

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd May, 2009

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McCann (Deputy Chairman) (in the Chair); the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor D. Browne); and Councillors Adamson, Attwood, M. Browne, W. Browne, Convery, Crozier, N. Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Lavery, C. Maskey, P. Maskey, Newton, Rodway, Smyth and Stoker.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Improvement;
Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services;
Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor D. Dodds) and Councillor Long.

Corporate Plan and Performance Management

Corporate Plan/Value Creation Map 2009-10 Update

The Committee considered a report in respect of the 2009/10 update of the Council's Corporate Plan/Value Creation Map. A copy of the report is set out hereunder:

"RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The purpose of this report is to ask Members to approve the 2009/10 Update of the Council's Corporate Plan/Value Creation Map.

As Members are aware, in June 2008, Members agreed the Council's corporate plan for 2008-2011, setting out the Council's vision for the city and its priorities for this period, based upon the needs and priorities of people in the city. At the time, Members stressed that whilst the plan needed to set a clear strategic direction it also needed to have the flexibility to adapt to new challenges; therefore, it should be reviewed and updated annually to keep it relevant and to ensure the Council's focus remains on the right issues.

This report sets out the information that will be used to inform the update of the plan and some proposed amendments based upon what has been achieved over the last year and the changed external environment, particularly economic environment, in which the Council finds itself operating.

It is intended that the information presented to Members at this meeting will be summarised in liaison with the Corporate Communications Section to produce an accessible, easily understandable document which will be used for communication with the public and staff at all levels across the Council.

KEY ISSUES

Update Process

Alignment

When the Corporate Plan 2008-2011 was agreed by Members, it was understood that the challenging part remained – to align the resources and actions of the organisation towards the achievement of the objectives within the plan and to begin to implement a fairly ambitious agenda. Members wanted to retain their focus on some of the biggest issues in the city such as safety, health improvement and good relations, but these were objectives which cut across all departments. A key issue was whether a functionally structured and biased organisation would ever be able to effectively plan and deliver on a thematic basis.

Good progress has been made -each service in the Council now has a Value Creation Map which is a service plan based upon the corporate plan, showing the ways in which services can contribute to those objectives so that thematic planning becomes integrated with service planning. Departmental plans have also become more aligned to the objectives within the corporate plan. The result of this is that Members can be shown the ways in which services are contributing to our corporate objectives so that they are not something different or remote or add-ons but features of what the services do. This is illustrated in Appendix 1, which shows the Value Creation Map and the way in which services are contributing to the environment theme within the corporate plan. This analysis is available for every service and each theme within the plan.

A separate report on the departmental plans of the Chief Executive's, Core Improvement, Corporate Services and Legal Departments are attached as separate agenda items. All the Council's service and departmental plans have helped inform the update of the corporate plan for 09/10.

Accountability

A key issue for the themes in the corporate plan is that they cut across more than one department and therefore assigning accountability to any one officer was a challenge. For the update, this challenge has been addressed, with Chief Officers taking responsibility for establishing a coherent, one-council approach to key objectives as set out below.

<u>Chief Officer</u>	<u>Objective</u>
Chief Executive	Safer city.
Director of Development	Good Relations; Children and Young People; Local Area Working.
Director of Parks and Leisure	Healthier city; Older people.
Director of Health and Environmental Services	Sustainable Development.
Director of Improvement	An organisation fit to lead and serve; RPA.

The actions and measures within the corporate plan are an integral part of the recently revised Chief Officers' and Senior Managers' Individual Performance Management process. The key to effective implementation of the actions decided by the Council, is clear accountability for delivery by officers.

Corporate Plan/Value Creation Map Update

Updated operating context

Since the plan was first agreed there have been significant changes in the global economy which have impacted upon the people of Belfast and upon the Council itself. Members have made a strong commitment to helping address the impact of the recession on Belfast and it is important that the Council's key strategic document reflects this commitment and the changing environment in which the organisation is now operating.

Key achievements 2008/09

The update will contain a section reflecting on some of the Council's key achievements during 2008/09.

Updated Value Creation Map – including updated actions and performance measures for 2009/10

The updated plan will be based upon the most up to date version of the Council's Value Creation Map. As members will recall, the Value Creation Map sets out the Council's purpose, the 'themes' or priorities that Members have chosen to focus on, and the way in which performance against these will be measured. A full copy of the Value Creation Map has been circulated. The strategic themes and objectives are summarised in the table below. The objectives remain largely the same as those agreed by Members in 2008; however some of the actions have been updated, any changes are summarised under each theme.

Performance Reporting

The plan will be regularly monitored through the performance management framework agreed by the Committee. The first report on progress will be brought to the Committee in the Autumn.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Corporate Plan will help the Committee plan and allocate resources over the coming year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to approve the information set out as the basis for the update of the Council's Corporate Plan 2009/10.

DECISION TRACKING

The Committee will receive regular performance management reports setting out achievements against the tasks and measures in the plan."

The Committee approved the content of the information for inclusion in the update of the Council's Corporate Plan 2009/10.

Departmental Plans 2009/2010

The Committee was reminded that the Council's Performance Management Framework required all Departments to prepare Plans which linked to both the Corporate and Service Plans. The Plans for the Chief Executives, Legal Services and Corporate Services Departments and the Improvement Unit identified the actions, initiatives and events to be undertaken for 2009/2010. Those Departments provided the support services in the corporate aim of "An organisation fit to lead and serve".

The contents of the Plans reflected the themes and objectives which had been set by the Members within the Corporate Plan 2008-2011 and had been aligned to and had helped inform the updated plan. The nature of the actions within the Departmental Plans complemented the Members' Plan for the City and had been placed in context with the Council's Value Creation Map and included performance indicators and financial information such as the cost of delivering key services. The Plans provided also a mechanism to enable the Committee and senior managers to performance manage the key work of the Departments in line with the Corporate Plan. In addition, they should assist managers and officers in the relevant Departments to take decisions and allocate resources in line with the agreed objectives and activities. Departments would provide regular updates to the Committee on the progress of their Plans and key work as appropriate.

The Committee approved the Departmental Plans for the Chief Executives Department, Legal Services Department, Improvement Unit and Corporate Services Department for 2009/2010 and granted approval under delegated authority for the outlined activities to be undertaken. A copy of the key achievements for 2008/2009 and the key actions for 2009/2010 as detailed in the Plans for each of the four Departments is set out hereunder:

"CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S

3. DEPARTMENTAL KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2008/2009

Better Leadership

- **Implemented a programme of restructuring of the Belfast District Policing Partnership and its four Sub-Groups, including the organisation of an Induction Programme for all newly appointed District Policing Partnership Members and 16 Sub-Group meetings held in public.**
- **Organised major, high profile events in the City, from alternative venues, during the refurbishment of the City Hall**
- **Provided support for the Lord Mayor to deliver the 'Belfast 2009' message thereby enhancing the profile of the Council and providing civic leadership for the City**

Better Support for People and Communities

- **Held four Belfast District Policing Partnership *General Forum for Discussion* events in conjunction with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Community Safety Partnership**
- **Secured award of £6.3m of European funding under measure 1.1 of the Peace III Peace & Reconciliation Programme**

- Supported over 70 local initiatives that promoted better community and race relations in the city through the provision of over £310,000 in grant-aid
- Appointed a specialist post of minority ethnic/migrant workers' officer
- Successfully delivered the bonfire management programme in 2008 resulting in praise from the police and emergency services since measurable outcomes included significant decreases in incidents of anti-social behaviour, substantially reduced numbers of call-outs from the emergency services and less damage to property.
- Used the research findings from the Peace II funded Conflict Transformation Project, completed in June 2008, to enhance our Peace Plan and inform our future work on a cross-city basis
- Established a new more representative Good Relations Partnership to direct the Council's work in good relations and equality, with additional responsibility for managing the delivery of the Peace III Programme in the city.
- Established an inter-agency Migrant Workers' Forum for the city, in association with a range of external statutory and voluntary agencies, to enhance sharing of information and best practice.
- Established a Faith Forum for the City, to promote better engagement between the Council and faith groups and their contribution to civic affairs.
- Worked closely with the Lord Mayor to celebrate the growing diversity of the city and hosted events for the following minority communities: Indian, Chinese, Mandarin, Islamic, Polish and Filipino cultures; plus Irish Travellers, Refugees and Asylum Seekers.
- Implemented a programme of initiatives on behalf of the Lord Mayor, to engage with a wide range of organisations, illustrating the spectrum of civic life in Belfast

Better Services

- Developed and launched an Equality Reference Guide for employees, to assist staff to understand different faiths, cultures and related issues

- Developed and delivered the Council's first Disability Action Plan demonstrating our commitment to promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Developed and delivered a range of specialist good relations training courses for staff, including migrant awareness and anti-racism training
- BCC's website traffic has increased fourfold, over the last four years and is on target to receive 2m visitors this year.
- Established web panel with ISB to co-ordinate use of new communications technologies
- Developed and implemented a Council-wide IT system for complaints monitoring
- Implemented SAP financial system in all sections
- Established web panel with ISB to co-ordinate use of new communications technologies

Better Value for Money

Finance: Efficiency Savings

- Total efficiencies achieved by reducing communications budgets in relation to graphic design and publications in association with departments, and by bringing in revenue by accepting advertising in City Matters and A-Z amounted to £435,000 in 2008/09
- Total gross efficiencies since the implementation of the Review of Communications since 2006 is £1.27m (approx) (£810k net allowing for staffing changes)
- Total efficiencies achieved by reducing communications budgets in relation to graphic design publications and advertising in association with departments, by reducing recruitment advertising spend by managing it in-house and by bringing in revenue by accepting advertising in City Matters will total £570,000 in 2009/10

Corporate Human Resource Management

- Supported the Members' Development Framework which included the roll out of a programme of general training events and the co-ordination and administration of Members' personal development activities

- Provided complaints awareness and monitoring training to front line staff in various departments

Communications and engagement

- Developed and rolled out a new City Brand working with BVCB and Ardmore Advertising on launch and roll out of brand and the development of guidelines.
- BCC's website is top of all local authorities in Northern Ireland. The prestigious assessment from SOCITM has the website in the transactional category, the only Northern Ireland website to reach the standard for past two years.
- *City Matters* has won the gold award as the Best Newspaper or Magazine at Northern Ireland's Chartered Institute of Public Relations Awards in 2008
- Evaluation of media coverage carried out by independent consultants shows 84% of newspaper stories about BCC are positive.
- Developed new websites for Belfast Zoo, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall
- Redesigned and launched a new website for the council and a new internal information system to ensure staff updated on council issues and the RPA including new team briefing system developed and managers trained to deliver; upgraded and improved web-based Interlink site and Intercom staff magazine now produced six times per year
- Produced A-Z of council services, paid for by advertising.
- Brought design of a number of publications and PR initiatives in-house, including Belfast 2009; St George's Markets (savings of around £30k); recruitment and public notice advertising in joint initiative with HR (will result in efficiencies of at least £100k); and working with departments on development of major waste management and anti-litter advertising campaigns
- Review of advertising approved by council and new advertising manager appointed December 2008

Audit, Governance & Risk

- Introduced the publishing of reports on the Modern.gov system in advance of Committee meetings

4. VALUING OUR PEOPLE

The Chief Executive's Department is committed to the development of its staff. The Department has combined both the Council's Corporate Competency Approach and the Individual Performance Management process to identify development needs for its staff. Each member of staff in the Department has a Personal Development Plan which contains development needs based on a review of the individual's job profile and identified through key tasks he/she has to deliver.

It is the Department's intention to combine individual development plans and create a Departmental Development Plan so that effective monitoring and evaluation can take place. The Departmental Management Team will review the benefits or outcomes of learning and development on a quarterly basis during the monitoring of Departmental key tasks. Further information on the Department's approach to learning and development is contained in individual Section business plans.

The Department's commitment to recognising the value which is placed on its staff is also reflected by the involvement of all Sections in the development of this Departmental Plan. Senior managers have consulted with their staff in the development of Section Business Plans and there has been 2-way communication between Sections and the Departmental Management Team when this Departmental Plan was being drafted. Prior to its submission to Committee for formal approval, each Section will ensure that all of its staff are made aware of the key tasks and indicators for the coming year and staff representative groups will be advised of the content of the Departmental Plan.

5. THEMES

Our departmental themes for 2009-2010 are aligned with the corporate planning cycle for 2008-2011. All priorities, key projects and activities have been aligned under the themes of:

1. Better Leadership – strong, fair, together;
2. Better opportunities for success across the city;
3. Better care for Belfast's environment – a clean, green city now and for the future;

4. Better support for people and communities;
5. Better services – listening and delivering; and
6. Better value for money – can-do, accountable, efficient Council.

