



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Update on Peace III Priority 2.1 Capital bids for Shared Space
Date:	18 June 2010
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive, Ext: 6001
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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the status of the Council's four applications under Priority 2.1 'Creating Shared Public Spaces' of the Peace III programme that were submitted to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) on 13th November 2009.

Relevant Background Information

Members will recall that the Council agreed, at its meeting in November 2009, to submit 4 bids to the call for capital bids under Priority 2.1 'Creating Shared Public Spaces' of the Peace III programme. Under this measure SEUPB was seeking to support between 4-7 large strategic and iconic projects across the eligible Peace III programme area funded at between 1.5-10million Euros each. Their preference was to support five projects around €5 Million per project although additional money may be made available for significant projects. Projects will be funded at 100%. The main aim of this measure is to produce iconic structures that can be easily recognised as a Peace III project long after the programme ends in 2015.

Members should note there was a significant level of interest in this programme and that it was heavily over-subscribed. In total 31 applications were received by SEUPB under this call competing for approx. €29million. A brief description of the four bids that the Council submitted is outlined below.

The 4 bids which the Council submitted as lead partner were:

- *Girdwood Community Hub* – the development of an integrated community hub containing leisure, community, library and educational facilities in a shared space with an associated plan of shared space activities at Girdwood. This application was for £9.6million
- *Giant Park Sports Village at the North Foreshore with Crusaders and Newington* - to develop a shared community sports complex through a partnership between the Council and Crusaders and Newington Football Clubs, using sports and heritage to promote peace and reconciliation. This application was for £14.1million
- *Gasworks Bridge* – the development of a pedestrian and cycle bridge to improve connectivity between the city centre, Gasworks Business Park and the Lower Ravenhill and Ormeau Park. This application was for £9million
- *North Belfast Cultural Corridor* (Donegall St., Clifton St., Crumlin Rd.) - to improve the

physical environment, in order to create an attractive, welcoming and shared public realm in an area uniquely rich in the city's built and cultural heritage. This application was for £8.9million

Assessment Process for Priority 2.1 Applications

Members are asked to note that all applications received by SEUPB under this call were assessed in line with their assessment criteria and process. Decisions on the applications are discussed and determined by the Priority 2.1 Steering Committee. The stages in this process are outlined below.

Stage 1 – Initial Assessment of projects – Following a basic eligibility check each bid received was scored against the following criteria –

- Capacity to be shared space and to build peace and reconciliation
- Capacity to transform local communities
- Capacity to be iconic and provide a lasting legacy to the Peace III programme
- Sustainable development and other cross-cutting themes including equality
- Capacity to implement and deliver within SEUPB timescales (including planning permission)
- Financial competence and long term sustainability

For a project to be successful it had to score at least 65% or more in relation to the above criteria. Applications greater than £500,000 applications will also be subject to a standard 'Green Book' economic appraisal. Only those projects deemed to score above the quality threshold (65%) will be forwarded for economic appraisal. Projects which did not meet the required threshold are rejected at this stage.

Stage 2 – Economic Appraisal Stage - If a project met the required scoring threshold above and was over £500,000 it proceeded to economic appraisal. At this stage SEUPB appoint independent consultants to carry out the appraisal on their behalf. The purpose of the economic appraisal stage is to test further the information in the application forms and to consider:

- the purpose of the project
- whether a need been established
- the specific objectives of the project
- whether measurable targets and quantifiable outputs are provided
- whether alternative options have been considered
- whether the project will provide added value
- whether the project would be scaled down or delayed without grant
- the anticipated benefits of the project and who are the primary beneficiaries.

An economic appraisal report is then prepared by the independent consultants and presented to the Steering Committee to make the final decision.

Applicants can also request a debrief session with SEUPB following the outcome of any stage in the process. Members are asked to note that there are review procedures in place for any applicant who wishes to appeal a decision of the Steering Committee at any stage. In this case of appealing a decision a request for a review of a decision must be made in writing within 28 days of the receipt of the letter of rejection or 14 days after the debriefing session has been held. Members are asked to note that the Review is an independent process through which the applicant has to demonstrate to the Panel that either –

- a. the outcome/decision by the Committee was unreasonable **or**
- b. the proper procedures were not followed

Appeals on any other grounds cannot be considered.

Key Issues

An update on the current status of each individual project is given below. 3 of the applications – the Girdwood Community Hub, the Sports Village and the Gasworks Bridge were considered by the Steering Committee at their most recent meeting on 27th May. The North Belfast Cultural Corridor was considered at an earlier meeting of the Committee in March.

Girdwood Community Hub

As Members are aware the Girdwood Community Hub application was invited to progress to economic appraisal stage in January 2010. SEUPB appointed an external consultancy, Cogent Consulting, to carry out this appraisal. A wide team of officers from across the Council worked closely with Cogent Consulting between January and May to produce the required detailed supplementary information for the economic appraisal.

