

Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



17th October, 2011

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room (Room G05), City Hall on Friday, 21st October, 2011 at 10.00 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

PETER McNANEY

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**
 - (a) Apologies
 - (b) Minutes
2. **Corporate Plan and Performance Management**
 - (a) Investment Package Update (Pages 1 - 18)
3. **Democratic Services and Governance**
 - (a) Requests for the use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality (Pages 19 - 24)
 - (b) The live streaming and archiving of Council proceedings on the internet (Pages 25 - 26)
 - (c) National Association of Councillors - Annual General Meeting and Conference (Pages 27 - 28)

(d) Arrangements for Monthly Political Party Briefings (Pages 29 - 34)

4. **Finance**

(a) Minutes of Meeting of Budget and Transformation Panel of 18th October (To Follow)

(b) Consultation Paper - Rating of Commercial Properties- small business, large retail properties and empty shops (Pages 35 - 46)

(c) Rate Setting 2012-13 (Pages 47 - 50)

5. **Human Resources**

(a) Review of Project and Corporate Systems Unit (PACS) - Finance & Resources Department (Pages 51 - 52)

(b) Potential industrial action involving Belfast City Council employees on 30 November 2011 (Pages 53 - 54)

6. **Asset Management**

(a) Former Grove Leisure Centre (Pages 55 - 62)

(b) Smithfield Market Unit Lettings (Pages 63 - 66)

(c) Application by North Belfast Paranormal Research Group to undertake a paranormal investigation in the City Hall (Pages 67 - 68)

(d) City Hall Security Breach and Proposed Enhanced Preventative Measures (Pages 69 - 72)

7. **Good Relations and Equality**

(a) Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership of 10th October (To Follow)

(b) Minutes of Meeting of Historic Centenaries Working Group (To Follow)

To: The Chairman and Members of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	'Investment Package' Update
Date:	28 October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive

1.0	<u>Relevant Background Information</u>
1.1	<p>Members will recall that a first cut of a draft 'investment package' was presented to Committee at its meeting on 23rd September. At this stage it was highlighted that this was a work in progress and would be further refined over the coming months following feedback from Members. At the meeting, Members asked that the following issues be addressed in a future iteration of the package:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balance between investment in the city through financial support for big construction projects and support for individuals struggling to cope with the recession; • investigate how we could do more to address the issue of employability by working with relevant government bodies such as the Department for Employment and Learning and by introducing a city-wide bursary scheme; • explore how we can identify more focused advice, support and signposting services to those in debt and examine how we can offer opportunities for internships, mentoring schemes and apprenticeships; • more work required on the contribution that procurement and social clauses might make to providing opportunities to local firms and those not in employment; • reduction in the levels of poverty and inequality need to be more central in the document; • the Council needs to drive the agenda for reducing health inequalities; • explore the social economy and the potential to work with other bodies in that area; • a commitment to ensure that the good relations and equality strategy is considered in relation to all the projects across the City in which the Council was involved; • a greater civic leadership role - Council as the voice of the city in relation to advocating for the needs of its citizens and marketing the city for investment and tourism; • develop an international and external relations strategy, and form key relationships with bodies such as Invest NI and government departments to ensure that investment efforts are aligned and focused; and • ensure that the identification of place shaping projects is spread fairly across the city and that key projects in the city centre, such as a civic square around the City Hall and the development of St George's Market, are considered. <p>This report sets out progress in responding to the issues raised by Members at the Committee and at subsequent sessions, including the Economy Workshop on the 28th September and the place shaping area based sessions (North, South, East, West and Shankill) which commenced on 10 October and concluded on 17 October.</p>

	<p>In order to take forward the next iteration of the investment package Members are asked to consider the information set out at appendix 1 for inclusion within the stimulus package. The appendix addresses each of the issues raised by Members in turn, providing an update on what the Council currently does in relation to each, and the proposed text for inclusion in the package.</p> <p>Members should note that in some cases, for example with respect to the good relations and equality theme, issues will be developed further at the next and final thematic workshop – “people and communities” which will also deal with neighbourhood interventions and local investment. Members will be informed of the date of this workshop as soon as it is identified.</p>
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Place-shaping
2.1.1	<p>Members will recall that they agreed that they wished to progress those projects which were ready to move forward but also to get other projects to a state of readiness where they might avail of potential funding opportunities or be the subject of advocacy by Members for funding. In order to progress this, a series of area based (North, South, East, West, Shankill) place shaping sessions took place in mid October. The purpose of these sessions was to consider in further detail the place-shaping projects and to agree -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of principles to underpin further prioritisation; • A set of political priorities in relation to major capital projects; and • A list of prioritised projects and agreement on further work to take this forward
2.1.2	<p>At these sessions Members considered the list of projects, including those already committed and underway, those prioritised by Members at the workshop on the 17 August and those on the longer list, for the relevant area and the city centre. These were set within the context of deliverability – i.e. the steps that were necessary to take a project from concept through to delivery, including concept design and agreement, potential funding arrangements; detailed design and costings; political approval, planning permissions; project planning, procurement, contract management and delivery.</p>
	<p>The set of principles that were agreed included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • political prioritisation • the need for a balance of projects across the city • projects must meet the Council’s objectives • Affordability / funding • Deliverability
2.1.3	<p>The revised list of prioritised projects is included at Appendix 2. <i>(NB Not yet included as these sessions will conclude on Monday 17th October)</i>. Members are asked to agree that Member/Officer working groups are now established to progress these projects. Members have already agreed at their meeting on 23 September that £125,000 is set aside through in-year reallocation to develop feasibility studies or other preparatory work in relation to progressing these projects.</p>
2.1.4	<p>In terms of governance for this work, officer input to the working teams will be overseen by designated Chief Officers. Composite reports on the outcomes of the working groups will be brought to Budget and Transformation Panel and SP&R to ensure that a city-wide perspective is</p>

	<p>taken and to ensure the balance that Members have asked for. It will be necessary to progress this work in the context of affordability as part of the rate-setting process. This means taking prioritisation as far as possible before the SP&R meeting in December so that investment decisions can be made in the context of the level of rate to be set. Members will then have a further opportunity to assess affordability in January when the final rates forecast becomes available from the LPS.</p>
2.2	POVERTY AND INEQUALITIES FRAMEWORK
2.2.1	<p>Given the impact of the economic downturn on some of the most vulnerable communities in the city, Members wanted to see the Council's work towards a poverty and implementation framework given greater prominence. Therefore the updated investment package will set out the Council's commitment to the implementation of the poverty and inequalities framework, once this has been agreed by Members, as a key policy tool which will ensure that effort is concentrated on reducing inequalities that exist across the city, including those pockets of disadvantage at sub-ward level. In addition to the measures relating to procurement and social clauses, improving skills and reducing worklessness set out in other parts of the stimulus package, key actions in the draft being presented to the Development Committee on xxxx include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work to support the social economy; • Support and funding for the advice provision infrastructure in Belfast; • Fuel poverty; • Access to services; • Reducing health inequalities. <p>Green New Deal</p> <p>Linked to the above, Members may be aware of the '<i>Green New Deal</i>' concept proposal. This is a joined up approach aimed at tackling the '<i>triple crunch</i>' of recession, rising energy prices and climate change and essentially is a scheme which could provide jobs for local people and reduce household bills by increasing energy efficiency. There is the potential for the Council to work with the Green New Deal Trust on a pilot programme where the Council provide loans to the Trust for the purpose of making pay-as-you-save loans available to households in their area.</p> <p>With Members' approval, further work will be undertaken to assess the potential for Council's involvement in this scheme, including a detailed examination of any obstacles in relation to its legal power to do it and how it would be financed. Again, this work will be fed into the overall affordability debate. It is anticipated that a more detailed report on this scheme will be brought to Committee as part of the rates setting process.</p>
2.3	SOCIAL CLAUSES
2.3.2	<p>As discussed at the economy workshop in September, there are currently legal constraints on the Council's ability to use social clauses in contracts. However, as Members are aware, the Council has recently received a consultation document: the Draft Local Government Best Value (Exclusion of Non-Commercial considerations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011, issued by the Department of the Environment, which proposes to make regulations under the Best Value Act 2002 to relax the restrictions on matters which Councils can consider in exercising their procurement functions.</p> <p>The proposed Order will enable Councils to include certain 'social clauses' in procurement contracts, but providing that they are relevant for Best Value purposes. A copy of the consultation document can be found at:</p>

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/consultation_document_draft_local_government_best_value__exclusion_of_non-commercial_considerations__order_ni.pdf.

A hard copy of the document has been placed in the Members' library or can be obtained from Kevin Heaney on email: heaneyk@belfastcity.gov.uk, Tel: 028 9027 0595.

2.3.3 In terms of responding to the consultation document, **it is proposed that Members welcome and support the introduction of this legislation** and the greater flexibility which it seeks to introduce, albeit that this is in the context of securing compliance with best value requirements as set out in the Local Government (Best Value) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002.

2.4 SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND LOCAL SUPPLIERS

2.4.1 Appendix 1 sets out in some detail **what the Council is currently doing in terms of supporting employment and skills development and supporting local suppliers** across the city and outlines a range of **new proposals**, for Members' consideration, for potential support initiatives including: **community outreach; internships, placements and other employment and career support initiatives** which the Council may wish to pursue. In line with the analysis contained within this report, it is proposed that the revised package will include proactive exploration of the following:

- **City-wide Bursary Scheme** - The **Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)** has recently commissioned a **feasibility study** about making a bursary scheme available across the city. It is proposed that the Council should work with DEL to ensure that any emerging recommendations represent the **maximum benefit to people across the whole city**. In order to ensure meaningful engagement and underline commitment to this outcome, it is proposed that **a sum should be committed** through the Council's estimating process to ensure effective delivery of the recommendations with a view to seeking match funding from DEL and the private sector. **A sum of up to £100,000** is potentially available through re-alignment of the Council's thematic budgets.
- Council participation in a **city wide Social Clause Delivery Forum** where we will work with partners such as the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), the Housing Executive, Construction Industry Forum, Central Procurement Directorate, Strategic Investment Board, business representative organisations, community organisations and training organisations to seek to mainstream social clauses in key public contracts.
- Increased support for internship programme - possibilities include:
 - the Graduate Acceleration Programme
 - Belfast Metropolitan College's Career Academy
 - Belfast Metropolitan College's Career advocates programme
 - UUJ's Professional Experience Programme

Other Members' suggestions such as ring-fencing a number of vacancies for the unemployed (in the case of multiple vacancies) are being explored in the context of issues such as:

- trade union buy-in
- potential adverse impact for existing temporary employees or agency assignments in the Council – i.e. if posts are ring-fenced to unemployed they would be excluded from applying
- the need to consider other disadvantaged groups

	A further report on both these issues will be brought back to Members in the near future.
	In terms of finding resources to support these initiatives, the Council has asked for a review of agency and overtime costs, highlighting that there are potential savings to be made through reductions in both which could be utilised to create jobs, or to provide paid placement opportunities.
2.5	SUPPORTING LOCAL PROCUREMENT
	In recognition of the Council's significant spending power and potential impact on local suppliers, Members have asked that consideration be given to identifying what practical steps could be undertaken to increase awareness among small businesses of the Council's tendering processes and to improve the overall capacity of small businesses to compete for public tendering opportunities. In 2010/2011 the Council spent £88.9m in procuring goods and services, of which £60.4m (68%) was delivered through local (Belfast based) suppliers.
	The Council already supports a number of specific initiatives targeted at local businesses which are set out in Appendix 1. Work is underway to baseline current spend with local suppliers and develop an effective strategy and programme of procurement support initiatives aimed at maximising the benefit of Council spend to the local economy. This strategy and action plan will be brought to Members in November.
2.6	EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETING
	Members asked that the stimulus package should include the Council's commitment to developing an external relations and international marketing strategy. This strategy will identify key strategic relationships both locally and internationally and will aim to ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members take the lead in forging strategic relationships with key bodies in the city and the NI Executive to ensure that priorities for city success and competitiveness happen, resources and plans are aligned and that the Council has a coherent approach to engaging on key strategic issues which feed back into its own governance and decision making structures; • The Council works with key organisations across the city to agree and consolidate strategic international relationships to support economic growth and competitiveness. <p>Members are asked to agree this proposal and that a report setting out a proposed approach and timescale for delivery for this project is brought back to Members by December.</p>
2.7	Equality and Good Relations
	Members have highlighted that, as a key Council objective and a statutory duty, good relations and equality are central to the consideration of all Council projects and investment decisions. We will ensure that this is clearly set out within the stimulus package. Members will have an opportunity to discuss in

more detail the messages about Council's commitment to good relations and equality at the workshop in November. At the workshop, Members will also consider further proposals for inclusion in the stimulus package, which will add to and expand the current references to PEACE III, building positive relationships and interventions in interface areas.