6. **KEY ACTIONS FOR 2009/10**

Better Leadership

- Support the preparation for RPA and in particular addressing the governance arrangements for transferring services
- Deliver Peace Plan in line with SEUPB expenditure targets
- Update the inter-agency Good Relations Plan for Belfast in line with revised government policy

Better Support for People and Communities

- Continue work with Community Safety Unit on hate crime issue
- Continue to mainstream good relations principles into every aspect of Council business
- Implement, in conjunction with the Council's Community Safety Partnership, the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and other key stakeholders, a year-long programme of events/initiatives which aim to promote the objective of a Safer City.

Better Services

- Implement the outcomes of the review of the Centre and Communications Review
- Ensure close collaboration internally between all of our sections and those responsible for the delivery of the Customer Focus, Information Management, Communications and Consultation and Engagement strategies to ensure alignment of our services to the corporate priorities.
- Develop and integrate a Communications Framework for the Civic Dignitaries

- Take the lead in working with ISB and departments towards ensuring council services are transactional on-line.
- Consult, brief and work with Councillors on developing new communication technologies to assist them in their work
- Undertake and evaluate a Members' satisfaction survey relating to the services provided by the Committee and Members' Services Section.

Better Value for Money

Finance: Efficiency Savings

- Identify and work with departments/sections to achieve further efficiency savings to be used to keep the rates down but also re-invested in developing communications technologies.
- Work with Core Improvement to identify ways of capturing savings
- Make total annual savings of around £250K as a result of the work identified for 09/10 of the recently recruited Advertising Manager

Communications and engagement

- Sharpen the effectiveness of internal communications, by further developing new Interlink site and introducing further initiatives.
- Develop the role of lead communicators and the Communications Forum
- Develop a greater corporate, and extended city-wide, remit for Corporate Communications team through the City Brand, Belfast 2009, City Matters and the website.
- Ensure the council continues to be in the top 10 of UK websites
- Win at least one award for website/City Matters
- Develop and implement a council-wide strategy with regard to the council's website and new communications technologies, including email marketing, podcasts, video, etc, with a view to improving access for 'hard to reach' audiences.

- Increase the frequency of City Matters to six editions per year.
- Media Relations Officers extending their impressive track record with the print media into rapidly expanding web news media;
- Further roll out of Internal Communications Plan
- Implementation of Publications Policy audit

Corporate Assets

- Plan and implement the return of Councillors and staff, together with the associated functions and services to the City Hall
- Contribute to the arrangements for celebrating the re-opening of the City Hall and ensure that the programme is as inclusive and diverse as possible and the building is welcoming to everyone

Corporate Audit, Governance & Risk

- Undertake a review of the Council's Governance Arrangements
- Implement the tracking of Council/Committee decisions on the modern.gov system

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LEGAL SERVICES

5 DEPARTMENTAL KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2008/09

The Department is committed to working towards the corporate objectives as detailed in the corporate plan.

A review of the contribution made by the Department in the past year has been outlined below against each objective.

Theme 1 – Leadership

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City Investment Strategy	Titanic Signature Project, governance arrangements Connswater Greeway, agreement with Board

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• RPA	Representation on Policy Development Panel
• Local Government Boundary Commission	Challenge successfully repelled and key assets retained at Forestside and the Harbour Estate. Estimated - £10 million per annum.
• Dargan Road Fatal landfill Accident	Council fined £40k for H&S failures. Fine at lower end of what is an unlimited scale
• Nolan Show (Chicago visit)	BBC acknowledged deficiencies in how the show was presented

Theme 2 – Environment

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• ARC 21 & NWP- Organic Waste Treatment Contract	Development Agreement, Lease arrangements
• Arc 21 Organic Waste contract	Settled the terms of the £18m contract
• ARC 21	Potential Purchase of lands at Northforeshore
• NWP v ARC 21	Oversaw and advised upon the outworking of the High Court judgement through to the implementation of the contract and recovered costs from insurers
• SWAMP	Drafted Statutory Order for incorporation (£10m)
• Cemetery	Site Selection

Theme 3 – City Regeneration

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Connswater Greenway	£5m - Agreement between the Council and the East Belfast Partnership Board.
• Tall Ships	Assisted with the incorporation of a company to run the Tall Ships race 2009
• Velodrome	Proposed citing at Blanchflower Park. - Report on Titles for each proposed site

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• ARP Phase II - Renewing the Routes	Licences for Works and Deeds of Covenants and Charge completed
• BCC v Mis-Behavin	Defendant found guilty of operating a sex establishment without a licence.
• Licensing Committee	High number of appeals in which the Council's position is vindicated either through the imposition of restrictive conditions or outright refusal

Theme 4 – People & Communities

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Grove Well Being Centre	£15m Leases, Deeds of Covenant, Conveyance of Skegoneil Site
• Grove Well Being Centre	Day Care Centre Lease - Lease executed
• Community Day Care	Ballygomartin South Lease agreed
• Shaftesbury Recreation Centre	£2 million in funding packages - Deed of Surrender & Re-Lease agreed and executed
• Fire Station- Dunmurry	Agreement for Lease relating to construction of Fire Station in Dunmurry area finalised.

Note :- Work instructed by Fire & Rescue Service directly
beneficial to citizens of Belfast

Theme 6 - Better Value for Money

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Landfill-Gas Powered Electricity Production	Negotiated the contract and Lease with the Contractor
• Waste Management landfill tax recoupment	£1m potential -claiming back Landfill Tax that
• Net Expenditure	The Department reported additional fee income from other Local Authorities of £130K

Theme 7 - HR Management

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Single Status issues	Completion of further compromise agreements,
• Employment Claims	Details reported to the Audit Assurance Panel

Theme 13 – Assurance Governance & Risk

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Development of Corporate Health & Safety systems	Identified key components of new corporate H&S regime and devices through which the corporate profile is raised particularly having regard to Corporate Manslaughter Act.

6 DEPARTMENTAL KEY ACTIONS FOR 2009-2010

The majority of work is reactive to instructions from frontline Departments and therefore it is difficult to plan on a case specific basis. The examples listed below give a flavour of the contributions anticipated to be made by the Department in pursuit of the corporate objectives.

Theme 1 – Leadership

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• RPA	Continued involvement in PDP's Support the Council's responses to legislative consultation
• City Investment Strategy	Governance & Management issues Funding Agreement for Lyric Theatre

Theme 2 – Environment

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Arc 21	Principal point of contact for all procurement matters including residual waste. Waste disposals alternatives Site selection
• M1 Vesting	£1.25 million of compensation monies received from DRD. To resolve title issues re: remainder of compensation monies (£260K)

Theme 3 – City Regeneration

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Connswater Community Greenway Project	Enable relevant legal documents to be prepared for this £30m project
• A2 Widening, Connswater link and Connswater Junction	To resolve title issues in relation to King George V Playing Fields and Victoria Park to facilitate various projects
• Connswater Greenway	Agreement with the Rivers Agency on Contract issues, and the purchase of lands
• Velodrome Bid	To provide advice in respect of the issues arising from Sport N.I's rejection of the Councils bids for funding

Theme 4 – People & Communities

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Lyric Theatre	To draft the bespoke Funding agreement and Deed of Covenant and Charge that the Council will use to secure it's funding of this project.

Theme 7 - HR Management

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
• Absence Management	To comply with the absence management protocol
• Performance	Implement IPM for senior officers
• Single Status issues	To provide further advice in respect of ongoing potential equal pay claims, craft employees and implementation issues raised.
• IIP	Participate in the assessment process for Internal reviewers

Theme 8 – Financial Planning

<u>Case</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Efficiencies	Contribute to the efficiency programme Comply with policy/procedures and timetables for budgetary management

Theme 10 – Planning and Performance

- | <u>Case</u> | <u>Outcome</u> |
|----------------------|--|
| • Strategic Planning | Complete Departmental and VCM while providing all necessary information for performance indicators |

Theme 11 – Communication & Engagement

- | <u>Case</u> | <u>Outcome</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Staff Comms | Hold regular Team Briefings |

Theme 12 – Assets

- | <u>Case</u> | <u>Outcome</u> |
|--|---|
| • Disposal of Lands at Colin Glen. | To draft, negotiate and finalise contract and transfer documents to HIHE/Clanmill |
| • Ann Napier Centre | Agree with the Clarawood Community Association the terms of their Sub-Licence with the Council |
| • Boathouse Project at Barnett Demesne by BAC & DCAL | To resolve encroachment issue onto Council property – LPS instructed to value. Licence for works being drawn up. Lease to be drafted to grant to DCAL on completion of works. |
| • Shore Road Development | Deed of Variation terms to enable the £15m project to proceed |

Theme 13 – Assurance Governance & Risk

- | <u>Case</u> | <u>Outcome</u> |
|------------------------|---|
| • Interreg | To settle funding documentation for use by the council in its role as Lead Partner of COMET |
| • Peace III | To settle the documentation to be used by the Council |
| • Scheme of Delegation | Make proposals to make a revised Scheme fit for purpose |
| • Constitution | To draft proposals on a Constitution for Belfast |
| • Risk Registers | Quarterly review of Risk Registers |

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IMPROVEMENT UNIT

5.0 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2008/2009

Better Leadership

Place – shaping – North, South, East, West framework – meetings with Members

Review of Public Administration (RPA)

- Secured and supported Council representation (both Members and senior officers) on the RPA policy development and implementation structures (e.g. Strategic Leadership Boards, Policy Development Panels and Regional Transition Coordinating Group)
- Established internal governance arrangements to take forward the implementation of the RPA process e.g. designation of RPA Transition Committee (Strategic Policy and Resources Committee) and Transition Management Team (e.g. COMT);
- Established internal programme management and support structures to drive forward the RPA process;
- Informed and shaped the policy agenda of Local Government through ongoing proactive and constructive engagement with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and Society of Local Authorities (SOLACE); and
- Secured £150,000 grant funding from DoE to support the RPA transitional process.

City Investment Projects

- City Investment Fund established;
- £10 Million funding secured by BCC towards the £100 Million fund for the Titanic Signature Project (TSP);
- Connswater Community Greenway (CCG) - Infrastructure to support the delivery of CCG established and £4.2 Million of Council funding achieved;
- Funding secured for Lyric - £1.5M and Old Museum Arts Centre – £0.5M; and
- Accountability framework for key projects established.

Further projects

- City Hall refurbishment phase one complete on target;
- Ulster hall operational;
- Visitor Centre opened at the Zoo for Parks & Leisure: new entrance and visitors facility, delivered on time and within budget;
- Acquisition of Lanyon Place office space and Roselawn Cemetery extension land;
- City 3-D Model – Partnership established with University of Ulster and Harvard school of design; and
- Grove Well Being Centre operational May 2008.

Better Support for People and Communities

Key achievements

- Safer City - supported the Chief Executive;
- Children and Young People working groups; and
- Policy and planning support to thematic group.

Better Services

Key achievements

- Customer Focus Strategy developed; and
- Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) Silver award for Best Event Category for the staff 'Making a Difference' (MAD) awards.

Better Value for Money – An Organisation Fit to Lead and Serve

Key achievements

Finance

- Efficiency savings of £2.7 Million identified for 09/10;
- Integration of financial planning with business planning ongoing;
- Vacant property exercise resulted in approximately £3 Million of recovered rates; and
- Rate guidance to Members published.

Policy, Planning and Performance

- New corporate plan developed;
- Thematic corporate plan budget established of £500,000;
- Integrated policy framework developed and agreed;
- Strategic planning and performance frameworks implemented;
- Theme work programmes established;
- Performance management system procured and developed;
- 140 corporate performance indicators identified and collected;
- 16 service and departmental VCMs developed across the council – all aligned to the corporate strategy;
- 15-20 performance indicators identified for each service to enable services to manage performance;
- VCM 08/09 cascade complete;
- Ongoing policy support across the organisation on major consultation and emerging strategic issues, e.g. Bamford Review;
- Programme management framework being developed;
- Contributed to the development of the Chief Officer appraisal scheme; and
- Responded to 11 corporate consultations.

Communication and Engagement

Internal Communications

- New staff intranet (Interlink) developed and launched;
- New team brief system established and evaluation system being developed;
- Getting people connected piloted in December '08; and
- Community engagement and consultation review ongoing.

Assets

- Asset management group established and strategy being developed;
- Gateway review process – training complete and reviews being rolled out; and
- Rent reviews settlement in 08/09 resulted in an increase in the rent base by £300,000 and a windfall of £600,000.

6.0 IMPROVEMENT UNIT – KEY ACTIONS 2009/2010

Better Leadership

A key role for the Improvement Department will be to ensure that the Council is prepared to respond to and take advantage of the out workings of the RPA. The Department will also help to establish the Council's place shaping role through better use of the city's assets.

