

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th December, 2015

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Boyle (Chairperson);
Aldermen Convery, Kingston,
Rodgers and Stalford;
Councillors Clarke, S.Corr, Graham, Haire, Hargey,
Hutchinson, Jones, Kennedy, Long, McAllister, McCabe,
McVeigh, Ó Donnghaile and Walsh.

Also Attended Councillor R. Brown.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Mrs. J. Minne, Director of Organisational Development;
Mr. J. Walsh, Town Solicitor;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Alderman Browne.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st December, subject to;

- (1) The amendment of the decision under the heading "NILGA – Development Programme for Local Government" to provide that the Council calls for an early review by the Northern Ireland Assembly of the decision by the DSD not to transfer regeneration powers in April 2016; requests that Council staff do their utmost to work around that decision for the City's benefit; and agrees that a request be made to the Assembly that it agrees that, in the interim period, the City be afforded "Agency Status"; and
- (2) The rejection of the decision under the heading "Audio Recording of Planning Committee Meetings" and accordingly the Council agreed to delete Section One of the Operating Protocol for the Recording of Committee Meetings, which stated that "audio recording of Committee meetings would apply only to those held in the Lavery Room of the City Hall" and, accordingly, all future Planning Committee meetings be recorded.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

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Schedule of Meetings 2016

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee during 2016, commencing at 9.30 a.m:

Friday, 8th January
Friday, 22nd January
Friday, 19th February
Friday, 18th March
Friday, 22nd April
Friday, 20th May
Friday, 24th June
No meeting in July Summer recess
Friday, 19th August
Friday, 23rd September
Friday, 21st October
Friday, 18th November
Friday, 16th December

Restricted Items

The information contained in the following report is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2016/17

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which presented an overview of the Council's revenue budget for 2016/17; the cash limits for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2016/17 and which sought agreement to refer the recommended revenue budgets and cash limits of the People and Communities Committee, City and Growth Regeneration Committee and the Planning Committee to the respective meetings of each committee in January 2016; and outlined the next steps in the rates setting process leading to the setting of the district rate by the Council at its meeting in February 2016.

The Committee agreed to:

1. A cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2016/17 of £42,534,608.
2. A capital finance budget for 2016/17 of £18,090,901
3. A cash limit of £75,681,091 to be presented to the People and Communities Committee for consideration at its January meeting.
4. A cash limit of £15,886,293 to be presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for consideration at its January meeting.
5. A cash limit of £1,673,308 to be presented to the Planning Committee for consideration at its January meeting.

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6. Consider a report on the next strand of the Council's efficiency programme and associated targets at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting in January.
7. Hold further party group briefings on the district rate and the efficiency programme in January, prior to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 22nd January 2016.

Matters Referred back from Council/Notices of Motion

Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland Football Teams

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st December, had referred the undernoted Notice of Motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Boyle and seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile, to the Committee for consideration in accordance with Standing Orders:

“This Council wishes to acknowledge the success of both football teams from this island and wishes them every success in the European Championships in France next year. This unique situation, where both teams have achieved international success, has brought happiness to their supporters throughout the whole of Ireland, regardless of football affiliation or geography. To mark this unique sporting occasion, in what has been a period of wonderful sporting achievements for local sport, the Council agrees to host a joint civic dinner for both teams prior to them heading to France next June.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Alderman Stalford,

That this Council:

- Welcomes the attendance of the Northern Ireland Team, manager and coaches and IFA management at the civic reception held at the City Hall on 9th November in celebration of Northern Ireland's qualification for the Euro Championship tournament in France next year;
- And also welcomes the qualification of three other national teams from the British Isles – England, Wales and the Republic of Ireland – and agrees that the Lord Mayor should write to all four national football associations expressing our congratulations and best wishes to them for the Euro 2016 finals.

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Amendment

Moved by Councillor McAllister,
Seconded by Councillor Long.

That the Committee agrees to adopt the Notice of Motion standing in the name of Councillor Boyle and seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile, subject to the substitution of the words 'civic dinner', with the word 'reception' in the final sentence.

On a vote by show of hands twelve Members voted for the amendment and seven against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was put to the Committee as the substantive motion, with twelve Members voting for and seven against and it was declared carried.

**Northern Ireland Local Government Officers'
Superannuation Committee**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the above matter to enable correspondence to be received from NILGOSC.

Council Resolution re: Cuts to Higher Education

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd November, had received a deputation from Unite the Union outlining its concerns in relation to budgetary cuts at Queen's University and the Ulster University. The deputation had highlighted that those cuts would reduce the number of student places in Belfast and impact upon the range of courses available. The Council had duly passed the following resolution:

"Resolved – that the Council, aware of the positive impact which students play in the City, expresses its concern at the decisions by the Queens's University of Belfast and the Ulster University to cut student numbers and close certain departments and agrees to write to both universities requesting that they review those decisions."

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been forwarded to both universities and a joint response, on behalf of the Vice-Chancellors (Professor Peter Johnston of Queen's and Professor Nixon of Ulster University), had been received on 8th December.

The joint response stated that the budgetary cuts had been "imposed on the universities by the Northern Ireland Executive". In essence, the universities had suffered a 28% cut in the funding over the past four years, which had resulted in a reduction in staff numbers and 500 student places. One of the main impacts of the funding cuts was that local students would be forced to study in other parts of the UK, a figure that was estimated to rise to 40%. The universities are acutely aware of the effect that that would have on the local economy and the ability of Belfast to retain a "highly-skilled, motivated workforce".

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Both Vice-Chancellors had expressed concern that Northern Ireland was the only part of the UK “actively disinvesting in Higher Education”, and shared the Council’s concerns as set out in the resolution. The final paragraph of the response indicated that the universities would be “delighted” to work with the Council to lobby the Executive for a “sustainable funding model” for the Higher Education sector. To that end, both Vice-Chancellors had expressed a desire to engage with the Council to explore the issue further.

The Committee noted receipt of the correspondence.

Belfast Agenda

Super-connected Belfast Voucher Scheme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report provides an update on the close down of the Belfast Connection Voucher Scheme by The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It also outlines a recent proposal from the Department of Rural Development (DARD) to provide additional funding to businesses for rural broadband connections.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report, and approve the proposal for the Belfast Voucher Team to administer DARD funds for those rural applications that did not receive vouchers due to the speed of closedown of the Belfast Connection Voucher Scheme. This will be operated at no cost to the council.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast Connection Voucher Scheme

The Belfast Connection Voucher Scheme (BCVS) has allowed small businesses and social enterprises within the new Belfast City Council boundary area to apply for grants of up to £3,000, to obtain high-speed broadband connections.

3.2 The first phase of the voucher scheme was launched in December 2013 and was closed on the 31st March 2015. During this phase DCMS set Belfast a target of achieving 690 vouchers. This target was based on the number of businesses located in the Belfast area and on projected demand. The Belfast Voucher scheme easily surpassed their

target distributing 837 vouchers by 31st March 2015 to businesses and charities across all parts of the city.

- 3.3 On 3rd December 2014, as part of the Autumn Statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, a decision was taken to extend the voucher scheme until March 2016 (subject to available funding). The government allocated up to £40 million to extend the scheme and further widened the scheme to an extra 28 cities. Vouchers were made available on a first come, first served basis.
- 3.4 Members will also recall that as part of this extension, Belfast expanded administration of the Voucher scheme on behalf of all councils regionally. Since March, the scheme has proved to be hugely popular and we have more than doubled the number of vouchers issued.
- 3.5 The scheme closed on 12th October when the £40 million fund was fully allocated.
- 3.6 An update of the current project status is outlined in the table below.

Connection Vouchers Scheme	
Vouchers Issued	2000
Vouchers value	£3.8 million
Unsuccessful applications	900

- 3.7 It should be noted that the Voucher Team has repeatedly contacted businesses in an attempt to reduce the number of incomplete applications.

DARD Proposal

- 3.8 DARD operate a scheme called 'Tackling Poverty and Rural Isolation', and have funding available within this scheme to get rural businesses connected to high speed broadband.
- 3.9 DARD are aware that a significant number of rural businesses across NI just missed out on vouchers due to the speed with which the Voucher scheme closed down.
- 3.10 DARD are proposing to cover the cost of those unsuccessful rural applications that were received but could not be fulfilled before the Voucher fund ran out.