Members may also be aware that the audit of inequalities which underpins the Council's equality scheme is currently being finalised. This audit will be linked to the future development of the stimulus package and the Council's emerging framework on poverty and inequalities to ensure that these are mutually reinforcing documents.

2.8 Conference / Launch of Stimulus Package - options

Members asked that officers outline options which could be explored with regards to the launch of the stimulus package. Whilst we are not limited to scheduling only one event, Members views are sought on the options set out below regarding the focus of the initial event. Members have asked that key partner agencies; public and private, as well as potential investors would be invited to the event.

In terms of timing, Members may wish to schedule the event around February 2012, when there is confirmation regarding the rates and the affordability thresholds within which the Council will be operating.

2.8.1 Masterplan Focused Launch/Conference

As the "Stimulus Package" develops it will be used to shape the content of the emerging Belfast Masterplan. The Masterplan will set out a high level vision for the city over the next 10 years and the "place shaping" projects which Members are continuing to identify will form a key component of that plan. A draft Masterplan is due to be completed in early January of this year and will form the basis for consultation with key stakeholders in the City including Government Departments, key delivery agents (such as Invest NI, NITB, Roads Service, Universities etc), Partnership Boards, the Voluntary and Community sectors and the Private Sector.

A high profile launch of the draft Masterplan at an Investment Conference in February could provide the perfect opportunity to demonstrate what the Council intends to do over the next 4 years to contribute to delivering the future vision of the City in the form of the Stimulus Package. This is likely to attract a high profile audience, including Government Ministers and generate significant media interest in both the City Masterplan and the Belfast Stimulus package.

Investment / Internationally focused event

2.8.2 An event targeted at potential institutional investors, promoting the potential investment opportunities which exist within the City. This could be arranged in conjunction with Invest NI and other key bodies such as Belfast Harbour Commissioners and the recently established Asset Team set up via the Strategic Investment Board. Important to recognise the huge landbank which exists within the City running from the gasworks Northern Fringe to Maysfield to sirocco to shatter zone to queens quay to odyssey site to TQ. **Such an event could be used to build on our need to create a coherent integrated international relations and marketing strategy for the City.**

Partnership Focused Conference

2.8.3

The package could be central to a partnership focused conference where the package is presented and the contribution of all partners to its implementation is discussed and agreed. This would include contributions from partner organisations and other sectors including the business and voluntary sectors

2.8.4	<p>and funders in order to validate and confirm their support for the Council's initiative. It would also consolidate the Council's value of collaborative leadership in delivering change and improvement in the city and in tackling issues that are larger than any one organisation.</p> <p>The Council will need to also consult upon its investment package and this would provide a perfect opportunity for feedback from key partner agencies. Such an event could be used to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. reinforce the significance of Belfast as an important economic driver for the region ii. promote the investment package iii. showcase and lobby for key city projects. <p>Press Launch</p> <p>The Stimulus Package could be introduced via a 'press launch' with emphasis being placed on the specific actions that the Council is committing to and the sums that are being invested. This could take the form of a press launch/briefing with interview opportunities offered, a press conference at which a prepared presentation is made by the Council's agreed spokes-person/people.</p> <p>There will be a varying financial costs to the Council depending upon the selected format of the proposed launch of the 'stimulus package'. The cost of the chosen option will be worked up by officers once the Members have given their direction. The involvement of Government Departments or Agencies and any external partners will also need to be considered in terms of the role they would have in the launch.</p>
3	Resource Implications
	<p>The resource implications of taking forward the Council's commitments as set out in the "investment package" will be discussed further in line with the budget setting process for 2012-15.</p>
4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	<p>Equality screening of all elements of the corporate plan will be taken forward throughout the process of its development.</p>
5	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note progress and agree that the information contained at Appendix 1 forms the basis for further narrative for the stimulus package – final narrative will be agreed with Members in November. • note the list of projects included at Appendix 2 and agree that joint officer/Member groups are tasked with exploring further the feasibility of prioritised projects; • agree that the Council welcomes and endorses the introduction of the Draft Local Government Best Value (Exclusion of Non-Commercial considerations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011; • consider a preferred focus for the launch of the stimulus package when complete.

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Appendix1 - Information for update of stimulus package

POVERTY AND INEQUALITIES FRAMEWORK

Belfast has the highest level of deprivation in Northern Ireland – and this translates into lower life expectancy and higher levels of illness as well as uneven access to services.

Belfast City Council cannot eradicate poverty but we can make our services more accessible, advocate effectively and use our resources so that we support people where they are now, facing the long-term effects of the recession. The Council is developing a poverty and implementation framework which will impact across the city, including the “hidden” pockets of poverty which exist at sub-ward level. Under this Framework we will:

1. Ensure that our services are more accessible;
2. Target our resources more effectively;
3. Work in partnership with other lead government departments to deliver on-the-ground projects that will support citizens; and
4. Advocate for the people of Belfast who are experiencing poverty and inequalities.

In addition to the measures relating to procurement and social clauses, improving skills and reducing worklessness set out in other parts of the stimulus package, key actions will include:

1. Support for social economy projects

- Improve procurement practices to ensure social economy enterprises have an opportunity to bid for contracts
- Undertake pre-enterprise social economy support in order to increase the number of social economy businesses

2. Community tourism and outreach

- Work with communities along key tourism routes and help them set up community tourism enterprises.
- Expand development and outreach programme so that people in poverty can access cultural opportunities.

3. Support and fund advice provision infrastructure in Belfast

- Maximise the uptake of rate relief in partnership with Land and Property Services.
- Invest £800,000 a year in funding to ensure provision of generalist advice and which draw at least £8 million in unclaimed benefits.
- Build capacity of the advice providers (on annual basis).

4. Reduce fuel poverty

- Investigate the possibility of piloting a warm zones approach in two socially deprived areas of the city which would aim to demonstrate a proof of concept to reducing fuel poverty and carbon emissions.
- Ensure that the most vulnerable people in Belfast participate in the fuel stamp initiative this scheme which has successfully helped residents save over £300,000 worth of oil stamps since its launch,

- Explore funding opportunities for delivery of new energy efficiency powers.

5. Improve access to parks and leisure centres

- Map out parks and playgrounds to ensure that all children have access to them.
- Support people in the most deprived areas to gain access to leisure centres free of charge – in partnership with the Public Health Agency

6. Reducing Health Inequalities

- The Council is a lead partner in a new a cross-sector partnership – the Belfast Strategic Partnership, set up to address health and life inequalities across Belfast. The partnership is finalising its five-year health inequalities strategy, entitled 'Framework for Action on Addressing Life Inequalities' which will ensure that all partners are focusing on and aligning resources to some of the main aspects of health inequality in the city, including mental health and emotional wellbeing; addressing life long learning related issues; alcohol and drug related health issues and early years and early interventions.

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SOCIAL CLAUSES

The Council will:

- Positively welcome and advocate for the introduction of the new legislation being brought forward by the DoE which will introduce greater flexibility and relax the restrictions on matters which Councils can consider (including social clauses) in exercising their procurement functions.

- Work with DEL and other key stakeholders (including the NIHE, Construction Industry Forum, Central Procurement Directorate, Strategic Investment Board, business representative organisations, community organisations and training organisations) to establish a **City-Wide social Clause Delivery Forum** which will actively seek to mainstream social clauses in key public contracts.

- Actively work with key public and private sector bodies to negotiate social clauses as a condition of recent and future investment decisions and partnership projects. This work builds on the Council's approach to the Titanic Belfast project where Council worked with central government to ensure that social clauses were part of the contract in order to provide opportunities for unemployed young people and apprentices during construction.

- Implement a range of employment and pre-employment support programmes which will provide local people with the necessary skills to access emerging employment opportunities linked to key developments across the city.

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed that the revised investment package incorporates the following initiatives and programmes which seek to support employment and skills development across the city.

CURRENT INITIATIVES UNDERWAY

- i. **City-Wide Employability and Skills Strategy and Action Plan** – The Council is working with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) to get agreement on the development and delivery of a city-wide employability and skills strategy and action plan. In conjunction with other partners, the plan will focus on a number of activities including:
 - Development of and agreement on an overarching strategic framework covering the breadth of the worklessness and skills agenda in Belfast, which informs and shapes partner organisations' business plans
 - Mobilisation of mainstream and discretionary funds to deliver the agreed strategy
 - Addressing gaps in provision and barriers to delivery that hinder progress in achieving the agreed priorities
 - Development and management of appropriate data management systems which support enhanced labour market intelligence and help target interventions to ensure delivery of agreed targets
 - Monitoring performance against targets
 - Sharing best practice from partner organisations and wider to enhance the quality of provision.
- ii. **Targeted employability support initiatives**
 - **HARTE (Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment) Programme - £35k Council investment** this year towards a **£460k** initiative which seeks to get **200 long-term unemployed people into employment** in the hospitality and service sector.
 - **Stepping Stone Initiative - £8k** Council investment this year towards a **£430k programme** which focuses on building employability skills of unemployed individuals.
 - **Tools for Life - £20k Council investment** this year towards a **£450k** employment programme concentrating on young people not in education, employment or training. This programme aims to increase the employability of 135 young people
 - **Jobs on the Move – £25k Council investment** this year towards a **£780K** engagement and outreach work programme which seeks to provide pre-employment support for around 1200 people
 - **Learn 2 Earn - £5k Council investment** this year towards a **£220k support programme** focusing on the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism industry.
- ii. **Young Persons Employment Initiative** – the Council recently ran, in partnership with DEL and North City Training -Bryson Charitable Group's Training and Employment Unit, a pilot programme which provided young people (aged 18-24), who had been unemployed for more than one year, temporary waged work

experience over a 26 week period. **36 placement opportunities** were facilitated of which 5 were graduate opportunities. Following the success of this pilot, the Council agreed to engage with North City Training on a **further 3 year programme, offering 10 placement opportunities each year.**

- iii. **Community Outreach Programme** - This Programme operates an unpaid work experience placement scheme for, on average each year, **200 students** from schools and further education / university establishments and **30 unpaid disability** work experience placements from a range of disability organisations.

