



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Northern Ireland Executive Economic Strategy: consultation on priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity
<b>Date:</b>	22 February 2011
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The Northern Ireland Executive announced the first phase of its consultation on a new regional economic strategy entitled "Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Prosperity" in January 2011. The deadline for submission of comments is 24 February 2011.
1.2	The work is being led by the Northern Ireland Executive Sub-committee on the Economy, which is headed up by Minister Arlene Foster MLA. A two-stage approach has been adopted. The reason for this is that the work of the UK government on rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy is awaited and the Committee considers that this has the potential to significantly influence the content of the economic strategy. The draft economic strategy will be subject to a further public consultation later in 2011.
1.3	A copy of the document is attached as Appendix 1. A draft Belfast City Council response is attached as Appendix 2

<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The framework for growth focuses on the twin challenges on <i>rebalancing</i> the economic towards higher value-added private sector activity and the need to undertake a more immediate <i>rebuilding</i> phase, to address the impact of the global downturn on the local economic and labour market. Priority has been placed on driving export-led economic growth.

2.2	The document contains a range of themes and priorities on which view are sought. It is proposed that, based on the comments received, and taking account of the UK's government's work on rebalancing the regional economy, a draft economic strategy will be issued for consultation later in 2011.
2.3	The consultation document has been issued by the Northern Ireland Executive Sub-Committee on the Economy. This is in direct response to criticism with regard to the lack of implementation and delivery of previous strategies.
2.4	The document identifies the key challenges in Northern Ireland's economic performance: low productivity levels, little improvement in gross value added (GVA) over time, lagging behind other UK regions in emerging from recession, disproportionate levels of private sector job losses and significant parts of the population with low skills levels.
2.5	<p>The document is framed around a series of 21 key questions on which it is seeking commentary. These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you agree with the key economic challenges that are expected to influence the performance of the Northern Ireland economy over the next 10 years?</li> <li>2. Are there any additional aspects that should have been included and which need to be addressed in the full economic strategy?</li> <li>3. Learning from what has worked in economically successful regions across the world and adapting measures to Northern Ireland's circumstances will be key to meeting the challenges. Are you aware of other successful initiatives around the world from which we could learn?</li> <li>4. What evidence is there that these initiatives were successful and would be appropriate to meet the challenges facing the Northern Ireland economy?</li> <li>5. Looking ahead to 2020, do you share the Executive's long-term vision of the Northern Ireland economy?</li> <li>6. Given the challenges facing the Northern Ireland economy, do you agree that promoting export-led economic growth should be the key economic priority of the Northern Ireland Executive?</li> <li>7. Do you consider the proposed rebalancing themes to be sufficient to meet the longer-term challenges faced by the Northern Ireland economy?</li> <li>8. Recognising the inter-dependence of these themes, which do you consider to be the most important in driving the long-term vision of the Northern Ireland economy?</li> <li>9. What is your view on the proposed short to medium term rebuilding themes identified in this strategy?</li> <li>10. Are these sufficient to meet the challenges resulting from the economic downturn?</li> <li>11. Are there other themes which the Executive should consider when preparing its economic strategy?</li> <li>12. Do you agree with the proposal to redirect resources from the short to medium term measures to rebalancing measures as the economic recovery takes hold and the labour market situation improves?</li> <li>13. Are there further cross-cutting themes which should be considered in relation to the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy?</li> <li>14. How do you think these cross-cutting themes should impact on the rebuilding and rebalancing themes identified earlier?</li> <li>15. Recognising the more constrained public expenditure position in the coming years, do you consider the extent of prioritisation given to the economy to have been sufficient or is there a need to go further in future years?</li> </ol>

	<p>16. Which are the key organisations able to deliver against the Executive's economic priorities?</p> <p>17. Are there any areas where roles and responsibilities could be clarified?</p> <p>18. Under the rebalancing themes noted above, what do you consider to be the key actions to rebalance the economy and ensure sustained improvements in long-term economic growth</p> <p>19. Under the rebuilding themes identified, what do you consider to be the key actions necessary to rebuild the economy after recession?</p> <p>20. In allocating resources to support this strategy, should the Executive prioritise particular sectors of the local economy in order to deliver sustainable improvements in long term growth?</p> <p>21. What sectors should be prioritized and how do these align with the framework and priority themes outlined earlier in the document?</p>
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<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	No specific resource implications at this stage.

<b>4.</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	No specific equality and good relations considerations at this stage – strategy will be equality-proofed.

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Note the attached draft Belfast City Council response to the consultation on the Northern Ireland Executive's priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity</li> <li>– Agree that this be presented as the Council's draft response (subject to any amendments suggested), subject to ratification by Council.</li> </ul>

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	No specific decision tracking required.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	None

<b>8.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Northern Ireland Executive Economic Strategy: consultation on priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity</p> <p>Appendix 2 – draft Belfast City Council response to consultation.</p>