



Belfast City Council

Report to: Parks and Leisure Committee

Subject: Ulster Sports Museum

Date: 14 October 2010

Reporting Officer: Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure

Contact Officers: Rose Crozier, Head of Parks and Leisure

Relevant Background Information

The Committee received a presentation from the Ulster Sports Museum Association (USMA) in November 2008. At that time the USMA were considering developing an Ulster Sports Museum in the old museum building in College Square North.

For a variety of reasons, including that of cost, USMA was unable to proceed with that proposal.

However USMA has continued to develop its plans to see the establishment of a permanent museum in 2012.

To that end, earlier this year USMA advertised to identify potential partners interested in hosting the museum. They interviewed a number of applicants and selected the three most promising responses. These are in Bangor, Belfast and Newtownabbey.

The Belfast location is the former Bank of Ireland building at the corner of North Street and Royal Avenue. Consultants have been appointed to assess the feasibility of each location.

Key Issues

The Ulster Sports Museum Association has outlined the possible arrangements for developing the museum as follows:

1. The host meets the capital costs of providing the premises and then leases them back to USMA.
2. USMA meets the costs of fitting out and running the museum.
3. The relevant district council makes an annual grant to USMA to cover the leasing and other costs.

Council officers have met with members of USMA to discuss their proposals and it is clear that they believe that there are strong arguments for locating the sports museum in Belfast City Centre.

At this stage it is unclear if the Belfast host building will be suitable, what size of floor area is available or what the leasing costs are. It will require the feasibility study to be completed before this information will be available.

It was explained to USMA that, given the current economic situation, finding additional funding in the 2011/12 financial year to support the leasing costs of the building is unlikely. It should also be noted that any costs would be recurrent on an annual basis. USMA were encouraged to look at other avenues for funding the project.

If the current process that USMA are engaged in does not prove successful the association will revisit its options for the development of the museum.

USMA is looking for an indication in principle if the Council would consider becoming involved in this sort of partnership to secure the Ulster Sports Museum for Belfast.

Resource Implications

Financial

It is not possible at this stage to accurately state the annual leasing costs for the preferred Belfast site. However, based on initial discussions with USMA there could be costs in the region of £80,000 to £120,000 per year. No provision is being made in the draft 2011/12 estimates for this purpose.

Human Resources

None

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members continue to support the concept of an Ulster Sports Museum but indicate to the Ulster Sports Museum Association that it would not currently be possible to contribute financially to the project.

Decision Tracking

Officer responsible: Director of Parks and Leisure.
Actions to be completed by the end of November 2010

Key to Abbreviations

USMA – Ulster Sports Museum Association.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Letter from USMA to Chief Executive of Belfast City Council