The Council has also engaged, on a pilot basis, with the Probation Board for NI (PBNI) and Youth Justice Agency (YJA) to provide work experience placements for individuals required to carry out community service orders.

- iv. **Public Employment Partnership (PEP)** - The Council, along with Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, recently participated in a pre-employment training programme for the long term unemployed organised by North Belfast Partnership Board. The aim of the programme was to assist the long term unemployed gain the necessary skills and experience to support them in gaining employment. As part of the programme the Council facilitated site visits, work experience placements and mock interview sessions. The Council facilitated **19 placements across various disciplines e.g. refuse collection, street sweeping, gardening, cleaning, community services and administration.** Of the 19 participants, 7 (37%) have gained employment. While this application was unsuccessful, the model could be adopted by Council and other public sector partners should alternative resources be available.

- v. **Industrial Placements** – In the last 4 years the Council has funded 83 paid industrial placements to support young people gain vital experience as part of their university course.

NEW PATHWAYS TO SUPPORT EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS ACROSS THE CITY

The Council will also actively explore a number of **new pathways** to supporting the development of employability and skills across the city. These might include:

- **City-wide Bursary Schemes** - the development of a **bursary scheme** to enable the unemployed and those on low incomes get back to work, progress in work or go on to further education and training. The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has recently commissioned a **feasibility study** about making a bursary scheme available across the city. It is proposed that the Council should work with DEL to ensure that any emerging recommendations represent the **maximum benefit to people across the whole city.**

In order to ensure meaningful engagement and underline commitment to this outcome, it is proposed that **a sum should be committed** through the Council's estimating process to ensure effective delivery of the recommendations with a view to seeking match funding from DEL and the private sector. **A sum of up to £100,000** is potentially available through re-alignment of the Council's thematic budgets.

There are also a number of **internship programmes** that may be considered. These include :

- **the Graduate Acceleration Programme** –Queen’s University and University of Ulster, along with Business in the Community have developed a programme centred on providing graduates with meaningful work experience and a valuable qualification. This programme is supported by DEL and is delivered through Steps to Work. There is an opportunity for the Council to support this work. Placement providers may be required to pay up to £1,500 towards graduate grant.
- **UUJ’s Professional Experience Programme** - a 26 week internship with the University of Ulster’s part-time online Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice. Financial contribution from employer of £2,500 per graduate, with University contribution of £5,000.
- **Belfast Metropolitan College’s Career Academy**- national programme designed to help young people raise their aspirations and prepare them for a career in business through a 6 week paid internship (summer months) which provides expertise insight and mentoring support.
- **Belfast Metropolitan College’s Career advocates programme** - separate from Career Academy – identify various Council staff to provide 1-2-1 mentoring and information to students on specific areas of expertise.

Further assessment of these options will be required, in line with council capacity and financial commitments. Members may wish to focus on those programmes which help the placements gain formal accreditation as well as the experience. **Specific participation targets will be established for any internship programmes put in place by the Council.**

SUPPORTING LOCAL PROCUREMENT

In recognition of the Council's significant spending power and potential impact on local suppliers, Members have asked that consideration be given to identifying what practical steps could be undertaken to increase awareness among small businesses of the Council's tendering processes and to improve the overall capacity of small businesses to compete for public tendering opportunities. In 2010/2011 the Council spent **£88.9m** in procuring goods and services, of which **£60.4m (68%)** was delivered through local (Belfast based) suppliers.

EXISTING SUPPORT

The Council already supports a number of specific initiatives targeted at local businesses including:

1. Procurement support initiatives:-

- Input into "**meet the buyer**" events – providing overview of Council tendering processes and raising awareness among local suppliers
 - Organisation of **tendering workshops** (in response to requests from local organisations) at a range of venues across the city.
 - Local **suppliers database** created, allowing potential suppliers to provide their details for use by those engaged in purchasing activities across the organisation
 - Encouragement to **introduce new suppliers for quotations** – as a way of increasing the number of new businesses working with the Council.
 - **Advertising emerging contracts** - All procurement opportunities (both tenders and quotations) are advertised on the Council's website
 - **RSS Email alerts** – the Council has put in place a notification service where businesses on the Council's supplier database can receive automatic notifications of contract opportunities including those below the official tender threshold (£30,000).
2. The **Smarter Procurement programme** – a programme run twice a year for 10 local businesses designed to help small businesses and social enterprises identify and take advantage of new sales opportunities in the public and private sectors. It aims to provide participants with the knowledge to identify procurement opportunities and develop the skills required to construct bids to enable them to tender for contracts more effectively.
 3. The **Construction Sales Growth Programme** - which has been designed to support 50 local sub-contractors and enable them to identify and exploit supply chain opportunities through one-to one mentoring support, workshops and partnership opportunities. **This programme has a target of generating £1million of new business for participating companies.**
 4. **eSourcing NI** – the Council currently uses this web based portal to further publicise tenders. This is an electronic tendering system which enables suppliers to complete and tender on-line thereby reducing their costs. It provides access to central and local government opportunities and it increases accessibility for SMEs, Social Economy Enterprises and other potential suppliers who wish to do business with the public sector. Companies can register on the portal and they will then receive alerts when a new tender/project has been published. Given that this is a relatively new system, it may be appropriate to increase awareness of how it works.

NEW SUPPORT PROGRAMMES UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- i. **Procurement Spend Profile** – detailed baseline audit underway to establish and breakdown the Council's current procurement spend profile with a particular focus on scale and location of suppliers and classification of spend. This information will enable the council to develop **focused capacity building sessions** for local businesses.
- ii. **Enhancing Corporate Capacity and Knowledge** – Strategic Review of Procurement recently completed and Council approval secured to appoint a senior procurement and contract manager. Will actively work to build greater procurement awareness, knowledge, expertise and skills across Council departments and produce develop a strategic approach to council-wide procurement that enables the council spend to be directed towards meeting agreed objectives e.g. SMEs, Green Suppliers etc..
- iii. Structured programme of **awareness raising/capacity building workshops** for local suppliers:
 - How the Council procures goods
 - Tips on how to complete necessary paperwork
 - Suggestions on building consortiums to enable bidding for large contracts
 - Tips for selling
 - Information-sharing on upcoming opportunities
- iv. Workshops can be supplemented with **1-2-1 mentoring support** (the Council's Economic Development Unit currently holds a mentor database).
- v. **BCC Internet Update** – in conjunction with Corporate Communications, undertake a review and update the Procurement section on the Council's web-portal to make it more visible and accessible for potential local suppliers.
- vi. **Procurement Guide** – to review and update the 'Selling to Belfast' publication and development of a new user firendly 'How to do business with the Council Guide'. This can be used as a check-list when considering to submit a bid for a procurement contract.
- vii. **Debriefing Sessions** – 1-2-1 debriefing sessions with unsuccessful suppliers to go through step by step why a particular submission did not succeed and to provide advice for future bids.
- viii. **Procurement Surgery Sessions (PSS)** – Programme of specialist support for local businesses to help them get an understanding of the procurement process and to provide practical and 'hands on' assistance as they prepare quotations and build organisational capacity to become tender ready.

Sector Specific Procurement Surgery Sessions could be organised to specifically cater for specific upcoming contracts that are due to be advertised in approximately 12/18 months time (which the Council already post notifications on its website) – the aim being to give potential suppliers an insight to what is required by the Council whilst giving businesses the opportunity to feedback information and ideas that can help develop tender specification. Ultimately, this can help the Council in packaging their contracts appropriately and intelligently. Clearly this would have resource implications which would need to be bid for as part of the estimating process.

- ix. **'Consortium Toolkit'** – a digital guide and support for businesses who are developing, or considering developing, a consortia bid for a large procurement contract. The Toolkit would contain model documents, templates and business planning tools to create a business strategy that will equip organisations to make robust decisions. Research underway to explore potential of this for Belfast and the associated cost, which would be recouped through a minimal charge per a copy of the 'Toolkit'.

Work is underway to develop a draft comprehensive programme of procurement support initiatives which the Council would intend to roll-out across the city and a report will be submitted to SP&R in November 2011.

DRAFT

External Relations and International Marketing

- The Council will develop an International Relations Strategy to support attracting tourism, foreign direct investment, commercial investment, European funding and talent to the city.
- In the first instance, we will carry out a review of all of our current international linkages to assess how the development of international civic relationships can support the development of investment and trade in the global market place.
- We are actively seeking to develop new linkages (civic business relationships) with other key cities – to enable us to draw from international knowledge and connections and to benefit from sharing best practice approaches. This will be the focus of the current programme of the 'State of the City' development debates.
- We will work with key agencies in the city to consolidate key strategic international relationships to support economic growth and competitiveness.
- At a more local level, we will develop an external relations strategy. This will ensure that Members lead the development of strategic relationships with key bodies in the city and the NI Executive to ensure that priorities for city success and competitiveness happen, resources and plans are aligned and that the Council has a coherent approach to engaging on key strategic issues which feeds back into its own governance and decision making structures.

Marketing the City

- **Over £7 million** investment in next 4 years in supporting the marketing and visitor servicing activities of the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau; and leveraging an additional **£8 million** investment with over 500 local tourism, hospitality and service businesses benefiting from this activity.

Developing the City's Tourism Product

- **£2m** investment over next 4 years in developing the city's tourism products in order to deliver the actions in the Integrated Tourism Development Framework. In particular we will focus on the 11 city places identified within the strategy to ensure that all parts of the city benefit from the potential growth in tourism over the coming years – particularly 2012/2013.



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Requests for the use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality
Date:	Friday, 21 October, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Mr. Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (Ext. 6314)
Contact Officer:	Mr. Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Ext. 6316)

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 26th September, 2003, agreed to the criteria which would be used to assess requests from external organisations for the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality. Subsequently the Committee at its meeting on 7th August, 2009, further amended the criteria so as to incorporate the new Key Themes as identified in the Council's Corporate Plan.
2.	Key Issues
2.1	The revised criteria has been applied to each of the requests contained within the appendix and recommendations have been made to the Committee on this basis.
3.	Resource Implications
3.1	Provision has been made in the revenue estimates for hospitality.
4.	Equality Implications
4.1	N/A
5.	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is asked to approve the recommendations as set out in the Appendix.

