

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 22nd April, 2015

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor Alderman Spence;
Aldermen Convery, Kingston, McGimpsey
and Stalford; and Councillors Beattie, Craig,
Dudgeon, Graham, Hanna, Howard, Kyle, Magee,
Magennis, McAteer, McDonough-Brown, Newton
and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. J. McGrillen, Director of Development;
Mr. T. Martin, Head of Building Control;
Mrs. S. Toland, Head of Environmental Health; and
Miss L. Francey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Ó Donnghaile.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Date and Time of Future Meetings

The Committee agreed that its meetings would commence at 5.15 p.m. on the following dates during the remainder of 2015:

- Wednesday, 13th May;
- Wednesday, 10th June;
- Wednesday, 12th August;
- Wednesday, 9th September;
- Wednesday, 14th October;
- Wednesday, 11th November; and
- Wednesday, 9th December.

Transport NI and Translink

The Committee was reminded that Transport NI, formerly DRD Roads Service, had attended meetings of the former Town Planning Committee to present its annual plan for the Belfast Area. It was reported that a request to address the new Council had been received from Transport NI and it had been suggested that such a presentation should be delivered to a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Given the remit of Transport NI, it was suggested that an invitation to attend that

meeting be extended also to representatives of Translink, which would enable Members to consider a range of transport-related issues which were relevant to the City.

The Committee agreed to invite both Transport NI and Translink to its meeting in May and that officers would seek to circulate copies of any presentations in advance of that meeting to enable Members to formulate questions for consideration.

The Committee noted also that a request would be forwarded to the Belfast Regeneration Office inviting its representatives to attend a future meeting to discuss issues relating to its capital funding projects for 2015/2016.

Presentation - Committee Role and the Belfast Agenda

The Chief Executive gave a presentation on the aims and objectives of the new Council insofar as they related to the work of the Committee. She outlined the opportunities and the leadership challenges that existed and referred to the specific roles which Members would play in meeting the key tasks which had been established for 2015/2016. She outlined also the emerging priorities for the Council, which included business growth and economic development, together with addressing inequalities and improving neighbourhoods.

Noted.

Governance

Notice of Motion - Family Friendly City Centre

The Committee was reminded that the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 20th March, had referred the following Notice of Motion to the Committee for its consideration:

"This Council notes that city centres which are child and family friendly bring a wide range of benefits including:

- *contributing to healthy childhood development;*
- *driving economic regeneration as families spend more time in the City; and*
- *making city centre living a more viable option for families, thereby contributing to longer-term social regeneration.*

The Council commends the work of the Belfast Healthy Cities organisation which has been researching child friendly places since 2011, including the provision of temporary 'Kids Spaces' in the city centre. The Council agrees to harness its new planning, community planning and economic regeneration powers to develop a world class family friendly strategy for Belfast, including the development of 'Kids Spaces' in the City centre."

The Committee requested that a report in respect of the issues which had been raised within the motion be submitted to a future meeting for consideration.

Belfast Agenda - Regeneration

Bank Square Scheme

The Committee was advised that the former Health and Environmental Services Committee had, at its meeting on 3rd September, 2014, granted authority to the Building Control Service to work in partnership with the Department for Social Development (DSD) to carry out enhancement work to buildings within the Bank Square area. The Head of Building Control provided an overview of the work which had been undertaken in the regeneration project. He explained that the appearance of eight buildings had been transformed at a total cost of £84,000, which had been provided by the DSD.

The Committee welcomed the progress which had been achieved in the Bank Square project and granted permission for the Building Control Service to engage with the DSD regarding the feasibility of delivering a further scheme in the Rosemary Street and Lombard Street area.

It was agreed also that the Building Control Service would discuss with the DSD the feasibility of extending the scope of the Bank Square project into surrounding streets within the 'Folktown' area.

Belfast Streets Ahead Project - Phase 3

The Director of Property and Projects provided the Committee with an update on the progress of 'Phase 3' of the Belfast Streets Ahead Project, which would be delivered by the Department for Social Development. He informed Members that a planning application in this regard had been submitted by the DSD and would be considered by the Council in due course.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Lagan Canal Trust - Request for Support

The Committee was reminded that the Council had been a member of the Lagan Canal Trust since 2006. The Director of Development outlined the aims and objectives of the Trust. He reminded the Committee that the Council, together with a range of other councils, had made a financial contribution towards the work of the Trust based on the proportion of the canal which lay within the various boundaries. With the change of the Council's boundary on 1st April, the percentage of the Lagan Canal within Belfast had risen from 18% to 22%. He added that a request had been received from the Trust seeking a contribution from the Council of £37,963.20, £42,281.80 and £42,563.84 for the next three financial years.

