

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 14th December, 2007

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor D. Dodds (Chairman);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Kirkpatrick); and
Councillors Adamson, D. Browne, M. Browne, W. Browne,
Convery, Crozier, Hanna, Hartley, Kirkpatrick, Lavery, Long,
A. Maskey, P. Maskey, Rodway and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Improvement;
Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services;
Mr. T. Salmon, Director of Corporate Services;
Mr. S. McCrory, Principal Committee Administrator; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Maginness and Newton.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 9th and 16th 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 3rd December, subject to the amendment of the minute of 16th November under the heading "Provision of Automated External Defibrillators" to provide that the pilot scheme be extended to include also the Council's Civic Headquarters, the Cecil Ward Building and the ISB offices.

Corporate Plan and Performance Management

Corporate Plan – Corporate Strategy 2008 and Beyond

The Members were reminded that the Committee's strategic planning session had taken place on 29th and 30th November. The purpose of the session had been to allow Members to continue to lead the development of the new Corporate Plan, the financial strategy and the programme of activity for 2008 and beyond. The session had built upon the Members' previous planning away days in August and had examined in greater detail the themes and issues which the Members had identified at that time as providing potential future focus for the organisation.

The discussions at the away days had been informed by the following:

- feedback from the results of the Council's consultation exercises;
- information regarding strategic financial issues, including the on-going development of the City Investment Strategy;
- analysis of key external strategic developments;
- organisational analysis; and
- analysis of data and evidence relating to the issues which had been identified by the Members.

The Chief Executive outlined the key points which had been made and the actions which had been agreed in relation to the consultation feedback, finance and communication. He pointed out that the Members had used information from the survey results and other external developments to revisit the objectives and priorities which had begun to emerge at the planning days which had been held in August and he reviewed the points which had been made in relation to strong leadership, economic growth and wealth creation, stronger, more shared communities and a cleaner, greener safer City.

The Members had agreed that more work would require to be undertaken with the Party Groupings in relation to further refining the objectives and in considering options for the future of the Council's assets and it was proposed that briefings would be held with each of the Party Groupings to move this forward. Within the guidance which had been provided by the Members in terms of strategic direction and affordability limits, officers would be required to work-up proposals for programmes of work to achieve the objectives set and submit these to Members for further discussion. The Chief Executive and the Director of Improvement would speak to the Party Groupings to agree the best approach to be taken with regard to the next planning session.

Noted.

Modernisation and Improvement

Review of Public Administration – Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report which provided an update in relation to the review of public administration:

“1.0 Relevant background information

- 1.1 Members will recall that on 19th October, the Environment Minister, Arlene Foster, M.L.A. released the Review of Public (RPA) Administration Emerging Findings Report on the future reform and shape of local government within Northern Ireland. The document outlined the proposed functions and resources to transfer under local government control and highlighted the variance from the original RPA proposals for local government reform.**

- 1.2 The Emerging Findings Report outlined the NI Executive's desire to secure a more integrated approach to public service delivery across Northern Ireland, with the proposed vision for local government being linked to the vision for the Northern Ireland public service as a whole.
- 1.3 In releasing the emerging findings report, the Minister indicated that the proposals contained therein '*mark the beginning and not the end of a process of reform and modernisation for local government*'.
- 2.0 Key issues
- 2.1 Members will accept that we are rapidly approaching a critical stage in the RPA process and in defining the future shape and role of local government within Northern Ireland. Key decisions will be taken over the coming weeks with regard to the exact nature of the functions (and the resources that support them) which will be transferred from central government to local government. It is essential that there is a common understanding within both central government and the NI Executive of the need for an adequate cluster of functions to be devolved to local government to enable Councils to fulfill their crucial role as a place shaper, enabler and co-ordinator of the delivery of joined-up local public services.
- 2.2 Belfast City Council's response to the RPA Emerging Findings Report
- 2.2.1 At a special meeting of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 9th November, Members voiced their concern and strong disappointment in respect to the proposed package of functions and resources outlined within the Emerging Findings which would transfer to local government. It was noted that the current proposals, if carried forward into the implementation of the RPA, would represent a missed opportunity to really make a difference in the way that Northern Ireland is governed and would deliver a substantially 'watered down' version of the 'strong local government' which the original RPA proposals had set out to achieve. The Council also made the point that sufficient funding and resources would have to accompany any transferring functions.

2.2.2 Accordingly, the Council, at its meeting on the 3rd December 2007, endorsed a response to the Emerging Findings Report, together with a supplementary paper prepared by Mr Colin Stutt entitled 'Beyond the Emerging Findings Report - Implementation Paper' which contains proposals on both the transfer of specific functions to local government and on how the RPA debate could be taken forward. Both papers have been submitted to the Department of Environment's RPA Review Team.

2.3 Ministerial Meetings

2.3.1 Members will recall that on 15th November 2007, an All-Party Deputation from Belfast City Council had met with the Minister, Arlene Foster, M.L.A., to discuss the Emerging Findings Report and to bring to the Minister's attention those issues of concern.

2.3.2 The Minister had indicated that a series of bilateral meetings had been scheduled with Ministerial colleagues to discuss the potential for the transfer of a greater package of functions and resources to local government and had noted that she would draw upon the points raised and response submitted by Belfast City Council during such bilateral meetings.

