

APPENDIX 2

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Development Committee,
Tuesday, 26th June, 2012

Visit by Delegation from Hefei, China

The Director reminded the Committee that there existed strong links between Belfast and the city of Hefei in China. He stated that, as part a Europe-wide fact finding tour in September, a delegation from Hefei would visit Belfast to undertake a programme of activities. He reported that the Hefei delegation had indicated that they wished to explore opportunities to develop and enhance economic relationships with Belfast and he sought the Committee's authority to host a networking event for the delegation. He added that all Members of the Committee would be invite to attend the event and that invites would be extended also to representative of the various agencies involved in economic development in the City.

The Committee granted the authority sought and authorised expenditure in the sum of £1,000 towards the hospitality costs associated with the holding of the networking event.

An Munia Tober - Revenue Grant Aid Support and Lease Arrangements

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 An Munia Tober (AMT) is the main Traveller support group within Northern Ireland providing specific services to Travellers within the greater Belfast area and also providing a regional supporting role. AMT receive Community Services Revenue Grant award of £17,116.06 pending compliance with our assessment procedures and their ability to demonstrate monitoring compliance.
- 1.2 In April 2011 the Council were advised that the Director of AMT had been dismissed following the discovery of financial irregularities which could potentially leave the organisation insolvent. The Board of AMT commissioned Bill Osborne to assist the AMT Directors investigate the current financial situation and to recommend a course of action for the Board to follow.
- 1.3 The Council's Traveller Liaison Officer immediately informed BCC Audit and Legal Services of the current position of AMT and it was agreed to hold all council grant support to AMT until the management and fiscal arrangements of AMT met our required professional standard as assessed by BCC Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

- 1.4 In September, AMT further advised Council that the agreed programme of work to address the issues recorded in the Investigation Report were ongoing and that the organisation were working, with support from Bryson Charitable Group, to address the financial issues and seek a way forward whilst maintaining much needed services to the Traveller community. The proposal was for Bryson to initially undertake the day to day operation and financial management of AMT and to consider options for the long time sustainability of the services provided. The agreement was subject to funding being released from OFMDFM to facilitate Bryson's involvement.
- 1.5 Following six months of Bryson management of AMT, the Council were advised on the 29th March 2012 by Jo Marley, Bryson Director of the *Transfer of Ownership- An Munia Tober to Bryson Charitable Group*. Details were set out in the correspondence from Jo Marley which is being considered by a Council solicitor. Community Services and officers from Legal Services, met with Bryson in May 2012 where all outstanding issues were resolved.
- 1.6 Belfast City Council have supported the efforts of AMT and Bryson during this difficult period given our stated commitment to the retention of a quality Traveller Support Organisation as an essential element in the promotion of quality of life issues that impact on the Traveller community .
- 1.7 The current lease arrangements relate to the Glen Road site i.e. two Portacabins and the land immediately adjoining them. The lease expires on the 30th September

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 AMT remains a viable organisation and continues to be a registered company, however due to the recent financial and management difficulties the previous AMT Board of Directors resigned and have been replaced by Directors nominated and elected at a EGM, on the 20th April 2012
- 2.2 AMT is now a sub group of Bryson Charitable group and is being fully managed and controlled by them and is subject to their assessed governance arrangements.
- 2.3 Community Services support this new arrangement which ensures effective governance and the retention of a dedicated traveller support organisation in the city. Community Services have assisted both AMT & Bryson during this difficult period of change.

- 2.4 BCC Audit Risk and Governance Services (AGRS) have assessed the new arrangement for management of AMT within the Bryson Charitable and the associated financial policy, procedure and practice. They confirm that they meet the required standards to permit the continuation of BCC grant support to AMT as a sub-group of the Charitable group.
- 2.5 Bryson Charitable Group have worked with AMT and Community Services in order to address the AMT financial irregularities, however an amount of £18,000 is still outstanding, this relates to costs associated with rent and insurance.
- 2.6 In order for Bryson Charitable group to formally take over the management of AMT, they have requested that their current core funders consider one off additional funding support to address this deficit position. They therefore ask that BCC contribute £2,000 to meet this outstanding balance.
- 2.7 Officers will continue to offer specific Traveller Liaison and community development support in order to facilitate this transition period and to build the capacity of the newly constituted group to maintain and then build effective support services for the Traveller community. Service provision will be monitored throughout this period with a formal review of the new arrangements at the end of the year.
- 2.8 Leasing arrangements with AMT are due for renewal (1st October 2012) with the current lease period stated as 5 years. Committee are asked to consider supporting this lease for a period of no more than 5 years up to 30th September 2017, subject to Council rent review procedures and endorsement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Revenue Grant towards the overhead and programme costs of the Traveller service provision to a maximum value of £17,116.06 for 2012/13, included in revenue estimates. Officer and worker support from within existing budgets
- 3.2 The request for the exceptional payment of £2,000 from within existing Traveller Liaison budget.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

- 4.1 The Traveller community is recognised under Section 75 of the Equality legislation. AMT provides essential support services to promote quality of life issues that impact on the Traveller community

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that committee:

- (i) Note the continuation of revenue grant aid support to AMT for the provision of Traveller Support Services,**
- (ii) Note the ongoing provision of officer support to develop and monitor service provision during this transition year**
- (iii) Support the renewal of the lease for the Travellers' Portacabin for a 5 year period from October 2012**
- (iv) Approve an exceptional payment of £2,000.00 to Bryson Charitable Group to address the accumulated deficit."**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Inter-Agency Forum on Travellers

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided Members with an overview of the items discussed at an inter-agency workshop which had been convened by the Council in May to discuss issues relating to the health and well-being of the Travelling Community in Belfast. It was reported that, given the ongoing issues regarding site provision, educational needs, travellers' services and quality of life, together with the potential implications of the Caravans' Act, there existed a consensus among attendees at the workshop that it would be prudent for the Council to establish a Inter-Agency Forum which would examine the range of issues outlined from a Belfast perspective.

The Committee agreed that the Council would oversee the establishment of the Inter-Agency Forum for the purposes outlined.

Community Development Strategy

The Committee endorsed the contents of the undernoted Community Development Strategy, which had been the subject of an extensive public consultation exercise, and noted also the contents of a delivery plan for the strategy.

"Introduction

Community development can be thought of as both the means by which we work together to support communities and to describe the outcomes we wish to achieve. Community development is thus both an approach to how the council should go about its work and an overarching aim in itself. It can be thought of as both an occupation (for example, the role of a community development worker in a council) and as a way of working with communities. As such it has a fundamental role to play in supporting and shaping how the council plans and delivers its services.