6.	Decision Tracking
Officer responsible – Gareth Quinn	

7.	Key to Abbreviations
Not applicable.	

8.	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Schedule of Applications	

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
IRFU Charitable Trust	'Leadership Through Sport' Conference Dinner 3rd February, 2012 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair, together' and Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £500
Lagan College, Belfast	'Peaceful City Conference' Gala Dinner 15th June, 2012 Approximately 350 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair, together' and Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Queen's University Belfast School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering	Cement and Concrete Science Conference Gala Dinner 17th September, 2012 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair, together' and Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Confederation of Ulster Societies	Annual Conference Gala Dinner 29th September, 2012 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair, together' and Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Belfast Hospital School	Pupil's Award Ceremony 17th November, 2011 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits	The Belfast Hospital School is a special school for children based in all of Belfast's major hospitals and who are unable to attend school because of physical or mental illness.	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits Approximate cost £375

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
			<p>This event aims to recognise the academic success of these children who have attended the school and will also seek to recognise the courage, resilience, and hard work of a very special group of young people.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'Better opportunities for success across the city', 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.</p>	
<p>Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium and Forum for Alternative Belfast</p>	<p>The launch of research into shared space and connection in Belfast</p> <p>16th November, 2011</p> <p>Approximately 80 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p>	<p>The aim of this event is to critically examine the connection of inner city interface communities to the city and analyse the implications for shared space in the city.</p> <p>The event also seeks to highlight the challenges which are faced by a city that is shared by all interface communities and will promote the benefits of working together to provide strong community, civic and political leadership.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'Better opportunities for success across the city', 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits</p> <p>Approximate cost £200</p>
<p>Golfing Union of Ireland (Ulster Branch)</p>	<p>Ulster Branch Centenary Dinner</p> <p>10th January, 2013</p> <p>Approximately 150 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception</p>	<p>This event seeks to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Golfing Union of Ireland (Ulster Branch) and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City leadership, strong, fair, together'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks.</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Action on Hearing Loss	Centenary Celebration and Christmas Carol Service 12th December, 2011 Approximately 120 attending	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits	This event seeks to celebrate the 100 th Anniversary of Action on Hearing Loss and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'Better opportunities for success across the city', 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services – listening and delivering'.	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits Approximate cost £300
Harberton Special School	Fashion Show and Awards Presentation 1st February, 2012 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits	This fashion show aims to showcase the talents of the children and young people from across the seven special schools in the Belfast area and to present awards in recognition of their hard work and achievements. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits Approximate cost £1,000
Age Sector Platform	Northern Ireland Pensioners' Parliament – Belfast 22nd February, 2012 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits	This event will provide a mechanism for older people from across Northern Ireland to have their say on the issues that matter to them. The event is one of seven local events which will identify issues of concern within the city and will be used to elect representatives to the overall Pensioners' Parliament. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together', 'Better Services – listening and delivering' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits Approximate cost £250

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Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	The live streaming and archiving of Council proceedings on the internet
Date:	Friday, 21 October, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext. 6314)
Contact Officer:	Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer (ext. 6316)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 22 October, 2010, agreed to the invitation of tenders for a system which would facilitate the live streaming and archiving of Council meetings on the internet. Furthermore, the matter was discussed briefly at the Committee's most recent meeting on 7 October.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The tender process is now complete and, as agreed by the Committee, the Assistant Chief Executive/Town Solicitor has exercised his delegated authority to approve the successful tender. This will result in the installation and operation of a webstreaming solution which will live stream and archive Council meetings.
2.2	The system will be installed in the Council Chamber over the coming weeks and will be fully tested at the Council meeting on 1st November. This meeting will not be shown live on the internet and the footage will only be used to help with the operation of the equipment, the training of staff and to feedback to the political parties.
2.3	It is important that all Members not only have an understanding of how the system will operate but that they are also both confident and comfortable with any implications that the system may have on the conduct of meetings. In order to ensure that this is the case, the footage recorded on 1st November will be used as a tool to assist with the briefing of Members during November. A further report will be presented to the Committee on 18th November setting out a more detailed protocol. It is intended that the Council meeting on 1st December will be the first meeting to be both broadcast live and archived.

2.4	During the last meeting of the Committee, a number of Members indicated that thought should be given as to how the conduct of the Council meetings might be impacted upon when the live broadcasts commence. In particular, Members were concerned to ensure that the reputation of the Council would not be adversely affected. It is intended that these matters will be discussed with the Parties during the briefings in November and any issues arising will be dealt with in the report to Committee on 18th November. The maintenance of order and the impact that the increased usage of social media during meetings might have will also be discussed with the parties during the briefings in November.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	The Council has agreed to the implementation of the system at a cost of £60,000 over three years.
3.2	Provision has been made within the draft 2011/2012 revenue estimates for the costs which would be incurred with the purchase of such a system.

4	Equality Implications
4.1	N/A

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report and that briefings will take place during November.

6	Decision Tracking
Officers responsible: Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer November 2011	



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	National Association of Councillors - Annual General Meeting and Conference
Date:	Friday, 21 st October, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Mr. Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (extension 6314)
Contact Officer:	Mrs. Julie Lilley, Democratic Services Officer (extension 6321)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The National Association of Councillors is holding its Annual General Meeting and Conference in Lytham St Annes from Friday, 25th until Sunday, 27th November.
1.2	This years Conference is concerned with how Local Government can work effectively with both the Westminster and European Parliaments to address the major problems being faced by all citizens in the current economic climate. A number of prominent MPs and MEPs will address the conference and take part in a 'Question Time' session.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The business of the Annual General Meeting falls within the criteria set out in Section 38 of the 1972 Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act in that it involves issues connected with the discharge of the functions of the Council and/or affecting the district or its inhabitants.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Delegate Fee: £350 Travel: £209 Accommodation: £110</p> <p>Total per delegate: <u>£669</u></p>

4	Equality Implications
	N/A

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>It is recommended that the Committee authorises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the attendance at the National Association of Councillors Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region), and a representative of each of the Parties on the Council not represented by the aforementioned Members.

6	Decision Tracking
<p>Officers responsible:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Julie Lilley, Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>November 2011</p>	



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Arrangements for Monthly Political Party Briefings
Date:	21 st October, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The importance of the Political Parties on the Council has increased over recent years and the Parties expect matters of importance or those which are complex to be presented either to the Party Leaders Forum or to the Party Groups for early comment before a report is submitted to the appropriate Committee.
1.2	At the moment, there is no structure in place to co-ordinate the dates of Party briefings or how they can contribute to the decision-making process. It should be remembered that a request to brief the Parties will necessitate 6 separate briefings which impacts upon the Members and senior officers alike in terms of the time commitment required.
1.3	It is clear that the need to brief the Parties will continue and that this is driven both by the Council Departments and by the Parties themselves. It is always difficult to find dates when both the Party Members and the necessary senior officers are free and officers realise that it is essential that briefings are organised so as to best suit the elected Members.
1.4	The Parties have now identified dates and times each month (with the exclusion of July and December) when their Members would be free for a 90 minute session. These dates will be included in the Committee meeting schedule and the monthly Remembrances so that Members and officers can both plan properly for the sessions. Democratic Services will provide appropriate refreshments for these meetings.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>A three month trial was held in 2006 when the dates of monthly Party briefings were organised in advance. The exercise was generally seen as positive by both Members and officers and a survey of Members demonstrated that 77% were in favour of the pilot scheme being made permanent. There is, therefore, evidence that a system of more regulated briefings would be welcomed.</p>
2.2	<p>It is vital for the success of any new arrangements that there is a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both Members and officers and a healthy mutual respect between the two. The new arrangements must have demonstrative benefits to both the Members and officers if they are to succeed. It can only be to the benefit of the Council if the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Political Parties are working so far as is possible in harmony towards the achievement of the key priorities in the Corporate Plan. It is recognised that individual Parties will have their own views on individual matters of policy which will differ from those of other Parties and those of Chief Officers. However, it should benefit everyone if there is a co-ordinated system in place which allows important and/or complex issues to be fed through the Parties before reaching Committee. It should also help towards a more informed and constructive debate on these important matters at Committee.</p>
2.3	<p>One of the most important issues to get right if this is to work is a mechanism to co-ordinate how issues get on the agenda for the Party briefings. It is vital that the briefings are not viewed as only a way in which officers can brief Members on what officers consider to be important. There must be ownership of the briefings by the Parties themselves.</p>
2.4	<p>Of course, it is extremely important that Chief Officers are able to brief all of the Parties on important matters such as the estimates process, the Corporate Plan, performance management etc and a defined schedule of meeting dates will allow officers to know in advance when the Parties will need to be briefed. For example, there would be a clear advantage to both Members and officers if officers knew well in advance the dates and times when they would be briefing the Parties on the estimates and capital programme rather than the current system where they are struggling to find dates within a very tight timescale.</p>
2.5	<p>In order for this to work properly, Chief Officers have a vital role to play. At the moment, individual Chief Officers and other senior officers often include a statement within Committee reports that they will brief the Parties on issues without any central control and this is partly responsible for the log jam in the meeting schedule. CMT has agreed to play the role of deciding on a monthly basis the one or two (maximum) matters of most importance to be included on the agenda for Party briefings.</p>

2.6	Equally, it is vital that time is allowed in each briefing for matters which have been raised by the Parties themselves. It must be recognised that the Parties control the briefings and that the agenda is not simply at the entire discretion of Chief Officers. For example, one Party might ask for a briefing on Arterial Routes. This does not mean that briefings on this subject have to be held for the other five Parties, which will save a considerable amount of time. The Parties are asked to agree not to raise ad hoc requests for briefings at Committee meetings. Rather, they are asked to agree that only the Party Leader (and/or Deputy Leader for the larger Parties) would be entitled to request that a subject is added to a monthly briefing session.
2.7	It must be recognised that no matter how much we try to regulate the business of the briefings, there will always be occasions when it will be necessary to arrange special briefings at short notice or where it will be necessary to arrange briefings on an area basis rather than on a Party basis. This can be accomplished with the Parties' agreement if it is seen as the exception rather than the rule, and every effort should be made to minimise the number of occasions when such emergency briefings are necessary.
2.8	During the year there will in all likelihood be occasions when CMT have not identified any issues that require the Parties to be briefed and in the same month a Party does not identify and individual issues about which it requires a briefing. In such circumstances either the briefing will be cancelled or, if it is deemed by the Party to be useful, the scheduled date could be used for Party development work under the Member Development Programme.
2.9	This will not work if there is not a resource provided to make sure that it is co-ordinated properly. This has already been accommodated within the new Democratic Services staffing structure. A Democratic Services Officer would be assigned to certain Parties and would work closely with them on the programme of briefings. Those officers would meet with the Party Officers to agree the agenda (made up of those issues agreed by CMT as important for all Parties and those issues which the individual Party wishes to be briefed about) and to ensure that this can be accommodated within the available time. The officers would prepare the agenda, liaise with the appropriate senior officers, issue the associated papers, attend the briefing, take a note of decisions, prepare a minute and follow up any decisions taken – similar to the work they undertake for the individual Committees. It is extremely important that the role of the Democratic Services Officers is defined clearly. They would not be attending political meetings of the Parties, such as those held prior to Council meetings to discuss the Parties' positions on matters before the Council, and they cannot be seen as a Party resource. Rather, their role must be tightly defined within the Party briefing arrangements.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The responsibility for staffing the Party Briefing sessions will rest with the Democratic Services Section and these duties have been included in existing job descriptions. There would not be any additional financial or Human Resources costs.

4	Good Relations and Equality
	None

5	Recommendations
	It is recommended that the Committee:
5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree to the establishment of monthly Party briefings on the basis set out in the report with effect from January, 2012;
5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the date and time of the monthly briefings as set out in Appendix 1; and
5.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree that from January 2012 all requests for individual Party Briefings must be through the Party Leader or Deputy Leader.