2.3.3 In addition, over recent weeks a joint deputation consisting of representatives from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) have met with Ministers of the NI Executive to discuss the concerns of the local government sector regarding the RPA Emerging Findings Report.

2.4 Review of Public Administration timeline

2.4.1 It is anticipated that the NI Executive's RPA sub-committee will discuss a revised draft RPA report on 17th December with a view to submitting a final report to the Executive during the 1st week of January, 2008. The NI Executive will announce its final decisions on the reform of local government to the Assembly and the public in late January, 2008.

2.5 NILGA RPA Update

2.5.1 NILGA has recently circulated an update briefing on the RPA and local government modernisation process (a copy of which had been circulated). The briefing provides an overview of the key issues discussed at recent meetings between NILGA and Michelle Gildernew MLA, Minister for Agriculture and rural Development; Arlene Foster MLA, Environment Minister and Rt Honourable Peter Robinson MLA, Minister for Finance and Personnel.

2.6 Framework to underpin decisions on the location of public sector jobs resulting from the Review of Public Administration

2.6.1 On 27th November, 2007, the Finance Minister, Rt Hon Peter Robinson M.P, M.L.A. published a '*Framework to underpin decisions on the location of public sector jobs resulting from the Review of Public Administration*'.

2.6.2 The framework consists of two key components:

- A set of five guiding principles (i.e., improving service delivery, achieving value for money, maximising social and economic benefits, taking account of staff interests, promoting equality and good relations); and
- A detailed methodology on how the principles should be applied.

2.6.3 The framework is relevant to those decisions on the location of public sector jobs resulting from the RPA and it replaces the DFP guidance on the 'Dispersal of Northern Ireland Civil Service Jobs' released in March 1999.

2.6.4 While compliance with the framework is not mandatory, decision makers are asked to consider the framework in the formulation of any future decisions in respect of the location of public sector jobs. It is suggested that the framework should provide a robust and transparent process and consistent approach to decision-making across the public sector.

2.6.5 Members will recall that the Council's Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 23rd March, 2007 endorsed a Council response to the initial 'Guiding Principles for the Location of Public Sector Jobs in Northern Ireland' consultation document released by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

- 2.6.6** The Framework document does not go against the Council's previous response; however, the issue will be how the framework is applied to determine the location or relocation of public sector jobs and the potential to lead to a greater decentralisation of public sector employment from Belfast.
- 2.6.7** The cumulative effect of the potential rationalisation of buildings in which public sector workers are located and the anticipated closure or relocation of public service headquarters brought about by the outworking of the RPA, will have a significant detrimental impact upon many market towns and cities across Northern Ireland. It is vital that there are satisfactory integration mechanisms built into the review process to ensure that any decisions being taken on the location of public sector jobs are evidenced based. Whilst the designation of employment locations will inevitably remain a territorial issue of contention between District Council areas who each seek to improve employment and economic opportunities for citizens, due consideration must be given to the strategic impact and sustainability of (re)location decisions for Northern Ireland plc.
- 2.6.8** The public sector has played a significant role over the last decade in supporting the revitalisation of Belfast and has directly assisted in alleviating the traditionally high levels of unemployment and income poverty experienced within the city. The sector remains one of the city's main employers.
- 2.6.9** The Framework document states that the public sector accounts for 31% of the total employment within Northern Ireland, with 60% (108,305 jobs) of public sector jobs located within the Belfast travel to work area. Therefore, it is apparent that any decentralisation of public sector jobs from Belfast will have an adverse impact upon the local economy and the citizens of the city.
- 2.6.10** Whilst the Council recognises the need to strengthen regional cohesion, all efforts should be taken to ensure that the strategic significance of Belfast, as both the primary engine for economic growth and regional gateway, as stated within the Regional Development Strategy 'Shaping Our Future 2025', is not compromised through future decisions on the location of public sector jobs. Accordingly, any decision(s) taken to decentralise public sector employment from the greater Belfast area must be viewed with caution.

3.0 Resource Implications

Financial and Human Resources

There are no financial or Human Resource implications contained within this report.

4.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.”

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Council Response to the Draft Programme for Government 2008-11, Budget 2008-11 and Investment Strategy 2008-2018

The Chief Executive advised that the Northern Ireland Executive had on 25th October launched for consultation the above-mentioned documents. He submitted for the information of the Members a summary of the documents and the proposed Council response, a copy of which was available on the Members' Portal. The response highlighted that:

- the Council welcomed the £223 million government commitment to invest in waste infrastructure over the next three years;
- the Council would welcome working with the Assembly and was well placed strategically and operationally to help deliver the Government's priorities;
- the overarching aim of the Programme for Government was to improve quality of life, which the Council would argue would be best addressed locally by Councils;
- the Council wished to reiterate its belief that the Review of Public Administration Emerging Findings represented a missed opportunity;
- there was concern at the lack of funding in the Department of Environment's budget for Local Government issues, in particular for the implementation of the Review of Public Administration and Modernisation;
- there was no mention of community planning nor a budget for it;
- there did not appear to be a sufficient budget in some Departments to meet the commitments made;
- documents were confusing with different cross-cutting themes and strategic priorities;

- there were few innovative policies or approaches;
- targets lacked detail and many were process driven with no baseline figures having been supplied;
- the “A Shared Future” document had not been mentioned; and
- £1 billion of the extra £4 billion contained in the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland was due to inflation.

