



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Support for the Weak Market Cities/City Reformers Group project
Date:	TBC
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Barbary Cook, Policy & Business Development Manager, ext 3620

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>The City Reformers Group is a learning network of active practitioners and policy-makers from 'weak market' de-industrialising cities across the EU and US. It also includes government, EU and non-governmental representatives. The city reformers are all actively engaged in addressing the economic, physical, environmental and social problems facing their cities. The City Reformers Group gathers ideas on policy innovations and practical projects from European and American cities that are successfully pulling away from a recent history of industrial collapse. It meets biannually at the London School of Economic, within the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion.</p> <p>http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/_new/research/weakmarketcities/cityreformers.asp</p>
1.2	<p>Belfast City Council has been a key partner in this project since its inception in 2006 and was profiled, as a result of this work, in the book 'Phoenix cities: the fall and rise of great industrial cities'. The project enabled Belfast to learn from the experiences of the other referenced cities, Leipzig, Bremen, Sheffield, Bilbao, Torino and Saint-Étienne.</p>
2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Since 2010, Belfast has been involved in the second stage of the research. This phase has looked at the following research questions:</p>

<p>2.2</p>	<p>1. <u>Economy and skills</u>: Understanding how European weak market cities are faring in today's difficult economic climate, and uncovering innovative approaches to developing new enterprise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are weak market cities coping with the economic crisis? How resilient are they? What makes them resilient? <p>Coping with crisis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will some public programmes / organisations fold? Spell out which ones and why in each city. What impact will closure of public organisations / agencies have? Real impact of fiscal tightening / shortage of funds in the cities? <p>Sign of resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of wider regional / metropolitan areas / authorities – local, regional and national. Role of public infrastructure – capacity to foster private enterprise / entrepreneurship. Any new initiatives / enterprises / inward investment?
<p>2.3</p>	<p>2. <u>Environment and climate change</u>: we want to understand the impact of the climate change agenda and resource constraints on the recovery trajectory of these cities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent are green technology innovations generating new skills, enterprises and jobs? Why? On what scale? - How much emphasis is there on energy saving and energy efficiency? What about density, anti-sprawl, public transport, cycling etc? - How big a priority is the environment in the cities? - What are the drivers and barriers for the greening of the cities' urban economies? And their physical structures? - What role do parks and green spaces, traffic control, cycle and pedestrian schemes etc play in the cities? - What about fuel poverty? And energy shortages?
<p>2.4</p>	<p>3. <u>Social integration</u>: We want to pin-point the impact of neighbourhood programmes on social integration, skills development and job access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are neighbourhoods with concentrations of minority residents faring? - What are the cities doing to remedy social inequalities? - How are they funding programmes? Which programmes are they funding? Which programmes are suffering? What are the consequences? - Physical segregation of social housing estates / poor transport links still exist - what is being done to overcome this? - Which areas have been most affected by the recession? - Are neighbourhood-based community regeneration initiatives still running? - Have community enterprises we documented survived?
<p>2.5</p>	<p>4. <u>Policy shifts and governance</u>: what is the policy response? How can the public sector help?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What immediate responses have local authorities promoted to minimise the impact of the crisis? - Has the emergency nature of the measures meant less public consultation/participation?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What about on-going management of public infrastructure resulting from the big investments of the past 10 years? - What has happened, and what is currently happening, to national and EU funding? How does this affect cities? - What changes in strategy and leadership have we identified? <p>2.6 In March 2011, Belfast hosted a workshop for the City Reformers Group. The workshop provided an opportunity to profile our work on economic development, regeneration, community development and sustainability. Members were invited to and attended the workshop.</p> <p>2.7 As a result of the wider project and this specific workshop, the council has been able to work with Bruce Katz, Vice President and Founding Director of the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. This meant that we were able to have Mr Katz as one of the State of the City speakers in March 2011.</p> <p>2.8 The project has progressed with the second phase of research and is a long way forward in its findings. It has updated all the research on 10 cities (three added since 2009 – Lille, Metz and Bochum) and has developed new lines of inquiry, given the major international developments that are shaking confidence in continuing recovery: They are gathering information from cities on these issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The energy shortages and costs due to North African upheaval, the threat of 'peak oil', strong growth in Asia, and the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant disaster. - The Eurozone crisis, the US budget crisis and their wider ramifications. - The environmental problems and much more ambitious targets now set by the EU for CO₂ emissions reductions and renewable energy targets. - The potential for renewable and "smart" technologies to offer new growth. - Youth unemployment and lack of openings for new jobs for low-skilled youth – youth protests in Spain highlight this problem. - Integration problems and extreme politics – community, cohesion, mediation – learning from the Northern Ireland and Basque experience is invaluable. - Severe budgetary problems, public funding cuts and resource pressures. <p>2.9 The research project has, by December 2011, committed to producing an International Handbook of Lessons learnt. Belfast features prominently because it has unique experiences and it is holding up somewhat better than many others.</p> <p>2.10 The research project is also hoping, with Richard Rogers' input, to produce a sequel to Cities for a Small Country which he co-authored with Anne Power – Cities for a Small Continent, based on this work and focussing on the unique in-depth learning from such a cross-section of countries.</p> <p>2.11 What does Belfast get from this research project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up-to-date, applied learning from other European and US cities which are experiencing the specific circumstances of 'weak market' de-industrialising cities in combination with current economic challenges. This learning is applied because it's done face-to-face either via workshops or site visits, between practitioners rather than solely academics. Belfast couldn't provide this connecting and hosting function on its own. - Raises the profile of Belfast's work among practitioners and academics.
--	--

	<p>We're included in books and academic papers. We give presentations to our peers and we hosted one of the site visits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We get challenged – the group asks tough questions about the whys and wherefores of our work, particularly on regeneration and environmental sustainability questions. - It offers us ideas that move beyond a 'growth at all costs' approach to urban recovery that can no longer work, for example in how environmental sustainability can also address jobs growth.
2.12	Dr Anne Power, on behalf of the City Reformers Group, has asked Belfast City Council to provide financial support for the final year of the programme, to June 2012 in the amount of £15,000.
2.13	This funding would be covered by the Policy & Business Development Unit's current research budget for 2011/12.
2.14	Committee are asked to agree to provide financial support for the final year of the City Reformers Group programme, to June 2012 in the amount of £15,000.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Funding of £15,000 would be covered by the Policy & Business Development Unit's current research budget for 2011/12.

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

5	Recommendations
5.1	Committee are asked to agree to provide financial support for the final year of the City Reformers Group programme, to June 2012 in the amount of £15,000.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report	