



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Development Committee |
| Subject: | Accessibility Support |
| Date: | 20 August 2013 |
| Reporting Officer: | John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470 |
| Contact Officer: | Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development, ext 3459 |

| 1 | Relevant Background Information |
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| 1.1 | Members will recall that a proposal to develop a quotation for the provision of city centre accessibility support services was approved by the Development Committee on 4 December 2012. |
| 1.2 | Quotations for suitably qualified organisations were subsequently sought and subject to an assessment process which resulted in the contract being awarded to Shopmobility. |
| 1.3 | The contract required that three key tasks were undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Provision of practical support to individuals with disabilities and mobility impairments to access the City Centre;– Provision of a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the impact of current accessibility/mobility support provision in the City Centre; and– Establish a framework for the ongoing collection of the monitoring information required. |
| 1.4 | Shopmobility Belfast was appointed to carry out the work. The contract was completed in June 2013 and a final report submitted for the Council's attention. The key findings from the report were: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Over the three month period of the contract, the Shopmobility service had 1,166 bookings;– Each member booking is accompanied (on average) by 2 friends/family members;– Retail remains the principal reason for visits by users of the service; and– Total spend generated by bookings is approximately £174,900 for a three month period. |

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| 2 | Key Issues |
| 2.1 | Belfast City Centre, like most modern City Centres, faces a range of accessibility challenges particularly in ensuring that all potential users of the City Centre can access the full range of services and supports. |
| 2.2 | Members will be aware that Council have recently commissioned work on the development of a Belfast City Access Strategy and associated action plan. The proposed City Access Strategy will consider a range of key factors including personal mobility with consideration given to identifying the means of getting around the city, especially in the city centre area. |
| 2.3 | Council have also supported Belfast City Centre Management in the development of the Belfast City Centre Access Guide across two phases of the project. The Access Guide has been developed to promote city centre premises across a range of sectors including hospitality, retail, professional service and public services which are fully or partly accessible. |
| 2.4 | Considering the economic impact of investing in the city centre accessibility and the ongoing need for investment in this activity, it is recommended that Members agree to set aside a commitment of up to £25,000 per annum for this activity in the current financial year, along with an in-principle commitment of £25,000 for the two subsequent financial years (namely 2014-2015 and 2015-2016). |

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| 3 | Resource Implications |
| 3.1 | A commitment of £25,000 would be required in the current financial year, with an in-principle commitment of £25,000 for each of the subsequent two financial years. |

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| 4 | Equality and Good Relations Considerations |
| 4.1 | Legislation and good practice will be adhered to with the proposal making a positive contribution to equality and good relations by enhancing access to the city centre for those with accessibility problems. |

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| 5 | Recommendations |
| 5.1 | Members are asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the information provided in the Shopmobility report. - Agree to a financial commitment of £25,000 towards city centre accessibility support in the current financial year with an in-principle commitment of up to £25,000 for the next two financial years, in line with council's procurement advice. |

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| 6 | Decision Tracking |
| There is no Decision Tracking attached to this report. | |