The Committee approved the Council’s proposed response to the consultation document.

Democratic Services and Governance

Change of Dates of Meetings

The Committee was reminded that the Council was scheduled to meet on Wednesday, 2nd January, 2008. However, that date was still considered to be within the festive or holiday period and it had been suggested by a number of Members that it might be more appropriate to hold the meeting instead on Monday, 7th January. In order to keep clear the Committee Schedule for the first week in January, both the Parks and Leisure and Town Planning Committees had agreed to put back by one week their January meetings. It was hoped that by doing so any Members who had holidays booked over Christmas and New Year would not have to miss any meetings.

In addition, the March meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee was scheduled to be held on Friday, 21st March, which was also Good Friday. Again, because of the ensuing Easter Holiday period, it was considered appropriate to bring the meeting forward by one week to Friday, 14th March. This change could be accommodated without any adverse impact upon the other meetings scheduled.

The Committee approved the changes to the meetings schedule proposed for January and March, 2008.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association – Annual Conference and Exhibition

The Committee was advised that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association was holding its Annual Conference and Exhibition in the Millennium Forum, Londonderry on 7th and 8th February, 2008. The theme of the conference was “The Challenge of Change” and, since an announcement on the number, role and functions of Local Government in Northern Ireland was expected in January, the conference would provide delegates with an opportunity to reflect on those decisions and begin to prepare for the future. It would also present Members with an opportunity to explore and discuss, with other Elected Representatives, the measures which they would need to take in order to ensure that a proactive approach to the modernisation agenda was adopted. The cost per delegate attending the conference was £395.

The Committee agreed, since both the Council and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association had taken steps to ensure that the views of Belfast City Council were fully taken account of in relation to the changes arising from the Review of Public Administration, to authorise the attendance at the conference of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Council's representatives on the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, the Chief Executive and appropriate Council officers and to approve the payment of the appropriate subsistence and travel allowances in connection therewith.

Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland – Spring Seminar 2008

The Members were informed that the Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland was holding its Spring Seminar in Trim, County Meath on 15th and 16th February, 2008. The Seminar would examine a number of issues, including how Local Authorities could support the elderly. Given that the Council, through its All-Party Reference Group on Older People, was examining ways in which it could improve the integration and delivery of services to older people in the City, this was particularly relevant. The cost per delegate of attendance at the conference was approximately £505.

Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee authorise the attendance at the conference of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors, Northern Ireland Region, the Head of Committee and Members' Services (or their nominees) and a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council not represented by the aforementioned Members and approve the payment of the appropriate travelling and subsistence allowances in connection therewith.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Finance

Revenue Estimates 2008/09

The Committee agreed that a special meeting to consider the Revenue Estimates 2008/09 be held at 12.00 noon on Tuesday, 8th January, 2008. The Committee noted that each of the Standing Committees would then be required to consider the spending plans of their respective Departments following which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting scheduled for 25th January, would then be requested to approve the Estimates of Income and Expenditure 2008/2009 and agree the District Rate.

City Investment Strategy

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report in relation to the City Investment Strategy:

"Relevant Background Information"

Committee on 19 October agreed upon the general approach which had been outlined in regard to the City Investment Fund and tasked officers to bring back further reports regarding resourcing and governance of the fund. Furthermore the Committee agreed in principle to funding the Lyric Theatre and City Arts Centre subject to a number of caveats and further detailed negotiations. A formal decision is imminently required in regard to the Lyric Theatre and the issues surrounding this are addressed in a separate report.

The Committee has also further considered at its Awayday, 'Todays Actions, Tomorrows Legacy' on 29/30 November 2007, proposals regarding criteria for the City Investment Strategy as well as initial three year cash flow analysis regarding potential funding of £29m over a three year period.

Key Issues

Members have identified that Belfast is now at an important stage of development where a further step change in its fortunes is possible. The Council can help to facilitate and deliver these changes through its vision and leadership and ensuring things happen particularly through allocating a significant level of our resources via the City Investment Strategy.

The Belfast motto 'Pro Tanto Quid Retribuamus' (what shall we give in return for so much) is very much in tune with the current situation in the City with major private sector investment, such as Titanic Quarter, Sirocco in the offing, major new retail openings such as Victoria Square imminent with others in the pipeline, record visitor numbers and employment levels etc.

Real hands on civic leadership can now be applied to push Belfast over the tipping point to consolidate prosperity by focusing our resources on a limited number of key projects.

In order to focus we need to agree on clear criteria such as those discussed at the Awayday.

Overall the City Investment Funding needs to be used strategically with a view to securing the Council's overall objective of improving quality of life now and for future generations that ensure a positive return for the City. In that context Committee is asked to consider the following criteria.

Overall criteria:

1. Create a focal point for the Council to play a leading role in the development of the City; create a 'can do' attitude amongst its citizens; and create a sense of place and pride in the City.
2. Encourage investment from and engagement of public, private and voluntary sectors, in the achievement of that aim.
3. Contribute to the Council's corporate priorities and vision for the city.

