



**Report to:** Development Department

**Subject:** Employers' Forum – proposed work programme

**Date:** 4 December 2012

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

**Contact Officers:** Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	At the 16 October meeting of the Development Committee, Members were reminded that, following an earlier approval to proceed, officers were engaging with Business in the Community to consider how the Employers' Forum for west Belfast and greater Shankill could be engaged to act as the employer conduit on a city-wide basis. This work would be funded by the employers (as happens at present) and supplemented by resources from Belfast City Council and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).
1.2	Draft terms of reference for the work were endorsed in principle and Members agreed to allocate funding of £25,000 per annum for a three-year period (subject to annual review). The funding allocation was also conditional on Members' approval of a work programme which would oversee the work of the Forum.
1.3	This work programme has now been drafted and is attached to this report (Appendix 1).

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The Employers' Forum is a collective of employers who have committed to providing opportunities – particularly for those furthest from the labour market – to access work placement, training and employment opportunities. Members have previously been advised that, since their establishment in 2003, initiatives undertaken by the Employers' Forum have helped almost 1300 long-term unemployed people into work.
2.2	A list of forum members is attached as Appendix 2. There is a core board which meets three times a year and there are other employers who work with Business in the Community (as the Forum facilitator) on a more ad-hoc basis.
2.3	To date, the focus of the work has been on working with those from west Belfast and greater Shankill. However the forum has now agreed to work across the

	city. There has also been an undertaking that the board will proactively seek representation from employers within future growth areas (IT; software development; creative industries).
2.4	At the previous Committee, it was agreed that the Citywide Employers' Forum would oversee a programme of employment interventions that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assist unemployed and economically inactive individuals move into sustained employment; and</li> <li>- consider skills deficits in sectors key to future jobs growth as well as areas and regions in greatest need, with a view to addressing imbalances.</li> </ul>
2.5	It was also confirmed that any programmes, interventions or services will complement those already delivered by Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Belfast City Council and Business in the Community (BITC).
2.6	Since the last meeting, work has been undertaken to develop the work programme for the city-wide grouping and this is attached as <b>Appendix 1</b> . The work programme was endorsed by the Employers' Forum at their meeting on 19 November 2012. It was agreed that the programme outcomes will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and will be written into a letter of offer with Business in the Community to ensure their delivery. This letter of offer will be developed in conjunction with DEL in order to ensure that there is an agreed programme of work to which all organisations are signed up. Regular updates on progress will be provided to this Committee.
2.7	At the 16 October meeting of Committee, it was confirmed that the current Chair of the Employers' Forum - Michael Ryan – was willing to remain in this position as part of the citywide group.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	At the 16 October Development Committee, Members agreed to provide funding of £25,000 per annum, for a period of three years (subject to annual review). This funding will be subject to match funding of £25,000 being available from DEL and £50,000 of match funding from the private sector, through Employers' Forum members (support to be provided both in cash and in-kind).

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no specific equality and good relations considerations attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to note and approve the work programme, attached at Appendix 1.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
A report on progress will be presented to Committee in May 2013.	
Timeframe:	May 2013
Reporting Officer:	Shirley McCay

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BITC – Business in the Community DEL – Department for Employment and Learning	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 - Citywide Employers' Forum – proposed work programme Appendix 2 - Employers' Forum – current membership list	