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- 3.11 DARD has approached BCC to ask if we can use existing processes to distribute funds on their behalf for those unfulfilled rural applications.
- 3.12 For state aid purposes, DARD wish to retain all of the same application criteria used for the original Voucher scheme – with the added condition that businesses must be construed as ‘rural’.
- 3.13 Belfast City Council would then just issue a voucher in the normal way.
- 3.14 It is anticipated that the DARD fund will be for a fixed amount and final approval for each application will be given by DARD. No Belfast-based businesses will be eligible under this scheme.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

- 4.1 The Voucher Team will continue to support those businesses who have received vouchers under the Belfast Voucher Scheme through to March 2016.
- 4.2 If agreed Belfast City Council will operate the DARD proposal on a ‘cost-neutral’ basis with DARD covering all costs needed to administer their funding. Costs will be minimal as the applications have already been received and the procedures and controls required to process these claims are already in place.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 4.3 None”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Transfer of DSD Regeneration Powers – Contingency Arrangements

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline possible legislative vehicles which would enable the Council to undertake regeneration powers, including Comprehensive Development schemes and Compulsory Purchase Orders, now that such powers are not to transfer to the Council in April 2016.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- note the contents of the report and:
- agree that this forms the basis of the briefing paper to be prepared for the meeting with the Social Development Minister, Mervyn Storey scheduled for 16 December 2015.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The decision of the Social Development Minister to indefinitely delay the transfer of regeneration powers to local government is disappointing. A huge amount of money has been spent on reducing the number of councils and transferring some functions like planning back out of central government. The aim was to give council sufficient powers and responsibilities so they could deliver local priorities including regeneration.

3.2 This decision brings with it major risks for the Council in terms of impacting upon our ability to deliver the ambitious plans for regenerating Belfast City Centre and the surrounding neighbourhoods; which will grow our economy, create jobs and prosperity and improve quality of life for our citizens. Not having important regeneration levers such as comprehensive development and compulsory purchase powers will constrain the ability of the Council to unlock and progress major investment and development plans through, for example, releasing underused or derelict land and buildings.

3.3 The non transfer will constrain the ability of the council to:

- Create the conditions and opportunities to invest in Belfast, supporting economic growth & prosperity
- Provide the required level of confidence to investors considering developments in Belfast – investors want a one stop shop approach
- Ensure a targeted and holistic approach is taken to addressing blighted areas and development sites across the city including the city centre which is the regional gateway
- Unlock the development potential of major flagship schemes in the city centre
- Ensure public spaces are managed and improved in a coherent way

- Ensure greater alignment of physical regeneration with the emerging local development plan
- 3.4 The stated intention of the NI Executive and central government was to transfer these powers along with the other land use planning powers to local government to provide councils with greater scope to effect improvement and regeneration in their local areas.
- 3.5 Belfast is identified as the regional driver for the NI economy and the Council is now charged with bringing forward local development plans and community plans, setting out a vision for the area in terms of commerce, city centre, housing, accessibility, economic development and improvements in local neighbourhoods. DSD will continue to hold its powers for comprehensive development schemes as well as drawing up masterplans and delivering local projects. With poorly aligned priorities to those of the Council this will cause significant issues in terms of delivery and will not represent value for money in terms of resources and outcomes. There is a clear synergy between those functions that the Council now has, together with its discreet economic development powers, which should act as a pivot enabling a joined up approach to regeneration. This should act as the foundation for an agreement that will allow an agency arrangement to be put in place which is mutually beneficial and which could achieve an agreed approach to the delivery of these functions.
- 3.6 Notwithstanding the recent announcement made by the Social Development Minister, it is clear that it would be in the best interests of both central government and local government, not to mention the NI citizen, that the transfer of such powers takes place as soon as possible. Finding a suitable mechanism through which this could be affected should be a common goal of both central and local government. The Council is of a strong opinion that if there is a willingness on behalf of the Social Development Minister and/or the NI Executive, a viable legal vehicle could be put in place quickly which would be a win-win for all concerned in that it would:
- (i) Enable the extension of specific regeneration functions (e.g. Development Scheme and Acquisition of land powers) to Council(s), who may utilise such functions if they so wish taking account of political and affordability considerations. No statutory obligation for councils.

- (ii) Ensure DSD (and the incoming new Department for Communities) retains oversight and final approval of such schemes;
- (iii) Ensure DSD (and the incoming new Department for Communities) retains statutory responsibility for such powers and can create and progress Development Schemes if they so wish.

3.7 The Council is similarly being pressed to act as a delivery engine for OFMDFM/SIB in respect of Urban Village capital spend and also SIF projects. It makes sense that the Council should have this role given the fact that it is multi-functional in terms of planning, community outreach, procurement, project management and maintenance, with strong supporting mechanisms in regard to finance, legal services and estates. The Council has a more coherent and streamlined delivery service than central government which is being increasingly recognised including DSD in terms of BCC delivering BSC projects.

3.8 Suggested Approach

The Council believes that both parties could enter into an Agency Agreement under Section 104 of the Local Government Act 1972 which would enable the Council to exercise regeneration powers on behalf of DSD (and the incoming new Department of Communities) and access Executive funding to deliver regeneration and development schemes. Attached at Appendix 1 is an initial draft Framework Agreement which could form the basis of detailed negotiations and engagement between DSD and Council. Whilst still at a skeleton stage, this draft framework sets out the types of key areas which would need to be worked through in detail including e.g. clarification of roles and responsibilities, financial arrangements, accountability and resources, potential staffing implications including secondments etc..

3.9 Benefits

Set out below are some of the key benefits for NI Executive and Central Government in taking forward this approach.

- Unlock the regeneration and development potential in the city - overcome recent challenges and difficulties experienced by DSD and central government linked to the rigid nature of Treasury rules and the budgeting treatment of large comprehensive development schemes such as North East Quarter, Northside and

other large CD projects. (see quote below from the then Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton)

- Ability to effectively utilise the strengths of both organisations to support the development and delivery of development schemes
 - Maximise funding - aligning the ability of the Department to access Executive funds with the ability of Council to access funding through prudential borrowing facilities.
 - Enhanced ability of Council to bring forward Compulsory Purchase Orders (acquisition of land) through having greater financial flexibility within the prudential finance regime
- Governance - Any legal agreement would need to be developed and agreed on a joint basis with clear lines of accountability. There would also be inherent in any agreement necessary protections and assurances including the fact that the exercise of functions by the Council would remain subject to departmental oversight and sign-off as would have been the case in the event that the Regeneration Bill had progressed. and any necessary assurances/protections build in
- Ensure greater alignment of physical regeneration with the emerging Community Planning and Local Development Plan processes – applying an outcome based approach.
- Ensure a targeted and holistic approach is taken to addressing blighted areas across the city including the City Centre which is the regional gateway and key investment location.
- Maximise the social impact and benefits of regeneration investment – improving connectivity and access to opportunity.
- Ability of the Council to provide the required level of confidence to investors considering developments in Belfast – position Belfast and Northern Ireland as an investment location and attract significant inward investment
- Ability to adopt a ‘whole system approach’ to taking forward key development and regeneration schemes e.g. Place Positioning / Bring to Market; commissioning, procurement, land assembly, legal support etc.
- Further development/regeneration activity will enhance the regional rates base and allow reinvestment in front-line services (NB. 55% of rates income is regional and 45% is district).

- Foster greater partnership between central and local government and potentially free-up central government resources through greater alignment of both staff and budgets.
- It is also important to recognise the focus across GB on localism and greater devolution of powers and resources to local authorities. Having the ability to access innovative tools, mechanisms and resources, key cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow have been able to unlock the development potential of city-regions, deliver critical city infrastructure; help rebalance the local economy through job creation and innovation and further enhance regional competitiveness and prosperity.

'The Member is right to highlight the opportunity that is presented by our local councils, particularly after reorganisation and the RPA, which will, of course, create much bigger councils with bigger rate bases. There will also be a change towards better borrowing powers and, importantly, more powers, including a power of regeneration.

.....Into the future, our councils, given their greater powers post-RPA, should be an increasing driver of infrastructure investment in Northern Ireland. I am keen, at these early stages, to use the good offices of the Department of Finance and Personnel to encourage them down that path.'^[1]

[Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton, Statement to NI Assembly on 1 April 2014]

- 3.10 It is important to recognise that an Agency Agreement would require the agreement of the Social Development Minister and it is important that the Council proactively seeks to secure such agreement as it is of mutual benefit to both organisations. It is also important that the necessary political capital and consensus is secured for extending regeneration related powers to the Council for the betterment of the city and its citizens. It is also important that the Council has an opportunity to work alongside DSD.
- 3.11 The Council will also seek to work alongside DSD (and incoming new Department for Communities) and input into any processes put in place to determine the future allocation of both capital and revenue funding within Belfast. The Council would also seek to work with DSD and central

[1] 57 AQO 5920/11-15: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-13-14/01-April-2014/#3>

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government to ensure that major development schemes within the city come to fruition.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.12 There will be financial/resource implications attached to the non-transfer of regeneration powers and budgets to the Council given the fact that these were being considered as part of the Council's overall approach & funding towards the delivery of regeneration activity within the city.
- 3.13 Further detailed reports on the financial and budget implications will be brought back to Committee in-line with the budget estimates process and timetable.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.14 Development of new policies and/or service delivery models will be subject to equality screening and, where required, EQIA process."

