



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Shadow Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Forum For Alternative Belfast
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 28 November 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive

### 1. Purpose

Members are advised that Mark Hackett and Declan Hill from Forum for Alternative Belfast (FAB) have written to the council requesting the opportunity to make a presentation to the Shadow SP&R Committee with an accompanying one page proposal (see attached).

### 2. Background – About FAB

Forum for Alternative Belfast is a not-for-profit organization (Community Interest Company) that campaigns for a better and a more equitable built environment in Belfast. The Forum was formally launched on 4 June 2009 by a group of architects, planners and others who came together to explore alternative ways to develop the city.

As a campaigning group, the Forum's work is underpinned by three key principles. In its view:

1. the creative potential of planning, urban design and architecture had not been explored for post-conflict Belfast;
2. the approach to design and regeneration has to be more socially expansive than traditional architecture, urban design and spatial planning practices;
3. the Forum itself should be an action-orientated research group; in other words, a 'do-tank' that should go beyond lobbying and 'think-tanking' to demonstrate alternative ways of developing the city.

### 3. Recommendations

Members are asked to receive the FAB to present to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in January 2015.

### 4. Documents Attached

Letter dated 21 October 2014 from FAB

Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

21st Oct 2014

Dear Councillor Stalford, Chair of Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

In late August we asked the Chief Executive to raise at committee level the engagement of the Forum with council. We request an opportunity to make a very short presentation to the committee with an accompanying one page submitted proposal.

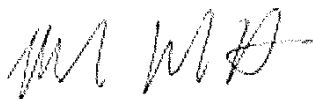
We list below some examples of our work positively incorporated into local authority thinking over the past four years. We also list five areas where we see the need for ongoing work by Forum to be continued until in-house skills are strengthened in the council under RPA.

In 2010 Esmée Fairbairn/ Henry Smith Charity approached and supported the forum and its work, this is reaching completion, to allow this work to continue we will submit a detailed project plan. We will highlight the time and cost saving value of our work, suggesting how it might be financed without additional burden on council budgets at this time.

We also ask if, over the next months we can explore and clarify with officers and committee, how the Forum, as a Community Interest Company, can play a role in the development of the community plan process leading to the preparation of the Local Development Plans by 2017.

The need for continued work by the Forum is clearly demonstrated in the recent meeting of BCC and DSD on the York Street Interchange, 2nd July 2014. BCC and DSD requested the Forum carry out a short report to submit to DRD.

yours faithfully



Mark Hackett, Declan Hill  
directors

#### FORUM WORK ADOPTED BY COUNCIL / OTHERS

- 1.0 **'The Six Links'** 2010: Adopted in Council Investment Programme 2012-2015,
- 2.0 **York Street Interchange** Dec. 2012; forum work acknowledged as influential in the preferred option. Input to the OGC procurement Gateway review and DRD have changed alignments in line with forum suggestions to enable more regeneration.
- 3.0 **'Streets not Roads'** 2012: The longstanding road threat through south Belfast was first negotiated as series of good streets, the approach was incorporated into the 'Draft City Masterplan'.
- 4.0 **'Coordinate and Connect'** 2012: established urgency for a local plan around the new University, actioned by BCC in May 2014
- 5.0 **Belfast City Council: Draft Masterplan 2013:** Forum work, 'Six Links' 2010 and 'Streets not Roads' 2012 was incorporated as the two spatial priorities. We proactively organised community engagement supported by 20 groups and partnerships.
- 6.0 **Belfast City Centre: Initial Directions: Urban Strategies Inc:** We provided the consultant with fully developed city schemes and detailed report. We walked Urban Strategies / Arups around the city illustrating disconnection issues. Four of the 'eight strategies' reflect Forum work, as are two of the four 'Places in the centre':

#### SUGGESTED AREAS OF SHORT TERM WORK NEEDED

- 1.0 **York Street Interchange:** Continued detailed discussions are needed with DRD over the next critical 6 months
- 2.0 **The Inner-city neighbourhoods:** Over the past eight months we have convened a group of city neighbourhoods who are sharing their common urban issues in the city. Continuation is needed to involve and built capacity of neighbourhoods in the Local Development plan process.
- 3.0 **Summerschool:** We want to continue this annual event and for 2015 suggest the theme. 'What is a good Local Development Plan?'
- 4.0 **Transport Hub:** we have had a series of meetings with Translink who want us to do an 'issues studio' with communities along with a report based on summer school process.
- 5.0 **Belfast City Centre plan:** We would like to work with Urban Strategies Inc to ensure a stronger neighbourhood engagement and review process.