6	Key to Abbreviations
	CMT – Corporate Management Team

Appendix 1**Dates and Times of Monthly Party Briefings in 2012****January**

5 th	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
9 th	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
13 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
16 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm
18 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
19 th	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm

February

2 nd	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
8 th	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
10 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
15 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
16 th	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm
20 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm

March

7 th	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
8 th	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
9 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
21 st	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
22 nd	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm
26 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm

April

5 th	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
11 th	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
13 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
16 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm
18 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
19 th	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm

May

2 nd	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
3 rd	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
11 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
16 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
17 th	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm
21 st	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm

June

7 nd	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
13 th	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
15 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
18 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm
20 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
21 st	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm

July

No Briefings

August

1 st	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
2 nd	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
10 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
15 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
16 th	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm
20 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm

September

5 th	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
6 th	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
14 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
17 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm
19 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
20 th	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm

October

3 rd	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
4 th	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
12 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
15 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm
17 th	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
18 th	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm

November

7 th	Ulster Unionist Party Briefing	3.00pm
8 th	Sinn Fein Party Briefing	2.00pm
9 th	Democratic Unionist Party Briefing	5.00pm
19 th	Social Democratic & Labour Party Briefing	4.30pm
21 st	Progressive Unionist Party Briefing	2.30pm
22 nd	Alliance Party Briefing	3.00pm

December

No Briefings – at this stage.



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Consultation Paper 'Rating of Commercial Properties: small business, large retail properties and empty shops'
Date:	21 October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources

1.0	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>The purpose of this paper is to present to Members a summary of the response made by the council to the consultation on Rating of Commercial Properties: small business, large retail properties and empty shops.</p> <p>Consultation Proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General expansion of the small business rate relief scheme. 20% relief to be provided to eligible premises with an NAV of £5,001 - £10,000. It is estimated that an eligible small business will benefit from £730 p.a. • No additional relief would be provided to those currently receiving small business rate relief (NAV of £5,000 or below). • An average levy on rate bills of around 20% to be applied to those retail premises with a rateable value of £500,000 or more, in the form of a regional rate supplement. The costs facing large retailers are estimated at £85,000 p.a. on average. The average rates bill will increase from £430,000 to £515,000. • Allowing the use of shop fronts or shop window displays for (non-political) community, artistic or other non-commercial purposes so that the full occupied rate is not charged on otherwise empty properties. Entitlement to 50% empty property relief (or exclusion if applicable) would be preserved. • The above changes would apply for three years from 1 April 2012 until 31 March 2015.

- Clarifying the legislation relating to the valuation assumptions used at non-domestic revaluation, by being more specific about the state and circumstances to be taken into account in compiling a new valuation list. This would take effect at the next general revaluation in 2015.

2.0	Key Issues																																																																																																																
2.1	<p>Stores affected</p> <p>Twenty-nine of the 77 large retail stores are in Belfast and 19 of these are located in the city centre. The geographical description above gives a misleading impression. The 77 comprise mainly multiple chain stores such as Tesco, but also a substantial number of 'High Street' stores, located in almost all cases in Belfast city centre. The stores listed below:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Geographical distribution of the 77 stores affected</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>Belfast</th> <th>Elsewhere</th> <th>NI Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Boots</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Charles Hurst</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Debenhams</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Eason & Son (NI)</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Harvey Norman Leasing (NI)</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>House Of Fraser</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>IKEA</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Republic¹</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>New Look</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Next</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Peacocks</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Primark Stores</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>River Island</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>TK MAXX</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Toys R Us</td><td></td><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>WH Smith</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Zara</td><td>1</td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>H & M</td><td>2</td><td></td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Arcadia (BHS; Top Shop; Wallis)</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Homebase</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Dunnes Stores</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Marks & Spencer</td><td>1</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Asda</td><td></td><td>7</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>B & Q</td><td>2</td><td>7</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>Sainsbury's</td><td>2</td><td>7</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>Tesco</td><td>2</td><td>16</td><td>18</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Geographical distribution of the 77 stores affected					Belfast	Elsewhere	NI Total	Boots	1		1	Charles Hurst	1		1	Debenhams	1		1	Eason & Son (NI)	1		1	Harvey Norman Leasing (NI)	1		1	House Of Fraser	1		1	IKEA	1		1	Republic ¹	1		1	New Look	1		1	Next	1		1	Peacocks	1		1	Primark Stores	1		1	River Island	1		1	TK MAXX	1		1	Toys R Us		1	1	WH Smith	1		1	Zara	1		1	H & M	2		2	Arcadia (BHS; Top Shop; Wallis)	2	1	3	Homebase	1	2	3	Dunnes Stores	1	3	4	Marks & Spencer	1	4	5	Asda		7	7	B & Q	2	7	9	Sainsbury's	2	7	9	Tesco	2	16	18
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Total	29	48	77
	Retail Levy		
2.2	It is reasonable to assume that most of the affected stores would continue to operate under the levy and would suffer a detriment only in the sense that their profitability would be reduced by the amount of the levy.		
2.3	It is only a slight simplification to say that the 77 stores to be affected by the proposed retail levy comprise supermarkets (and B&Q) on the one hand and the large city centre stores of Belfast on the other hand. The business model of large store chains, as described to us by the principal chains affected is that each store is a cost and profit centre and stands or falls by the contribution it makes to the group as a whole: a store pushed into loss by a levy averaging around £85,000 per store may not be retained by the group on the grounds that the chain could 'afford' to pay the £85,000. A review of publically available documentation shows that the parent companies of several of the stores are in significant financial difficulty; and one chain at least has a recent record of closing stores in marginal locations. If the levy tipped even one major Belfast store over the edge into closure, this would have a major impact on the city's rate base and the local economy.		
2.4	The levy may also impede investment. Smaller retail outlets, restaurants, and chain supermarkets are very important, but it is the High Street stores that define Belfast as a major retail centre within the UK. The shopping centre of Belfast offers a service to the whole of Northern Ireland, and to visitors from elsewhere. It has a good selection of the British and Irish chain stores, and of course of smaller and specialist shops of all kinds. But it has, for instance, no branch of John Lewis, still less of Selfridges or Harvey Nicholls. It is clearly desirable for Belfast to step-up its retail offer and the levy may impede efforts to do this.		
	Alternatives to Proposed Retail Levy		
2.5	There are 260 properties with a net annual value exceeding £500,000, of which 77 are 'large retail'. On a pro rata basis, we suppose that the required levy would be 6% rather than 20% if levied on all 260 premises rather than on large retail premises only.		
2.6	In Scotland a new "public health levy" on major retailers has been proposed as part of an effort to alleviate cuts to Scotland's local authorities. Large retailers that sell alcohol and tobacco will have to pay a business rates supplement from April 2012. The levy will be applied through a business rates supplement on premises with a rateable value above £300,000 that sell tobacco and alcohol.		
	Small Business Relief		
2.7	The council welcomes the extension of small business relief which will benefit around 9,000 small businesses by over £700 per annum. The council would also encourage further research to be carried out on the market failures that face small businesses in Northern Ireland so that a targeted approach could be developed which aims, by ameliorating market failure, to achieve effective economic impact.		

3.0	Resource Implications

4.0	Recommendations
4.1	Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

5.0	Decision Tracking

6.0	Key to Abbreviations

7.0	Documents Attached
Appendix 1	Full response
Appendix 2	Full list of stores

Appendix 1: Draft responses to questions

Question 1

1. Do you have any general comments on the preferred approach presented in this paper? (Specific questions are posed later in this paper)

Response

The council welcomes the relief offered to small businesses through this proposal. The council has concerns about the potential impact on the city's rates base as 29 of the 77 retailers are based in Belfast.

Question 2

2. Do you agree that the proposed large retail levy should be used to provide additional help to small businesses?

Response

It is true that most stores would continue to operate under the levy and would be affected only in the sense that their profitability would be reduced by the amount of the levy. It is only a slight simplification to say that the 77 stores to be affected by the proposed retail levy comprise supermarkets (and B&Q) on the one hand and the large city centre stores of Belfast on the other hand. The business model of large store chains, as described to us by the principal chains affected is that each store is a cost and profit centre and stands or falls by the contribution it makes to the group as a whole: a store pushed into loss by a levy averaging around £85,000 per store may not be retained by the group on the grounds that the chain could 'afford' to pay the £85,000. A review of publically available documentation shows that the parent companies of several of the stores are in significant financial difficulty; and one chain at least has a recent record of closing stores in marginal locations. If the levy tipped even one major Belfast store over the edge into closure, this would have a major impact on the part of the city affected, and would we suggest have a greater adverse impact on the economy than any benefits from the business relief.

The levy may also impede investment. Smaller retail outlets, restaurants, and chain supermarkets are very important, but it is the High Street stores that define Belfast as a major retail centre within the UK. The shopping centre of Belfast offers a service to the whole of Northern Ireland, and to visitors from elsewhere. It has a good selection of the British and Irish chain stores, and of course of smaller and specialist shops of all kinds. But it has, for instance, no branch of John Lewis, still less of Selfridges or Harvey Nicholls. It is clearly desirable for Belfast to step-up its retail offer and the levy may impede efforts to do this.

Question 3

3. What are your views on the preferred approach of an average 20% levy (against the overall rates bill) on high value retail premises?

Response

We have summarised above our concerns about the levy. The lower the rate, however, the weaker are the immediate practical objections and therefore if it is to be implemented it should be implemented at the lowest possible rate. We would reiterate that this view has no implications for the support that ought to be extended to small businesses, which should be considered separately from the question of the levy.

Question 4

4. Do you have any views on the alternatives to a fixed percentage retail levy?

Response

Scope of the proposed levy

A levy on all large properties should be considered. We note that there are 260 properties with a net annual value exceeding £500,000, of which 77 are 'large retail'. On a pro rata basis, we suppose that the required levy would be 6% rather than 20% if levied on all 260 premises rather than on large retail only.

The consultation paper notes that a further 20% of properties are electricity or gas company premises or banks, hotels and call centres etc. The only argument in the paper against their being subject to the levy is that of mobility. It seems doubtful to us that the occupiers of many of these premises are truly mobile or that of those that may be mobile, many would actually move. The occupiers of the remaining 50% of premises are described as '*public bodies, receive public funding etc*'. The argument against their inclusion amounts to a claim that their inclusion would simply recycle public money. Even if this claim is true, there is a case for including these premises: their inclusion would articulate what is in a sense the real cost of providing the relevant services, including an appropriate contribution to the goals of the small business rate relief. But it is unclear from the description what types of entity fall within the description. Many bodies in receipt of public funds are at arm's length from the core of the public sector and may receive a substantial amount or even the majority of their funding other than through the public sector (eg through fees or user charges).

In Scotland a new "public health levy" on major retailers has been proposed as part of an effort to alleviate cuts to Scotland's local authorities. Large retailers that sell alcohol and tobacco will have to pay a business rates supplement from April 2012. The levy will be applied through a business rates supplement on premises with a rateable value above £300,000 that sell tobacco and alcohol.

Banding

We agree with your suggestion that banding the levy so that the largest premises paid more would lead to undue complication.

Question 5

5. *What are your views on a levy being applied selectively, for example confined to supermarkets or properties outside of town centres?*

Response

One option which could be considered is a new "public health levy". Large retailers that sell alcohol and tobacco would have to pay a business rates supplement. The levy would be applied through a business rates supplement on premises with a rateable value above £300,000 that sell tobacco and alcohol. This scheme has already been introduced in Scotland.