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that a further meeting with the Minister would be held in February, 2016.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Area Working Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 At its meeting in April 2012, the SP&R Committee agreed to convene Area Working Groups (AWGs) to support effective 'place-shaping' and make recommendations on investment decisions for their local area including LIF and BIF. Given the unique role that they played in allowing Members to shape their local areas it was agreed that AWGs would be reconvened as part of the new Council. The latest round of AWGs has taken place and the recommendations emerging are outlined below:

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to –

Area Working Group Planning Sessions

- note that the AWGs have previously agreed the need for joint planning sessions as a first step towards the development of AWG plans. The first one of these workshops was held with the South AWG at the end of November and focused on highlighting for Members the projects and assets within their areas together with an overview of the key demographics, socio-economic indicators, the wider strategic context and emerging thematic priorities. Members are asked to note that this workshop was successful and the Members who attended highlighted that it was a positive first step towards the development of a wider plan. It is proposed that this format is followed for the workshops for North, East and West which are scheduled for January.

Local Investment Fund proposals

- agree the recommended proposals as set out in 3.5 - 3.7 below from the South, West and East AWG in relation to the Local Investment Fund
- Members are asked to note that these proposals (with the exception of Malone Rugby Club) are subject to the projects going through the LIF process with the project being assessed against the prioritisation matrix – the results of this assessment will be reported back to a future AWG and Committee. All projects will be subject to the full due-diligence process agreed for LIF projects
- Note that 3 projects which had previously been agreed for in principle funding (Malone Rugby Club and Ashfield Girls School – East AWG and Forthriver Tennis and Bowling Club– West) have now been scored - all have successfully met the minimum threshold and it is recommended that these projects proceed to the Due Diligence stage of the LIF process.

Request for Council to act as Delivery Agent for other projects

- Note that the Committee previously agreed in October that the Council acts as the delivery agent for a range of projects funded under external initiatives including

Building Successful Communities and the Social Investment Fund. Since this the Council has been approached to potentially act as the delivery agent for additional projects as outlined below and Committee is asked to endorse if these should be progressed.

- ***Building Successful Communities*** – agree in principle that the Council acts as the delivery agent for the delivery of a further 31 alleygates in the Sufflok/Lenadoon BSC area. Members are asked to note that BSC monies are timebound and to note that this proposed project, along with the other proposed BSC projects, requires DSD business case approval. At the time of writing none of the projects proposed have received this approval which means that it will be very tight to deliver any of the projects within the required timeframe. Council officers have highlighted these issues to DSD and are awaiting a response.
- ***Urban Villages*** – agree in principle that the Council acts as the delivery agent for a range of projects under the Urban Villages initiative which is being managed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) subject to further discussions with OFMDFM and SIB and ensuring the deliverability of the projects within the required timescale

Resources

- Members are asked to note that if the above projects are agreed then there are 37 LIF 2 projects which have been agreed in principle together with over 15 potential LIF2 projects which Members have asked officers to investigate how feasible they are to progress. Members will appreciate that there is a substantial amount of work in bringing these projects forward and officers are already working at maximum capacity on other Council physical projects including 50 capital projects, over 35 LIF 1 projects which are still ongoing and 20 BIF projects. In addition the Council is now being requested to deliver an increasing range of partnership projects under external funding streams including Urban Villages, Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Building Successful Communities (BSC). Members are therefore asked to note that it will be early next year before project sponsors can be allocated to all emerging LIF 2 projects and follow up with Groups and are asked to liaise with Groups to ensure that they are aware of this.

3.0 Main report

KEY ISSUES

AREA WORKING GROUP UPDATES

AREA WORKSHOPS

- 3.1** As part of the AWGs and looking at future recommendations for investment decisions under LIF and BIF, Members have been presented with physical portfolio updates and noted that there is a lot of work taking place across the city in terms of physical development. However it was highlighted that the impact of ongoing revenue programmes also needs to be taken into consideration as a physical project can be a catalyst for an area but it needs associated programming to make it work. Members also agreed that there was a need to look at other initiatives happening in local areas – e.g. links to Urban Villages, Building Successful Communities pilots, SIF projects etc.
- 3.2** The AWGs have therefore recognised the need to think through the issues and context of their areas and agreed the need for a number of planning workshop sessions per area as a first step towards the development of local area plans and to allow Members to start to consider wider issues in their areas linking with the ongoing work on the Belfast Agenda, the outcomes framework and the forward Committee plans for People and Communities and City Growth.
- 3.3** The first area workshop was held with the South AWG on 27th November. The workshop was facilitated by staff from Property Projects and the Corporate Policy Unit to ensure a link with the emerging Belfast Agenda. The workshop focused on a number of key areas including -
- 1.** Developing a shared understanding of the local area - looking at a statistical evidence base, service delivery in areas, existing public sector and community assets and existing investments;
 - 2.** Starting to identify the specific issues and concerns affecting the area - using an OBA approach, identifying the key outcomes that Members want to focus on in their areas
- 3.4** All the Members agreed that the workshop was very productive and that it should form the first of a series of workshops. Workshops with the other AWGs are due to be

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held in January. A full report on the outcome of the workshops will be brought to a future SP&R meeting following completion

EAST AWG

- 3.5** *LIF Recommendations* - The East AWG at its meeting on 24th November made the following recommendations for the consideration of the SP&R Committee in relation to their Local Investment Fund II

Ref No	Project	£ Amount
ELIF2-02	Malone Rugby Club	Additional £93,300 Total allocation - £208,300
ELIF2-03**	Towell House – Sensory Garden	£75,000
	<i>LIF 2 allocation remaining if agreed - £786,700</i>	

****Members are asked to note that this proposal is subject to these projects going through the LIF process with the project being assessed against the prioritisation matrix – the results of this assessment will be reported back to future AWGs and Committee. All projects will be subject to the full due-diligence process agreed for LIF projects. The Malone Rugby Club has been scored – see Appendix 1.**

The East AWG also asked officers to assess a number of other projects for their feasibility (including Eastside Souk and CharterNI) and report back to a future East meeting.

WEST AWG

- 3.6** *LIF Recommendations* - The West AWG at its meeting on 26th November made the following recommendations for in principle funding for the consideration of the SP&R Committee in relation to their Local Investment Fund2 monies -

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Ref No	Project	£ Amount
WLIF2-	Woodvale Cricket Club	£26,000
	<i>LIF 2 allocation remaining if agreed - £30,000</i>	

Members are asked to note that these proposals are subject to these projects going through the LIF process with the project being assessed against the prioritisation matrix – the results of this assessment will be reported back to the next AWG and Committee. All projects will be subject to the full due-diligence process agreed for LIF projects. The West AWG also asked officers to assess a number of other projects for their feasibility and report back to a future West meeting.

3.7 SOUTH AWG

LIF Recommendations - The South AWG at its meeting on 27th November made the following recommendations for the consideration of the SP&R Committee in relation to their Local Investment Fund II

Ref No	Project	£ Amount
SLIF2-08	Ballynafeigh Orange Hall	£60,000
SLIF2-09	Ballynafeigh Community House	£80,000
SLIF2-10	Ormeau Boxing Club	£40,000
SLIF2-11	Surestart (Belvoir)	£108,000
	<i>LIF 2 allocation remaining if agreed - £20,000</i>	

Members are asked to note that all the proposals above are subject to these projects going through the LIF process with the project being assessed against the prioritisation matrix – the results of this assessment will be reported back to the next AWG and Committee. All projects will be subject to the full due-diligence process agreed for LIF projects

NORTH AWG

3.8 The North AWG at its meeting on 24 November also asked officers to assess a number of other projects for their

feasibility (North Belfast Alternative and Good Morning North Belfast (Sunningdale Gardens) and report back to a future North meeting.

Projects recommended to be advanced to due-diligence

- 3.9 Members are asked to note that a number of projects which have previously received 'in-principle' commitment have now been scored by officers (Malone Rugby Club and Ashfield Girls School – East AWG and Forthriver Tennis and Bowling Club– West) and all have successfully met the minimum threshold. It is recommended that these projects proceed to the Due Diligence stage of the LIF process.

REQUEST FOR COUNCIL TO ACT AS DELIVERY AGENT FOR OTHER PROJECTS

- 3.10 Members will recall that they were updated in October that the Council has been requested to act as the delivery agent for a range of projects funded under a number of external initiatives including the Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Building Successful Communities (BSC) These requests recognise both the successful track record of the Council as a delivery agent for capital projects and also the uniquely placed role of the Council as a civic leader in the city. This is a sign of confidence in the Council and recognition of the Council's increasing role in terms of regeneration and emerging community planning role. Since this the Council has been approached to potentially act as the delivery agent for additional projects as outlined below and Committee is asked to endorse if these should be progressed.

