



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Big Lottery – Application for funding to deliver Community Planning projects in Northern Ireland
Date:	19 th March 2010
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
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Relevant Background Information

On 22nd January, the Committee was advised that the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) had commenced a tendering process for the delivery of three pilot projects on community planning in Northern Ireland with a separate but linked support contract to capture the learning and good practice. The overarching aim is to provide a model and a toolkit of good practice in community planning that will help to ensure the genuine engagement of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the new / emerging formal processes.

The first phase in the process was a pre-qualification stage, following which only those potential contractors that BIG deemed to have the suitable skills and capacity would be invited to tender. At its meeting on 22nd January, the Committee agreed that the Council should submit an expression of interest, and as BIG's preferred method of delivery appeared to be a partnership approach with the voluntary and community sector (VCS), it was further agreed that this should be done in collaboration with the five Area Partnership Boards (APBs) and, the non-profit organisation, Community Places.

The Council's consortium application has since been short-listed and we have now been invited to submit a tender for the pilot community planning project. The closing date for completed submissions is Monday 29th March.

The purpose of this report is to present for approval an outline project proposal for that will form the basis of the submission that will be made to BIG in line with the formal tender requirements. Owing to the very tight timescales, work is underway to produce a detailed and comprehensive submission document, in the hope that resources can be secured to carry out a pilot in Belfast.

Key Issues

BIG - Scope and Process

As previously reported to Members with respect to the scope and process of the BIG project:

- Each project must be based in a different council area, based on the boundaries of the 11 new council areas planned for Northern Ireland.
- The areas chosen will be decided by BIG from the bids received, based on rank scores. BIG have stressed that there will not be more than one pilot in any council area.

- The total contract value for the three projects will be in the region of £380,000 to £420,000. BIG have confirmed that the final breakdown per area will be negotiable.
- The contract term is a maximum of 18 months, commencing in May 2010 and ending in November 2011

BIG has indicated in the tender papers that a successful pilot project will be one that:

- (i) enables local councils, the VCS and other stakeholders to gain a fuller understanding of community planning, through testing and modeling community planning processes
- (ii) engages key stakeholders in pilot community planning projects ahead of formal structures due to be introduced in 2011
- (iii) builds and increases networks and strategic alliances
- (iv) enables meaningful collaboration between the proposed Statutory Transition Committees and various partners in the community planning process
- (v) increases understanding of the role of the VCS in community planning
- (vi) empowers the VCS to participate in community planning.

Council Position

On 22 January, the Committee agreed that in making a Council-led or Council-involved expression of interest the Council could seek to ensure that the pilot encompassed as many parts of the city as possible with ideally a city-wide perspective; that it addressed one or more of the council's key priorities for the city; and that it supported longer term relationship building and the development of a more effective framework.

In line with meeting the requirements of BIG as set out in the tender, it is proposed that the pilot should seek to:

- Incorporate work and test engagement mechanisms at strategic, thematic and local levels.
- Test one thematic area in order to manage volume, time and resource constraints
- Build on existing work and mechanisms
- Apply city-wide, but with scope for particular elements to be tested within specific geographic areas
- Focus on delivery
- Take into account the leadership role of Members and the on-going context of the council's emerging approach to community planning.

Each of the Area Partnership Boards have endorsed the partnership approach to the BIG bid; as have Community Places who confirmed that their role would be to act as a technical "critical friend" assisting with facilitation and evaluation.

Proposed Pilot

It proposed that the chosen pilot theme should be "health" with the exact scope to be clarified as part of the pilot project in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including the new Belfast Health Development Unit. For example; it may be that during the delivery of the pilot the focus may be directed to a specific priority (or priorities) as identified through the new Belfast Health Development Unit so that particular priority area(s) become more manageable and deliverable at a local level. BIG has indicated that there will be a degree of flexibility permitted in terms of the implementation of the contract, subject to the negotiation and agreement of BIG, in order to reflect emerging developments within the RPA and community planning guidance.

The proposed high level project outline as follows:

- **Strategic Planning** – seek to ensure that local priorities are reflected in relevant plans of key agencies/ partners and that Government priorities are meaningfully translated into and reflect local need. This will involve the early engagement and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, and specifically the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) as facilitated through this pilot, to the development of:
 - The Belfast Health Inequalities Plan;
 - The joint Health Development Unit business plan; and,
 - Existing / emerging plans within Council and other statutory agencies.

The focus will be on developing further a number of agreed themes and priorities in relation to Health in order to reduce the gap that exists between the health outcomes of different people and communities across the city. The primary focus in the first instance will be aligning local need through engagement and capacity building with the VCS to the work of the new joint Health Development Unit. But ultimately this work should mean changes to the plans and policies of agencies across the city in a way that creates real health improvements and the development of an effective health partnership and strategic health inequalities plan for the city.

