



Belfast
City Council

Protocol for the City Development Forum

v2.0 April 2017

Protocol for the City Development Forum

1. Background

The Belfast Agenda, which sets out the Council's aspirations for the next 20 years, has a number of key objectives related to City Development. This includes specific regeneration targets, such as the development of 1.5m sq foot of Grade A Offices and 2,500 hotel spaces by 2021; as well as broader strategic targets, including the aspiration to create 50,000 jobs, to grow the population by 70,000, and to improve sustainable transport by 15%.

All of these issues require a step change in how we consider and progress our regeneration agenda.

2. Purpose

The City Development Forum is an internal Council meeting that provides a mechanism to progress the Belfast Agenda:

The Forum has two key functions:

- i. To consider, at an early opportunity, proposals for major or strategically important development in the city (see criteria below)
- ii. To provide a forum to discuss related strategic issues, including community engagement; job creation; education & skills; housing; transport; infrastructure; and investment.

The Forum is intended to:

- align proposed physical and strategic developments with the vision of the Belfast Agenda;
- ensure greater certainty over the shape and impact of potential development at an early point in the process;
- consider wider strategic issues (referenced at ii above); how these shape the future needs of the city; and the impact that proposed development could have; and
- ensure the needs of all stakeholders, in particular the needs of the surrounding community, are identified and supported.

The Forum is not a decision making body nor does it form part of the planning application process.

3. Membership

Membership of the City Development Forum will include:

- The Chief Executive
- The Director of Planning and Place;
- The Director of City Centre Development;
- Party Leaders;

4. Role of the Chair

The meeting will be chaired by the Chief Executive or her nominee (this is likely to be either the Director of Planning and Place, or the Director of City Centre Development). The Chair will:

- determine the agenda for the meeting;
- invite attendees relevant to the agenda;
- guide the management of the meeting, including questions from Members.

The Chair will also guide the Forum in relation to potential issues which may arise in relation to conflicts of interest or the Code of Conduct.

5. Format of the Meeting

The Forum will consider the following categories of presentations:

- i. Proposals for private developments from external parties;
- ii. Proposals for public development by external parties or Council officers;
- iii. Thematic presentations on strategic issues relevant to development and regeneration.

It is recommended that no more than 2-3 presentations are tabled at each Forum. Presentations will follow the following format:

- 5 minute pre-brief from the Chair to highlight key issues (Council participants only)
- 15 min Presentation from developer or lead Council officer, followed by questions
- Discussion between members and officers (Council participants only)

6. Frequency

The Forum will meet on the first Friday of each month between 12 noon and 2pm. Meetings will not generally take place in July or August.

7. Criteria

(i) Development Proposals

The Forum will consider schemes which would be deemed major applications under planning legislation and/or are considered by officers to be strategically important. It will also consider minor schemes which are considered to be strategically important or any schemes where there is a significant level of community interest.

(ii) Strategic Issues

The Forum will consider related strategic issues that are relevant to major development applications and help shape the aspirations of the Belfast Agenda. This includes, but is not limited to, community engagement; job creation; education & skills; housing; transport; infrastructure; and investment.

8. Community Interest

Of particular importance to the agenda setting and strategic considerations of the Forum is how local stakeholders are included in development, and what benefits regeneration can bring to surrounding communities.

These issues will be informed by a specific community engagement action plan that will be developed and implemented by the City Centre Development Team.

9. Code of Conduct

Members of the Forum are entitled to ask questions from developers, but should not say or do anything that could give rise to allegations of bias or pre-determination. In particular, any members of the Forum who are on the Planning Committee should not organise separate meetings with developers or be party to conversations that would give rise to allegations of lobbying. Officers will feed back relevant comments to the developer/external party as appropriate.

The Cllr's Code of Conduct with regard to planning matters, which is relevant to the City Development Forum, is appended to this protocol.

Appendix A

Application of the Councillor's Code of Conduct with Regard to Planning Matters Summary of Do's and Don'ts

http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/news/dfi_planning_news/news_other/summary_of_dos_and_don_ts_planning_element_of_councillors_code_of_conduct.pdf