Question 6

6. *Have you any other views on the issues covered in this section?*

Response

No

Question 7

7. *Would you agree with the proposal to extend the small business rate relief scheme for three years, as a temporary downturn measure?*

Response

We appreciate the need to support small businesses. We note that the businesses to be assisted by the proposed new tranche of relief are not the very smallest: they may perhaps be described as the smaller medium-sized businesses. The relief of some £700 that they will each receive on average would, doubtless, be welcome. We would also encourage further research to be carried

out on the market failures that face small businesses in Northern Ireland so that a targeted approach could be developed which aims, by ameliorating market failure, to achieve effective economic impact.

Question 8

8. Would you agree with the proposal to fund this through the imposition of a rates levy on the highest value retail properties?

Response

We have already stated concerns about the levy in our response to question 2.

Question 9

9. If not, how should this be funded?

Response

A 6% levy on all properties with an NAV greater than £500,000 would reduce the risk of chain closures in Belfast city centre.

Question 10

10. What are your views on the proposal to extend the reach of the existing scheme rather than provide additional relief to current recipients of small business rate relief?

Response

A view on this matter needs to be informed by research. We would suggest that there is some risk in a scheme that provides, by way of relief, small sums to a large number of businesses, rather than a more targeted programme, and this consideration would point towards raising the existing relief rather than extending relief to a greater number of businesses, but we would reiterate that the approach should be based on research evidence.

Question 11

11. Do you agree that 20% relief should be provided to eligible premises with an NAV of £5,001 - £10,000?

Response

Again we have no strong view. Given the general approach, we have no reason to suggest, say, that the relief should be 15%, but provided to a wider NAV range, or 25% but provided to a narrower range.

Question 12

12. Do you agree that the relief should be applied to all non-domestic premises (with some limited exclusions) regardless of use?

Response

Yes. Uniformity is to be preferred unless there are strong countervailing reasons

Question 13

13. What are your views on the small business retail relief option, taking account of the issues associated with this option?

Response

On the whole, we consider that a restriction of the proposed relief to a particular industry is inappropriate.

Question 14

14. Do you have any views on the general issues raised in this section?

Response

No.

Question 15

15. Are there any other matters that you think should be considered?

Response

No

Question 16

16. Do you agree with the proposal and the suggested approach?

Response

Yes. We believe strongly that where it is not, for the moment, possible to use retail premises for business purposes, it should at least be possible to make them attractive without losing rate relief.

Question 17

17. Do you have any views on the issues raised in this section?

Response

None apart from than those in responses to other questions

Question 18

18. Is the scope of the suggested categories of use sufficient to meet the policy objectives?

Response

We believe so; however, there is scope for clarification. We have been impressed by displays such as those in central Sheffield by art students exhibiting their work in vacant shop premises. The crucial point is 'animation' of city centres, bringing them back to life by allowing the widest possible range of displays in empty shops whilst maintaining the principle of 'no commercial use'.

Question 19

19. Have you any views on how this should operate?

Response

The consultation document makes clear that this question relates to the physical depth of permitted displays or similar criteria. We would comment simply that the operating criteria should not impede attainment of the objective. In case of doubt, the criteria should be generously drawn.

Question 20

20. Have you any views on the type of activities that should be excluded?

Response

The exclusions suggested in the consultation document seem appropriate

Question 21

21. Do you have any views on the issues raised in this section?

Response

We agree with the general approach of clarifying and standardizing practice in Northern Ireland. We note that the consultation document says that there will be '*...no real change to the operational practice that is already in place.*' We should appreciate confirmation that this is indeed the case and that the process described in the consultation document will not, perhaps inadvertently, lead to

substantial changes in the relative rate burdens faced by businesses of different types or in different areas.

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Appendix 2: Full list of stores affected

(Taken from the Consultation Document with one modification (see footnote))

Arcadia – British Home Stores	13 Castle Lane, Belfast, BT1 1GB
Arcadia – Wallis	Unit 9/10 Forestside Shopping Centre, Belfast, BT8 6FX
Arcadia – Top Shop	Msu 2, 1 Victoria Square, Belfast, BT1 4QG
Asda	43 Asda Railway Road, 43 Railway Street, Strabane, BT82 8EQ
Asda	Unit D1, Ards Shopping Centre, Circular Road, Newtownards, BT23 4EU
Asda	2 Ring Road, Coleraine, BT52 1QN
Asda	31 Dromore Road, Omagh, BT78 1QZ
Asda	8 Derrychara Road, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, BT74 6TG
Asda	85 Park Street, Ballyclare, County Antrim, BT39 9DQ
Asda	150 Junction One Outlet Centre, Antrim, County Antrim, BT414LL
B & Q	2 Balmoral Road, Belfast, BT12 6QA
B & Q	1 Marlborough Retail Park, Craigavon, County Armagh, BT641AG
B & Q	15 Braidwater Retail Park, Ballymena, County Antrim, BT42 3ES
B & Q	300 Airport Road West, Belfast
B & Q	1 Faustina Retail Park, Londonderry, BT48 8QN
B & Q	Unit 1 Sprucefield Park, Lisburn, BT27 5UJ
B & Q	5 Damolly Retail Park, Newry, Armagh, BT35 6PR
B & Q	Unit 4, Abbey Retail Park, Church Road, Newtownabbey, County Antrim, BT36 7GU
B & Q	20 Riverside Regional Centre, Coleraine, BT51 3QQ
Boots	35 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5AW
Charles Hurst Ltd	60 Boucher Road, Belfast, BT12 6HR
Debenhams Plc	Unit 34, Castle Court, Belfast, BT1 1DD
Dunnes Stores	1 High Street, Belfast, BT1 2AA
Dunnes Stores Ltd	Fairgreen Shopping Centre, 1 Forthill Street, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, BT74 6AJ
Dunnes Stores Ltd	Riverside Centre, 2 Irishtown Road, Omagh, BT78 1EF
Dunnes Stores Ltd	1 Bannside Wharf, Coleraine, Londonderry, BT52 1BW
Eason & Son (NI) Ltd	20 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5BA
H & M	Queens Buildings, 8-10 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 8DE
H & M	Unit Ug 17, 1 Victoria Square, Belfast, BT1 4QG
Harvey Norman Leasing (NI) Ltd	Units A-D, 304 Airport Road West, Belfast
Homebase Ltd	1 Crescent Link Retail Park, Londonderry, BT47 6SA
Homebase Ltd	Units 1-3, Balloo Retail Park, Balloo Link, Bangor, County Down, BT19 7QY
Homebase Ltd	Unit 1 Shane Retail Park, 105 Boucher Road, Belfast, BT12 6RH
House Of Fraser	1 Victoria Square, Belfast, BT1 4QG
Ikea	306 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9EJ
Republic ¹	Unit Msu 03, 1 Victoria Square, Belfast, BT1 4QG
Marks & Spencer	No 1 Abbey Centre, Old Glenmount Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7DN
Marks & Spencer	48 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5BB
Marks & Spencer	1 Sprucefield Shopping Centre, Lisburn, BT27 5UJ
Marks & Spencer	Unit 1B, Store 2 Forestside Shopping Centre, Upper Galwally,

¹ This is listed in the Consultation Document as 'Indulge Retail T/A Head', but that business is no longer operating and the premises are occupied by Republic

	Belfast, BT8 6FX
Marks & Spencer	Unit 29, Bloomfield Shopping Centre, South Circular Road, Bangor, BT19 7HB
New Look	Fountain House, 19-21 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5AB
Next	40 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5BB
Peacocks	49 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5AG
Primark Stores	33 Castle Place, Belfast, BT1 1GA
River Island	Unit Ug 19, 1 Victoria Square, Belfast, BT1 4QG
Sainsbury's	14A Forestside Shopping Centre, Belfast, BT8 6FX
Sainsbury's	5 Sprucefield Park, Lisburn, BT27 5UQ
Sainsbury's	10 Riverside Regional Centre, Coleraine, BT51 3AW
Sainsbury's	1 Braidwater Retail Park, Ballymena, County Antrim, BT42 3AG
Sainsbury's	18 Rushmere Centre, Craigavon, County Armagh, BT64 1AA
Sainsbury's	Hollywood Exchange, 302 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9ED
Sainsbury's	4 The Quays, Newry, County Down, BT35 8QS
Sainsbury's	150 Strand Road, Londonderry, BT48 7PB
Sainsbury's	(Unit 28), Kennedy Centre, 580 Falls Road, Belfast, BT11 9AE
Tesco	4 Marlborough Retail Park, Balteagh, Craigavon, BT64 1AG
Tesco	29 Knocknagoney Road, Belfast, BT4 2PW
Tesco	Unit 1, Abbey Retail Park, Church Road, Newtownabbey, BT367GU
Tesco	28 Castle Way, Antrim, BT41 4BU
Tesco	47 Orritor Road, Cookstown, BT80 8BH
Tesco	1 Minorca Place, Carrickfergus, BT38 8AU
Tesco	170 Newtownbreda Road, Belfast, BT48 4PZ
Tesco	45 Millenium Way, Lurgan, BT66 8DH
Tesco	90 Larne Link Road, Ballymena, Antrim, BT42 3HB
Tesco	11 Dublin Road, Enniskillen
Tesco	Unit 1, Springhill Retail Park, Killeen Avenue, Bangor, County Down, BT19 1ND
Tesco	Unit 1, Bloomfield Shopping Centre, South Circular Road, Bangor, BT19 7HB
Tesco	Unit 25, Connswater Shopping Centre, 115-117 Bloomfield Avenue, Belfast, BT5 5LP
Tesco	Unit 1, 1 Lisnagelvin Shopping Centre, Londonderry, BT47 6DF
Tesco	1 Beechvalley, Dungannon, County Tyrone, BT71 7BN
Tesco	Bentrim Centre, 2 Bentrim Road, Lisburn, BT28 2GB
Tesco	27 Castlewellan Road, Banbridge, BT32 4BW
Tesco	M 13 The Meadows Centre, Portadown, Craigavon, BT62 3TN
TK MAXX	32-40 Rosemary Street, Belfast, BT1 1GA
Toys R Us	1A Sprucefield Park, Lisburn, BT27 5UQ
WH Smith	44 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5BB
Zara	3 Donegall Place, Belfast, BT1 5AA



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Rate Setting 2012/13
Date:	21 October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources

1	Relevant Background Information																								
1.1	Members will recall that at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting in April the process for the setting of the rate was agreed as outlined in the chart below.																								
1.2	The purpose of this briefing is to outline progress made against the agreed timetable and to discuss the key issues which will need to be addressed as part of the rate setting process.																								
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Feb	Council	Agree district rate Q3 Finance Report																							

