



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Proposed study visits for Gilpins and Market Tunnels projects
<b>Date:</b>	22 October 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development, ext 3459

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Under the Investment Programme, Council is supporting the advancement of many community focused physical regeneration schemes; two such projects are the redevelopment of the former Gilpins site and the opening and development of the Markets Tunnels by Central Station. The Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and some other Councillors have been working with these groups to identify ways of accelerating progress of these schemes and wishes to propose that a study visit is supported to enable the groups to learn from practice elsewhere.
1.2	<u>Summary of Gilpins project</u> Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive jointly financed a study into the future potential use of the Gilpins building on physical development options to bring the area back to life. A technical assessment was carried out on the feasibility of reusing the building or elements of it as well as a comprehensive options appraisal informed by substantial community and stakeholder consultation and engagement. Belfast City Council led on the conducting of the study and managed a locally oriented steering group which included agreed Members also.
1.3	The draft report was completed in December 2012 which concluded the preferred option was based around a multi use centre comprising a community hub, village square, retail and enterprise units along with some rental apartments and cultural space. The total capital requirement is in the region of £6million. The next stage for the project is for a business plan to be completed on the preferred option to further test the economic and financial viability of the project. This project has been identified by the South Belfast Area Working group as a potential Belfast Investment Fund recipient and will now be able to benefit from some feasibility fund monies agreed through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

	<p><u>Summary of Markets Tunnels project</u></p> <p>The Markets Development Association's strategy includes 13 potential regeneration projects in their local area including the redevelopment of the Tunnels under the railway arches at Central Station. The proposed regeneration of the Tunnels includes reuse as a crèche, enterprise units, health and fitness centre, café and training facilities. The project has advanced to the stage of seeking planning permission and consultations are now underway between the Planning service and statutory bodies.</p> <p>Council has supported the advancement of the project to this stage and most recently the South Area Working group has now agreed to support it further under the Belfast Investment Fund. Monies will be made available from the Feasibility Fund element to develop a strategic outline case which is part of the Councils assessment procedure for potential larger scale financial investments in external capital schemes.</p>
--	---

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Given the scale and potential ambition contained in both proposals, it is considered valuable to assist the community bodies behind these projects in learning from practice elsewhere. The Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor along with some other Councillors have asked that a study visit is arranged and financed by Council to similar projects in Dublin and/or England. Some initial research has been carried out by Council officers on relevant projects which could be studied by the community bodies although more detailed research would be required. It is possible to consider that a 2 day visit to 2 or 3 similar projects could be arranged for up to 2 community representatives from both Gilpins and Markets Tunnels organisations.
2.2	Whilst the proposal was raised as part of the consideration at an internal working group it should be recognised that these projects are not part of the Departmental Plan and there are no resources available to support the type of activity proposed. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, as outlined above, has identified resources to develop the strategic outline case for proposals prioritised by the Area Working Groups and will progress the technical assessments required.
2.3	Although no specific budget exists at present it should be recognised that there are unallocated resources in the South Belfast Area Working Group intervention allocation that may be available and the AWG recently recommended that the SBPB develop a programme to support Tourism and Economic Development for the South of the city. It may therefore be appropriate for the AWG to consider resourcing the additional support for the local organisations leading on the development of these Belfast Investment Fund proposals.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	No specific budget exists at present however there are some monies unallocated in the South Belfast Area working group which may be available.
3.2	Up to £500 per person is required therefore for up to 4 community representatives along with a Council officer the sum of £2,500 max is required.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	To consider approval of the organising and financing of a relevant study visit for community representatives of both the Gilpins and Market Tunnels projects using monies from the South Area Working Group if available.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Timeline:	Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay