



Belfast City Council

Report to: Special Development Committee
Subject: RDS 10 Year Review Consultation
Date: 24th March 2011
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Shaping Our Future Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2025 10 Year Review consultation document was launched on the 6 th January 2011. The RDS is an overarching spatial framework to influence the future distribution of activities throughout the Region to 2025. A public consultation process was initiated, requesting for comments to be submitted by the 31 st March.
1.2	The Council has advocated that the RDS should play a critical role in setting the context for the continued development of Belfast as the driver of growth for the region. The recognition in the consultation document of the importance of the city to the region is positive and linked to the issue of continued population loss in Belfast.
1.3	The RDS should maintain the balance of future growth in favour of Belfast, as the driver of regional growth, and provide formal linkages to any linked Investment Strategy proposals such as the transportation plan, infrastructure proposals and the emphasis on public transport provision and connectivity. The current consultation document states that the RDS will inform and influence these strategies.
1.4	The Draft response, appended for consideration by the Committee, has been developed following internal consultations and with input from key external stakeholders.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The response to the consultation on the '10 Year Review of <i>Shaping our future, Regional Development Strategy 2025</i> ' has been prepared to provide the views of the Council and provide a strategic contribution to assist the department in the review process, particularly in light of the current work being undertaken in respect

	of the 2011 review of the Belfast City Masterplan.
2.2	The Belfast City Masterplan sets out the Council's strategic planning and regeneration framework. It was first completed in 2004 to formulate the city's response to Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and to set out a strategy to support economic competitiveness until 2020. It is presently undergoing review and this representation reflects the key regional planning issues emerging from that process.
2.3	The response is set out in two parts, the first dealing with strategic issues and the second dealing with the more specific responses gathered from internal consideration and engagement with key stakeholders.
2.4	<p>Emerging Masterplan Themes: The 2011 Masterplan is currently reviewing the key issues of economic competitiveness that Belfast has to address in order to perform its core city role. The changed economic context is recognised in that economic recovery will be slow and that investment resources in all sectors will be scarce. However, the priority of developing a strong and growing core city remains the Masterplan's primary focus, and a number of emerging themes, relevant to the Regional Development Strategy, will be advanced to help Belfast achieve this;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continue to develop the role of the city as a economic driver and location of future employment that support regional economic prosperity – Recognise the importance of the centre city zone that links the university area to the harbour estate as the prime economic space in Northern Ireland – Enhance connectivity and accessibility within and to the centre city, particularly where this improves access to jobs, education and training opportunities – Grow the population, attract new residents and support the improvement of environmental quality including air quality, public realm enhancements and access to shared open space – Develop a competitive local low carbon economy, with associated opportunities for employment creation – Maximise the use and potential benefits of infrastructure including existing resources and underused land and buildings – Enhance the potential of natural assets and open space, including the provision of strategic connections, to deliver a range of benefits to health and wellbeing, wildlife protection, flood risk management and capacity for sustainable modes of transport.
2.5	The emerging themes of the 2011 Belfast Masterplan provide a basis for understanding the suitability or otherwise of the policy direction contained within the RDS as it relates to Belfast's role as the driver for regional economic growth. To support growth it is critical that the RDS informs future infrastructure decisions in the context of limited resources and need to maximise investment.
2.6	<p>RDS Response: Based on the role that RDS should play at the strategic spatial planning level and strategic policy direction required to implement policies at the local level within the city, the Council will comment on the following broad areas within the RDS consultation draft:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge the current proposal that the preferred strategy would be to promote development in Belfast and Derry and in identified clusters with key settlements, in terms of the potentially adverse consequences of this polycentric model for regional economic growth. • Highlight and support the need for a stronger urban policy so that Belfast can fulfil its role as an economic driver for the region, efficient use is made of existing infrastructure and areas where there is a clear requirement for regeneration need are continually improved

2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise the need for more effective policies to grow the city's population and support local regeneration • Stress the need for clarity in relation to under used and brownfield land, along with a strategy to ensure its reuse • Underline the need for more effective policies to identify strategic employment sites within the region and help deliver improvements to transport infrastructure <p>The draft response to Regional Development Strategy 10 year review is attached (Appendix 1) for consideration and if appropriate endorsement as the formal response to the Department for Regional Development.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	There are no resource implications

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality and Good Relations considerations attached to this report

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are requested to:
5.2	consider the content of the proposed draft response to Regional Development Strategy 10 year review, as set out in Appendix 1 , and if appropriate endorse this as the formal response to the Department for Regional Development; and
5.3	note the work on the emerging Masterplan Themes.

6	Decision Tracking
<p>Draft response to the RDS 10 year Review be submitted to the Department for Regional Development for consideration. Timeline: March 2011 Reporting Officer: John McGrillen</p>	

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>DRD – Department for Regional Development RDS – Regional Development Strategy</p>	

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Draft response to the RDS 10 year Review	