- *Building Successful Communities* – agree in principle that the Council acts as the delivery agent for the delivery of a further 31 alleygates in the Sufflok/Lenadoon BSC area. Members are asked to note that BSC monies are timebound and to note that this proposed project, along with the other proposed BSC projects, requires DSD business case approval. At the time of writing none of the projects proposed have received this approval which means that it will be very tight to deliver any of the projects within the required timeframe. Council officers have highlighted these issues to DSD and are awaiting a response.
- *Urban Villages* – agree in principle that the Council acts as the delivery agent for a range of projects under the Urban Villages initiative which is being managed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) subject to further

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discussions with OFMDFM and SIB and ensuring the deliverability of the projects within the required timescale

RESOURCES

3.11 Members are asked to note that if the above LIF projects are agreed then there are 37 LIF 2 projects which have been agreed in principle together with over 15 potential LIF projects which Members have asked officers to investigate how feasible they are to progress. Members will appreciate that there is a substantial amount of work in bringing these projects forward and officers are already working at maximum capacity on other Council physical projects including 50 capital projects, over 35 LIF 1 projects which are still ongoing and 20 BIF projects. In addition as outlined above in 3.10-3.12 the Council is now being requested to act as delivery agent for a range of partnership projects under external funding streams including Urban Villages, Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Building Successful Communities (BSC). Members are therefore asked to note that given existing work pressures and capacity that it will be early next year before project sponsors can meet with all the Groups and Members are therefore asked to ensure that Groups are aware of this.

3.13 FINANCIAL & RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- **Financial - £4m has been allocated to LIF 2.**

AWG	(A) TOTAL LIF 2 ALLOCATION	(B) AMOUNT ALLOCATED TO DATE	(C) PROPOSALS IN THIS REPORT	(D) PROJECTED ALLOCATION (B)+(C)	REMAINING ALLOCATION
North	£800,000	£133,200	-	-	£666,800
South	£800,000	£492,000	£288,000	£780,000	£20,000
East	£1,200,000	£245,000	£168,300	£413,300	£786,700
West	£1,200,000	£1,144,000	£26,000	£1,170,000	£30,000

- **Resource - Officers will be required to help work up LIF projects. As highlighted above if the above projects are agreed there are 37 LIF 2 projects which have been agreed in principle together with a range of proposals which Members have asked officers to look at in detail and bring back to future AWGs. There are associated resource implications with working all these projects up and Members will appreciate that**

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the Property & Projects Department is already working at maximum capacity on ongoing and emerging capital projects together with LIF 1 and BIF projects.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Asset Management

Slievegallion Drive – Off street car parking

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 5th January, 2015, had agreed to dispose of lands at Slievegallion Drive to the Department of Education. The land was to be redeveloped by De La Salle College to provide a school/community facility comprising a 3G sport pitch and associated changing pavilion.

Planning approval for the development had been granted earlier in the year and, as a condition of the Planning Permission, the development required a public car park to be constructed to replace the on-street car parking being lost at Slievegallion Drive as a consequence of the redevelopment. The Department of Education had sought to have the new public car park, consisting of 17 spaces, adopted by Transport NI. However, following the Review of Public Administration, the responsibility for off street car parking had transferred to local councils in April 2015 and the Department had now referred the request to the Council.

The People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 10th November, had considered the matter and had approved the adoption of the off street car parking at Slievegallion Drive.

The Committee noted the decision of that Committee.

Mountforde Road – Encroachment by St Matthew’s Housing Association

The Committee was advised that, in the early 2000s, St. Matthew’s Housing Association had developed a site on Beechfield Street to provide sheltered accommodation for the elderly. An extension to provide additional accommodation had been completed in 2010. That extension was known as Mac Airt House and was a design and building project by a local contractor in compliance with the design brief which had been prepared by the St. Matthew’s Housing Association.

The Committee was advised that the development backed on the to Council’s Mountforde Road Playground, which had been refurbished in February 2013. The contractor had erected a new rear boundary but had inadvertently encroached onto Council land, which comprised a narrow strip of landscaped grassland used as part of a common rear garden enjoyed by the ground floor residents of the sheltered accommodation.

During the park refurbishment, the Council’s contractor had replaced the original fence with a new high quality fence along the same boundary. The Council’s Parks and

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Leisure Department had confirmed that it had no requirement for that small strip of land of approximately 45 square metres. St. Matthew's Housing Association had now written to the Council expressing a desire to resolve the encroachment by purchasing the strip of land.

The Committee agreed to the disposal of approximately 45 square metres plot of land to the St. Matthew's Housing Association, subject to a consideration of £1000 to the Council.

**Cregagh Youth and Community Centre – Ulster Rugby
over flow car park**

The Committee was advised that the Cregagh Youth and Community Centre had been transferred to the Council from Castlereagh Borough Council on 1st April, 2015, as part of the Local Government Reform. The site comprised a community centre, a small astro turf pitch and associated on site car parking.

At its meeting on 8th December, the People and Communities Committee had considered a report and had agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the occasional use of the overflow car park by way of a licence agreement to Ulster Rugby.

Ulster Rugby had previously paid Castlereagh Borough Council a fee of £250 per day for the use of the overflow car park. Discussions with a representative from Ulster Rugby had indicated a willingness to continue with that arrangement and to enter into a licence agreement for an initial period of 9 months paying £250 for each day of use of the overflow car park. At the end of the initial 9 month period, both parties would have the opportunity to assess the initial agreement and renew the licence fee and licence period for a longer term, if so required. It was anticipated that Ulster Rugby would use the overflow car park on approximately 20 separate days during the current rugby playing season. The overflow car park was not currently used on a regular basis by users of the Cregagh Youth and Community Centre.

The Committee approved the recommendation of the People and Communities Committee to allow the occasional use of the overflow car park by way of a licence agreement to Ulster Rugby.

Musgrave Park Pavilion – Licence for meeting Room

The Committee was advised that, as part of its Pitches Strategy, the former Parks and Leisure Committee had agreed that Musgrave Park would receive investment to provide a four room changing pavilion. St Brigid's GAC, which operated under a Facilities Management Agreement (FMA) at Musgrave Park, had requested that a reception room be included in the pavilion. St Brigid's had agreed to fund the cost of that, together with other enhancements which comprised of security fencing and a new path.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that the inclusion of those additional works had been approved by the former Parks and Leisure Committee, at its

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meeting on 14th August, 2014, subject to the cost of the works being met through sources other than the Council and subject to any variation to the FMA being approved by the Parks and Leisure Committee. The additional works were estimated to be in the region of £122,327. The Council had entered into an Agreement for works with St Brigid's GAC to govern this.

Accordingly, a licence for use would be required to regularise St Brigid's GAC's use of the room, which would remain in the ownership of the Council. The licence would run concurrently with the FMA until 8th March, 2024 and would be at a nominal fee, given that the room had been paid for by the licensee. Whilst the licence would not be entered into until the pavilion had been completed, approval for the licence was required at this stage in advance of the building works commencing.

The Committee agreed to the grant of a license to St Brigid's GAC for the use of the reception room at Musgrave Park pavilion, following completion, for a term until 8th March, 2024 at a nominal fee and as such other terms as required by the Town Solicitor and the Director of Property and Projects.

**Rural Tourism Scheme – Access at Black Mountain and
Glencairn/Ligoniel in the Belfast Hills**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting of 14th December, 2012, it had authorised the Council to enter in to Development and Licence Agreements with the Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP) for the construction of paths and related works at the Cave Hill Country Park and Ligoniel Park. BHP had been successful in obtaining funding for those works from the Rural Development Programme under Axis 3 – Improving the Quality of Life in Rural Areas and Diversifying the Rural Economy. The completion of the paths and interpretative signage had helped build linkages across the hills by improving accessibility and encouraging greater numbers of visitors to the area, to appreciate its natural beauty and heritage.

The Committee was advised that there was now an opportunity to build on the strategic approach to the development of the rural tourism product of the Belfast Hills and to mirror those recent developments at Black Mountain and Glencairn/Ligoniel, through the submission of a funding application to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) under the Rural Tourism Scheme. Successful projects would be funded at 75% grand aid, up to a maximum of £500k, whilst the remaining 25% match funding must be 5% cash and a contribution in kind up to a maximum of 20%. Expressions of interest were being invited during January and February as the first stage of the application process.

In relation to the Black Mountain, discussions had initially taken place in 2012 with local Elected Members, community representatives and the BHP regarding the provision of pedestrian access. An informal route currently linked the Whiterock Road to the "Hatchet Field" on Black Mountain and the land was mainly in private ownership, whilst Northern Ireland Water owned the a reservoir in the vicinity. The proposal was to create a pedestrian path which would formalise part of that route but also connect to the National Trust's existing network of paths on Divis, with its agreement.

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Similarly, at Glencairn an informal route existed which linked Wolfhill Road, Ligoniel Dams and Mill Avenue with Ligoniel Park. The formalisation of that route would create valuable linkages in the area for locals and visitors alike. The People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 13th October, 2015, had granted approval for BHP to apply for external funding to create a path linking the Horseshoe Bend to Carrs Glen in Cave Hill Country Park. If that funding was successful, an extensive path network would link the Belfast Zoo to the Cave Hill Country Park and the Ligoniel Park and contribute to a long distance walking route across the Belfast Hills.

Initial costings had been obtained for the Black Mountain Path in 2012 (which had been £305k) but there was need to revisit that figure to obtain a more accurate costing to include also interpretation/signage costs. Likewise, costings would need to be undertaken for the Glencairn/Ligoniel route. It would be necessary for the Council to negotiate access with each landowner and, in the case of Black Mountain, the Legal Services Section had indicated that a Public Path Creation Agreement would be the most suitable arrangement which would exist in perpetuity. That would entail the Council assuming responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the path and being required to indemnify the landowner from public liability claims.