During discussion, Members expressed concern that the figure requested from the Trust had risen significantly. It was pointed out that, in 2014/2015, the former

Council had contributed a sum of £17,341 to the Trust, which had been based on the fact that 18% of the canal lay within the then Council boundary. However, that amount had more than doubled within in the space of a year, despite the fact that the length of the canal within the Council's boundary had increased only by 4%.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable representatives of the Lagan Canal Trust to attend a future meeting to discuss in detail its request for financial assistance.

Strategic Drainage Board - Update

The Director of Property and Projects provided the Committee with an overview of the work of the Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Programme Board, which had been established by the Department for Regional Development to address major drainage infrastructure issues. He reported that the inaugural meeting of the Board had considered matters regarding the challenges posed by future growth and demographics, climate change, protection of the environment, the management of flood risk, together with the associated funding required to address those matters. He outlined how the Council would work with the Board to address issues particularly relevant to flooding in the City, and answered a range of Members' questions.

Noted.

Rivers Agency - Consultation on Flood Risk Management Plan

The Committee endorsed a consultation response to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Flood Risk Management Plan, a full copy of which was published on the Council's Mod.gov website. It was agreed that the response would be strengthened to emphasise that the Council would request that the issue of flooding caused by run-off rainwater from the Belfast Hills be examined further with a view to identifying measures to address this issue. It was noted that the Head of Environmental Health would ensure that the aforementioned suggestion was reflected within the corporate response.

- It was agreed that the Council would seek to establish an internal working group consisting of officers from a range of departments to consider the implications of the Rivers Agency's consultation exercise insofar as it would impact on the City; and
- It was agreed further that the Rivers Agency would be invited to attend the June meeting of the Committee to provide a presentation in relation to its flood maps.

Tourism and Events

Tall Ships - Update

The Committee noted an update on the preparations for the 2015 Tall Ships event, which would take place between 2nd and 5th July. It was reported that

approximately 50 vessels would visit the City and that an estimated television audience of five million viewers would watch the event worldwide.

Noted.

City Centre Regeneration - City Animation

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, which is currently out to public consultation, highlights the importance of world class events and the animation of the city as important elements of creating a vibrancy within the city centre, attracting overnight visitors and enhancing the international reputation of the city in the global market place.**
- 1.2 The Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy, which is also out to consultation similarly identifies *‘improving the quality and international appeal of the events and festivals on offer’* as one of the main improvements required in terms of developing tourism in the city.**
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to inform members of a number of opportunities for the Council to support a number of large scale events which align with these strategies and which are due to take place across the city in the course of the current financial year.**
- 1.4 The Development Department is currently in the process of commissioning a citywide Events and Festivals Strategy which will provide the policy framework for the resourcing of events and festivals from 1 April 2016 onwards. The events referred to in this report will predate the conclusion of this strategy.**
- 1.5 Members are therefore being asked to consider these opportunities in the context of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and the Belfast Integrated Tourism Framework. These events will also form part of the overall events programme for the new council in 2015 which also includes other events already funded such as community festivals, Tall Ships, Friel Festival, etc.**
- 1.6 The proposed contributions to these events would be met from the existing regeneration budget.**

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report
- Consider contributions to the following:-
 - BBC Proms in the Park - £95K
 - Belfast International Festival - £25k
 - Belfast Tattoo - £25k
 - Belfast Pride - £25k
 - Cyclovia - £15K

Key Issues

- 3.1 The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, which is currently out to public consultation, highlights the importance of world class events and the animation of the city as important elements of creating a vibrancy within the city centre, attracting overnight visitors and enhancing the international reputation of the city in the global market place.
- 3.2 The Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy, which is also out to consultation similarly identifies *'improving the quality and international appeal of the events and festivals on offer'* as one of the main improvements required in terms of developing tourism in the city.
- 3.3 The strategy highlights the need to develop a series of six 'Signature Events' that have the potential to attract out of state bed-nights and positive international publicity for the city.
- 3.4 This issue was picked up by the Development Committee of the previous Council when considering the issue of competing for international events and it was suggested that the Council develop a citywide Events and Festivals Strategy to inform the types of events and festivals that the Council should allocate resources to in the future. At its January 2015 meeting, the former Shadow Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed to commission such a strategy.
- 3.5 The events which the council will want to consider fall into three broad categories:
 - 1) Large Scale International Events such as Giro d'Italia, MTV EMAs, Tall Ships and World Police and Fire Games;