The above criteria allow the Council both to take a lead role and to work in partnership with others to mutual and civic benefit, and invest in projects which are deliverable in the short to medium term.

Scheme specific criteria:

4. Promote the image of Belfast as a place to visit
5. Enable and/or promote the City as a place in which to do business
6. Bring financial or other economic returns to the City which help to build the City's rate base.
7. Promote Belfast as a City in which its citizens have pride and belief in a brighter future.
8. Enhance the City's strategic, social, cultural and environmental infrastructure.
9. Provide a lasting legacy for future generations

As noted further work is ongoing in regard to the governance and resourcing issue, however, if Committee is to now take a decision regarding the Lyric Theatre it is important to establish consistent criteria from the outset.

Resource Implication

As discussed at the Awayday the affordability of the City Investment Strategy is contingent upon maintaining the stability of the Council's financial position and our ability to deliver appropriate services to the citizen.

In terms of additional resourcing the following table sets out a conservative three year analysis by the Director of Corporate Services. The table indicates a position to finance a substantial City Investment Strategy without recourse to borrowing.

City Investment Strategy – Cash Flow Analysis					
Source of Funding	Year				Total
	2007	2008	2009	2010	
	£m	£m	£m	£Me mber	£m
Reserves	1.0				1.0
Boucher Road Receipt		1.5			1.5
Rental	1.0				1.0
1% Rate Increase		1.0	2.0	3.0	6.0
Capital Receipts		6.0	6.0	6.0	18.0
Efficiency Programme		0.5	0.5	0.5	1.5
Borrowing					0.0
Total	2.0	9.0	8.58	9.5	29.0

Decision Required

Members are asked to provide direction, on the future development of this approach, so that final decisions on priority projects, resourcing, asset ‘sweating’ and engagement with potential partners from other sectors can be considered as part of the ongoing corporate planning process that is due for finalisation by the end of the financial year.”

A Member pointed out that the Council needed to be proactive in identifying key issues to support and that the criteria to determine which schemes should be included in the Investment Strategy should be evidence-based and include the social, economic and environmental reasons as to why they were being undertaken. It was also suggested that the criteria should not be too restrictive but would require to be broad enough to allow the Council to respond positively to other developments taking place in the City. It should not restrict the Council to certain projects from which it could not deviate but be flexible enough to allow the Council to respond to initiatives from other sectors. The Strategy needed to provide also the impetus to enable the Council to undertake schemes which were key to the achievement of corporate objectives.

In response, the Chief Executive stated that the points which had been made by the Members would be taken on board during the discussions which would be held with the Party Groupings in order to identify the priorities for the City and the projects which might be taken forward.

After further discussion, the Committee approved the criteria in relation to the City Investment Strategy and noted that additional reports would be submitted in due course in relation to the financial strategy and the prioritisation of schemes.

Cultural Legacy Pillar

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Culture Legacy Pillar:

“Relevant Background Information

The issue of lack of cultural infrastructure in Belfast has been a concern for Belfast City Council for nearly 20 years. The Council’s own contribution to that infrastructure – the Waterfront Hall created new standards in what was needed for the City. The success of the Waterfront Hall raised further debate in Council and resulted in the commissioning of 2 major reports – a review of performing arts venues and one of visual arts promotion in the City.

The review of performing arts known as the Southwood Review was jointly commissioned by Belfast City Council and the Arts Council N.I. The report was endorsed by Council in February 1998; its recommendations were agreed by both councils.

The 8 recommendations were:

- That Belfast City Council and the Arts Council establish formal mechanisms to ensure a strategic approach in the support of the arts product in the City.
- That Belfast City Council (BCC) and the Arts Council (ACNI) facilitate formally constituted, regular meetings of a liaison group consisting of representatives of the City’s principal venues and promoters.
- That the Ulster Hall and the Group Theatre are totally refurbished.
- That a major, city centre arts centre for Belfast is developed, either through the amalgamation of the Crescent Arts Centre and the Old Museum Arts Centre (OMAL), or by another means.
- That the Arts Theatre is funded as a receiving house until such times as plans to develop a middle-scale performance pace by other organisations are able to be fully appraised.
- That the Lyric Theatre upgrade the facilities for audiences and performers.
- That Belfast City Council and the Arts Council revisit the concept of a city-wide arts marketing service.
- That the proposal to establish a Mobile Theatre Unit be support, subject
- to the outcome of the economic appraisal.

BCC and ACNI were keen to move forward with these proposals and the next years were to see major changes in the cultural sector in Belfast.

The establishment of a Department for Cultural Arts and Leisure, with a Minister, added weight to arguments about the role of culture in regeneration. The Council in 2000 initiated and backed a bid for Belfast to become European City of Culture, which also further galvanised the debate. In this period also, Laganside become responsible for the area now known as Cathedral Quarter and designated this as a cultural area.

As a direct result of Southwood, the Council took a number of actions. In relation to performing arts venues the Arts Sub-Committee included the refurbishment of the Ulster Hall, a major city centre arts venue and the upgrade of the Lyric in its 1998-2001 Arts Strategy agreed in February 1998. A Southwood Group was established between BCC and ACNI with both officers and Members participating, which met from 1998 to 2002. An arts venue promoters group was also established. BCC also commissioned an economic appraisal by BDO Stoy Hayward into the development of a city centre arts centre in Belfast – its conclusion endorsed by the Arts Sub-Committee in April 1999 was that the preferred option was to site it at Talbot Street (Laganside to provide space) and to have it managed by an amalgamation of the Crescent Arts Centre and the Old Museum Arts Centre, or some other arrangement.