The Committee agreed to submit an initial funding application, Expression of Interest, to the Rural Tourism Scheme and to undertake further detailed proposals for both projects, including entering into discussion/negotiations with the landowners and to submit a further report on the updated position to the Committee in due course.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Treasury Management – Mid Year Report

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report presents the mid year treasury management position for the Council as at the end of Quarter 2, 2015/16.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the report.

3.0 Main report

Local Government Finance Act Northern Ireland) 2011

3.1 The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011, and the supporting Prudential and Treasury Codes introduced a new capital financing system and legislative framework within which the Council may manage its finances.

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- 3.2 The Council's Treasury Management Policy, developed in response to the new legislative framework, states that the Council will receive reports on its treasury management policies, practices and activities, including, as a minimum, an annual strategy, a mid-year review and an annual report after the close of the financial year**
- 3.3 This report represents the mid-year review as required by the policy and is structured to highlight key changes to the Council's capital activity and the actual and proposed treasury management activity.**

Prudential Indicators

- 3.3 The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and CIPFA's Prudential Code require the Council to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators (PIs). The key objective of which is to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.**
- 3.4 Capital Expenditure Prudential Indicator:**

	Original	Revised
Indicator	£'000	£'000
Estimates of Capital Expenditure 2015/16	61,859	52,353

The original estimate reflects the capital budgets that were approved by Council on 20 March 2015, whilst the revised estimate reflects the capital expenditure that is forecast to be spent by 31 March 2016. The decrease in the forecast for this year is mainly due to the re-profiling of the capital programme. As the overall total has not changed this does not affect the financing of the Council's total capital expenditure.

- 3.5 Other Prudential Indicators:**

	Original Estimate	Current Estimate
Indicator	£'000	£'000
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	92,634	72,743
Borrowing Within CFR	yes	yes

As can be seen above the CFR estimate has reduced. This is due to financing decisions made at the end of the previous financial year and the slippage in the current years capital programme. The Council is forecast to remain within the Authorised Borrowing Limit, and the CFR indicates that over the medium term borrowings will only be for a capital purpose.

Treasury Management

- 3.6 The Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy adopt the key principles of CIPFA's Code of Practice and take into account of the guidance issued by the Department of the Environment on Local Government Investments.**
- 3.7 Debt Activity: During the first half of 2015/16 the Council has taken advantage of internal borrowing, i.e. cash surpluses, to fund capital expenditure.**
- 3.8 In addition, loan principal repayments of £1,461,457.31 have been made during the same period.**
- 3.9 The level of external borrowings at 30 September 2015 is £26,148,998. Consisting of loans relating to the City Hall Works, Grove Wellbeing Centre and the Waste Transfer Station.**
- 3.10 Investment Strategy 2015/16: The primary objective of the Council's investment strategy is to safeguard the repayment of the principal and interest of its investments on time. Investment return is a secondary objective of the strategy.**
- 3.11 The current investment climate is one of overriding risk consideration, particularly that of counterparty risk. As a result, officers continue to implement an operational investment strategy which maintains investments short term with high quality counterparties.**
- 3.12 The Council has earned £123,835.85 in interest in the period from 1 April to 30 September 2015.**
- 3.13 During this period the Council has placed deposits with Bank of Scotland, Santander UK, HSBC and Barclays. All four institutions meet the council's approval criteria.**
- 3.14 The Council's limit for total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days is £2,000,000. As at**

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30 September 2015, the Council has not made any investments which are for periods longer than 364 days.

3.15 Other Treasury Management Indicators: Two other Treasury Management indicators were set at the start of the year as follows: -

- **Upper Limits for Fixed and Variable Rate Borrowing**
- **Limits on the Maturity of Fixed Rate Borrowing**

3.16 Officers can confirm that the limits set have not been breached and no changes to the current limits are required.

Finance and Resource Implications

3.17 All finance implications are detailed within the report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

3.18 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Contracts for Award

The Committee approved the public advertisement and delegated authority to the appropriate Director using pre-agreed criteria, to accept the most economically advantageous tenders, allow month-by-month extensions for contracts under review and approve the extensions of contracts as set out below. The Committee agreed also to accede to Standing Order 62 (a) Exceptions in Relation to Contracts by Direction of the Council acting on a recommendation of the Chief Officer that the exception was justified in special circumstances for the appointment of a contractor for the design and installation of a safety system for the Waterfront Auditorium:

Appendix 1 - Schedule of tenders for consideration

Table 1 - New tenders

Title of tender	Senior Responsible Officer	Proposed contract duration
Tender for implementation of an integrated HR/Payroll T&A and T&S System	Paul Gribben	5 years
Tender for procurement of SQL server	Paul Gribben	3 years

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Tender for commercial support for a programme of tenders	Gerry Millar	1 year with the option to renew on a month by month basis
Tender for concession catering contracts at the Malone House, Belfast Castle and the Zoo.	Rose Crozier	3 years
Facilities Management Agreement for Mary Peters Track	Rose Crozier	1 year plus 2
Mechanical services installation at Prince Regent Road Depot	Gerry Millar	16 weeks
Electrical services installation at Prince Regent Road Depot	Gerry Millar	16 weeks
Building works at Prince Regent Road Depot	Gerry Millar	16 weeks

Table 2 – Tenders justified by special circumstances

Title of tender	Senior Responsible Officer	Proposed contract duration
Tender for design and installation of a safety system for the Waterfront Auditorium	Donal Durkin	3 months

Table 3 - Tenders for extension of contract period on a month by month basis

Title of tender	Director Responsible
Tender for provision of arboricultural services	Rose Crozier
Tender for provision of young tree maintenance, tree planting and minor horticultural works	Rose Crozier
Tender for provision of franchise for Bobbin coffee shop at City Hall	Gerry Millar
Tender for the hire of a telescopic handler and scissor lift	Siobhan Toland

Table 4 - Existing contracts requiring extension of contract period

Title of tender	Senior Responsible Officer	Extension period
Tender for provision of a continental market at City Hall	Gerry Millar	Until 30 June 2016

Community Support Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members on the proposed expenditure options in relation to the offer of additional income of £275,280 against our DSD administered Community Support Programme grant.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree to accept the offer of additional DSD income of £275,280 as a variation to the existing Community Support Programme grant contract for 2015/16;
- Consider the proposals to utilise the potential additional allocation of CSP funds and prioritise these dependant on the total funds available;
- Agree that, where uptake within any of the proposed elements is under-utilised, officers can reallocate funding based on the committee agreed priorities in order to maximise the uptake of the additional CSP funding allocation.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Council has an annual grant contract with DSD under its regional Community Support Programme: the total value of the 2015/16 contract is £1.404 million.

3.2 The contract is conditional on our making a contribution to the CSP overall aim defined as:

‘To strengthen local communities, increase community participation and promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups, community activity and local advice services’.

A series of four outcomes, or impacts have been set for the CSP:

- i an active and organised community,
- ii an influential community,
- iii an informed community,
- iv a sustainable community,

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3.4 On 4 December we were informed that the Voluntary and Community Unit (DSD) has offered Belfast City Council an additional in-year allocation of £275,280 towards general revenue expenditure and subject to the same conditions of grant offer. It should be noted that this allocation is conditional on the additionality of any supported activity and full utilisation by 31 March 2016. There is no requirement on BCC to provide match funding. All of the additional grant allocation will be subject to the normal DSD monitoring and compliance requirements.

3.5 The limited timeframe attached to the additional funding will not allow for monies to be administered competitively so it is crucial to find a prompt but robust way in which to allocate the funds in support of projects and service providers for community benefit.

3.6 Given this requirement (to allocate and fully expend the additional monies within the current financial year), officers have identified a number of potential in-year funding opportunities. In doing so, we have considered the following;

- DSD Community Support Programme funding criteria and target outcomes**
- The opportunity presented to significantly contribute to the Council's and Service Priorities.**
- Priority needs related to current financial climate**
- Feasibility of proposals to support compliant assessment, committal and expenditure of funds by 31st March 2016**
- Efficiency considerations**

3.7 The proposed options for expenditure of the in-year allocation are:

i. Community Sector Support - Large Grant Uplift

Under the Community Support Plan, BCC currently provides 82 Revenue grants for Community Buildings and 29 Capacity Building grants to organisations across the city. The Revenue funding is used towards the running costs associated with operating a community building and the Capacity Building grant contributes to the core costs of larger, area based community development support agencies. Officers are aware, via the monitoring process, that funding awards do not currently meet full costs. There is also evidence that, within the current funding environment, a significant number of community organisations are struggling to meet these costs.

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Committee is asked to consider an in-year limited offer of additional funds to support programmes in community buildings or those of community development support organisations. The fund could be used to support any verified increase in core costs, for small scale building repairs and maintenance or for programme equipment.

If we are to meet the requirement to allocate and fully expend the additional monies within the current financial year, it is suggested that any agreed uptake of these funds be administered to those organisations currently in receipt of a revenue or capacity grant from BCC in 2015/16.

If agreeable, officers will invite organisations to submit proposals on how they propose to utilise the potential funding of up to £1,500 per organisation. After assessment and confirmation of available budget, recommendations for grant uplift would be presented for the Director's approval via delegated authority. Subject to approval, a letter of variation on existing contracts will be issued and, as per current arrangements, all successful groups will submit monitoring returns to report progress against targets.

If Members agree to the proposal as outlined above, the allocation would be approximately £166,500

ii. Resourcing Girdwood Community Engagement Programme

Committee will be aware that the Girdwood Community Hub Shared Space project will be launched in January 2016. The development is the first step in the wider regeneration of Girdwood Park, a 14 acre site located between Crumlin Road and Cliftonpark Avenue.

The Hub will include a gym and wellbeing area, youth space, multi-purpose rooms and an outdoor piazza with seating, as well as a range of other facilities.

The shared space programme has been developed in partnership with the Girdwood Hub Forum which is made up of over 20 groups from the surrounding area and other key stakeholders. Officers have worked with the Forum to develop plans for the Hub and other regeneration proposals for the wider site and this stakeholder involvement will support the vision of the hub as a safe and welcoming place for everyone.

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- The Forum has identified a range of additional equipment which would support the targeted usage of the facility by nearby community groups, as well as other organisations in north Belfast, including statutory bodies and charities. The equipment requested will specifically support the outline programme for the Youth Space and other Community Programming across the building. It is anticipated the total cost will be in the region of £44,780
- A range of activities to support community awareness has been ongoing including a community fun day and tea dances in the autumn and a soft launch programme in the building during December 2015. A week long programme of events, including a Good Relations conference, is planned for January 2016 with the official opening on the 15th. While officers are utilising all our current internal and external communication platforms to publicise the facility, the message could be further extended via a targeted publicity campaign, for example, using adshells, bannering on adjacent arterial routes, social media and Flicker. It is anticipated the likely cost would be up to £10,000
- Given the end spend date, the ability to utilise additional funds to support programming is limited however there is an opportunity to host a mini St Patrick's Day event which would be planned & delivered on a community engagement basis ensuring participation of all local communities: £5,000

iii. Super Connected Cities- Digital Hubs Programme

The Superconnected Communities pilot project set out to animate twelve IT hubs in community centres across the city agreed by the former Development Committee. An outreach (mobile) hub was also set up. The project outcomes are digital inclusion, literacy and skills development - generally engaging people in the community online and teaching them how to surf, email and also learn skills to support their work ambitions. There has been significant progress with all 12 hubs up and running along with 2 further hubs in the new council areas: Sally Gardens and Tullycarnett. We have also expanded the outreach service to meet the needs of all 31 centres and the wider community such as Folds and other community buildings with the delivery of Belfast WIFI. The co-ordination of the project is key and has brought in a vast array of new partners to offer free training or avail of our contacts in the community. This has resulted in 426 new on

liners engaged since November 2014 (9 months) in a significantly short period.

Community Services officers support the project through a working group made up of community development staff who promote the programmes in and around their centres and support delivery and secure small levels of programme investment both internally (eg Age Friendly Belfast) and externally (eg DFP through Go Online; DEL; NI Screen and the US Consulate).

In order to extend the programme offer in support of our core outcomes, we recommend utilisation of £12,000 to support a Digi Programme consisting of courses and classes for new onliners, mature onliners and progression classes for those that want to know more. This allocation will also support a *train the trainer* programme for volunteer champions in order to extend and sustain current programming.

iv. Youth Forum

As one of their current programme priorities, the Belfast Youth Forum is committed to a Shared Space campaign. Youth Forum members have already completed initial research via a survey of young people attending our summer events and interviewing young city centre users during Autumn of this year. The next phase would include a POP UP Youth space which is the mobile youth space / bus owned by T13. This would be operated over 6 weekends during February and March 2016 to engage young people on what any future permanent 'youth shared space' should offer. The total cost of this engagement programme is anticipated as £11,000 including bus hire and development session support and related promotional activity.

v. Play Development Programming

In line with the recently agreed Children and Young People outcomes framework, our Play Development team will work with at least 12 children to design and deliver a competition. The project will build skills through the use of animation techniques in order to translate our new CYP *character images* into an engagement programme. The programme will be ready for launch on 1 April and will encourage all children over the summer to create a new *character*. The total cost is anticipated as £10,000 including skills development training, software, junk art materials and promotion.

vi. Advice Tribunal Service

In August 2013, Council announced two-year funding totalling £430,000 for a Citywide Tribunal Representation Service to help claimants who wish to appeal SSA decisions on benefits including Employment Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independent Payment, Universal Credit and any other SSA benefit. This service enables clients to challenge decisions, assisting them through the process and representing them at hearings.

DSD income of £54,000 allowed for a further extension of 3 months and Council has since agreed additional investment of £175,000. The programme is now due to end in June 2016. In order to capture the impact of the programme to date and to make recommendations to inform any future support, committee is asked to agree that officers commission external expertise to complete an independent evaluation (£10,000). The recommendation from the report will be tabled with committee.

vii. Equipment to support incoming Community Centres

Under service convergence, Council now supports a number of additional community centres either via direct or independent management. Officers have identified a need for a small level of additional service equipment to ensure compliant management. The total budget required will be £6,000.

- 3.8 Officers believe the proposals outlined above represent a balanced opportunity to allocate the additional CSP funds given the associated conditions.

Category	Allocation
Large Grant Uplift	£166,500
Resourcing Girdwood Community Engagement Programme	£59,780
Super Connected Belfast: Digital Hubs Programme	£12,000
Youth Forum	£11,000
Play Development Programme	£10,000
Advice Tribunal Service evaluation	£10,000
Equipment to support new CC compliant management	£6,000
Total	£275,280

- 3.9 Given the conditions of offer and the challenge to ensure full spend before 31st March 2016, it is recommended that where

uptake within any of the proposed elements is under-utilised, officers are given delegated authority to reallocate funding based on the committee agreed priorities. This will allow BCC to maximise the uptake of the additional offer of in-year income.

3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

The additional DSD allocation will cover all grant or associated project costs. Related assessment and administration resource requirements will be subsumed into current staff work programmes. There is no requirement for match funding from BCC.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or Good Relations implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 14th December and adopted the recommendations in relation to the following:

Holocaust Memorial Day

The recommendation of the Partnership for the Committee to approve the hosting of an event in the City Hall to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

Update on Refugee Resettlement

To approve a request from the EMBRACE Organisation for the use of the Reception Room, City Hall to host an event on 28th January, 2016 to support the integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers and approve the expenditure of £200 for refreshments.

Minutes of Meeting of Diversity Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Diversity Working Group of 18th December and adopted the recommendations in relation to the following:

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Belfast Blitz Commemorations

- (1) that Council officers meet with the NI War Memorial representatives to discuss the possibility of them funding a permanent Blitz Memorial in the grounds of the Belfast City Hall; and
- (2) to the purchase of and to give copies of “the Belfast Blitz; the City in the War Years” to each secondary school in Belfast at a cost of approximately £700.

Request to Present, Foras na Gaeilge

That the Committee consider a request, which had been received from Foras na Gaeilge, to present to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee regarding the guidelines that they had produced to support councils when addressing issues relating to the Irish Language and to inform them on issues associated with the context of the formation of the new Council and that the Committee should also consider inviting the Ulster Scots Agency to present as part of the discussion.

The Committee agreed to receive the presentation at a future meeting and agreed also to accede to a further request from Conradh na Gaeilge to present at the same meeting.

Operational Issues

Employee Relations Policies Review

The Director of Organisational Development submitted for the Committees consideration the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the council has a number of human resources (HR) policies and procedures in place to ensure consistency, fairness, legal compliance and best practice in the management of the council’s workforce. The policies and procedures are subject to regular review and consultation with the council’s trade union group, through its Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee (JNCC).**
- 1.2 Management and trade unions work hard to reach agreement on the content and application of all HR policies and procedures before they are communicated and implemented, and in the vast majority of cases agreement is reached.**
- 1.3 Discussions have been ongoing with trade unions for some time on updating the organisation’s key HR policies and procedures, i.e. the Attendance Management Policy and Guidance, the Disciplinary Procedure, the Grievance**

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Procedure and the Guidelines for Dealing with Complaints of Unfair Treatment.