Key actions

- Co-ordinate the overall implementation and shape the outcomes of the RPA and Community Planning within the Council
- Assist with the implementation of the review of the centre recommendations
- Continue with the development of the Council's Asset Management Strategy
- Continue the implementation of the City Investment Strategy (including the development and delivery of 'big' projects and the capital programme)
- Connswater Community Greenway – achieve land assembly and reward design and build contract
- Agree a prioritised and affordable list of place-shaping projects – North, South, East, West

Better Environment

The Project Management and Estates sections within the Department will help to protect the city's natural and built heritage by promoting environmentally friendly design, sustainable site usage and the preservation of old buildings.

Key actions

- Incorporate environmentally efficient design
- Redesign the use of old buildings in the city
- Develop a BREEAM model (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Model)

Better Services

A key objective within this theme is the development of a strategic approach to customer focus within all aspects of the Council's work.

Key actions

- Implement the Customer Focus Strategy
- Support the development of Local Area Working

Better Value for Money – An Organisation Fit to Lead and Serve

This theme is all about the need for the Council to link strategic and financial planning to the delivery of our objectives. As the Department responsible for aligning and co-ordinating this theme through the OFTLS Group, we will play a central role in the delivery of the efficiency programme and in ensuring that our assets and resources are used in a way which delivers improved performance and better value for money for the citizen.

Finance

- Develop a Service Level Agreement with Land and Property Services (LPS)
- Support the development and implementation of the efficiency programme
- Develop a strategic plan for procurement spend
- Fit capital expenditure within affordability limits
- Support the budget and transformation panel

Policy, Planning and Performance

- Implement the Policy Framework
- Develop the Corporate Plan update 2010/2011
- Support the VCM cascade process and the development of a thematic working approach

- Implement the Performance Management framework
- Roll-out the Performance Management System
- Support the implementation of the Accountability Framework
- Develop and implement the Programme Management Framework
- Further integrate council planning frameworks

Communication and Engagement

- Complete the development of a Consultation and Engagement Strategy
- Implement the Internal Communications Plan
- Develop an External Relations Strategy

Assets

- Implement a 'Gateway' process for capital projects
- Manage our leased assets
- Provide professional property related advice and guidance
- Develop a policy for sale and leasing of community assets
- Manage the Corporate land bank

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CORPORATE SERVICES

KEY ACTIONS 2009/2010

Theme 1 Better City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together

1. Influence the provision and modernisation of IT in the region
 - i. Develop partnership with the DoE
 - ii. Influence and engage with RPA working groups
2. Develop a contingency plan in respect of delivery of street lighting services
3. Align all structural and operational reviews to corporate priorities in preparation for RPA

Theme 2 Better care for Belfast's Environment

- 1. Implement virtualisation of PCs and Servers**
- 2. Develop a printer strategy**
- 3. Implement Unified Communications**
- 4. Enable Mobile working and alignment to Asset Strategy**
- 5. Implement a process to ensure compliance with the WEEE directive for all IT equipment**
- 6. Complete Council Sustainable Development Action Plan 2009/11**
- 7. Devise and Implement Carbon emission Reduction Plan**
- 8. Devise and Implement Monitoring of Utility Consumption and Cost**
- 9. Devise and Implement Energy Efficiency Measures**
- 10. Devise and Implement Energy Training and Awareness programme**
- 11. Include CO² emissions programme as part of Fleet Assets strategy**
- 12. Lead the joint BCC/Translink/DRD Roads Service Working Group to deliver a staff travel smartcard scheme**

Theme 3 Better Opportunities for Success across the City

- 1. Market and Re-launch City Hall tours**
- 2. Give effect to the theming of a new coffee shop in City Hall**

Theme 4 Better support for People and Communities

- 1. Collaborate with partners to further develop the Portal**
- 2. Pilot the use of wireless connectivity (I-Burst) to improve communication channels with 'mobile' council staff**
- 3. Maximise opportunity for funding e.g. European funding**
- 4. Research best practice for e-democracy in Local Government**

Theme 5 Better Services – Listening and Delivering

1. Develop new channels for customer access to information and services
2. Provide self service for staff
3. Promote mobile working for frontline staff
4. Extend range of e-enabled customer services
5. To develop structures aimed at supporting the delivery of customer focused services in line with the customer focus strategy

Theme 6 Better Value for Money – a can do, affordable, efficient Council

Corporate Human Resources

1. Planning for HR implications of the implementation aspects of RPA
2. Agree and implement RPA approach to managing vacancies effectively (as appropriate)
3. Implement HR strategy and year 2 of the Workforce Development Plan
4. Continued implementation of a corporate approach to the IIP Framework
5. Work in conjunction with Member Services' to implement the Member Development Programme
6. Continue to implement a corporate approach to personal development planning for Members and Officers
7. Implement Absence Management initiatives
8. Design and delivery of aligned development activities for Chief Officers, Heads of Service and Senior Managers
9. Develop and implement revised Chief Officer, Heads of Service and Senior Management individual performance review scheme
10. Develop a Diversity Strategy
11. Develop capacity building programme including succession planning in the context of RPA

12. Develop and implement corporate learning and development policy
13. Report on corporate health indicators including absence, overtime and agency staff numbers
14. Develop HR's management information system
15. All key BIS policies, procedures and practices reviewed, agreed and communicated to support effective organisational change
16. To apply a stringent challenge when developing structures and posts with the aim of achieving more for less
17. Examine relativities across the organisation to support the move towards the creation of job families
18. Complete reviews of categorisation, job evaluation, honoraria processes and structural pay and grading reviews within BIS to support the corporate improvement agenda

Theme 6 Better Value for Money – a can do, accountable, efficient Council

Corporate Financial Planning

1. Further refine Medium Term Financial Plan
2. Agree new system for Internal Trading
3. Pilot integrated, on-line (self service) solution for staff attending events; agree programme; roll-out through Council
4. Review Council Travel Procurement Processes with a view to providing online, (self service) system and pilot same
5. Publish year one Employee Travel data
6. Progress on-line pilot of mileage and subsistence claims (self service) and devise roll out programme
7. To address all issues raised in Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Audit reports
8. Implement review of Financial Management process and roll-out programme
9. Review BCC Financial Regulations and Accounting Manuals and guidelines

10. Include on-line version of above to include intelligent search options in Web based format
11. Develop and deliver Financial Management training programme for all budget holders
12. Complete and submit all financial plans and reports on schedule and in line with corporate planning process including
 - i Outline Financial Planning Cycle
 - ii Annual Abstract of Accounts
 - iii Budget Report y/e March 08
 - iv Publish Audited Accounts
 - v Efficiency proposals 2010/11
 - vi Report mid year financial position
 - vii Submit for agreement District Rate 2010/11
13. Agree and implement proposals contained in the Sector Report
14. Develop and Deliver Financial Management training programme for all budget holders with emphasis on Council payment policy and processes

Theme 6 Better Value for Money – a can do, affordable, efficient Council

Corporate Information Management

1. Develop and Implement
 - an Information Management Strategy
 - a Printer Management Strategy
 - a Data Quality Policy
 - A Corporate Business intelligence Tool
2. Align IT governance arrangements to the IM Strategy
3. Extend e-enabled Customer Services
4. Facilitate and support collaboration facilities for front line staff
 - Mobile Computing
 - Pilot unified communications
5. Improve Telephony
 - Council Telephone Rationalisation
 - Mobile Telephony Policy and Rationalisation
 - Rollout of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)
6. Establish Business Process Re-engineering
7. Implement virtualisation of PC/s/Servers

8. Improve IT Service Management through the adoption of the industry standard ITIL practices (the Information Technology Infrastructure Library)
 - Implement a Disaster Recovery Plan
 - Review Business Continuity arrangements
 - Roll-out Office 2007
9. Carry out bench marking exercise

Audit, Governance and Risk Services

1. Implement Audit Panel's agreed programme of work
2. Annual assurance on the Council's risk management, internal control and governance processes
3. Complete programme of VFM studies as agreed with the Audit Panel, to contribute to the efficiency programme
4. Annual Governance statement Independent review during 2009/20 that AGRS complies with professional standards for the practice of internal audit in local government
5. Contribute to effective IT governance through Information Panel and related Boards
6. Provide fraud awareness training to managers throughout the Council
7. Develop assurance framework further
8. Annual audit of implementation of agreed Code of Governance"

Democratic Services and Governance

Consultation on Severance Arrangements for Councillors

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Department of the Environment's consultation paper on severance arrangements for Councillors:

"Purpose of Report

To submit for the consideration of the Committee a report regarding the consultation document which has been issued by the Department of the Environment entitled 'Severance Arrangements for Councillors'.

Summary of the Consultation Document

Under the Review of Public Administration, the Executive has proposed severance arrangements as a way of recognising the contribution which long serving Councillors who choose to stand down have made to their local area and to Northern Ireland as a whole. It is also one of the preliminary steps for the reorganisation of Local Government in 2011.

The consultation document puts forward a number of options for possible severance arrangements, including the calculation of the amount of money which could be paid to an individual Councillor, the timing of any scheme and how the associated costs should be met.

Calculation of Award

The Department has set out two options for how severance might be calculated. These are:

- a set amount for each year of service as a Councillor

severance could be calculated at a set amount per year, with a possible maximum period of qualifying service. The examples given are £1,000 per year up to a maximum qualifying period of either 36 years (setting a cap of £36,000) or up to a maximum period of 25 years (£25,000) or a maximum period of 20 years (£20,000).

- level of award grouped by a number of bands according to length of service

the level of the award could be determined under a banding system. The example given is Councillors who have served between eight and 10 years would receive £10,000, Councillors who have served more than 10 years but under 15 years would be awarded £15,000 and Councillors who have spent more than 15 years in Local Government would receive £20,000.

Meeting the Costs of the Awards

Again two options are suggested by the Department for meeting the costs involved. The first option is that, given that the reorganisation of Local Government is a Central Government initiative, the cost should be met by Central Government. The second option is that Local Government should meet the costs as severance payments are essentially recognition of long service by locally-elected representatives.

Timing of the Scheme

The Department has identified three possible options for the introduction of the scheme. These are:

- in January 2010
- in January 2011 prior to the Local Government Elections
- at the end of the current Local Government term in 2011.

Eligibility

The consultation document proposes that MLAs, MPs, MEPs and Members of the House of Lords be not eligible for severance. This has been the approach adopted by the Welsh and Scottish devolved administrations.

The consultation document also asks whether:

- next of kin should receive severance if a Councillor who has applied for payment under the scheme dies before the award is paid; and
- Councillors who receive severance but return to Local Government at a future date should be required to repay in full the amount paid.

Previous Response

As Members are aware, the issue of severance arrangements for Councillors has been highlighted on numerous occasions by the Council, most recently in September 2006 following the publication of a report compiled by the Councillors' Remuneration Working Group. That Group had been tasked with making recommendations to the then Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment regarding the future remuneration of Councillors in Northern Ireland.

In relation to severance payments specifically the report suggested that:

- only Councillors who have served more than one term should be eligible for severance;
- should a Councillor apply for severance and subsequently put his/her name forward as a candidate for the following Local Government elections the application for severance would be invalidated;

- if an individual received a severance payment and was subsequently elected as a Councillor, he/she should be required to repay the full sum before taking up office;
- there should be a provision to allow the severance to be paid to the Councillors' next of kin in the event that he/she died between applying for the scheme and payment being made; and
- Councillors who are also members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the UK Parliament or the European Parliament would not be eligible for severance.

The Council welcomed the recommendations made by the Group with regard to severance payments. However, during evidence sessions arranged by the Working Group the Council had in its representation argued that any severance scheme should be on-going rather than a one-off as had been the case in other jurisdictions in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Key Issues

Calculation of Award

It is accepted that a severance scheme which provides for a set amount per year of service is primarily to recognise the contribution to public life which Councillors have made through the dedication and commitment they have shown to their constituents and Local Government. That being the case it is appropriate that the maximum qualifying period of service should be set at 38 years, this being the maximum entitlement a Councillor could attain if the period of service is calculated from the 1973 Local Government Elections. Capping the severance at a lower number of years would in fact mean that those Councillors with the longest service would receive a lower payment per year than other Members, in essence disadvantaging financially those very Members which the scheme sets out to recognise. The overall cost of applying a maximum qualifying period of 38 years, given the relatively few Members who will have this length of service, is negligible. However, for a Member who has completed nine Council terms, it would mean the difference between receiving £1,000 per year of service as opposed to the significantly lower amount of £526 per year if the maximum qualifying period were restricted to 20 years. This would clearly be inequitable and would work against the principle of the Scheme.

A severance scheme based on a set amount for each year of service as an Elected Representative is transparent, easily understood and therefore is likely to be perceived by the general public as a fair means of recognising long service.