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Progress to date</p> <p>At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in April 2011 Members agreed that the department estimates should be compiled using the planning assumption that any required growth should be within the level of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. Departments have now completed the first draft of the estimates and all budgets are well within the current CPI rate of 4.5%. The proposed budgets are currently being checked for completeness and accuracy. The next stage, in terms of the revenue estimates is to ensure that the budgets are aligned to the corporate priorities of the organisation. The outcomes from the Member planning workshops and the development of the stimulus package will be integrated with the financial plans in October and November. The first cut of the department estimates at a high level will be presented to the second Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in November.</p> <p>Members also agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in April 2011 an efficiency target of £2m cash savings for 2012/13. I am pleased to report that officers have been able to identify and capture efficiencies which will meet the £2m target. A detailed report on the efficiency programme will be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 4 November.</p> <p>Key Issues for the Setting of the Rate 2012/13</p> <p>2.2 As in previous years, Members will be faced with the challenge of balancing the conflicting priorities of keeping the rate at an acceptable level and at the same time providing sufficient finance to deliver their ambitions. The key factors which will need to be considered are outlined below.</p> <p>2.3 Net Department Expenditure The key challenge will be to keep the revenue estimates as low as possible in the context of inflation and any growth proposals emanating from the corporate planning process. The efficiency programme will serve to reduce the estimates by the £2m target set by members.</p> <p>City Investment Fund</p> <p>2.4 This fund is used to finance city projects where the asset is not owned by the council. It is currently financed through a £3m annual contribution from the rate and proceeds from the sale of council owned land or assets. At present, it is forecast that by 2014/15 the fund will have a balance of £11m. Members are currently prioritising a suite of potential projects which, by their nature, will require funding in part from the city investment fund. The delivery of these projects must be tested against affordability. The stimulus package report has already recommended that each proposed project will be reviewed by joint Member / officer teams and a key element of this work will be to determine the funding requirements. The findings of this work will be fed into the rate setting process in November and December. Members will then have to determine which projects they wish to fund and set a rate which supports the delivery of these projects.</p>

2.5	<p>Capital Programme</p> <p>The capital programme and capital finance relates to the council owned assets. The programme can be funded through loans, grants, asset sales and revenue contributions. Currently the programme is fully financed and any new capital schemes of a material value, such as the extension to the Waterfront Hall will require additional financing. Officers are currently working on ways to enhance the current financing arrangements and a further report will be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in November.</p>
2.6	<p>Local Investment Fund</p> <p>This fund was created by Members to support the financing of smaller scale neighbourhood capital projects where the asset may not necessarily be owned by the council. £2.5m was allocated to the fund at the end of the last financial year. Members should note that the fund is not rate supported, in other words there is no agreed recurrent funding for the scheme. The development of the policy framework to support the fund will be discussed with Members at the People and Communities workshop in November.</p>
2.7	<p>Reserves</p> <p>The general reserve is currently sits at £10.4m which Members have agreed is an acceptable level. Members should note that it is recommended that reserves should not be used to finance recurrent expenditure and to do so would create sustainability issues for the council.</p>
2.8	<p>Rate Base</p> <p>The decision on the level of the district rate for 2012/13 will be dependent on the state of the rate base. When setting the rate for 2011/12 the estimate of rates income was reduced by £2.5m. Land and Property Services will provide the council with the first cut of the rates forecast for next year at the end of October. At this stage we have no indication of what the forecast will be but there are obvious concerns about the continuing impact of the recession on Belfast and the level of vacant properties in the city. Officers will be working very closely with LPS officials to ensure that the required rates information is provided to Members in a timely manner..</p>
2.9	<p>Local Government Finance Act 2011</p> <p>New local government finance arrangements will start from 1 April 2012. The key changes which will impact on the council are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will provide new powers to councils in terms of borrowing. In short, the council will be able to decide what borrowing levels are appropriate. Members will required to approve a set of indicators known as Prudential Indicators which will cover affordability (have we the money?), prudence (are the risks acceptable?) and sustainability (can we afford it in the longer term?). • The Director of Finance and Resources will be required to submit a report to council on the robustness of the estimates.

2.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Director of Finance and Resources must produce a written report on the adequacy of financial reserves. • The council will be required to agree a Treasury Management Strategy which will cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Capital finance plans ○ Borrowing Strategy ○ Debt management ○ Investments. <p>Council officers have been working with the Chartered Institute of Finance and Public Accountancy (CIPFA), who are the leading experts in this field, on the implementation of the new Finance Act. A detailed report will be brought to Members at the second Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting in November.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report.

6	Decision Tracking
	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources November, 2011

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Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Potential industrial action involving Belfast City Council employees on 30 November 2011.
Date:	21 October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Jill Minne, Head of HR

Relevant Background Information

On 14 September 2011 the Trade Union Congress voted unanimously in favour of industrial action over the government's proposals to increase employee pension contributions in the public sector pension scheme.

Currently 70 percent of the Council's workforce is a member of a trade union. 33% are members of NIPSA, 30% members of GMB, 27% are members of Unite and 10% are members of SIPTU.

HR has also identified the make up of each of these unions at a service level in order to establish those services potentially most affected by any industrial action.

Key Issues

- During October the local government trade unions will ballot their members on industrial action with the result being known by mid November.
- It is anticipated that this will result in strike action by Unite, NIPSA, GMB and SIPTU members on **30 November 2011**.
- As with previous national industrial action (e.g. strike action in July 2008 as a result of the national pay offer) Belfast City Council will initiate its Industrial Action Contingency Group (IACG) chaired by the Head of HR to establish contingency planning arrangements in the event of industrial action.
- This group will manage all issues arising from the strike through a planned and coordinated approach to ensure that essential services are maintained where possible and that communication is ongoing with elected members, the media and the workforce.

- The IACG will determine exemption requirements, i.e. those individuals or groups of staff who should remain in work during industrial action to minimise disruption to service provision, meet health and safety obligations, and provide business continuity in so far as is practicable (e.g. Registrars, Malone House and Belfast Castle staff for weddings and civil partnerships; cemetery operatives; health and safety staff). IACG will discuss and seek to agree these exempt staff with the council's Trade Union Coordinators.
- The Chief Executive and Head of HR will meet with Party Group Leaders to discuss the contingencies to be put in place for the strike to ensure that disruption to the public is minimised.

Resource Implications

Staff will not be paid for the day of strike action.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the information as set out in this report. A further report will be provided to committee once the council has been officially notified of the result of the ballots and communication with members will be ongoing.

Decision Tracking

Report to be made to committee in November 2011

Key to Abbreviations

IACG - Council's Industrial Action Contingency Group.

Documents Attached

None



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Former Grove Leisure Centre
Date:	21 October 2011
Reporting Officers:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officers:	Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager Michael Stanley, Capital Programme Manager

1.0	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The issue of the former Grove Leisure Centre was raised at the September Committee and an update report was requested.
1.2	The former Grove Leisure Centre currently sits within the Councils Corporate Landbank, held by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee & managed by the Property & Projects Department, pending future use options being considered by Committee. The site extends to approximately 1.27 acres; a location map is enclosed at Appendix 1.
1.3	Demolition of the building had previously been proposed for inclusion in the Capital Programme with a budget estimate of £500k but it is currently sitting as an uncommitted proposal, pending a decision on funding availability. Demolition had not therefore progressed due to there being no identified funding and also on the basis of previous planning advice which had indicated that from a highway perspective there could be advantages in the building remaining in place prior to submission of a planning application. This was because the associated traffic with the previous use could potentially be factored into a planning application, whereas a cleared site might mean that 'nil-use' could be deemed for the site and no discount could be applied for 'committed/previous' trip in any Transport Assessment. This has been the position taken in respect of Maysfield for example, which has additional planning issues in relation to the adjacent apartment block, based on the advice of planning consultants. However, more recent advice from the planning consultants has indicated that this is not as relevant in the case of the former Grove Leisure Centre site which will entail a much smaller scale of development
1.4	It is expected that the demolition and associated works could be

	<p>undertaken within the provisional budget estimate of £500,000, although this is subject to a detailed invasive (in that the fabric of the building will need to be opened up) survey of the building to identify issues, such as asbestos, which would need to be removed by specialist contractors.</p>
1.5	<p>The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed that funding could now be made available for demolition of the building should Members wish to proceed from revenue contributions to non loan funded capital schemes on the Committed Capital Programme. It is worth noting that the cost of demolition would inevitably have to be borne by the Council either as a direct cost now or by way of a reduced financial return for the site in the event of it being disposed as any purchaser or developer would factor the cost of demolition into any offer they would make.</p>
1.6	<p>Members may wish to note that the total initial cost of securing the building, blocking of doors, windows and skylights and fencing off pool areas etc; retaining essential services (electricity, intruder and fire alarms); removal of contaminated water, chemicals, heating oil, de-gassing of fuel tank & cleaning contaminated areas was £34,000. The costs from November 2008 to date of insuring the building; keeping it alarmed; key holding and call out services and intermittent maintenance required has been approximately £21,250.</p>
1.7	<p>In terms of future disposal and/or development options for the site Members may wish to note that a planning appraisal & site contamination report have recently been undertaken in order to assess future use options and any potential constraints. The planning assessment identified that a range of development mixes could be delivered on the site, potentially incorporating a range of commercial & community uses such as serviced office accommodation, related to local enterprise/social economy uses, or retail, restaurant or entertainment uses with residential development on upper floors. It also indicated that the site is suitable for a higher density residential led mixed use development. NIHE have, however, confirmed that the site is not located in an area of identified social housing need. The planning consultants had also commented that the former Grove Primary & Nursery School site could be suitable for complementary development.</p>
1.8	<p>Members may also be aware that a report was undertaken in 2009 by Colin Stutt Consulting on behalf of the Council to assess business accommodation and business incubation in Belfast. This study was one of the actions identified in the Council's Local Economic Development Plan 2006 – 2010. A number of conclusions & recommendations were made in this report regarding the Council's role in relation to business accommodation & incubation provision & potential proposals for a new business centre. The report had considered the availability of business incubation space and the role of the Local Enterprise Agencies in Belfast. One of the recommendations was that the Council may want to consider developing proposals for one or more sectorally focused business development centres in areas of the city requiring regeneration. Given that the work on the report was carried out in June 2009 which considered the economic climate and demand at that</p>

	<p>time, it is considered that there would be merit in getting an update on this needs analysis and there could be a focus on this location in North Belfast, with a view to potential consideration of the former Grove Leisure Centre site as a location for a business development centre or a social economy project.</p>
1.9	<p>Members may also wish to note that North City Business Park, a local enterprise agency, are considering expansion of their current social economy business park (located at Duncairn Gardens) and potential development of an additional site. Whilst their proposals are still at a relatively early stage and they are considering various sites, they have however indicated an interest in this particular location. Given the current property slump there is likely to be limited demand generally for development sites such as the Grove site and whilst there has been this potential interest by North City Business Park it is only an initial expression of interest and equally there may potentially be other interest in the market.</p> <p>North City Business Park are aware of the Council's procurement & legislative requirements in terms of any disposal; and any recommendations that will subsequently be brought to Committee in relation to disposal or development will be in accordance with those requirements. Disposal by way of a Development Brief may possibly be one option but a more detailed report will be brought back to Committee in the near future with proposals on the way forward.</p>
1.10	<p>Members may also be aware that Grove Primary & Nursery Schools, located opposite the Grove former leisure centre site are now closed and have been earmarked for disposal. There may, therefore, be scope for joint consideration of disposal/development options of both sites and an initial preliminary discussion has taken place with BELB on this potential.</p>