- 1.4** A review of these policies was undertaken to ensure they are in line with best practice and meet business needs. Many of the changes proposed as a result of the review relate to improving implementation and application and the need to streamline employee relations processes rather than material changes to the policy.
- 1.5** The vast majority of these changes have been agreed with the council's TUs with the exception of some revisions to the Attendance Management Guidance and the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 2.0** Recommendations
- 2.1** The committee is requested to agree the revised Attendance Management Policy and Guidance and Disciplinary Procedure, in full, incorporating management proposals on those areas where agreement has not been reached with the Council's trade unions.
- 2.2** The committee is also requested to agree the revised Grievance Procedure incorporating the guidelines for dealing with complaints of unfair treatment, as agreed with the trade unions.
- 3.0** Main Report
- 3.1** It is management's view that the policies set out at appendices one (revised Attendance Policy and Guidance), two (revised Disciplinary Procedure) and three (revised Grievance Procedure) are legally compliant, and represent best practice policy solutions for the organisation in relation to attendance management and disciplinary and grievance matters.
- 3.2** Revisions to the policies mainly relate to improving implementation and application and the need to streamline employee relations processes rather than significant policy change.
- 3.3** The vast majority of these changes have been agreed with the council's trade unions with the exception of matters relating to the issuing of letters calling staff to absence management meetings; the manner in which an employee's absence history should be considered; and the timeframe for disciplinary warnings

- 3.4 Specifically the areas of disagreement are as follows:**

Attendance Management Booklet

- 3.5 Firstly, management has proposed that letters requesting staff to attend absence management meetings should be issued on a proactive basis, in advance of an absence trigger point being reached to ensure that employees are not over the trigger point before action is taken. Trade union side, however, believes that these letters should only be issued once the trigger point has been reached.**

- 3.6 Secondly, management believes it is reasonable to consider an employee's entire absence history (if necessary) to monitor for patterns and trends and to assess how much discretion has been used in the past. Trade union side believes that a three year absence history only should be used.**

Disciplinary Procedure

- 3.7 In relation to the Disciplinary Procedure trade union side has proposed that the duration of the disciplinary process should be taken into account in the setting of the effective date for any warning. Management believes, however, that any warning or sanction can only be effective after a disciplinary hearing has taken place to consider the allegations against an employee, and a determination reached. Management therefore believes that this should not change.**

- 3.8 Further, trade union side has proposed that all minutes should be released to the employee within 10 days of an interview or hearing taking place. Management side believes that this may not be possible administratively; that it may not be appropriate in certain cases; and that it may not be necessary to release minutes unless they have been requested. Management side has therefore suggested, that minutes will be released to the employee who was the subject of a meeting or hearing, where they request them, and that, where possible, they will be released within 10 days of the meeting.**

- 3.9 All other revisions to these documents and to the Grievance Procedure have been agreed between management and trade unions, as well as the incorporation of the Unfair Treatment guidelines into the Grievance Procedure. Members are asked to agree these revised policies and guidance in full, including management proposals on those areas where agreement has not been reached with trade union side.**

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3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

None

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications

These revisions have been screened out.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that full copies of the policies were available on the Council’s website.

Minutes of the Meeting of Budget and Transformation Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 10th December.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Audit and Risk Panel of 19th November and 7th December.

Request for the use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality

The Committee approved the undernoted requests for the use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality:

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Political Studies Association of Ireland	Annual Conference 2016 Dinner 8th October, 2016 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the Congress will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council’s Key Theme of ‘City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together’.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £500
Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	What a Difference One Community Can Make 22nd January, 2016 Approximately 70 attending	The use of the City Hall	This event will showcase the positive impact of the work of organisations in the Crumlin/ Ardoyne area to making a safer and	The use of the City Hall

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			<p>healthier community while displaying how working together will bring the communities together.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'.</p>	
Digital DNA/Sentinus NI	<p>Digital Futures Showcase and Graduate Careers Fair</p> <p>5th and 6th December, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 700 attending over the two days</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits on day one</p>	<p>This event will provide the opportunity to inspire young people to have a stronger understanding of consumer and business needs before applying technology to provide a delivery solution. In previous years this event has catered solely for 13-16 year olds and this year it will evolve to include participants from the 16-19 years range therefore the event will be spread over two days.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together', 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better support for people and communities' and in addition would contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits on day one</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>
Girlguiding Belfast	<p>Belfast County Girlguiding Awards Ceremony</p> <p>23rd May, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 250 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p>	<p>This event seeks to recognise the achievements of Guides and their Leaders. Awards being presented include Queen's Guide, Duke of Edinburgh, Baden Powell Award for Guides and Long Service Awards for</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p> <p>Approximate cost £625</p>

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			<p>Leaders.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better opportunities for success' and in addition would contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.</p>	
<p>Michaela Foundation</p>	<p>Volunteer Recognition Event</p> <p>17th February, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 120 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p>	<p>This event will celebrate the work of the Foundation volunteers in providing camps for young girls which allow them to participate in carefully planned activities.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better opportunities for success' and in addition would contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p> <p>Approximate cost £300</p>
<p>Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Volunteer Services</p>	<p>Belfast Trust Volunteer Awards</p> <p>3rd June, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 100 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall</p>	<p>The Belfast Trust has approximately 300 volunteers who support existing services in a variety of roles.</p> <p>This event seeks to recognise the contribution made by the volunteers in supporting service delivery in both acute and community settings.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together', 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall</p>

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Belfast Pride	<p>Launch of Pride 2016 and Awards Presentation</p> <p>23rd July, 2015</p> <p>Approximately 300 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception</p>	<p>This event will be the first official event of 2016 Belfast Pride Festival. The Festival will promote awareness of the arts, cultural heritage, history and experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered communities in Belfast and advance equality by offering a diverse and inclusive Festival open to all citizens of Belfast.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>
Youth Initiatives Northern Ireland	<p>Youth Initiatives 25th Anniversary Partner Breakfast</p> <p>3rd March, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 70 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p>	<p>This event will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Youth Initiatives. It will highlight the work undertaken by the organisation and their continued contribution to youth provision and community relations work in areas of social deprivation .</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities' and in addition would contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p> <p>Approximate cost £175</p>
Provincial Grand Lodge of County Antrim	<p>150th Anniversary of the Provincial Grand Lodge</p> <p>26th May, 2018</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-</p>	<p>This event will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the formation of the Provincial Grand Lodge and acknowledge its</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of wine and</p>

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	Approximately 400 attending	dinner drinks reception	<p>contribution to the general life and well-being of the city through its charitable work and donations.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.</p>	<p>soft drinks</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>
Barnardos	<p>PATHS Plus Celebration Event</p> <p>6th June, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 120 attending</p>	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits	<p>This event will celebrate the positive impact the programme has had on both schoolchildren and teachers over the last three years. The programme provides the opportunity to support children in the development of pro-social skills while encouraging professional development for teachers, principals and assistants.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better opportunities for success' and in addition would contribute to the Council's thematic area of Children and Young People.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p> <p>Approximate cost £300</p>
Organisation of Malayalis in Northern Ireland	<p>'Ponnonam 2015' Celebration Event</p> <p>23rd August, 2015</p> <p>Approximately 500 attending</p>	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits	<p>Ponnonam 2015 is the celebration of the various cultures within the Indian community for people from the state of Kerala.</p> <p>This programme consists of a series of events which include children's entertainment activities, a special vegetarian lunch and a stage programme showing the talent of the community through</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p> <p>Approximate cost £1,250</p>

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			<p>song and dance.</p> <p>The aim of the event is to promote cultural diversity and also to forge closer relationships between the Indian community and the citizens of Belfast.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's key themes 'City Leadership - strong, fair, together' and of 'Better support for people and communities'.</p>	
National Police Memorial Day	<p>National Police Memorial Day Reception</p> <p>22nd September, 2018</p> <p>Approximately 500 attending</p>	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	<p>This event is held once a year, rotating in a four yearly basis. This event will seek to remember Police Officers who have been killed or died in duty, demonstrate to relatives, friends and colleagues that their sacrifice is not forgotten and recognise the dedication and courage displayed by officers.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>

Energy Transition – Notice of Motion Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The following Notice of Motion was considered by Council on 2 November 2015:

At the meeting of the Council on 2nd November, it was proposed by Councillor R. Browne and seconded by Councillor Heading, that:

“This Council:

- *recognises the serious challenges presented by climate change but also the significant economic benefits which are created through the development of an energy efficient economy;*
- *believes that the council must take a lead in planning for an energy transition and for energy transition to be a central aspect of the Belfast*
- *agrees to become fossil fuel free by 2050 and to set an interim target date for the city to become carbon neutral; and*
- *agrees to implement an energy transition action plan which includes a timeline of actions to be taken and policies to be implemented by the council to support renewable energy”*

1.2 Committee on 20 November 2015 asked for a report that might determine potential action in relation to the Notice.

1.3 In terms of actions proposed under the Notice of Motion –

- 1) The Council has recognised the challenges of climate change and the fact that economic benefits are created through an energy efficient economy and has taken considerable action as outlined below.
- 2) At present the Council does not have resources to implement all the aspects of this Notice of Motion. The Committee would need to agree to re-prioritise and re-align resources from elsewhere to enable this to happen. However it is recommended that a feasibility study should be carried out first to give the Committee a clearer understanding of what would be required.

2.0 **Decisions required & Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is recommended to:-

- Agree to a feasibility study on development and delivery of a City Energy Strategy, including resource implications, by Autumn 2016, in time for the next budget round. This will include a review of any external funding available.
- Note and endorse the current approach to the management of energy and CO₂ pending the development of any energy strategy.

