effectiveness of our work via both the corporate CorVu performance management system (reports to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee) but also via evaluations of particular programmes. These evaluations are often carried out at the end of particular programmes (summative evaluation) which is a common evaluation practice. However, the current economic climate and the pressure on resource allocation means that we need to find ways of improving these existing impact measurement systems so that we can provide

Members with even more useful data on the impact of our work. To this end, this paper asks Members to consider the development of two evaluation frameworks which would provide formative and summative evaluations and the potential for action research for real time learning in programmatic work.

Key Issues

We propose to develop two evaluation frameworks for:

1. Area based social and physical regeneration projects; and
2. The impact of the council's European unit and overall council's involvement in European activities

In terms of the latter, this will be preceded by an evaluation of the EU Unit's current impact.

1. Develop an evaluation model for area based social and physical regeneration projects

In the current financial climate and given council's ongoing crucial role in place-shaping urban regeneration, we need to be able to measure the impact of social and physical regeneration projects, over and above our current summative evaluation practices.

This framework would:

- Enable us to measure the impact of physical regeneration work such as the Arterial Routes programme and the social regeneration work of community services;
- Define the intended outcomes of this work as defined by the Corporate VCM and the Development Department VCM;
- Design and put in place base lining, data collection and analysis methodologies;
- Define appropriate indicators for measuring impact building on our current evaluation practices (and building on other Departments' work on indicators such as Good Relation's work on developing indicators that measure the impact on good relations of regeneration work);
- Link the evaluation framework to the corporate performance management system; and
- Equip staff to learn from the evaluation process to improve service design.

There are some examples of good practice in this field such as the UK Communities and Local Government's evaluation of the New Deal for Communities. However, these models cannot be directly implemented here because of different systems and challenges in England. In addition, Members may also wish to include economic impact data on positive externalities; direct, indirect and induced benefits and the cost of not providing this service.

In terms of evaluation indicators, the main aim would be to build a model that enables us to evaluate social and physical regeneration projects in order to show the public the value for money and economic viability of this work. This work will benefit all council departments and would be especially beneficial for building any future proposals and negotiation tools for Members and officers.

2. Evaluation of the impact of the council's involvement in EU and global initiatives and development of longer-term evaluation framework for EU Unit

As previously mentioned, the current financial climate places a further burden on Members to define the costs and benefits associated with council's activities and, more importantly, to find ways to improve efficiency.

The work of the European unit and the council's work in Europe in general have been under understandable scrutiny to provide value for money. The unit's work to access substantial EU funds on behalf of the council and wider partners is recognised, but their additional added value in terms of policy influence is highly valuable but less well understood. The work of the EU Unit enables other parts of the council and other stakeholders to deliver their outcomes which may include creating and maintaining jobs, increasing visitor numbers, physical regeneration etc. There is an interesting counterfactual to be measured, which is, 'had the EU Unit not used its influence and relationships to influence policy and funding frameworks and then to draw down monies, X jobs would not have been created and X building would not have been built'. Described in these terms, the impact of their work is clearer.

The evaluation could address multi-level benefits, i.e. for the council, for the city, for businesses and ratepayers. It could also look at quantifying specific benefits, such as:

- Investment brought into Belfast
- Business volume as a result of trade shows
- Contribution to the efficiency agenda

It should be noted that an evaluation of the EU Unit was previously carried out in 2007 by independent consultants. This noted that for the £260K cost of the unit an additional £4.6 (€5.3) million was brought into the Belfast economy over three years (from 2004-2007).

The aim of the new evaluation and then of the ongoing evaluation framework would be to define the measurement metrics and, as above:

- Enable us to measure the impact of European work;
- Define the intended outcomes of this work as defined by the corporate VCM and the Development Department VCM;
- Design and put in place base lining, data collection and analysis methodologies;
- Define appropriate indicators for measuring impact building on our current evaluation practices;
- Link the evaluation framework to the corporate performance management system (particularly the impact of policy and planning); and
- Equip staff to learn from the evaluation process to improve service design.

Recommendations would be made as to how this work could be improved, be it in terms of communication, outreach, performance or the extent of international work.

The above evaluation work will enable the department and the council at large to measure impact more effectively; to improve efficiency via service redesign and so to more effectively serve our customers and the citizens of Belfast and to evidence value for money in a restricted resource environment.

Resource Implications

The costs for both pieces of work would be covered under the existing budget of the Development department – the research budget of the Policy and Business Development Unit.

Each piece of work would cost a maximum of £25,000. Both pieces of work would be finalised before the end of the financial year.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to approve the proposals to:

1. Commission the development of an evaluation framework for social and physical regeneration projects
2. Commission the evaluation of the work of the EU Unit and the development of an ongoing evaluation framework for the EU Unit.

Decision Tracking

John McGrillen will report back on the evaluation frameworks in April 2011.

Time line: April 2011

Reporting Officer: John McGrillen