In addition, the Client Services Committee agreed in principle in November 1999 to the refurbishment of the Ulster Hall. Alongside this process the Grand Opera House was also seeking refurbishment. What was essentially lacking from the process though was major resourcing to undertake in particular the physical infrastructure projects outlined in Southwood. Both ACNI and BCC lacked large capital resources to support these. The failure of the Capital of Culture Bid in 2004 underlined the need to address this issue, as lack of cultural infrastructure was cited as a main reason for the failure. As a result, DCAL worked to establish capital funding for new infrastructure and published its own position paper in November 2005 in which it included the Lyric, the Grand Opera House, the Ulster Hall, OMAC/City Centre Arts Venue, Crescent Arts Centre as well as the Black Box, as strategic projects. Since then they have worked with ACNI, DSD and ourselves to bring these projects to fruition.

Moving forward in relation to performing arts infrastructure as outlined by Southwood – the Ulster Hall is now being refurbished; the Lyric is poised to move forward and the City Centre arts venue is to be completed by OMAC, both supported by DCAL and ACNI. In addition, the Grand Opera House recently completed its refurbishment and the Crescent Arts Centre is in the final planning stage to go forward.

In this context, BCC considered again its commitment to providing support to cultural infrastructure. Under its Integrated Cultural Strategy launched in June 2007, the Council committed itself to the development of creative and cultural means to promote physical regeneration in the City and support sustainable development of cultural venues in the City.

At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in October 2007, it was agreed to create a Cultural Legacy Fund of up to £3m for the City as part of a larger City Investment Fund. Key elements in investing in the City are the desire to designate and fund strategic projects, which will enhance the City for citizens and as a place to visit and invest. Of particular importance is the need to get not just public sector intervention, but to work actively also with the private, voluntary and community sectors to encourage and incentivise them to take action which would help to realise the potential of this City. Given the Council's position dating back to the Southwood report it was further agreed to designate the Lyric and the City Centre Arts Centre (OMAC) as strategic projects – by so doing the Council would complete its original endorsement.

Since then meetings have taken place with the Lyric and OMAC. The position in relation to the Lyric has now become critical as they intend to close 13 January 2008, and further delays will cause costs to rise.

Key Issues

The Lyric has been fundraising for many years to realise the re-development of their project. They intend to replace the current building with a new landmark building with state of the art facilities. The Lyric brings a major contribution to the cultural life of the City and of Northern Ireland as a whole as the only producing theatre. Its refurbishment will bring a new iconic building to South Belfast and, significantly, enhance the Queen's Quarter tourism product. In addition, the Lyric has throughout its history maintained a strong outreach arm working, in particular, with young people across the City. The Lyric is keen to see greater involvement by Council in its management in the future.

The Lyric fits well within the concept of strategic projects for the City. It promotes a very positive image for the City as a centre for the promotion of new theatre. In relation to the promotion of the City, especially to the investment sector, it is now accepted that cultural infrastructure is a key part of location decisions. As such, the Lyric plays a role in relation to economic development and as a tourist attractor. The outreach work of the theatre especially, though not exclusively with children and young people across the City, has helped build confidence and pride. The project is one destined to provide a legacy for the long-term in this City.

The Lyric had a major target to achieve. As well as public sector funding they set a high target for private fund-raising of £5.5m. They have been so far successful in reaching £3m of that total Council investment at this time will enable them to achieve a funding level that would permit the project to proceed to commissioning and tender.

At this stage, Committee must decide at what level it wishes to support the Lyric having established the project as strategic, enhancing the economic drivers for the City and sharing its benefits across communities. In addition, the Committee will wish to note the extent to which the Lyric has achieved its challenging fund-raising target and is now in sight of realising the project.

At the same time, committee will also wish to ensure the funding set aside for cultural development achieves a wide range of cultural product in the City. It is, therefore, suggested that, in line with the City Investment Strategy's aim of incentivising investment in the city, a formula for funding is based on performance against fund-raising targets accepting that private fund-raising in Northern Ireland is particularly difficult.

To that end, Committee are asked to consider a percentage funding as illustrated at:

**25% of £5.5m = £1.3m
20% of £5.5m = £1.1m**

Between 20%-25% is suggested to ensure impact against funding targets, give the final push to the project to allow its realisation and still leave a significant amount in the Cultural Legacy Fund.

It is intended to bring further reports on OMAC proposals and on the processes to be developed for the disbursement of further tranches of the fund.

Resource Implications

Financial

Funding is part of £3m identified for Cultural Legacy Fund.