Eligibility

It would be more appropriate for the minimum term to be served by a Member before he/she would become eligible for severance to be at least two Council terms, since this would be more acceptable to the general public in terms of the definition of long service.

Exclusion of MLAs, MPs, MEPs and Members of The House of Lords

Members of the House of Lords, at the end of their service in Parliament, receive no resettlement grant nor do they have any pension entitlement. It would therefore be inequitable to exclude them from a severance scheme purely on the basis that they currently serve in another tier of Government. The House of Lords is not an elected Body and it would be unfair to exclude persons appointed to it since they are still representing their constituents yet do not receive any recompense other than a daily allowance for attending the Lords.

Furthermore, given that the underlying principle of a severance scheme is to recognise the long and valuable service given by Members to Local Government, it would be unfair not to include those MLAs, MPs, and MEPs who have contributed to public service and simply penalise them for moving on to a higher elected Body. However, the basis of their entitlement to an award should be calculated only on those years of Local Government service which they have acquired prior to their election to another tier of Government.

Meeting the costs of the Scheme

The cost should be met by Central Government. In both Scotland and Wales the costs of the schemes were borne by the devolved administrations. Given that the review of Public Administration and the reorganisation of Local Government is an initiative which is being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Assembly, it would seem reasonable that the costs associated with the introduction of a severance scheme as part of the overall reorganisation should be met by Central Government.

Timing of the Scheme

It is considered that the scheme should be implemented from January 2010, but with appropriate legislation being enacted to prevent by-elections having to be held to fill vacancies which may arise as a result of Members opting to take severance. Implementing the scheme from January 2010 would also help ensure that new Councillors would gain valuable experience of Local Government

in preparation for Councils' assuming additional powers in 2011. In addition, this lead-in time would allow capacity-building issues for new Members to be addressed in a structured and comprehensive manner, thereby helping to ensure a smooth and efficient transition to the new Local Government structures. A phased approach will help reduce the impact of losing experienced Councillors and an introduction of the Scheme to apply during the period from January 2010 until the date of the Local Government elections in May 2011 would be essential.

The second option, to introduce the scheme in January 2011, could potentially result in some Councils trying to conduct their business with a significantly reduced number of Members during the last months of the Council term. This scenario could also be potentially very disruptive to the efficient running of Councils as well as being highly disruptive in Belfast to the operation of proportionality arrangements.

The third option, of implementing the scheme at the end of the Local Government term in 2011, is the least favourable in that in the crucial period leading up to the full implementation of the Review of Public Administration it may result in Councils being faced with working through a complex transition process with retiring Members who may have a peripheral interest only in the restructuring of Local Government and the additional powers which Councils will assume.

Consultation with The National Association Of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region)

The Council has in the past liaised closely with the National Association of Councillors in all matters relating to Councillors' interests and particularly remuneration and severance. I have spoken to the Secretary of the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region), Councillor Ronnie Ferguson, regarding the consultation document and specifically the proposals being suggested which it is felt would enhance the scheme and ensure that it is equitable and does not disadvantage any long serving Member of Local Government. Councillor Ferguson has indicated that the National Association of Councillors response to the consultation document will mirror the response being made by Belfast City Council.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to:

1. A set amount of £1,000 per year being payable up to a maximum of 38 years;

2. eligibility for severance being restricted to Members who have served a minimum of two Council terms;
3. the inclusion of Members of the House of Lords in the severance scheme and also the inclusion of MLAs, MPs, and MEPs but on the basis that their entitlement to an award would be calculated only on those years of Local Government service which they have acquired prior to their election to another tier of Government;
4. the next of kin of a Member being entitled to severance in the event that a Councillor dies after applying for severance but before the payment has been made;
5. a recipient of severance having to repay it in full in the event that they return subsequently to serve in Local Government before a period of two Council terms has elapsed;
6. Central Government being responsible for meeting the costs associated with the introduction of a severance scheme;
7. introducing the scheme to apply during the period from January, 2010 until the date of the Local Government elections in May, 2011, providing that the necessary legislation on co-option is implemented; and
8. the attached response to the consultation document (Appendix 1) being approved and submitted to the Department of the Environment.

Decision Tracking

Following approval at Council in June the Head of Committee and Members' Services will submit the Council's response to the Department of the Environment.

Belfast City Council's Draft Response to the Department of the Environment Consultation Document on Severance Arrangements for Councillors

Question 1: Do you have any comments about the proposal to introduce a severance scheme for Councillors?

Belfast City Council, having long lobbied for a severance scheme for Councillors, welcomes the proposal to award Members' severance payments in recognition of their long and valued service to Local Government.

Question 2: Do you agree that MLAs, MPs, Members of the House of Lords and MEPs should not be eligible for a severance award?

The Council believes that it would be inequitable to exclude Members of the House of Lords from the severance scheme given that at the end of their service in Parliament they receive no resettlement grant nor do they have any pension entitlement. Furthermore, given that the underlying principle of the severance scheme is to recognise the long and valuable service given by Members to Local Government, it would be unfair not to include those MLAs, MPs, and MEPs who have contributed to public service before being elected to a higher tier of Government. However, the basis of their entitlement to an award should be calculated only on those years of Local Government service which they have acquired prior to their election to another tier of Government.

Question 3: Should the eligibility criteria include a minimum period of service? If yes, what should that period be?

The Council is of the opinion that the eligibility criteria should include a minimum period of service. It is felt that it is appropriate for the minimum term to be served by a Member before they become eligible for severance to be at least two Council terms. A minimum of two terms is more likely to be acceptable to the general public in terms of the definition of long service and the actual costs of any scheme.

The Council is also in favour of cumulative service being applied to determine the level of award.

Question 4: Do you agree that a provision allowing a Councillor's next of kin to receive the award should be included in the severance scheme?

It is recognised that serving as an Elected Representative involves a significant amount of time being spent both on Council and constituency business. This commitment undoubtedly impacts on family life and therefore the Council feels that it is wholly appropriate that in the event of a Councillor dying after applying for severance but before the payment has been made the next of kin should be entitled to receive the full amount.

Question 5: With regard to the timing of the scheme which of the three options listed below do you consider most suitable?

Option 1 - Introduce the scheme in January 2010

Option 2 - Introduce the scheme from January 2011

Option 3 - Introduce the scheme at the end of the Local Government term in 2011

The Council is in favour of option one, implementing the scheme from January 2010, providing that appropriate legislation is enacted to prevent by-elections being held to fill vacancies which have arisen as the result of Members opting to take severance. Implementing the scheme from January 2010 would also help ensure that new Councillors would gain valuable experience of Local Government in preparation for Councils' assuming additional powers in 2011. In addition, this lead-in time would allow capacity-building issues for new Members to be addressed in a structured and comprehensive manner, thereby helping to ensure a smooth and efficient transition to the new Local Government structures. A phased approach will help reduce the impact of losing experienced Councillors.

The second option would potentially result in some Councils trying to conduct their business with a significantly reduced number of Members in the last months of the Council term. This scenario could also be potentially very disruptive to the efficient running of the Council as well as forcing Councils to revisit their proportionality arrangements.

The third option is the least favourable in that in the crucial period leading up to the full implementation of the Review of Public Administration it may result in Councils being faced with working through a complex transition process with retiring Members who may have a peripheral interest only in the restructuring of Local Government and the additional powers which Councils will assume.

Question 6: Is there another more suitable time to make the scheme available?

No.

Question 7: Which of the two methods set out below for calculating the award do you consider most suitable?

Option 1 – A set amount for each year of Service as a Councillor

Option 2 – Level of award grouped by a number of bands according to length of service

The Council is in favour of Option 1, with a set amount of £1,000 per year of service being awarded up to a maximum of £38,000.

Question 8: Should there be a maximum amount for an individual award? If yes, what sum should that be?

The Council is of the view that it is reasonable to set a maximum amount of £38,000 for an individual award. This sum, for which a relatively low number of Members will be eligible, ensures that those with the longest service are not in fact disadvantaged financially in terms of the amount which they would be entitled to for each year of service given.

Question 9: Who do you think should meet the cost of a severance scheme?

Of the two options for meeting the costs of the scheme, that is, the costs should be met by Councils or by Central Government, the Council is of the opinion that the cost should be met by Central Government. In both Scotland and Wales the costs of the schemes were borne by the devolved administrations. Given that the Review of Public Administration and the reorganisation of Local Government is an initiative which is being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Assembly it would seem reasonable that the costs associated with the introduction of a severance scheme as part of the overall reorganisation should be met by Central Government.

Question 10: Should a recipient of an award be required to repay it in full in the event that he/she is elected or co-opted to a Council at a future date?

The Council is of the opinion that a recipient of an award who subsequently returns to serve in Local Government should be expected to repay the award in full unless a period of two Council terms has elapsed.”

The Committee approved the foregoing comments as the Council’s response to the consultation document.

Council Constitution

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to an interim constitution for the Council:

“1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This is an initial report on the Interim Belfast City Council Constitution. It is an introduction to its purpose and key themes. Although this report contains some detail on the issues that will be addressed in the Interim Constitution, it is not meant to be exhaustive.

1.2 The report is set out in six sections:

- **Background to the Belfast City Council Interim Constitution**
- **Purpose of the Interim Constitution**
- **Relevant themes that will be addressed in drafting the Interim Constitution**
- **Layout of the Interim Constitution: what we intend to achieve**
- **Proposed timetable**
- **Summary of decisions required**

2.0 Relevant Background Information

Belfast City Council continues to review its processes in order to modernise and improve its service delivery and democratic accountability. Part of this agenda has involved discussion of drafting a constitution for Belfast City Council.

Full political engagement is fundamental to this process.

This report aims to introduce the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to the preliminary research and proposals that will provide a platform for drafting a constitution for Belfast City Council.

3.0 Background to the Belfast City Council Interim Constitution

3.1 The concept of the Constitution was conceived to bring together into one document the guidelines and regulations which explain and govern how the Council operates; and to do so in a presentable and accessible way. It is considered that this will enable the Council to be more transparent and democratic, and will encourage and foster more efficient working practices.

3.2 The Constitution will be an Interim Constitution pending the recommendations of the Review of Public Administration and the new local government legislation in 2011. Following this, the Interim Constitution will become the Constitution of the new Belfast City Council.

3.3 The motivation for the Belfast City Council Interim Constitution is also informed by a wider context. A brief outline of this context is as follows:

1. Review of Public Administration

The Policy Development Panel A (Governance, Community Planning and Central/Local Relations) of the RPA has raised the issue of a requirement for the new councils in 2011 to have a written constitution.

In light of this Belfast City Council has the opportunity to:

- (i) Take a policy lead ahead of other councils in Northern Ireland in adopting the concept and practice of using a constitution. The BCC Interim Constitution example will provide a template for other councils across Northern Ireland to follow, as they look to accommodate the complexities of the new local unitary structures; and

- (ii) Play an important role in informing the RPA process and the development of legislation in this area through the Council's experience of constructing and using a constitution.

The progress of the RPA, and how it will affect councils and residents, can be unclear. The Interim Constitution will provide a space for Council Members, officers and residents to find out about – in plain English - the progress of the RPA. The Interim Constitution would be updated immediately on any developments in this area.

The transition aspects of the reforms can be addressed in the Interim Constitution. The dual role of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee acting also as the Transition Committee can be explained along with their legal foundations. The same applies to transition groups such as the Budget and Transformation Panel.

Local government is experiencing significant change with devolution of services occurring concurrently with the unification of councils. A constitution for BCC which includes all the relevant information in an accessible format will, it is hoped, provide an opportunity to help ease the transition for all.

2. *Beyond Northern Ireland*

- **Europe:** From a European perspective local government is of increasing importance. The European Charter of Local Self-Government has been a strong background force in motivating a renewed approach to developing local government across Europe. The Charter considers that: 'local authorities are one of the main foundations of any democratic regime; ... [and] that the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles that are shared by all Member States of the Council of Europe'. These principles of enhancing democracy and empowering citizens would be reflected in the introduction of a constitution for Belfast City Council.
- **Under Article 4(2) of the Charter,** local governments have 'full discretion to exercise their initiative with regard to any matter which is not excluded from their competence' Belfast City Council, leading with a policy of implementing a constitution, would be employing this initiative in accordance with the aims of the Charter.

- It is of note that the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are signatories to the Charter, but that the United Kingdom government has to date only formally adopted the Charter in respect of England, Scotland, and Wales. NILGA have urged the RPA to consider Northern Ireland's signing of the Charter as being of 'paramount' importance. It is possible that this will occur hand in hand with the broadening of local government powers in 2011.
- England and Wales: Councils have been statutorily obliged to create, in England and Wales, council constitutions, following the Local Government Act 2000. The purpose of this legislation is to make councils "more efficient, transparent, and accountable to local people". A constitution for Belfast City Council will help to achieve these aims for its citizens.

