



Report to: Special Development Committee

Subject: Relocation of University of Ulster to Belfast City Centre

Date: 6 February 2012

Reporting Officer: John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In 2006 the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) commissioned a report into the physical condition of the buildings at the University of Ulster (UU) Campus at Jordanstown. The report concluded that the main educational buildings were reaching the end of their useful life and were no longer fit for purpose as a modern educational establishment.
1.2	Following the condition survey a further study was undertaken to identify the preferred option for replacement facilities. DEL and Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP) subsequently approved a full business case which identified York Street as the most academically attractive and cost effective solution for replacement.
1.3	Since the completion of the business case the University has acquired a number of sites adjacent to its existing York Road campus, including the Interpoint building to facilitate the development of a new city centre campus. The project represents an investment of £250m in the area. The University have been awarded funding of £16m by DEL with the remainder being funded over a 25 year period from the University's income.
1.4	The Project Team has now completed the concept design for the new campus and wish to present the proposals to Elected Members as the first stage of an extensive engagement exercise in advance of submitting its planning application at the end of March 2012.
1.5	The University hopes to have full planning approval in place by late 2012. Contractors are expected to be appointed in mid 2013 with the new campus ready for occupation in 2018.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The relocation of the University of Ulster to the York Street area represents one of the biggest regeneration opportunities which the city is likely to see for decades to come.
2.2	Evidence from elsewhere would suggest the locating of a major anchor institution within a city centre presents the opportunity for substantial social, environmental and economic regeneration.
2.3	Should the planned relocation proceed, some 14,000 students and 2000 staff will be transferred to the York Street campus. The additional economic activity which will be generated has the potential to transform the economic future for this area of the city and present substantial benefits for communities in the vicinity of the campus and further afield.
2.4	The relocation will bring educational opportunities into the heart of the city centre. The project will bring with it a range of employment opportunities. The lead in period will present the potential for the Council, DEL and UU to support local communities to avail of employment opportunities both during the construction phase through social clauses and in the longer term.
2.5	In addition to employment opportunities within the University itself, the project will drive further commercial activity in the area, develop the night time economy and present real business opportunities for social enterprises in neighbouring areas through the provision of ancillary services.
2.6	The University is keen that its facilities will be accessible to local communities, helping build a strong and shared community and promote cultural and creative activity within the city.
2.7	<p>If the regenerative benefits of the project are to be fully realised it will be critical that the development connects and integrates with other developments within the north of the city and the city centre. These projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cathedral Quarter - Sailortown - Girdwood - North Cultural Corridor - Crumlin Road Jail - Royal Exchange
2.8	Whilst there are clear benefits to be gained from such a development it is recognised that a project of this scale will undoubtedly impact on communities across the city and in particular in those neighbourhoods closet to the development. The University recognises the need to take account of the aspirations and concerns of local communities and therefore is in the process of developing an extensive long term community engagement process. This is being led by Dr Duncan Morrow who has recently returned to the University following his term as Chief Executive at the Community Relations Council.

2.9	<p>As part of that process the University's project team have identified four key issues which they wish to explore with local communities to ensure their concerns are adequately addressed during the development and delivery of the project. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and Design of the building - Housing - Transport and Parking - Community Benefit
2.10	<p>The first stage of that process is a presentation of their concept design to Elected Members. This will allow the team to get the initial views of the Council and identify potential issues which they will need to address with local communities as they take forward their community engagement plans.</p>
2.11	<p>The University and central government departments recognise the benefits of the integrated approach developed by the Council in taking forward the development of Titanic Quarter and the Department of Social Development (DSD) are proposing that a similar programme led, integrated approach is taken on the delivery of the University relocation and associated regeneration of North City Centre/Inner North Belfast area of the city.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	There are no resource implications for the Council at this point.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations considerations at this point.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Elected Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider the content of the presentation given by the University project team. - Identify any additional key issues which the team need to consider as part of the Community Engagement Process. - Agree to Council officers working with the Project Team and officials from Government departments to develop TORs for a cross departmental/Council/UU delivery team and associated governance arrangements. - To receive a further report on the above once the proposals have been developed.

6	Decision Tracking
A further report will be brought back to the Committee in March 2012.	
Timeframe: March 2012	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>DEL – Department of Employment and Learning UU – University of Ulster DFP – Department of Finance and Personnel DSD – Department of Social Development</p>	