Recommendations

1. **Members note the report.**
2. **Agree to receive further reports on the future priorities and supporting process for the Cultural Legacy Fund monies and to support for OMAC.**
3. **Agree the recommendation of a percentage award to Lyric and decide at which level."**

After lengthy discussion in the matter, during which the Chairman (Councillor D. Dodds) pointed out that the Committee, at its meeting on 19th October, had agreed, in principle, that funding be provided to the Lyric Theatre and the City Centre Arts Centre projects subject to detailed negotiations and final approval by the Council on the amount of funding and the schedule of payments, full recognition being given to the Council in respect of its contribution, the Lyric Theatre being requested to consider Council representation on its Board and a commitment from the Lyric Theatre to undertake an outreach programme in the wider Belfast community, the Committee confirmed the provision of funding to the Lyric Theatre of up to a maximum of £1.25 million, subject to the conditions agreed on 19th October being met.

Minutes of Meeting of Audit Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel of 10th December and adopted the recommendations of the Panel in relation to the following issues:

Statement of Purpose and Terms of Reference for the Audit Panel

The purpose statement and terms of reference as set out hereunder:

"Purpose of the Audit Panel

'The purpose of Belfast City Council's Audit Panel is to provide an independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment. It will provide an independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it exposes the Council to risk and weakens the control environment. The Panel will also oversee the Council's financial reporting process.'

Note: the expression 'audit' should be accordingly understood in this context.

Audit Activity

1. *To consider the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give concerning the Council's corporate governance arrangements.*
2. *To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports.*
3. *To consider reports dealing with the management and performance of Audit, Governance and Risk Services.*
4. *To consider reports from Audit, Governance and Risk Services on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale.*
5. *To consider the Local Government Auditor's annual letter, management letter and relevant reports.*
6. *To consider all recommendations, reports and declarations of the Local Government Auditor as made under the Local Government (NI) Order 2005.*
7. *To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value-for-money.*
8. *To commission work from internal audit (including value-for-money and review of the progress of any improvement plans) and external audit.*

Regulatory Framework

9. *To maintain an overview of the Council's constitution in respect of contract procedure rules, financial regulations and codes of conduct and behaviour.*
10. *To review any matter concerning issues of audit referred to it by the Council or any Committee of the Council or by the Chief Executive.*
11. *To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance in the Council.*
12. *To monitor Council policies on whistleblowing and the anti-fraud and corruption strategy and the Council's complaints process.*
13. *To oversee the production of the Council's Statement on Internal Control and to recommend its adoption.*
14. *To consider the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and agreeing necessary actions to ensure compliance with best practice.*
15. *To consider the Council's compliance with its own and other published standards and controls.*

Accounts

16. *To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.*
17. *To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issuing arising from the accounts."*

The Committee agreed also that the issue of Governance be included within the Terms of Reference of the Audit Panel and noted that a Member of the Panel had expressed concern that the issue of scrutiny had not been included within the Terms of Reference.

**Requests for Funding – Be Your Best Foundation
and the City of Belfast Concert Band**

The Committee was advised that requests for financial assistance had been received from the Be Your Best Foundation in respect of the Belfast Rock Challenge which was scheduled to be held in the Belfast Waterfront Hall on 2nd April, 2008 and from the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band in respect of a forthcoming tour of the United States.

The Committee was advised that legal opinion had been sought and the Council could if it so wished use Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 to make financial contributions of this nature. Accordingly, it was recommended that funding in the sum of £2,000 be awarded to the Be Your Best Foundation and that £5,000 be awarded to the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and

Resolved – That funding of £2,000 and £5,000 respectively be approved in regard to the aforementioned events under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interests of, and would bring direct benefit to, the District and the inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

Adventure Playground – Cavehill Country Park

The Committee was advised that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 15th November, had accepted the most advantageous tender received in respect of the provision of permanent public toilet facilities for users and staff at the Adventure Playground in the Cavehill County Park. However, the anticipated capital

budget was now £215,000 compared to the amount of £175,000 which had been included in the Capital Programme. Since the increase in the cost of the project was in excess of 10% of the approved amount, Financial Regulation D9 required the approval of the additional expenditure to be ratified by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee approved the additional expenditure associated with the provision of toilets at the Adventure Playground.

Tenders for the Supply and Delivery of Services

Stewarding and Related Enforcement Services for Events and Public Areas under the Control of the Council

The Committee agreed to extend until 30th June, 2008 the existing contract with Eventsec Limited for the provision of stewarding and related enforcement services for events and public areas under the control of the Council and granted approval for the commencement of a tendering exercise for a new contract.

Uniform Clothing

The Committee granted approval for the commencement of a tendering exercise in respect of the provision over a two-year period of uniform and wet weather clothing items.

City Matters Advertising – Pilot

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th June, it had awarded a tender to BPC magazines to produce a pilot edition of City Matters, the costs of which were to be covered by advertising revenue.

The Head of Corporate Communications outlined the success of the project and reviewed the costs and revenue, the number of advertisers, the results of an advertising survey and the further opportunities which could arise. He recommended that, following the success of the pilot scheme, the Committee agree:

- (i) that the cost of producing and distributing City Matters be paid for by advertising on a permanent basis (at a saving to the ratepayer of £138,400 in the next financial year);
- (ii) to the commencement of a tendering exercise for agencies to compete for the business of selling advertising space in City Matters over a fixed-term;
- (iii) that private sector advertising should be accepted, provided it was included in a way which was in keeping with the Council's priorities and/or have a public sector focus;

- (iv) to loose or non-fixed leaflets and insertions being included, again with the above proviso;
- (v) that limited sponsorship of pages/features be accepted, provided that the sponsors were compliant in their activities with the Council's priorities and/or had a public sector focus;
- (vi) to a payback clause being included in the contract which would enable the Council to receive a percentage of the profits made from the production of City Matters; and
- (vii) to a penalty clause being considered if the successful company accepted advertising from any organisation which was not compliant in its activities with Council priorities and/or had a public sector focus.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Human Resources

Single Status

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Single Status Steering Group of 27th November and adopted the recommendations of the Steering Group in relation to the following issues:

Working Arrangements – Final Paper

The final paper be approved as the Management-side position to be submitted to the Trades Unions for agreement.