3. Best Value Act

Under the Local Government (Best Value) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002, district councils have a legal obligation to 'make arrangements' for 'continuous improvement' in the way in which their functions are exercised. In seeking to achieve this, councils must engage with 'persons who use or are likely to use services provided by the council'. A Constitution, in providing a clear and accessible outline of the Council's services to all interested parties, is a practical step towards improvement.

4.0 Purpose of the Interim Constitution

4.1 The proposed, but not final, purpose of the Interim Constitution is:

1. To outline the work of Belfast City Council and give a brief overview of its internal processes; and
2. To establish a clear framework for the Council's Members and officers to operate within.

5.0 Relevant themes that will be addressed in drafting the Interim Constitution

1. Review of Public Administration

The Interim Constitution will provide a space for informing all interested parties of what the RPA is and how it will effect local government. The Interim Constitution will be updated with the recommendations of the RPA.

Also included in the Interim Constitution will be information on the Transition Committee and the Budget and Transformation Panel, including an explanation of the relevant legislative framework within which local government in Northern Ireland operates, with reference in particular to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and subsequent relevant legislation.

2. Updating Documents

Whilst the central purpose of the Interim Constitution is to create a single document which describes how the Council operates, drafting the Interim Constitution will present an opportunity to update a number of practices/documents which govern Council operations. The following are examples of issues that are likely to be addressed:

Note: extensive consultation is taking place with key officers over the following areas.

- **Scheme of Delegation**

Potential areas for updating / clarification:

- **Staff Management;**
- **Virement of Budget;**
- **Departmental Plan;**
- **Procurement of Goods and Services;**
- **Grants;**
- **Any other issues that arise**

- **Standing Orders**

Potential areas for updating / clarification:

- **Whether the Orders should only include rules governing meetings;**
- **Any other issues that arise.**

- **Modern.gov**

Potential areas for updating / clarification:

- **The extent of usage of Modern.gov;**
- **To extent to which Modern.gov will track decisions and recommendations made under the Scheme of Delegation;**
- **The specific roles and responsibilities of the Audit Panel in monitoring the usage and effectiveness of Modern.gov; and**
- **Any other issues that arise**

3. Corporate Plan / Value Creation Map

The Corporate Plan's importance will be reflected in the Interim Constitution.

The role of the Plan and its central provisions will be included and explained in the Interim Constitution. The full Plan will be appended in the 'key documents' section or contained online and clearly referenced from the Interim Constitution.

The Value Creation Map will be included in the Corporate Plan section. Due to its purpose as a cross-cutting strategy document, its vision and themes will also be built-in to the overall structure and style of the Interim Constitution.

4. E-Government

The Interim Constitution will be available online. Useful documents that are not of immediate relevance to the Interim Constitution will be available online and signposted from the Interim Constitution (or hyperlinked from the online Interim Constitution).

5. Guidance Manual or Formal Protocol

An important issue is the extent to which the Constitution will be a formal protocol document or a guidance / signposting manual.

It is likely that the whole Interim Constitution will be a formal protocol defining and governing how the Council operates. It will also, however, act as an information booklet for informing the public of the Council's structure and services.

Careful drafting will be required to serve these two aims in the same text. Locating fuller versions of complex regulations/ documents outside of the main document can help. (Signposting to these documents can be clearly indicated in the Interim Constitution.) This will enable the Interim Constitution to contain outlines of important regulatory documents for the benefit of the Council staff and Members whilst being less likely to put off or perplex the lay reader.

6. Size of Interim Constitution

The Interim Constitution will aim to include only what is helpful and useful to its expected readership of Officers/ Members and residents. A balance must be struck between practicality / accessibility – the smaller the better – and creating a thorough document.

If large documents are not contained in the hard-copy Interim Constitution then they will be clearly signposted and available online or hard-copy on request.

7. Serving the Present / Looking Forward

The Interim Constitution will be tailored to the Council's current situation. It is also likely, however, that the Council will be subject to significant change in the next few years. The Interim Constitution will need to be drafted as a 'living document' so as to be able to accommodate these changes.

In terms of the legal drafting, the Interim Constitution will be compliant with current legislation whilst also being drafted so as to be able to incorporate new legislation in the near and medium term.

8. Plain English

The Interim Constitution will be written in a coherent and easy-to-read plain English format. It aims to be clear throughout whilst also being legally compliant. The document will be available in Braille, large-print, and audio formats.

The document will be scrutinised by Corporate Communications to ensure that the Council's Plain English requirements are met.

6.0 Layout of the Interim Constitution: what it is intended to achieve

6.1 Introduction

- Explains the background to, and purpose of, the Interim Constitution
- Explains the structure of the Interim Constitution
- Contents page

Part 1: Who We Are

- Describes the composition of Belfast City Council including Members, full Council, Committees, Working Groups, and Officers
- States when the Council meets and provides information on meeting dates
- Outlines the relationship between Council Members and Officers
- Includes information on the RPA (this affects 'who' BCC is)

Part 2: What We Do

- Describes the areas the Council is responsible for, grouped by Committee area (i.e. 'Development'). It is expected that committee responsibilities will be inserted here and removed from the Standing Orders. Standing Orders will still be included in Part 5 of the Interim Constitution. This part will also include text in relation to the Council's strategic objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan and will include information on the themes that the Council applies in pursuing those objectives.

Part 3: How We Do It

- Brief policy documents from each of the key areas will be included here. These will be summary guides to the specialist area that also outline the important regulations affecting Council staff. If an area has a corresponding full document the document will be clearly signposted and included in Part 5 of the Interim Constitution
- Each document will be drafted by a key officer in the grouping
- Headings are likely to be as follows:
 - Our Finance
 - Our People
 - Our Assets
 - Our Information Management
 - Our Communication and Engagement
 - Our Policy, Planning and Performance
 - Our Governance
- A number of documents that are listed in Part 5 may be referenced in this section (e.g. Health and Safety Policy). Particularly relevant sections of these key documents will be paraphrased here
- References to Strategic Frameworks that have been approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will be probably be included here, if they contain the necessary procedural information

Part 4: Our Values

A brief summary of Belfast City Council's agreed Corporate Values.

Documents may also be referenced / paraphrased, such as:

- Equality Scheme
- DoE Code of Conduct for Members / Officers-
- Freedom of Information and access to Information measures
- Sustainable Development policy

Part 5: Documents to be included

A collection of key documents which will be referenced from the earlier parts of the Constitution and / or which are important in explaining how the Council works.

Some documents may, if included in the Interim Constitution, render the constitution extremely large (i.e. 300 – 400 pages). As a result, only key documents will be included in Part 5 with clear signposts for accessing the larger documents online.

The following are potential documents to be included (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Code of Governance
- Scheme of Delegation
- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations and / or Accounting Manual
- BCC Staff Code of Conduct
- DoE Member Code of Conduct
- Thematic Planning
- Health and Safety Policy
- Joint Declaration with Trade Unions
- Freedom of Information and access to Information
- Sustainable Development

7.0 Proposed Timetable

7.1 *May/June*

- Legal Services write first draft of Parts 1 and 2
- Commencement of redrafting of the Scheme of Delegation / Standing Orders / other issues by Legal Services

June/July

- First drafts of Part 3 completed by key Officers
- Relevant material collated for Part 5
- First Draft of Part 4

These drafts can then be developed and refined by relevant key Officers / Legal Services.

It is anticipated that a final draft of the Belfast City Council Interim Constitution will be provided to the Strategy and Policy Resources Committee for scrutiny by September/October 2009.

8.0 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the foregoing report and approve the direction which is proposed for the development of an Interim Constitution for BCC.

9.0 Officers to contact for further information

Ciaran Quigley, Director of Legal Services ext 6038”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

Requests for the Provision of Hospitality

The Committee was informed that the undernoted request for the provision of hospitality had been received:

<u>Organisation/ Body</u>	<u>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
University of Ulster	Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts 2009 – 15th International Symposium 26th August, 2009 (evening) Approximately 600 attending.	The provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	It is estimated that 800 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.	The provision of a drinks reception in the form of red and white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £2,400

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Service of Remembrance at Guillemont

(Councillor Adamson declared an interest in this matter in that he was Chairman of the Somme Association.)

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Somme Association enquiring if the Council would wish to be represented at a Service of Remembrance for the men of the 16th (Irish) Division to be held in Guillemont, France on 3rd September, 2009. The Committee was reminded that the Council normally

authorised attendance at the Somme Pilgrimage in July to recognise the sacrifice of the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions and had already approved attendance at this year's event. The Pilgrimage included Services of Remembrance at both Thiepval and Guillemont. That being the case, it was considered that there would be no added benefit accruing to the ratepayers of the City through attendance at this additional service.

The Committee agreed to decline the invitation on this occasion and agreed further that a report on the event be submitted to a future meeting by Councillor Adamson, who would be attending in his capacity as Chairman of the Somme Association.

Somme Remembrance Parade at Knockagh War Memorial and Similar Events

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Knockagh Joint Committee inviting Members to attend the Somme Remembrance Parade and Service at the Knockagh War Memorial, Monument Road, Carrickfergus on Saturday, 28th June at 10.40 a.m. As part of the Service the Mayor from each of the City, Borough and District Councils within County Antrim had been requested to lay a wreath. It was pointed out that the Committee had authorised attendance at previous events and had contributed financially towards the restoration of the Memorial.

The Head of Committee and Members' Services reported that the Committee routinely received invitations of this nature and granted authority for Members to attend. However, it was the view that, rather than continue to report all such correspondence to the Committee, authority to accept such invitations, where there was no cost to the Council except minor travelling expenses, should be delegated to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive currently had such authority in the case of invitations to attend the Northern Ireland Disabled Ex-Servicemen's Association Annual Church Service which was held in the Sinclair Seamen's Church.

Accordingly, it was recommended that:

- (i) the Committee authorise the attendance of any Member of the Council at the Service; and
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to accept in future years the invitation to attend the Service and other similar events, where there was no cost to the Council except minor travelling expenses.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Finance

(Mrs. R. Crozier, Head of Information Systems Belfast, attended in connection with these items.)

Budget and Transformation Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 8th May.

Review of Information Services Belfast

The Committee was informed that the Budget and Transformation Panel had considered a report in relation to a review of Information Services Belfast and agreed that it be submitted to the Committee for approval. A copy of the report in this regard is set out hereunder:

“Relevant Background Information

In the past external IT work has generated significant income for the Council and subsidised internal IT costs by up to 25%. This contribution has dropped to 17% in 2007/2008 and to 14% in 2008/2009.

At Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 9 January 2009 the Director of Corporate Services highlighted a significant downturn in income for ISB and the projected loss of income (in the region of £890,000) for the financial year 2009/2010.

Committee supported the recommendation that a review be undertaken to determine how the service could be ‘right-sized’ by reducing expenditure whilst sustaining the quality of IT service.

As part of the Council’s efficiency programme ISB has reduced costs and created savings wherever possible resulting in a lean operating budget. This has made the realisation of further cost savings in areas other than staffing less achievable. As staff costs in ISB account for 60% of overall costs it was considered reasonable to commission BIS to examine ISB’s structure and the potential for a reduction in the number of posts to realise savings.

Key Issues

ISB’s current structure has four portfolios: Customer Services, Internal Solutions, External Solutions and Infrastructure, all supported by a Commercial Support section. Each portfolio has an establishment of a portfolio manager post. The service has been functioning with two portfolio managers supported by the Deputy General Manager and the Head of Service. The review presents an opportunity to review ISB’s management requirement with a view to flattening the management structure and reorganising the portfolios.

In recent years ISB has changed the way resource is managed and in particular how work is allocated to projects within the service. Rather than having staff dedicated to specific applications, a number of staff are allocated from a resource pool with generic skills - keeping the balance right between supporting specialisms and increasing the ability to flex capacity according to demand. This presents an opportunity to review the size of the generic pool without impacting negatively on capacity.

The creation of CTU and the changing needs of the service have changed the role of Commercial Support in ISB. It has moved away from the more traditional role of business support to one of creating and supporting a programme office and supporting the staff development and performance management needs of the service.

In 2009 Reprographics section merged with ISB. It was agreed that the merge would deal initially with the physical move and that it would be appropriate to review the Reprographics function as part of this review.

With the above factors in mind, the scope of the work undertaken by BIS has covered the structure of ISB and Reprographics and the changing role of business support staff.

Recommendations

BIS has developed the recommendations outlined below to address the key issues identified.