- 2) **City Festivals which have the potential to attract tourists and have a positive economic benefit e.g. Belfast festival at Culture Night, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, Feile, and Titanic Maritime Festival etc;**
 - 3) **Community based festivals which engage local communities, enhance civic pride and engender good relations and community engagement;**
- 3.6 **With the exception of the annual events programme delivered by the Council's own City Events Unit which is almost solely financed by the Council, almost every other event is funded through a cocktail of funding from various sources including Tourism NI, The Arts Council, DCAL and DSD. The sustainability of many of these events is now under threat due to cuts in the Executive's budget and the subsequent reductions in the budgets for events within various agencies moving forward. As an example, Culture Night potentially faces cuts from ACNI, DSD and Tourism NI.**
- 3.7 **The Director of Development is currently commissioning support for the development of a Citywide Events and Festivals Strategy. This strategy will take into account the resources which will be available from other sources to support events in the city once those budgets become known. It is likely that the strategy will not be complete until summer 2015 and therefore will be used to guide policy from the 2016/17 financial year onwards.**
- 3.8 **In recent weeks the Council has been made aware of a number of events which would benefit from a 'one off investment' by the Council in advance of the completion of the city events and festivals strategy. This investment is required to either ensure the events can actually take place or to allow the events to be enhanced in terms of scale and impact. Details of each of the events as far as is known is set out in the paragraphs below and whilst the events and festivals strategy has not been developed, each of the events below align with the objectives of animating the city centre, presenting a positive image of the city in key tourism and investment markets or have the potential to develop into future 'signature events' which can drive up tourism spend within the city.**
- Proms in the Park**
- 3.9 **In recent years the Council has contributed £100k to the cost of staging the BBC Proms in the Park in the city. This has**

been a very successful event in terms of both community participation and positive broadcast coverage for Belfast as a city across the key tourism markets of Britain and Ireland. Last year the BBC invested in additional infrastructure to increase participation from 8,000 to 11,000 attendees with tickets being made available for the event free of charge to ensure the event is attended by a broad spectrum of the local population.

- 3.10 Following a previous approach by the BBC, the Council decided to allocate £100k towards the cost of hosting the Sports Personality of the Year awards in Belfast, in the expectation that in 2015 the Proms in the Park would be broadcast from Fermanagh. The new Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has indicated that it does not have the resources to support the event so there is the potential for this popular event to once again be broadcast from Belfast, in addition to the Sports Personality of the Year. Broadcast events of this nature are important in portraying a positive image of the city in the face of on-going negative perceptions which still exist in the GB and Irish tourism markets.
- 3.11 The BBC has indicated that if the Council were in a position to make a contribution of £95k, this would ensure that Belfast is included within the locations from which the Proms will be broadcast this year. This would secure significant additional visitors to the city.
- 3.12 Council Officers have asked the BBC to set out what additional activity it would be prepared to undertake within the city should this funding be made available given the situation with Sports Personality of the Year. In response the BBC has made a number of additional commitments including:-
- A variety of programming on television and radio to complement the Sports Personality of the Year assuming the bid to London is successful along with an extensive community engagement programme through the BBC's 'Get inspired' Programme;
 - A major television and radio event broadcast from the Crumlin Road Gaol as part of the national BBC Music Day which will feature the Ulster Orchestra and musicians from the area;
 - Provision of interactive displays and exhibitions as part of Tall Ships 2015 and subject to final approvals primetime network wide coverage of the event to a UK and ROI audience of over 5m people.

- 3.13 The activities outlined above present a real opportunity to positively promote the city in a very positive light to Belfast's two key tourism markets over the course of the next nine months.

Belfast International Festival (formerly the Belfast Festival at Queens)

- 3.14 Members will be aware through extensive media coverage that Queen's University has announced that due to cuts in its budget and the need to focus on its core business of Higher Education, the University is no longer in a position to support the Belfast Festival. Following a number of meetings with the core funders, the festival director, Richard Wakeley has proposed the setting up of a new 'not for profit' entity to continue to deliver the festival in 2015, rebranded as the Belfast International Festival. He has also agreed to a future review of the new festival in the context of the Citywide Events and Festivals Strategy being commissioned by the Council.
- 3.15 The other funders - namely Arts Council NI, Tourism NI and the British Council - are supportive of this approach in principal and have agreed, subject to support forthcoming from BCC, that funding commitments to the Festival at Queen's transfers to the new entity.
- 3.16 Each of the funders have agreed to commit the same level of resources as they did in 2014 in order to sustain the festival and have asked that Belfast City Council commits to do likewise.
- 3.17 Last year the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed to commit an additional £25k, bringing its total contribution to the festival in 2014 to £64k. In response to this investment the festival engaged in a wide range of activity with partners in the community sector and venues across the city. The Festival Director is committed to continuing to engage in this way across the city should the Festival get the support necessary to proceed in 2015. The concept of a Belfast International Festival aligns fully with both the City Centre Regeneration and Tourism strategies. Similar festivals take place annually in cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Dublin and are seen as critical to the cities' reputation as centres of cultural and creative excellence.