2.0	Key Issues
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demolition of the building had previously been proposed for inclusion in the Capital Programme but it is currently sitting as an uncommitted proposal, pending a decision on funding availability. Demolition was not therefore progressed due there being no identified funding and also on the basis of previous planning advice in relation to the effect demolition might have on any future planning applications.
2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of demolition would ultimately be borne by the Council either as a direct cost now or by way of a reduced financial return on disposal of the site if purchaser/developer were to undertake demolition.
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A previous report commissioned by the Council back in 2009 on business accommodation & incubation space in Belfast recommended that the Council consider developing proposals for a business development centre in areas of the city requiring regeneration. In order to inform the future use options for the subject site and following on from this 2009 report, it is recommended that an updated needs analysis is undertaken, which could focus on this particular location, with a view to

<p>2.4</p> <p>2.5</p>	<p>potential consideration of the former Grove Leisure Centre site as a location for a business development centre or a social economy project. In addition, the terms of reference for the business case (as detailed above) that is being taken forward for a digital hub could include consideration of specific locations including the subject site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is also recommended that officers take forward discussions with BELB regarding any scope for joint consideration of disposal/development options for both the Council’s site and the adjacent former schools site. • It is proposed that a future report will be brought back to Committee in the near future with proposals for future use options based upon the updated market analysis on business accommodation; as well as property demand generally; the business case findings in relation to a potential digital hub; the discussions with BELB, and any potential funding opportunities.
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<p>3.0 Resource Implications</p>	
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p><u>Finance</u></p> <p>A provisional estimate of £500,000 for demolition was shown in the uncommitted capital programme. It is expected that the demolition and associated works could be undertaken within this budget estimate cost of £500,000, although this is subject to a detailed invasive survey of the building to identify issues, such as asbestos, which would need to be removed by specialist contractors.</p> <p>This cost will be offset in part by the ongoing costs of insuring & maintaining the existing building. Any financial return on disposal of the site will reflect that the developer /purchaser does not have to undertake demolition of the building.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <p>Staff resource, primarily from Property & Projects in progressing demolition & future use/ disposal options.</p> <p><u>Asset & Other Implications</u></p> <p>Demolition of the building should diminish health & safety risks associated with an old vacant building, as well as improving the area from an aesthetic perspective. Consideration of future use disposal and/or development options should have economic, regenerative & financial benefits.</p>

<p>4.0 Equality and Good Relations Considerations</p>	
<p>4.1</p>	<p>None at this time.</p>

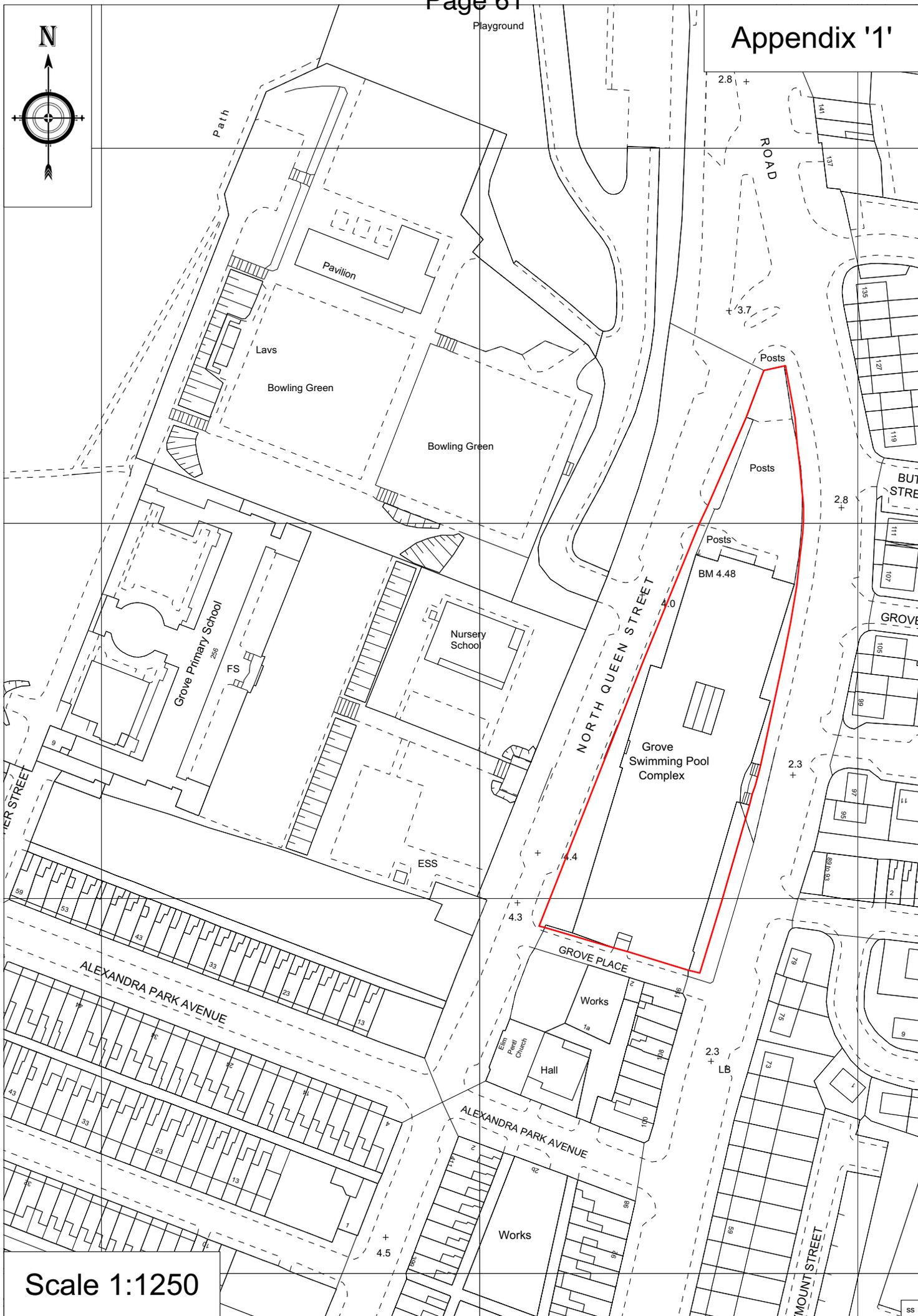
5.0	Recommendations
	Members are asked to recommend:
5.1	(i) To progress with the demolition of the building and proceed with the invitation of tenders for the demolition works and the award of contract to the most economically advantageous offer received.
5.2	(ii) In order to inform future use options for this site that an updated report be undertaken on a needs analysis for business accommodation and incubation space in Belfast, which would also focus on this particular location.
5.3	(iii) Officers take forward discussions with BELB regarding any scope for joint consideration of disposal/development options for both the subject site and the adjacent former schools site.
5.4	(iv) A report will be brought back to Committee in the near future with proposals for future use options for the site based on the foregoing.

6.0	Decision Tracking
6.1	The Director of Property & Projects to progress the above within 4 months.

7.0	Key to Abbreviations
7.1	None.

8.0	Documents Attached
8.1	Appendix 1: Site Location Plan

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Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Smithfield Market Unit Lettings
Date:	21 st October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Projects and Projects
Contact Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager

1.0 Relevant Background Information

Unit Lettings at Smithfield Market

1.1 Functional responsibility for dealing with the property related issues in relation to the letting of units at Smithfield Market rests with the Director of Property & Projects; approval of the letting terms for the units is to be undertaken by him, on the basis that the terms are reported retrospectively to the Strategic Policy & Resources.

2.0 Key Issues

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the letting of units in Smithfield Market as agreed under the delegated authority of the Director of Property and Projects:

2.2 Unit 5/6 – Smithfield Market – Rental, sale and repair of computers, computer parts computer and accessories

Tenant: Paul Livingstone (name change) Paul Livingstone's father previously occupied unit 5/6

Mplex Computers
162 Longstone Street
Lisburn
BT28 1TT

Unit Size:

	Ground Floor Mezzanine floor (Total space 996 sq ft)
Terms:	£800.00 per Month Tenancy Agreement for Six Months and monthly thereafter commencing 1 st July 2011.
<u>2.3 Units 13/14 – Smithfield Market – Sale of Carpets & rugs</u>	
Tenant:	Brendan and Ann McLarnon 18 Glenwell Park, Newtownabbey BT36 7TA
Unit Size:	Ground Floor Mezzanine Floor
Terms:	£750.00 per Month Temporary Tenancy Agreement for three months only commencing 19 September 2011. (Brendan and Ann McLarnon are currently long term tenants in Unit 32/33 and Unit 8)
<u>2.4 Unit 39 – Smithfield Market – Boxing and fitness equipment and associated products</u>	
(Charles Brown currently in Unit 21 and wishes to expand to a bigger unit).	
Tenant	Charles Brown 26 Sprinkbank Drive Dunmurry BT17 0QN
Unit size -	Ground floor Mezzanine Floor
Terms:	£460.00 per month Tenancy Agreement for 6 Months and monthly thereafter commencing 1 November 2011.

3.0 Recommendations
3.1 Committee is asked to note the terms of the lettings as set out above.

4.0 Key to Abbreviations
4.1 None.

5.0 Documents Attached

5.1 None.

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Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Application by North Belfast Paranormal Research Group to undertake a paranormal investigation in the City Hall
Date:	21 st October 2011
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects, Ext: 6217
Contact Officer:	George Wright, Head of Facilities Management (Ext 6232/5206)

1.0 Relevant Background Information

1.1 Members will be aware that the Committee has delegated authority for routine requests for use of the City Hall to the Director of Property & Projects on the basis of an agreed set of criteria. However it was recognised that there would still be occasions on which the nature, scale and/or scope of the request means that it is appropriate to place the matter directly before the Committee. The request from the North Belfast Paranormal Research Group (NBPRG) below is considered to fall into this category, and the direction of the Committee is therefore sought.

1.2 The NBPRG consists of 12 individuals and has been in existence since February 2011. The group carries out paranormal investigations in older type buildings which may or may not have a history of paranormal activity. Some of the buildings investigated to date include Mossley Mill, Ballygally Castle and Grace Neill's Bar.

1.3 The investigation would involve NBPRG investigators coming into the City Hall on an agreed evening between 9.00pm and 4.30am. Ideally the buildings would need to be empty of people and it may be necessary to shut down as many of the mechanical and electrical systems as possible.

1.4 The group would bring in a range of hand held equipment into the building including temperature gauges and meters, voice and white noise recorders and CCTV monitors etc.

2.0 Key Issues

2.1 NBPRG are very aware of the sensitivities around using the City Hall, and as a result the group is content to have nothing publicised following their visit, although they do stress that a 'good news' story could be run if it suited Belfast City Council. There remains however a risk to the reputation and prestige of City Hall depending on how the media react to this type of event.

2.2 If permission in principle is granted further discussion will be needed with the investigation organiser to ascertain what is involved with switching off mechanical and electrical plant, systems etc. before the final go-ahead can be given.

3.0 Resource Implications

3.1 Some costs maybe incurred from bringing in staff to close down plant and systems. It may also be necessary to have a BCC staff member accompany the group. Any costs arising from this will be covered by NBPRG.
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3.2 The group will also indemnify the Council against injuries, damage etc.

4.0 Decision (s) required

4.1 The direction of the committee is sought on whether or not to approve the request from NBPRG for the stated purpose and, if so, whether it wishes to impose any specific conditions.
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5.0 Key to Abbreviations

5.1 None

6.0 Documents Attached

6.1 None

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