- Delete the post of Deputy General Manager;
- Delete one post of Portfolio Manager, leaving an establishment of three Portfolio Managers;
- Reconfigure the four Portfolios into three.
- Delete two posts of Assistant Manager;
- The two vacant posts of Principal Consultant should be filled to enable effective delivery of the IS/IT service at this level;
- Delete four posts of Senior Consultant reducing the establishment to twenty nine;
- Delete one post of Consultant and two posts of Senior Analyst;
- Delete one post of Senior Technician;

- Delete one post of Technician;
- Delete post of Reprographics Manager;
- Delete post of Commercial Support Manager;
- Re-title post of Commercial Support Assistant to Programme and Business Support Assistant;
- Delete post of Management Support Assistant

Resource Implications

Financial

The implementation of the above recommendations will result in the following costs;

<u>Posts</u>	<u>Actuarial and Redundancy Costs (£)</u>	<u>Current Salary and Superannuation Costs (p.a.) (£)</u>	<u>Clawback Period</u>
IT Staff	896,970	506,116	
Commercial Support Staff	169,974	82,914	
Total	1,066,917	589,030	22 months

If these recommendations are accepted, savings of £589,030 per annum after 22 months will be realised.

Benchmarking has identified that the clawback period is well below that used by other public sector organisations where a payback period of 3.25 years has been defined as acceptable.

Human Resources

Detailed consultation will now take place with all relevant stakeholders including HR, Trade Unions and staff to develop an implementation plan which is fully in accordance with all relevant HR policies and procedures.

It is acknowledged that all affected post holders must sign and agree amended job descriptions. In addition, a recruitment exercise will need to be undertaken for new posts, as appropriate.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree the BIS recommendations for the ISB review as a management side position.

Members are asked that, if no written objections are received, we can proceed directly to implementation stage without further referral back to committee.

Key to Abbreviations

ISB – Information Services Belfast
BIS – Business Improvement Section
RPA – Review of Public Administration
CTU – Central Transaction Unit

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Authority to Seek Tenders

The Committee granted authority for the commencement of tendering exercises and delegated authority to the Director of Corporate Services, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, to accept the most advantageous tenders in respect of the following:

- (i) the provision of a business intelligence tool at a cost of approximately £80,000; and
- (ii) support provision for the System Analysis and Programme Development (SAP), the Council's new procurement and financial system, for a period of three years, the cost of which would be approximately £100,000 per annum.

Joint Development of Staff Travel Smartcard

(Mr. A. Curran, Sustainable Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 24th April, it had agreed to defer consideration of a report in relation to the development of a staff travel smartcard to enable further information to be obtained. A copy of the report submitted to the Committee on 24th April, together with a further report providing the additional information, is set out hereunder:

Report of 24th April

“Relevant Background Information

This paper seeks Committee approval to contribute £6,000 towards a joint project with Translink to introduce discounted public transport ‘smartcards’ for travel to work.

Employee (tax) benefits similar to those offered by the Council for the purchase of childcare vouchers and its Bike to Work scheme are available to employees who commit to using public transport for travel to work. This is a HM Revenue and Customs sponsored

scheme aimed to stimulate use of public transport, where individuals make 'salary sacrifice' payments towards travel to work costs. The scheme was introduced in 1999 as part of the Finance Act under the Governments Green Travel Initiative.

While schemes operate in many UK regions, the option has not yet been availed of in Northern Ireland. The Council has worked closely with DRD Roads Service and the regional transport provider, Translink, in developing a proposal for trial in Belfast.

Initial investigation of the scheme concluded that devising a programme for BCC employees only would not provide sufficient 'critical mass' to progress a project in Belfast. In view of this, the Council convened a group of other large scale public sector employers in the city to seek a co-operative approach. An agreement, in principle, has been reached with Belfast Health Trust, the Housing Executive and Queen's University to pilot the scheme. It was considered beneficial to have a private sector representative participate in the project which has been achieved with the involvement of Belfast City Centre Management/Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

The organisations involved, to date, represent over 30,000 public sector employees working in Belfast with an additional 500 businesses represented by BCCM/Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

The roll out of the pilot scheme would not, therefore, be restricted to BCC employees.

Key Issues

The level of use of Translink's 'metro' service in Belfast has increased in recent years. (23.8 million journeys in 05/06; 26.0 million journeys in 07/08) However, the percentage of the population using public transport in the city remains low. Almost 70% of employees in Belfast travel to work using private transport.

Recent surveys conducted within BCC reveal low rates of uptake of public transport by Council staff. This situation exists despite the fact that the majority of staff actually live in Belfast. Sixty-five per cent of staff said they were willing to consider using buses for travel to work. When asked what measures would encourage use of public transport the majority of staff responded the provision of discounted travel cards/season tickets.

Belfast City Council does not have statutory responsibility for transport matters. It has been opportune, however, for the Council to initiate involvement of a number of partners to progress a scheme that provides mutual and collective benefits for the city.

The proposal to work with Translink supports, entirely, Council objectives to demonstrate leadership and support economic development within the city while contributing to wider environmental aspirations. It has been developed principally as part of the Council's Sustainable Development planning process but also reflects objectives contained in the Council's draft Transport Policy, which seeks to discourage over reliance on private car transport within the city.

The proposal contributes directly to Council objectives to support economic prosperity amongst businesses in Belfast by helping to defray travel to work costs.

Translink officials are fully supportive of the proposal and have developed an outline pricing discount model and draft specification to enable a fully automated 'smartcard' system. The scheduling of work with Translink's software development supplier may result in a project 'lead-in' time of approximately 12 months.

A detailed draft outline of how the scheme is proposed to operate in Belfast has been agreed by all parties involved in the pilot project. In summary, the scheme operates when

- (1) An employee agrees to contribute to the purchase of an annual, discounted, bus travel pass by way of a monthly or fortnightly contribution (salary sacrifice)
- (2) Translink will issue a customised electronic pass which may be used at any time provided there is some work travel use. The employing organisation pays collective ticket costs monthly to Translink.
- (3) Income Tax and National Insurance exemptions save employees up to 40% on monthly travel costs
- (4) National Insurance exemptions save Employers up to 12.8%.

In order to make the "salary sacrifice" option more attractive, Translink has agreed to discount further the cost of their annual ticket product.

Resource Implications

Financial

Due to present budgetary constraints, Translink is not in a position to commission software development for a travel to work scheme at this time. Officials have intimated that a jointly funded

initiative would, however, be likely to be viewed positively by their Board. In order to accelerate introduction of a Belfast pilot it is proposed to seek agreement whereby the introductory project would be funded as follows:

Total (maximum) development cost estimate		50K
Translink	70%	35K
DRD Roads Service	12%	6K
Belfast City Council	12%	6K
BCCM/Chamber of Trade and Commerce	6%	3K

Funding for the proposed BCC contribution is available from existing budgets.

Human Resources

None Should the scheme progress, administrative overheads for BCC participation is considered minimal and would be recovered from savings on National Insurance contributions.

Assets

None

Recommendations

The proposal presents the Council with a clear opportunity to influence others towards improving the environment and the economy of Belfast, particularly at a time of economic downturn.

The Committee is invited to agree a contribution of £6,000 towards a joint project involving Translink, DRD Roads Service and Belfast City Centre Management/Chamber of Trade and Commerce for the development of automated travel to work 'smartcard' scheme and, if agreed, to pass the undernoted resolution.

That the expenditure in respect on the aforementioned be approved under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to the District, and inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

Report of 22nd May

“Relevant Background Information

The foregoing paper was presented to the Committee on 24 April. It was agreed to defer consideration of the request to permit further information to be obtained. Since then discussion has taken place with Translink, DRD Roads Service and party representatives.

The purpose and rationale for the paper remains unchanged. However, points raised at the April Committee and in subsequent discussion with members are addressed in this cover report.

Key Issues

(1) Control afforded to Belfast City Council.

The context against which the paper was considered in April coincided with Translink announcements for fare increases. Members expressed concern regarding the lack of consultation and lack of transparency relating to the reasons behind the increases proposed. In response to reaction from political parties and the Consumer Council, Translink deferred increases which are limited to an average of 2% on Metro and Ulsterbus services. Increases relate to cash fares only and there will be no change for commuters using multi-journey, weekly or monthly ‘smartcards’. The increase has been approved by the Minister for Regional Development. Furthermore, the Consumer Council has confirmed that it is now content with the level of consultation and the fares revision will be implemented on 18 May 2009.

Response

- (i) Regarding the principle of a ‘consultative approach’ Translink accept that this is critical. All parties subscribing to the development of a pilot ‘salary sacrifice’ smartcard will be involved as part of a steering group to design the product for use in Belfast.
- (ii) A Memorandum of Agreement will be drawn up by the Council to ensure the investment made on behalf of rate payers is optimised.

(2) Service Standards

Some members expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of provision by the Metro service.

Response

- (iii) Concerns have been relayed to Translink officials who have indicated that they would be happy to meet with the Committee to hear views directly.

(3) Integration of Project with other Council Policy

As indicated in the attached paper, the proposal is deemed to contribute to Council policy on leadership, economic development and environmental improvement. The original paper also made reference to the Council's draft Transport Policy.

Response

- (iv) The draft Transport Policy was agreed by the Development Committee on 13 May. The underpinning position within the policy is for the Council to adopt a strong leadership role in promoting sustainable transport initiatives for Belfast. The policy also seeks, specifically, to develop effective working relationships with delivery agencies to develop schemes which support local people and communities.

(4) Project timescale

Some members sought assurance that the duration of the scheme pilot phase amongst subscribing organisations be minimised.

Response

Translink has agreed to contain the pilot phase to the minimum length of time necessary and would expect to roll out the provision of discounted staff travel cards to all businesses in Belfast as soon as possible.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider the additional information above alongside the paper submitted on 24 April and to agree a contribution of £6,000 (12% of total costs) to the joint development of an annual staff travelcard initiative for Metro bus service users.

Decision Tracking

The decision of the Committee, when ratified, will be communicated to project partners in *June 2009* and a progress report submitted to the Committee before *April 2010*.

Officer responsible – *David Cartmill*'

The Committee agreed to contribute the sum of £6,000 towards a joint project involving Translink, the Department for Regional Development, Roads Service and the Belfast City Centre Management/Chamber of Trade and Commerce for the development of a staff travel to work smartcard scheme and

Resolved – That the expenditure be approved under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the District and inhabitants of the District, the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

Human Resources

(Mrs. J. Minne, Head of Human Resources, attended in connection with this item.)

Year End Absence 2008/2009

The Committee was reminded that the average number of days lost per full-time employee in 2007/2008 was 13.91. Accordingly, at its meeting on 23rd May, 2008, the Committee had agreed an overall Council target reduction in absence of two days by 2010/2011, that is, to reduce to 12 the average number of days absence per full-time employee.

The Head of Human Resources reported that the work in relation to absence management had resulted in the reduction in sickness absence of four and a half days per full-time employee since 2005/2006 as shown below:

2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
15.75	15.08	13.91	11.22

The Head of Human Resources then made the following points:

- at the end of the financial year 2008/2009 the average number of days of sickness absence per full-time employee had been 11.22 days;
- the Council had reduced its absence by 5,618 days or 17.16% for the year;
- during the year the figure had reduced by more than two and a half days average per person (2.66 days or 19.2%);
- almost 40% of staff had no absence during 2008/2009 compared with 34.85% for the previous year;
- 13.34% of staff had been absent from work on a long-term basis (more than twenty consecutive working days) compared with 17.48% for the previous year;

- long-term sickness absence accounted for 60.18% of the Council's sickness absence in comparison with 70% for the previous year; and
- Departmental sizes had a significant impact on the overall sickness absence figures.

The Head of Human Resources then provided information in relation to the comparative figures for other Central and Local Government bodies. She explained that, whilst the Council had exceeded the target of an average of 12 days sickness absence per employee by 2010, which had been set by the Members, that level of reduction would not be sustained over the next few years since many of the long-term absence issues had been addressed and the lower the absence rate the harder it was to reduce. In order to sustain the downward momentum, it was recommended that the Council set a target of 10.50 absence days per person to be achieved by March, 2011.

The Committee noted the year-end performance figures and approved the target of 10.5 absence days per person to be achieved by March, 2011.

Asset Management

Loughside Park: Development

The Committee agreed to defer for one month consideration of a report in relation to the development of the Loughside Park to enable further information to be provided.

Sports Village Concept - North Foreshore

The Committee was reminded that Crusaders Football Club had previously submitted proposals to relocate their ground from Seaview to a potential new stadium, together with ancillary sports based facilities, at either the Grove Park or the Valley Park Newtownabbey. The Council had rejected the proposal to use the Grove Park for such a venture. However, Crusaders' preference remained a Belfast location and, since the Council's decision to reject the proposal for Grove Park, they had developed further the Sports Village Concept.