- **Local Level** – seek to introduce a number of visible outcomes on the ground for local people by contributing to the planning of local programmes and enabling the VCS to support statutory agencies in more effective and joined-up implementation. It is intended that the pilot project will inform the further development of the new Joint Health Development Unit business plan and also contribute in practical ways by utilising local level VCS contacts to support specific work streams. This should therefore help ensure that Unit delivers meaningful projects at local level which are responsive to local need and which make a stronger impact by maximising collaboration with local communities.
- **Engagement** – seek to ensure that VCS are able to engage in meaningful discussions and planning at strategic and local level. This will be crucial to the development and implementation of successful quality of life improvements for local people. Engagement will focus on a number of strands – strategic planning; thematic and area based issues, and local delivery. Testing the effectiveness of this engagement will be a critical element of the project. The new joint Health Development Unit has indicated that the connection with the VCS is a key gap; therefore, the proposed pilot will help bridge that gap delivering both practical and process related learning for the Unit and the Health theme generally.
- **Capacity Building** – seek to develop VCS understanding and awareness of the wider system and how they can influence and contribute as an equal partner. This will only be achievable if meaningful discussion and implementation is secured through the development of a real partnership approach with capacity building supported across all sectors, with work rooted in practical action plans. As work to develop joined up plans is at an early stage within the Health theme, it provides an opportune time to develop and test capacity building for all partners involved.
- **Engagement with the political process** - the pilot will also seek to clarify and build on the role of Elected Members, both as civic leaders and community representatives, within the engagement and community planning process.

Establishment of a Member Community Planning Reference Group

The leadership of Members in the community planning process is vital to its success, with the Transition Committee in particular having a pivotal role in the development of the community planning process. As part of the submission bid, it is suggested that the Council would establish a cross-party 'Community Planning Reference Group' which will provide a

political forum to discuss and test emerging ideas/concepts as required. It is recommended that this group would comprise of up to 2 elected Members from each Party.

It is envisaged that this group would act also as a reference panel in the wider development of the Council's community planning framework and the work streams which need to be undertaken, including:

- Agreement of a working definition of community planning for Belfast;
- Establishment of necessary engagement mechanisms and an influencing strategy;
- Considerations of issues around partnership development;
- Identification of areas of best practice and expertise and establishing learning from these;
- Identification of capacity issues and ways these can be addressed;
- Identification of ways in which current partnership successes can be built upon.

In doing so, assurance can be given that the pilot sits within and informs the overall community planning framework for Belfast and that the lessons learnt from this pilot are transferred to other related processes. The Member Reference Group will be supported by an officer working group; this group has already been established and has undertaken preliminary work on community planning and its implications for Council and services.

In addition, it is intended that there will be continual engagement with the Council's Transition Committee (i.e. Strategic Policy and Resources) throughout the developmental stages of the pilot project so as to ensure that there remains a direct link with the wider work being taken forward by the Council in relation to developing a community planning process for the city.

Regional Developments

Work has been ongoing for some time to develop policy proposals for the introduction of a council-led community planning process. This work had culminated in the creation of a 'Community Planning Foundation Programme' which had been issued by DoE in November 2009. A copy of the information circulated with respect to the Foundation Programme has been attached for the information of Members at Appendix 1.

The purpose of the Foundation Programme is to support Transition Committees to prepare for the introduction of the Community Planning Duty and, inter alia, identify the key issues that should be addressed in guidance which will be developed to support the operation of Community Planning. It is the view that the Foundation Programme will build upon the work already happening by councils in partnership with other stakeholders.

It is understood that the Environment Minister and DoE are to hold an awareness raising event for Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams to discuss the Foundation Programme and its implementation. DoE had indicated that this event would be arranged in January 2010, however, no date has yet to be confirmed, we will keep Members informed should any further developments arise.

Potential for Other Pilot Bids within Belfast

With respect to the BIG pilot, currently we are aware that a NIVCA bid has been successfully short-listed, NICVA have approached the Council to say that if successful they would intend one of the pilots to happen in the Belfast area. This would provide an alternative option should our own, Council-led bid be unsuccessful.

Resource ImplicationsFinancial

None at present. The Council has already committed resources to the development of the Joint Health Development Unit and it is envisaged that this Unit together with other existing officers responsible for supporting community planning will be expected to contribute to the pilot project. Additional support costs for managing and coordinating the project will be met from within the BIG funding if successful.

Human Resources

For successful implementation of the project, it is envisaged that a fixed-term co-ordination and support role will be required. This will be included in the funding application and would be a fully funded post with no additional cost to the Council.

Recommendations**Decision required**

The Committee is asked to note the above report and to approve “Health” as the proposed theme and to authorise the development of a formal bid in collaboration with the Area Partnership Boards and Community Places for submission to the BIG Lottery by 29th March.

The Committee is also asked to agree to the establishment of a cross-party “Community Planning Reference Group” for the purposes of taking forward the pilot project and agree that the proposed Reference Group would comprise of up to 2 Members from each Party.

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Abbreviations

APBs – Area Partnership Boards
BIG – Big Lottery Fund
VCS - Voluntary and Community Sector