Broad-Banded Salaries

To note the proposal for the dismantling of board-banded salaries, the principles of which had been approved by the Chief Officers' Single Status Steering Group and consulted on with the Trades Unions.

Single Status Outstanding Issues – Compensatory Payments

Authority be delegated to the Director of Legal Services to approve compensatory payments to a number of employees who had left the service of the Council during the two years in which the Single Status arrangements had been negotiated.

Asset Management

Accommodation Issues – Clarendon House

The Director of Improvement advised the Committee that it would be required to take a number of decisions in relation to future accommodation needs for Council employees and that he would submit a detailed report in this regard to the Committee for consideration at a future meeting. However, in the meantime, there were a number of health and safety issues in relation to the staff who were located at Clarendon House and he recommended that the Committee undertake a study visit to the building, on a date to be determined by the Chairman (Councillor D. Dodds), in order to view the facilities thereat.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Capital Project – Maysfield Leisure Centre

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Maysfield Leisure Centre facility:

“Relevant Background Information

The Client Services Committee, at its meeting on 15 June 2004, agreed to the demolition of the Maysfield Leisure Centre facility and the facility closed for business on 31 July 2004.

Since then the Client Services Committee and the Development Committee have agreed to various temporary licence/hire arrangements with television and film production companies.

This non-operational asset has transferred to the corporate land bank which is now managed by the Estates Management Unit.

Key Issues

Maysfield is an obvious key site that can play a key role in any City investment Strategy both in terms of realising asset value, providing a partnership vehicle for key development of any other option the Council might consider. It will of course take some time to work up options but as that process moves forward, Maysfield has a cost in terms of rates, maintenance contracts as well as attracting various bright ideas from others in the City who wish to make temporary use of the building. We are now in a position to move the debate forward to reduce running costs and perhaps earn a small interim return.

The existing agreement on the building with the Northern Ireland Film and Television Commission expires at the end of January 2008.

An initial asbestos survey is programmed for the beginning of February and tender documents for the demolition of the building have been prepared.

The options available are:

1. Do nothing (after the NIFTC vacate the building). Members should note that the ongoing annual costs to retain the building, even when vacant, could be in the region of £35k (security, insurance and maintenance). If this option is selected then there is also the possibility of a vacant rates liability of approximately £100k per annum.
2. Demolition only: car parking facilities would continue to be available for BCC staff attending the Learning and Development Centre.
3. Demolition, surfacing, etc to provide car parking: to enable an arrangement to be made with the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company or other car park operators, to operate the site as a car park until such time as development of the site is progressed. Planning permission will be required for this option.

Resource Implications

The site is a development opportunity awaiting decision and is under consideration as one of a number of possible locations for the proposed Belfast stadium a decision on which is due January 2008.

An amount of £365,000 is included in the 07/08 capital programme for the demolition of the building (£410,000 for 08/09). Some additional expenditure may be incurred depending on detail of a temporary car parking solution.

Estimated income from the operation of an interim car park is £50-£100k per annum.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee considers the options detailed above of which Officers would recommend option 3 for progression.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Standing Order 60 – Acquisition and Subsequent
Leasing of Land at Stranmillis Embankment**

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee was notified that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 15th November, had agreed to the acquisition and subsequent leasing of land at Stranmillis Embankment.

Requests for the Provision of Hospitality

The Committee was advised that the undernoted requests for the provision of hospitality had been received:

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Obstetric Anaesthetists Association	Obstetric Anaesthesia Conference 2008 14th May, 2008 (evening) Approximately 500 attending	Provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	It is estimated that 500 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.	Provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception Approximate cost £1,500 Approximate budget remaining £150,877
Northern Ireland Stedfast Association	International Convention of Stedfast Associations 3rd October, 2008 (evening) Approximately 100 attending	Provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	It is estimated that 90 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.	Provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception Approximate cost £300 Approximate budget remaining £150,577
Association of Inner Wheel Clubs	Reception for the Organising Committee of the Annual Conference of Inner Wheel Clubs 22nd April, 2009 (evening) Approximately 175 attending	Provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception for the organising committee of the conference.	It is estimated that 2,000 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.	Provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception Approximate cost £525 Approximate budget remaining £150,052