The Director of Improvement reported that Crusaders had now partnered with Newington Football Club, another North Belfast Club which had major difficulties with its ground, to develop a flagship project which would provide not only tangible benefits for both clubs but address also the major social issues of reconciliation and a shared space in deeply segregated North Belfast. Whilst the proposal was still at the concept stage, it envisaged locating the Stadium/Sports Village on the North Foreshore.

The proposed Sports Village complex would comprise a 4,000-6,000 seat stadium with restaurant and corporate function facilities, 70,000 square feet of commercial retail, office and educational facilities which would be aimed at sports-related businesses, a number of training pitches, a soccer dome and a 65-bed hotel, together with car and coach parking space. The estimated cost of providing the facility was approximately £35 million. In terms of land the proposal would require a minimum of 25 acres in the South West area of the North Foreshore site.

To date, the Crusaders/Newington partnership had received funding from the Strategic Investment Board to consider governance arrangements for the Sports Village model. In essence a partnership with the Council was envisaged whereby Crusaders/Newington would raise the capital to undertake the scheme and the Council would provide the land. The Sports Village would create some jobs and would provide a financial return which would be shared by the partnership or put back into the Sports Village. The value of the Council-owned land would be reflected in a number of ways over and above the jobs and financial return outlined above. There would be a community approach to the Sports Village which could address a number of the Council's Corporate Objectives such as Good Relations, place shaping, younger and older people, healthy lifestyles, sport and tourism. Therefore, the governance of the Sports Village would be separate from the clubs on a "not for profit" but "income generating" basis.

The Council's current position in regard to the North Foreshore was based on extensive community consultation at the time of the Big Lottery Bid for Giant's Park, following which the Council had agreed to utilise approximately 21 acres for an Eco Business Park, 20 acres for Port-related warehousing and 7 acres for a Park and Ride site. A planning application had been submitted based on the foregoing uses, together with waste and open space use on the remainder of the site. Although progress had been made in regard to the firming up of the planning issues, there had been more limited progress in terms of identifying resources for its delivery. Consequently, proposals such as that which had been received from Crusaders/Newington were worthy of consideration if they provided a delivery route for a product which the Council deemed to be in line with its overall objectives.

Given the changed economic environment, Council officers had already begun to reconsider the detailed components of the overall masterplan for the North Foreshore and the Sports Village concept could be considered in that review. However, choices inevitably would have to be made as it might not be possible to meet the space requirements of the various interests on the site. Issues which might arise include the economic viability of one scheme over another, the opportunity cost of using part of the site for a social benefit over a commercial return, and the practicality of undertaking all or individual elements of schemes given the environmental liabilities and technical difficulties of the site. However, there could be no answers in relation to such questions without further work being undertaken.

The Crusaders/Newington Partnership had requested the Council's "in principle" support for the concept. In addition, they had requested formally that consideration be given to an appropriate legal vehicle for a possible joint venture. A third key point was that the partnership required the Council to act as sponsor on a Special European Union Programmes Body bid which would be subject to a feasibility study and an economic appraisal and which would require all legal, planning and technical issues to be addressed fully. Crusaders had intimated that the Strategic Investment Board had indicated that funding support for an economic appraisal and a masterplan revision could be provided.

Accordingly, it was recommended, given that the North Foreshore masterplan was being revisited due to the changing economic climate, that the agreement in principle to the request submitted by the Crusaders/Newington Partnership be granted and that Council officers be authorised to follow up on the details with the clubs and the Strategic Investment Board.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Gasworks Estate Service Charge

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to proposed amendments to the Gasworks Estate service charge:

“Relevant Background Information

At its meeting on 6th February 2009 the Strategic & Policy Resources Committee adopted the report and template of action proposed by BCC in response to the economic downturn prepared by the Development Department.

It was undertaken to bring back to Members proposals on how Council will manage the difficulties faced by tenants of the industrial estates with one possible option to review service charges.

Council directly undertake work and procure additional services aimed at maintaining the physical state and environmental quality of the Gasworks Estate. Excluding Amenity Areas the cost of providing these services is recouped from the various developers who are direct tenants of the Council.

For a variety of reasons the annual service charge cost in the Gasworks Estate has increased quite significantly over the past few years. Whilst paid directly by developers these service charges are in turn passed onto the tenants/business who occupy the commercial premises in the Estate.

Having reviewed the Economic Downturn Action Plan Update the Estates Management Unit has identified a number of specific proposals in relation to the Gasworks Estate service charge aimed at reducing the level of financial burden.

Specific proposals and projected financial impact on the level of the service charge are set out in detail in Appendix 1 and include review of services provided, incidence of allocation of service charge, restructuring payments to a monthly regime.

Key Issues

Council are legally obliged through their Leases with individual developers in the Gasworks Estate to provide services aimed at maintaining the quality environment created within the Estate. Council recover costs from individual developers through the annual service charge on a 'not for profit not for loss' basis.

Despite in many instances recharging the Estate service charge onto their occupational tenants approaches from various developers have recently been made to Council with a view to reducing the cost of services provided through Council (for example Ormeau Business Park and Cusp Ltd)

Majority of Gasworks Estate occupiers pay a building service charge (payable to their developer/landlord) in addition to the Estate service charge payable to Council. Developers/landlords are constantly seeking to retain a level of competitiveness with other similar commercial city centre developments where, without any 'estate' charges, total occupational costs can be less.

Letter of explanation detailing reasons for service charge increases is issued with annual statement of accounts which details specific reasons that have given rise to any significant increases.

Water infrastructure within the Estate is not adopted by NI Water. Charges for water and sewerage, whilst metered at the entrance to the Estate, fall to be apportioned through the annual service charge. In this instance Council are merely recollecting fees on behalf of NI Water. The cost of water consumption accounts for one-third of this coming year's annual service charge and represents the biggest increase in any single item of relevant expenditure.

The annual service charge, payable in advance, is calculated on costs incurred in each previous year ending 31st March. Therefore relevant expenditure in respect of 2009/10 service charge has already been incurred prior to this review. However, interim measures can be implemented immediately that would have an impact on service charge invoicing for this coming year. These proposed interim measures include reducing Council's management fee to zero, removal of NI Water charges to be charged separately and inclusion of the Gasworks visitor's car park that would revise incidence of cost liability apportionment.

Council's Security Unit has undertaken a risk assessment of existing measures in place at the Gasworks and likely impact on security if the current level is reduced (Appendix 1, Item 1)

The potential financial impact of these reviews on the 2009/10 service charge (if they had been fully implemented) is set out in Appendix 2.

The existing service charge is apportioned using the area of each developer's site and does not currently include the Council's visitor's car park. A comparison of the incidence of cost on the 2009/10 service charge, if the visitor's car park was included, is set out in Appendix 3.

Any measures implemented must be underpinned with the principle of good estate management and fulfil current obligations in the development Leases. Council's position as landlord in the Gasworks should not overtly subsidise occupation in a Council owned estate so as to disadvantage other commercial developments within the city.

Resource Implications

Financial

- Loss of income from forgoing the 5% management fee charged for managing the Gasworks Estate, although it would be proposed to review this decision on an annual basis.
- Direct financial contribution by Council with inclusion of the Gasworks visitor's car park in apportionment of the annual service charge (Appendix 3)
- Budgets previously prepared for the year 2009/10 may require revision to reflect any changes to the provision of services in the Gasworks Estate.

Human Resources

No impact over the existing Council resources already involved in managing the Gasworks Estate.

Asset and Other Implications

- Reduction in service provision should not impair the quality environment created in the Gasworks Estate.
- Reduction in security cover has a small impact on the risk profile of the Estate (Appendix 1, Item 1)
- Implications arising from scaling back services in the Estate will be checked Legal Services with regard to existing Lease obligations.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the scope of this review of the current Gasworks Estate service charge and approve the various measures proposed in line with Councils Economic Downturn Action Plan, also to permit the Estates Management Unit to keep any measures adopted under review.

Decision Tracking

Subject to Members endorsement Estates Surveyor to ensure proposed measures for Gasworks Estate service charge are implemented and kept under review.

Key to Abbreviations

None

Documents Attached

- Appendix 1 – review of services currently provided in the Gasworks Estate
- Appendix 2 – financial impact on 2009/10 service charge if review were implemented
- Appendix 3 – cost apportionment of service charge with inclusion of visitor's car park

Appendix 1

Review of services currently provided at Gasworks Estate

<u>Service Heading</u>	<u>Current Service Provided</u>	<u>Proposal</u>
1. Security	Seasonal mobile patrols, whilst they monitor the entire Estate, were initially engaged to manage the volume of incidents associated with the Water Feature and are provided over and above the static G4S security at the entrance to the Estate.	Remove the G4S cover between 7.00am and 7.00pm during the 6 month period that Eventsec patrols are in the Estate.
2. Grounds Maintenance	Road Sweeping services provided under SLA with Parks & Cemeteries Services, currently twice per week.	Reduce to once per week.

<u>Service Heading</u>	<u>Current Service Provided</u>	<u>Proposal</u>
3. Clamping Services	Release fees (£35) are deducted from the annual fixed contract price.	Increase the release fee from current £35 to £50 that is also charged by Cusp Ltd in management of their Plot 4 parking with the same contractor as Council.
4. Mains Services	In addition to charging for water consumption NI Water have introduced charging for sewerage, based on volume of water consumed, at 50% of true cost rising to 100% next year. Consumption for water/sewerage relates to individual development plots but is apportioned through the service charge.	Remove the NI Water charge from the service charge and recharge as separate invoices that are readily identifiable as a cost arising from NI Water and not Council provided service. Incidence of cost apportionment to be based on building area as opposed to plot areas that should more accurately reflect actual usage.
5. Hire Charges (Winter Gritting)	Roads and footpaths not surfaced with anti-slip surface are gritted Sept – March.	Already implemented that gritting only occurs when Met Office give RED warning only.
6. Hire Charges (Painting Railings & Gates)	Incurred £23,347.97 in 2009/10 service charge.	Not an annual service charge cost and should not be required for a further 8 – 10 years.
7. Shuttle Bus Service	Shuttle bus is provided under a contract procured with Translink for an agreed level of service. Tenants/developers advised of cost liabilities in the service charge at the time. Service continues to be well utilised.	Make no change to current agreement as scaling back service may render an ineffective service. EMU have sought no price increase in Translink's contract price from last year.
8. Estate Management Fee	Currently Council charge 5% fee based on total cost of services provided to manage the Estate.	Reduce to 0% and review reinstatement annually. This would in effect be a Council subsidy.

Appendix 2

**Financial impact on 2009/10 service charge
if review were implemented**

<u>Service Heading</u>	<u>Actual 2008</u>	<u>Actual 2009</u>	<u>Revised 2009</u>	<u>Savings (Actual/Revised 2009)</u>	<u>% Variance (Actual 2008/ Revised 2009)</u>
Security	£114,446.80	£113,652.47	£95,628.83	£18,023.64	-16.44%
Grounds Maintenance	£12,049.39	£12,800.00	£9,300.00	£3,500.00	-22.82%
Clamping Services	£12,710.00	£11,240.00	£10,040.00	£1,200.00	-21.01%
Mains Services	£69,118.97	£111,754.14	-£1,306.76	£113,060.90	-101.89%
Hire Charges	£12,163.77	£31,758.84	£8,410.87	£23,347.97	-30.85%
Shuttle Bus Service	£29,241.65	£43,939.50	£43,939.50	£0.00	+50.26%
Management Fee	£12,486.53	£16,257.25	£0.00	£16,257.25	-100.00%
Totals	£262,217.10	£341,402.19	£166,012.45	£175,389.74	-36.69%

Notes

1. As actual costs incurred it is not possible to implement the review in total
2. Increase in Actual 2009 Mains Services is due to introduction by NI Water of sewerage charge (phased in at 50% in initial year)

It is proposed to re-invoice this charge to developers as a separate item and apportioned on building area to more accurately reflect usage
3. Painting of Estate railings/gates and additional winter gritting account for increase in Actual 2009 Hire Charges
4. Shuttle Bus Service for Actual 2009 has increased with withdrawal of Council subsidy – agreed with tenants/developers
5. Increase in 2009 Management Fee reflects 5% of total increased costs

Appendix 3

**Service Charge cost apportionment with
inclusion of visitor's car park**

<u>Developer</u>	<u>Site Area</u>	<u>Actual 2009</u>	<u>Revised 2009</u>	<u>% Variance (Actual 2009/Revised 2009)</u>
CUSP Ltd	0.301	£6,125.05	£3,601.16	41.21%
Turkington	0.38	£7,732.62	£4,546.32	41.21%
CUSP Ltd	1.142	£23,238.55	£13,662.89	41.21%
CUSP (car park)	0.833	£16,950.71	£9,966.01	41.21%
Halifax	2.12	£43,139.86	£25,363.68	41.21%
Inislyn	2.18	£44,360.80	£26,081.52	41.21%
Klondyke	0.942	£19,168.75	£11,270.09	41.21%
Ormeau Enter	1.53	£31,133.96	£18,304.92	41.21%
OMG	0.184	£3,744.21	£2,201.38	41.21%
OMG	0.24	£4,883.76	£2,871.36	41.21%
OMG	0.784	£15,953.61	£9,379.78	41.21%
OMG	0.377	£7,671.57	£4,510.43	41.21%
OMG	0.113	£2,299.44	£1,351.93	41.21%
OMG	0.563	£11,456.48	£6,735.73	41.21%
JHT (Cromac Wood)	1.197	£24,357.74	£14,320.91	41.21%
Visitor's Car Park (Council)	0.99	£0.00	£11,844.36	100.00%
Total	13.876	£262,217.10	£166,012.45	36.69%

Notes

The above table illustrates the combined effect of reviewed service charge provisions with inclusion of the visitor's car park in apportionment which indicates a total reduction in incidence of cost per plot of 41.21%”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Leasing of Various Community Assets

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee noted the details of property lettings and rents payable or collected in relation to a number of community facilities as agreed by the Development Committee.