The Girdwood Community Hub application and supporting reports, including the economic appraisal, were presented to the Priority 2.1 Steering Committee at its meeting on 27th May. At this meeting it was noted that, although the Committee believed this proposal met some compelling priorities of the Peace programme, there were a number of uncertainties attached to the project which would have to be resolved before further consideration could be given to the project. Concerns which were raised included the lack of political agreement over the wider masterplan for the site, the uncertainty over housing and infrastructure issues and the fact that there were a number of comments from community representatives who felt they had not been fully consulted or engaged in the process.

In light of these concerns the Committee decided to defer consideration of the Hub proposal at this stage pending further information from the council including -

- an implementation timetable for the Community Hub and the wider site (including housing and infrastructure) within an agreed masterplan
- further evidence that there is full political and local PUL community support for the proposed project
- programming of the facility by strategic partners as part of the Shared Space Action Plan
- an Equality Impact Assessment for this element of the proposal incorporating further consultation as it was noted that the previous consultation was outdated

Members are aware that there are unresolved issues in relation to the masterplan for the wider Girdwood site and that this is currently with the Executive for consideration. However it is unlikely that there will be a decision on the masterplan in the short term. It should be noted that although community representatives were approached for their views on this proposal as part of the economic appraisal process there was no consultation undertaken with the local political representatives.

A debriefing session with SEUPB on this proposal is being arranged and Members will be updated on the outcome of this session at a later date if required.

Crusaders and Newington Sports Village at the North Foreshore

Members will also be aware that the Sports Village proposal was also invited to progress to economic appraisal stage in January. Cogent Consulting also carried out this appraisal. Following the meeting of the 2.1 Steering Committee on 27 May, the Council was informed that this bid had been rejected on the basis that it failed to meet the minimum scoring threshold. This project scored 48.25%.

Members are asked to note that a debriefing session on this proposal is taking place on the afternoon of the 18 June and the Council will be given the opportunity to seek further information on the reasons for this decision and will be taken through the economic appraisal and the scoring. Further information on the outcome of this will be provided to Committee at a later date if required. The Director of Property and Projects is attending this session along with representatives from Copius Consulting who helped Crusaders/Newington Football clubs and the Council in the preparation of this bid.

Gasworks Bridge

This application was also considered by the Steering Committee at its meeting on 27th May. The

Council was informed that this project had also been rejected on the basis that it failed to meet the minimum scoring threshold outlined above after initial assessment. This project scored 38%. A debriefing session on this proposal is to be arranged when further information will be requested on the reasons why this proposal was rejected.

North Belfast Cultural Corridor (Donegall St., Clifton St., Crumlin Rd.)

The Council was notified on 2nd March 2010 that this project had been rejected by the Peace III Steering Committee on the basis that it failed to meet the required minimum scoring threshold outlined above after initial assessment as it scored 55.5%. Subsequently officers from the Council meet with the SEUPB Peace III staff for a debriefing session and to consider undertaking a formal appeal. Council officers were advised that SEUPB felt that the project was weak in terms of addressing peace and reconciliation at community level and that it was felt it was more a tourism and environmental project. SEUPB officers advised that on the basis of this, the project was unlikely to succeed at appeal.

Summary and points to note

A summary of the status of the Council's Peace III applications is outlined below for the convenience of Members -

Proposed Project	SEUPB Decision
Girdwood Community Hub	Deferred
Giant's Park Community Sports Village	Rejected
North Belfast Cultural Corridor	Rejected
Gasworks Bridge	Rejected

Members are asked note that there is a possibility in light of the above decisions that the Council will not receive any funding under this call. It is not known at this stage what other applications, if any, have been successful and if any of these are located in the Belfast City Council area.

Resource Implications

Financial

None at present

Human Resources

Additional officer time will be required to attend debriefing sessions and progress work on the Girdwood bid, if required.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the information in this report and to

1. agree if they wish for further work to be carried out on the Girdwood proposal and the further information requested to be submitted
2. note that officers will arrange debriefing sessions on the Girdwood Community Hub and Gasworks Bridge proposals and will report back on the outcome of these sessions if the Committee wishes
3. in light of the timescales required for requesting a review of a decision (either within 28 days of the date of the letter of rejection or 14 days after the debriefing session) consider if they wish officers to formally appeal the decisions on the Gasworks and the Sports Village following the outcome of the debriefing sessions
4. note the advice from SEUPB that the North Belfast Cultural Corridor was unlikely to succeed in appeal.

Officers to contact for further information:

Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects,
 Caroline Wilson, Senior Good Relations Officer (Ext 6037)
 Sinead Grimes, Policy Analyst – Girdwood Community Hub/Gasworks Bridge (Ext 6203)
 Stephen Smyth, Project Management Unit – Giant's Park Sports Village (Ext 3504)
 Kerrie Sweeney, Tourism Manager – North Belfast Cultural Corridor (Ext 3586)

Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body