3.0 **Main report**

Key Issues – Actions to Date

- 3.1** Members will be aware that for a number of years the council has sought to implement a pragmatic, business-oriented approach to the related issues of securing efficiencies and cost reductions in relation to energy consumption and management on the one hand and the management of CO₂ emissions on the other. This approach has consciously sought to identify and action schemes and policies which minimise capital outlay and maximise revenue savings, while also offering some tangible element of CO₂ emissions reduction.
- 3.2** This approach has proven to be robust and beneficial to the organization and to its rate-payers and indeed to the environment, as the following summary of recent projects illustrates:-
- Ozone Tennis Centre – LED court lighting. Annual estimated revenue saving of £15,000 together with an estimated 62 Tonnes of CO₂ emissions avoided;
 - Templemore Baths – New boiler upgrades. Annual estimated revenue saving of £55,000 together with 275 Tonnes of CO₂ emissions avoided;
 - Boiler replacements (e.g. Ballysillan, Whiterock and Avoniel). Annual estimated revenue saving of £18,000 together with 83 Tonnes of CO₂ emissions avoided;
 - LED floodlighting system at City Hall. Annual revenue savings of £12,500 together with an overall reduction of 70% in energy consumption and consequent CO₂ emissions.
- 3.3** Other projects successfully completed include the following:-
- Insulation Upgrades – Cavity wall insulation improvements carried out to a number of community centres and leisure centres.
 - Lighting upgrades – LED re-lamping at Belfast castle and Malone house. LED refurbishment at Cecil Ward Building.
 - Combined Heat and Power Units (CHP's) – Installed in all leisure centres and the Waterfront Hall using grant funding from DFPNI. Due for replacement in 2016 using an ESCO contract.
 - North Foreshore – Electricity generation using recovered methane.

- **Boiler upgrades – Boilers replaced at various sites based on condition survey reports. Oldest and least efficient boilers take priority.**
- **BEMS controls - 42 of the council's civic, community and leisure sites have their internal environments controlled centrally via a building energy management system.**
- **Belfast Bike Share Scheme – could also potentially contribute in a limited way to CO₂ reduction if fewer car journeys are made although this is difficult to quantify**
- **Girdwood – Utilisation of an earth heat source instead of a traditional heating system**

3.4 It can be seen from the above that the various actions and projects have had a number of financial and environmental benefits. Substantial cost savings in excess of £100,000 per annum have been achieved thus far, and this has been further enhanced by the council's decision to enter into a managed energy contract with an external provider (Schneider Ltd) which has resulted in an additional saving in excess of £80,000 from the procurement of energy for the year 2014/15.

3.5 In terms of CO₂ emissions, members will be aware that in 2008 the UK Government introduced the UK Climate Change Act which set into law national targets for the reduction of CO₂ emissions. The end goal is to reduce CO₂ output from 1990 levels by 80% by 2050. As an interim target the Northern Ireland Executive has set its own target of 35% reduction by 2025.

3.6 In July 2015 the energy management team commissioned the Carbon Trust to carry out an independent, external analysis of BCC energy consumption data collected since 1992 for comparison with the current 2014/15 levels.

3.7 The results of this analysis show that, since 1992, the council's CO₂ emissions have reduced by 39%, thereby already exceeding the full NI Executive 2025 target and also the national target on a pro rata basis. This has been achieved through energy efficiency projects of the type highlighted above, better consumption management, fuel switching (oil to natural gas) and de-carbonisation of the electricity network (although it should be noted that while the council continues to source 'green' electricity the government has removed the climate-change levy (CCL) exemption for this meaning that there is now no financial benefit in doing so).

- 3.8 Most recently, the council was joint winner (together with QUB) of the Sustainable Ireland Energy Efficiency Award 2015 on the basis of much of the above.
- 3.9 Hopefully all of the above illustrates that the council is actively and successfully managing its energy and CO₂ responsibilities so far as possible with the resources available. The pragmatic, business-oriented approach to these matters has produced significant financial and environmental benefits to date and it may be appropriate to continue with the current approach at least until a comprehensive energy strategy has been produced (see below).

Resources

- 3.10 Going forward, it must be pointed out that for many years funding for most BCC energy projects was provided externally in the form of fully or part-funded grants. Most notable is the £1,025,134 obtained from the DFPNI's Central Energy Efficiency Fund (CEEF). Unfortunately, however, these funding streams have now largely disappeared, thus forcing many organisations including BCC to find alternative means of funding energy projects. The reality for the council is therefore that the level of funding required to make a meaningful contribution to the reduction of consumption and CO₂ needs to be found internally. In the past few years this funding has been delivered solely via the planned maintenance budget, which offers only very limited scope.
- 3.11 Without a dedicated energy budget for projects there is no guarantee of funding from year to year, and more innovative and integrated solutions will therefore need to be explored in the future. The achievements set out above are notable, but it should be noted that these have been accomplished despite the absence of an over-arching council energy strategy or funding. Projects with short to medium-term paybacks have been and should continue to be carried out, but it should also be noted that these types of projects are getting harder to identify and indeed harder to finance.

Future Options

- 3.12 To continue to make energy and carbon improvements the focus of future projects will inevitably mean a need to shift emphasis largely to renewables. However there would clearly be issues in adopting a totally CO₂-centric approach in this regard, as renewables tend to have high initial capital costs and very long payback periods etc. If the current, business-oriented approach were to be changed to one in which we solely prioritise reducing CO₂ emissions there is no clear correlation that doing so will in turn reduce consumption or costs, e.g. the replacement of existing gas fired boilers (which are low CO₂, clean, efficient, and low maintenance) with biomass boilers will certainly result in a further CO₂ reduction (as biomass is deemed to be carbon neutral) however the initial capital outlay is significantly higher, the fuel cost is not significantly cheaper than gas and in some cases can be more, there are limited fuel sources available locally and the maintenance costs are significant.
- 3.13 Renewable technologies are certainly not an automatic no-cost or low-cost option, and this must obviously be borne in mind. Funding for these high capital cost schemes is also an issue which must be addressed as part of any strategy.
- 3.14 From a strategic point of view there is a real and growing need for the council to implement an Energy Strategy with accompanying action plan which will map out the route to compliance with the 80% reduction target and beyond.
- 3.15 Such a strategy should not only seek to address BCC issues around energy and CO₂ management but should also provide a platform and be a catalyst for a city-wide approach to these issues, which would be very much in line with the Belfast Agenda.
- 3.16 For example, it is notable that, despite the demonstrable progress made by BCC as set out herein, the city itself is not moving in the same direction, or at least not at the same speed. A recent study produced by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors



(RICS) has found that Belfast ranks last in terms of the top 20 UK cities studied in terms of CO2 emissions per capita. As can be seen opposite, Belfast is the worst-performing city in the UK while Northern Ireland is the worst-performing region, so clearly there is scope for improvement. In fairness, it should be noted that a significant proportion of these emissions are in fact from domestic sources and that adjusting for this moves Belfast to a middle-low ranking but the situation is still clearly a difficult one and illustrates the opportunity for Belfast not only to develop its own internal strategy but to provide leadership and direction to the city as a whole in the medium term.

3.17 Opportunities do exist, including incentives to public and private sector organisations in order to meet government targets. For example, Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs) are available for Wind, Landfill Gas & Solar Panels. Some existing BCC examples of this are the ROCs paid to council for electricity generation from Landfill Gas produced at North Foreshore and for example the solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the new Girdwood Hub which will be entitled to ROC payments. Other opportunities also exist, for example:-

- nearly-zero Carbon Buildings (public sector need to be building exemplar buildings by 2018, and private sector by 2020)
- deep building retrofit (bringing about 60% reduction in energy consumption)
- Smart Cities and communities initiatives
- developing innovative finance vehicles for energy efficiency and renewable energy schemes.

3.18 Hopefully all of the above demonstrates that (a) BCC has made excellent progress in terms of both energy and CO2 management to date on the basis of the pragmatic, business-oriented approach, but (b) that a more difficult period is on the horizon characterised by falling grant and financial support for energy/CO2 projects coupled with more stringent government targets for CO2 management in particular, and (c) that what is now needed is the development of a comprehensive energy strategy for the council and indeed the city to deal with the emerging issues in an innovative, coherent and integrated way.

3.19 Financial & Resource Implications

A feasibility study is likely to cost between £10,000 - £20,000, depending on the scope of the work. There will clearly be

implications should any revised policy or strategy be developed as a result.

3.20 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations

Attendance at Events

**National Association of Councillors –
National Executive Meetings**

The Committee was advised that it had eight Members on the National Association of Councillors – Northern Ireland Region. Two Members, namely Councillor Jones and Sandford, had been appointed to represent the Northern Ireland Region on the National Association which would require attendance at a number of National Executive Meetings in Waterloo, London during the year. The next four meetings were scheduled to be held on 18th January, 9th May, 12th September and 26th November 2016.

The Committee approved the attendance of Councillor Jones and Sandford at the meetings of the National Executive of the National Association of Councillors and authorised the payment of the appropriate travel, costs and subsistence associated therewith.

Chairperson