



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Corporate Plan 2011 – Workshop with Members 8 September 2010 – report back
Date:	24th September 2010
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Purpose of the report

To outline key points from the strategic planning workshop held 8 September 2010 in the Ulster Hall.

Background

A workshop, to which all Members of Council were invited, was held on 8th September 2010. The purpose of the workshop was to give Members the opportunity to discuss future priorities in the context of the Council's financial environment, including the capital programme. The workshop was the culmination of a series of North/South/East/West briefings held for Members on the development of the corporate plan, the capital programme and Strategic Regeneration Frameworks. Twenty two Members attended the workshop.

Outcome of the workshop

After presentations from the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Property and Projects, Members broke up into round-table workshop sessions to discuss what they had heard and to give their views on the way forward. Members discussed four broad areas:

- What do Members want to achieve at the end of the plan and the role of Members in taking the plan forward;
- The main themes in the current corporate plan - economy, environment and people and communities and if these need to change;
- The capital programme - finding a process to reach agreement about priorities
- Process – Members' views on the current broad structure of the current corporate plan and whether this should be retained.

Key points made by Members and Issues raised

Members raised vital issues both in terms of the development of the corporate plan and what the Council's future focus should be. Discussion revealed a rich spread of views across Members about the role of the Council and what its corporate plan should

contain; however, all comments focused on improving life for citizens across the city and on the importance of the Council's leadership, especially in economically uncertain times. Some of the key points most consistently raised by Members at the workshop are summarised below; however, it is important to reiterate that this was only the beginning of discussions with Members about the development of the plan. The issues raised by Members will be worked on by officers as the basis of continued and on-going engagement on whatever basis members feel is most appropriate – in party groups, in Committees and on an area basis with a view to developing a plan that is stretching but realistic and deliverable, bounded within the limits of what we can afford and is a real reflection of Members' commitment to improving quality of life in Belfast.

Views on current corporate plan

- The overall framework of the plan – in terms of the broad themes of leadership, economy, environment, people and communities and better services - is still solid; however, consideration needs to be given in the months ahead to what the priority projects and programmes are within this and how success will be measured;
- The number of priorities and performance measures need to be reduced and focused;
- The plan needs to be realistic and focus on areas where it can make demonstrable improvements; citizens need to see and experience these improvements;
- The corporate plan needs to be focused but also allow the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities in what is an uncertain and fluctuating environment;
- The right set of values, behaviours and way of working is important to future success;
- A balance needs to be found between area-based and city-wide discussions;
- The plan needs to be action focused but more strategic – too much of a mix of the strategic and operational at present.

Leadership and Influence

- Need to use democratic mandate to influence and shape the city – should look at the city on a local, area and citywide basis. There should be a particular focus on urban regeneration;
- There should be a balance between ambition for the city and focus on core issues;
- We need to measure how well we are dealing with issues where our focus is influence or civic leadership
- We should look to the future and anticipate the areas where the Council may eventually have further influence – such as planning and regeneration
- There needs to be clarity about the Council's leadership role so effort is focused, not dissipated.
- We need a much more strategic approach to city planning and development
- Should continue to move forward with a community planning approach – with clear member input and a local area focus.

Priorities and Issues

- Particular concern about how to make things work locally - need to think about how we plan and allocate resources at a local level;
- Concerned about the lack of integration between the work of statutory agencies

in local areas;

- Renewing the routes; alley gating cited as examples of where Council's intervention was visible to local people;
- Need to find balance between core mandatory activity and contribution to the broader priorities of citizens such as safety and support for children and young people;
- Support for high impact / low cost initiatives;
- Economy a key issue for the city but need to focus on the right things to have influence, connectivity across the city is key;
- Need better integration across services and to use our assets and services in a way that has most impact;
- Improving key services remains a priority.

Process

- Support for Members in the process and new Members' induction is vital;
- Need an effective framework for prioritisation;
- Scenario planning for setting the rate helpful and briefings helpful Members want options with consequences to help them make decisions;
- New Council after May elections – need to have the flexibility to allow new Council to modify and shape the plan further.

Capital

- Need to get into process about prioritisation and the consequences of decisions about ceasing/continuing investment;
- Need a city-wide perspective;
- Need to balance iconic and local schemes;
- Need to be imaginative about financing options including the role of other sectors.

Next steps

Members stressed the importance of continued engagement in the corporate planning process and the rate setting and capital programme prioritisation processes. A series of briefings will therefore be organised to take place during October on these issues with further reports brought to the Committee until the plan is finalised. As Members discussed at the workshop, the Committee is working towards January 2011 to have a high level draft of the plan in place.

Resource Implications

Financial

The development of the corporate plan is being taken forward in tandem with the development of financial plans for 2011 and beyond so that Members can consider its content in the context of affordability.

Decisions required

Members are asked to note the key points emerging from the workshop and agree to further briefings to take forward the process of developing the corporate plan;

Work is on-going at service and departmental level across the Council to provide proposals for Members consideration in terms of projects, programmes and performance measures for inclusion in the new corporate plan. In order to facilitate this work the Committee is asked to agree that these plans can be developed within the broad framework of the current Value Creation Map (at Appendix 1), subject to its amendment by the Committee.