Ciclovia 2015

- 3.18 A proposal has been received by the Council from a group called Upbeat on behalf of a number of organisations known as the 'Ciclovia Group' which includes organisations such as Sustrans, NI Greenways and a cross party group of MLAs which are promoting the development of the 'Ciclovia' concept in Belfast. This is an international movement which promotes the closure of streets within cities in order to facilitate walking and, in particular, cycling on certain days in city centres.
- 3.19 It is proposed that an event to promote the movement takes place in Belfast on Sunday 14 June to mark the start of Bike Week in the Botanic Avenue/Dublin Road Area of the city. This will also provide a good opportunity to further promote the Council's Public Bike Hire Scheme which is due to launch on 27 April.
- 3.20 The total cost of the event is estimated at £30k. The Council's contribution would be £15k with the remainder coming from DRD (£10k) and a private sector sponsor (£5k).

Belfast Pride 2015

- 3.21 Belfast Pride Festival hopes to offer a broader range of events as part of their 25 Year Celebrations. The organisers wish to increase the scale and impact of the event and regard it as an opportunity to promote Belfast as a modern, tolerant and multi-cultural cosmopolitan city. To enable this to happen a one-off contribution of £25k would be required.

Belfast Tattoo 2015

- 3.22 The Belfast Tattoo is a relatively new large scale event in the city which celebrates its Ulster-Scots culture and has taken place in the Odyssey Arena over the past two years. This event has not received any Council funding to date and this proposal is to allow the event to bring in international bands and to be held over two nights, thus creating a demand for bed-nights in the city. Again it is understood that the funding required is likely to be in the region of £25k.
- 3.23 Financial and Resource Implications:

If approved, the total cost to Council of supporting the events outlined above would be £185k.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

3.24 These events will support the promotion of the city centre as a shared space and the participation of all sections of the community in Belfast and beyond.”

In response to a Member’s question, the Director of Development undertook to discuss with the BBC the feasibility of distributing the tickets for the Last Night of the Proms event to a wider range of people and communities across Belfast.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed that the financial contributions, as outlined within the recommendations of the report, be granted to the organisations listed.

It was noted that, whilst agreeing to grant funding to the BBC for the 2015 Proms, prior to considering future requests for additional funding from the BBC, a request would be forwarded to the Corporation inviting it to attend a meeting of the Committee to discuss the benefits which would be accrued by the Council in providing such funding.

Cultural Framework - Year 3

The Director of Development outlined a proposed programme of work which had been developed to meet the targets under the four themes of the Council’s Strategic Framework, namely, ‘Distinctly Belfast’, ‘Inspiring Communities’, ‘Attracting Audiences’ and ‘Strengthening the Sector’. He indicated that the Framework sought to achieve the following during 2015/2016:

- Delivery of the flagship Creative and Cultural Belfast Programme, with three major productions scheduled for later in the year, with a combined funding allocation of £285,000;
- Delivery of the Community Festivals Fund – supported by resources from DCAL – to assist a minimum of 15 festivals and events across the City;
- Managing the core multi-annual funding budget;
- Allocating £160,000 towards arts and heritage project grants;
- Developing a new ‘City as a Gallery’ project;
- Continuing to work to attract new audiences to Belfast’s culture and arts based activities through a series of audience development initiatives; and
- Providing capacity-building support to cultural organisations to help them diversify sources of income.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the following course of action:

- delegated authority to the Director of Development for the procurement of services associated with the delivery of the programme, subject to legal agreement;

- agreed to renew the Service Level Agreements with Audiences NI and the Community Arts Partnership;
- agreed that the Council would arrange for all unsuccessful groups to be provided with feedback on their applications;
- undertook to circulate to Members a list of 200 grantees;
- agreed that a Funding Directory be created for use by groups applying for grants.

Operational Issues - Attendance at Events

CIVITAS - (The Institute for the Study of Civil Society) - Study Visit

The Committee approved the attendance of the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson (or their nominees) at the above-mentioned study visit, which would take place in Ljubljana, Croatia, in May. It was noted that the visit would examine best practice models aimed at creating cleaner and better transport in cities. It was noted further that the visit would provide an opportunity for the Council's representatives to explore more sustainable, clean and energy efficient urban transport systems.

'CIVINET' Conference

The Committee agreed that up to six Members be authorised to attend the CIVINET Conference, which would be held in the in City Hall on 30th April. The conference, which was entitled 'On the Move', would focus on cycling and connectivity in cities and attendance at the event would be free of charge.

Chairperson