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Queen's University Belfast	Universities and Communities Building Knowledge Conference 28th August, 2009 (evening) Approximately 300 attending	Provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	It is estimated that 250 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.	Provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception Approximate cost £900 Approximate budget remaining £149,152
Mediation Northern Ireland	The Challenge of Change 10th April, 2008 (evening) Approximately 350 Attending	Provision of Civic Hospitality in the form of a Dinner	This event seeks to bring together civic leaders from across Northern Ireland. Mediation Northern Ireland has a close relationship with Belfast City Council and has been extremely helpful in promoting our Good Relations strategy. The event meets the Council's Corporate Strategic Objectives of Providing Civic Leadership and Promoting Good Relations.	Civic Dinner Approximate cost £8,750 Approximate budget remaining £140,402
Irish Bowling Association	Competition Awards Ceremony 19th June, 2008 (evening) Approximately 160 attending	Provision of hospitality in the form of a dinner	National event, President of organisation from belfast, showcase the city etc More information to follow	Provision of a dinner Approximate cost £4,000 Approximate budget remaining £136,402

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Wheel

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 24th March, 2006, it had granted authority for the temporary installation of the 60 metre high Belfast Wheel in the grounds of the City Hall at Donegall Square East. The Events Manager advised the Members that, to date, the wheel had been popular with visitors and had attracted positive media attention. Due to the considerable success of the project, the operators of the Belfast Wheel, World Tourist Attractions, had requested that the Council consider

extending to the end of December, 2008 the use of the City Hall grounds beyond the agreed four-month period, which expired currently at the end of March, 2008. He pointed out that this would require not only Council approval but an extension to the current planning consent which had been granted by the Northern Ireland Planning Service.

The Events Manager reported that no additional costs would accrue to the Council. However, World Tours Attractions had agreed to pay an initial fee of £5,000 and an additional £500 per week. If approval were granted for the Wheel to stay until the end of December, 2008, this would mean revenue income of £21,500 for the Council.

After discussion, the Committee determined that it would offer no objection to an extension until December 2008 on the basis that a reasonable level of fees be agreed with the operator and directed that further negotiations be undertaken in relation to the fees to be paid.

Good Relations and Equality

Minutes of the meeting of Good Relations Steering Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Steering Panel of 7th December.

Proposed Staff Memorial

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to a proposed staff memorial:

“Relevant Background Information

A proposal that the Council commission a memorial dedicated to all BCC employees who were killed, maimed or injured in the course of delivering services to the citizens of the City over the past 30 years, was initially made by an employee under the Council’s Brainwave Staff Suggestion Scheme about a year ago.

The item was then discussed and supported at the Council’s Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) earlier this year. All the parties there agreed that the contribution of the Council’s workforce in this demanding period should be acknowledged in some way and a representative of the Council’s Trade Union Group wrote a letter to the Chief Executive requesting that this matter be progressed.

The Chief Executive responded by proposing to refer the matter to the Good Relations Steering Panel, who have responsibility for considering issues of memorabilia and commemoration; this proposal was accepted by the Trade Unions.

Staff from the Good Relations Unit have held meetings with Trade Union representatives and the Council's Landscape Architect to develop the proposal in an appropriate manner.

Key Issues

The Council's own Good Relations Strategy refers to the hurt caused by the past 30 years and the need to provide some memorial for the victims of the Troubles in Belfast.

There are very many sensitivities around the issue of remembrance and it is premature for the Council to consider a memorial to the citizens of Belfast on a wider civic scale. However, this proposal from the Trade Unions is timely as in a changing political and social context, it is entirely appropriate for the Council to acknowledge formally the enormous contribution made by its own workforce and to mark this in a symbolic way.

The courtyard of the City Hall was considered the best location for a staff memorial as most employees use the back gate and courtyard to enter and leave the building.

The refurbishment of the City Hall, at a cost of almost £12m., was agreed by Council in December 2006. The scheme already includes a proposal for a fountain in the courtyard.

Following discussions, the Council's Landscape Architect has developed draft proposals for enhancing the fountain design for the courtyard as a staff memorial, by:

- dedicating the fountain to those employees killed, maimed or injured in the course of delivering services to the citizens of the city over the past 30 years
- placing 5 hornbeam trees (6 metres high) in planters, at various locations in the courtyard to soften the space
- designing a plaque for the fountain area, in keeping with the design work already agreed for the courtyard, with appropriate text explaining the significance of the memorial, the fountain and the trees.

The water fountain and trees symbolise hope, rebirth and a new beginning. A memorial of this type is viewed as a fitting tribute and has been agreed with the Trade Union representatives.

The memorial will not list individual names but will be a recognition of the contribution of all Council staff who continued delivering public services as normally as possible over an extraordinarily difficult period in Belfast.

Plans of the fountain will be on display at the meeting.

Procedure

The Council's Capital Programme Manager has recommended that this proposal be considered first by the Good Relations Steering Panel before referral to the Accommodation Working Group and main Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Financial Implications

	£
Supply, delivery & Installation of 5 hornbeam trees (6 metres high) with planters	16,000
Professional fees (in house landscape architects fees)	1,800
Bronze plaque designed to complement fountain	5,000
Total cost	22,800

The Good Relations Unit is prepared to contribute 50% of the cost of this memorial project (£11,400), leaving an amount of £11,400 to be funded by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Recommendations

The Good Relations Steering Panel discussed this proposal at its meeting on 7 December and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the staff memorial project be approved and that its cost be met as outlined above."

The Committee adopted the recommendation of the Good Relations Steering Panel.

Chairman