The Belfast Wheel

(Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 24th March, 2006, it had granted authority for the installation in the grounds of the City Hall at Donegall Square East of the 60 metre high Belfast Wheel, with further extensions for the use of the grounds for the continued operation of the Wheel having been agreed by the Committee on 14th December, 2007 and 14th November, 2008.

The Head of Civic Events and Venues advised the Members that, to date, the Wheel had been popular with visitors, had attracted positive media attention and was seen by many city centre-based businesses as a key attraction for creating additional footfall in the city. Due to the considerable success of the project, the operators of the Belfast Wheel, World Tourist Attractions, had requested that the Council consider a further extension for 24 months from 1st September, 2009. He pointed out that this would require not only Council approval but an extension to the current planning consent, which would be sought from the Northern Ireland Planning Service. There would be no additional cost to the Council. However, the operator had agreed to pay to the Council £4,500 plus VAT per month for the additional period.

After discussion in the matter it was

Moved by Councillor D. Browne,
Seconded by Councillor Kirkpatrick,

That the Committee agrees not to accede to the request to extend the use of the City Hall grounds for the Belfast Wheel for a further two years but that the operator be given an additional six months in order to enable him to identify an alternative location.

On a vote by show of hands five Members voted for the proposal and twelve against and it was accordingly declared lost.

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor P. Maskey,
Seconded by Councillor C. Maskey,

That the Committee agrees to accede to the request and approves an extension to the period of operation for the Belfast Wheel in the grounds of the City Hall for a further twenty-four months from 1st September, 2009, subject to Planning Service approval being obtained.

On a vote by show of hands ten Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was accordingly declared carried.

The Committee agreed also to authorise the Head of City Events and Venues to undertake further negotiations in relation to the fees to be paid.

Disposal of Land at Lyric Wood

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Members were advised that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 14th May, had considered a report in relation to the potential disposal of lands adjacent to the site of the proposed new Lyric Theatre. At that meeting, that Committee had agreed to the Council entering into arrangements for the contractor's compound on the Council's lands and the subsequent disposal of the lands to the Lyric Theatre by way of a 999 year lease. The Committee had agreed further to the disposal at the full value of £43,250, as assessed by Land and Property Services, for the 0.47 acres of land. That sum was to be deducted from the Council's contribution of £1.25 million towards the funding of the Lyric Theatre redevelopment. The disposal remained subject to approval by the Department of the Environment in

relation to the Council's obligations to obtain "best value" in accordance with the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. In addition, the Committee instructed that any future use be for open space purposes and that, should the Lyric ever wish to dispose of the land in the future, the Council should have the first option to acquire it.

The Committee noted the decision of the Parks and Leisure Committee of 14th May regarding the disposal of 0.47 acres of land at the Lyric Wood to the Lyric Theatre on a 999 year lease for the sum of £43,250 which would be deducted from the proposed Council grant funding of £1.25 million agreed previously as a contribution to the Lyric Theatre's redevelopment costs.

Place Shaping Projects

The Committee was reminded that during March and April Members had taken part in a series of briefings on potential projects located across Belfast on a north, south, east and west basis.

Given the benefits which had accrued from the briefings, it was recommended that further briefing sessions in this regard be held in June in order to provide Members with detailed feedback and the possible prioritisation of such projects.

Good Relations and Equality

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

(Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 17th April and adopted the recommendations contained therein.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Consultation: Local Partnership Working on Policing and Community Safety - A Way Forward

(Mrs. S. Wylie, Head of Environmental Health, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the Council's contribution to a Safer City is achieved through its leadership role in both the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and District Policing Partnership (DPP) as well as through the delivery of services by a number of departments.

Members have previously expressed concerns that there is considerable duplication between the work of both partnerships and consider that there should be a more integrated approach. The current roles of each partnership are described below:

- **The District Policing Partnership**

The District Policing Partnership (DPP) consists of a Principal DPP and four geographically based sub groups. The DPP, which is made up of both Elected and Independent Members, has statutory responsibility for community engagement on policing issues, gaining the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime and in monitoring the performance of the police against the targets included in the Annual and Local Policing Plans. The Northern Ireland Policing Board provides for 75% of approved expenditure incurred by the DPP which consists mostly of Members' allowances and staff salaries. There is also provision for the advertising and holding of a significant number of public meetings to monitor police performance and a small amount to support local initiatives. In the 2008/09 financial year, the total budget for the DPP was £511,000 of which the Council contributed £128,000.

- **The Community Safety Partnership**

The Belfast Community Safety Partnership (CSP) brings together representatives from various agencies and sectors to work collectively on the delivery of programmes to help make communities safer. Each of the political parties is represented. The CSP has recently agreed a Safer Belfast Plan for 2009–2011, which prioritises four main themes: tackling anti-social behaviour; reducing alcohol fuelled violent crime; dealing with hate crime; and to help Belfast feel safer. The Council receives funding from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) on behalf of the CSP of £380,000 for programme work and £123,000 for staff per year (secured until end of March 2011). Partner agencies also make some contributions to particular programmes.

On 20th March 2009, the Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice issued a consultation document on the future of CSPs and DPPs - '*Local Partnership Working on Policing and Community Safety: a way forward*', inviting initial comments on the general principles detailed in the paper by the end of April, with an extended timeframe to the end of May for more detailed comments.

At its meeting of 24th April 2009, the Committee agreed an interim response to the NIO, which stated that it is in agreement with the principle of creating fully integrated partnerships in the longer term and on taking steps as soon as possible to more closely align the work and approaches of CSPs and DPPs.

Key Issues

Safer City Workshop

A Safer City Workshop for members was held on 6th April 2009 at which one of the topics discussed was the consultation document and steps which could be taken to more closely align the work of the two partnerships prior to 2011. There was general consensus around the following issues:

- Support for the general principles contained in the consultation document (as described above);
- The CSP/DPP staff should be brought together under one Service and management structure; and
- A detailed proposal paper should be developed and agreed through the political system with actions to outline how to better align the work and outcomes of both partnerships. This could include joint public meetings, joint consultations, a clear communication line between the two partnerships, reviewing the Policing Board Code of Practice etc. and engaging the Transition Committee in discussions around rationalising community engagement structures in preparation for community planning.

Consultation on CSPs and DPPs

In terms of the consultation document, the paper proposes that the NIO aims to have integrated partnerships combining all of the functions of the CSPs and DPPs in place to coincide with the changes to local government planned for the Spring of 2011, whilst acknowledging that the final decision on the shape of the integrated partnership will need to be taken in the devolved context by a local Minister. It also suggests that, once a vision is established on future arrangements for local partnership working, progress should be made on implementing interim measures to bring the two partnerships closer together, in anticipation of further integration in the future. The Consultation document is attached in Appendix 1.

A draft response, which includes comments under each of the questions posed in the consultation document is attached at Appendix 2. Both the Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the District Policing Partnership will be making individual responses.

Resource Implications

None at this stage.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree to the draft response to the NIO consultation document on CSPs and DPPs.

Key to Abbreviations

CSP - Community Safety Partnership
DPP – District Policing partnership
NIO – Northern Ireland Office

Appendix 2

DRAFT RESPONSE

1. Introduction

Belfast City Council is pleased to respond to this consultation given its lead role in the management and administration of the Belfast Community Safety Partnership and the District Policing Partnership.

The Council has for some time expressed concerns that there is too much duplication between the two partnerships and a lack of integration is apparent.

The Council has already provided an interim response outlining that it is in agreement with the principle of creating fully integrated partnerships in the longer term and on taking steps as soon as possible to more closely align the work and approaches of CSPs and DPPs.

At a recent workshop held for Elected Representatives on the Safer City Agenda, Members expressed the view that the current separation between the two partnerships is far from ideal and there are definite advantages in bringing the two partnerships together in the longer term. In addition, they emphasised that the independent monitoring function currently provided by the DPP needs to be maintained, as this is a statutory function. They also felt that the

political primacy provided by the DPP was extremely important. However, whilst it was recognised that the DPP delivers its services under statutory authority which restricts the scope of its operations, it was considered that DPPs needed to change in that their inability at present to deliver interventions and programmes at community level, was causing serious frustration among both Members and the Public.

The Council has not been overly prescriptive in its response at this point in time as it considers that specific models will evolve as the scope and functions of the new integrated partnership develop, the community planning framework is progressed and devolution of criminal justice takes place which could result in some further alterations to what is proposed in the consultation document. The Council would therefore request that there is a process of continuous dialogue with it as the proposals progress.

The following more detailed comments are made in response to the questions posed in the consultation document.

2. Response

Q1. Should we be planning for the creation of fully integrated local partnerships to coincide with the move to 11 council areas in 2011?

Belfast City Council has already responded on this issue, stating that it is in agreement with the principle of creating fully integrated partnerships in the longer term and on taking steps as soon as possible to more closely align the work and approaches of CSPs and DPPs

The Council however recommends that significant time is invested through meaningful and proactive consultations with elected members, stakeholders, partners and community networks to agree the scope, functions and structure of the new partnership. Clarity of roles and responsibilities is essential.

It is important to note that councils will also, between now and 2011, be identifying their approach to community planning and the new 'safety' partnership arrangements would support and complement this new way of working.

The Council's view is that both the accountability and delivery roles of the existing partnerships must be maintained and where possible combined in a pragmatic way. There still exists a political imperative to monitor the performance of the PSNI against the policing plan. There is also a need to demonstrate that issues raised through community engagement can be supported by direct intervention programmes and that planning on 'safety' for each area is much better integrated.

Q2. Provided sufficient consensus exists on the principle of new integrated partnerships, should the working group, which would include the main stakeholder organisations, be invited to agree outline proposals that could be presented to an incoming devolved minister?

Once the function of the new partnership is agreed and a clear understanding of what is or is not included is reached; it makes sense that the working group would develop outline proposals to be presented to an incoming Minister for Justice. However it is imperative that such proposals are developed in consultation with councils and other stakeholders.

Q3. Are the timescales proposed for achieving the new partnerships realistic (annex A)? If not, when should we be aiming to have them in place?

Annex A refers to a number of steps which culminate in membership and governance of new partnerships being confirmed in advance of local government reforms which are scheduled for 2011. This would appear to be a logical timeframe given that the number of partnerships will be reduced to 11 at that time. However it should be borne in mind that the DPPs were reconstituted in April, 2008 for a four year term. Steps would need to be taken to dissolve the DPPs before their term expires if we are to be ready to start the new arrangements in 2011.

As mentioned previously Belfast City Council recommends that the working group invests its energy in ensuring the functions and scope are correct at this stage so that the structural proposals are well thought through in advance of 2011.

Q4 Should all of the current community safety partnership and district policing partnership functions be maintained?

The Council considers that the functions of both partnerships should be maintained. In particular the monitoring role of the DPP in respect of the PSNI and the annual and local policing plans is considered vital as is the delivery role of the existing community safety partnership. However it is considered that in bringing the two partnerships together there is an opportunity to streamline and clarify the functions of:

- engagement
- planning
- delivery
- monitoring and review.

This review should take account of the changes taking place through the review of public administration where the new partnership is likely to form a sub partnership of the community planning structure for the area.

It is important that elected representatives have a pivotal role to play, not only in monitoring the performance of the PSNI, but in oversight of service delivery by public bodies through community planning; this should include the need for elected members to influence the allocation of resources to help deliver a safer Belfast.

The specific functions the new safer area partnership (e.g. the Safer Belfast Partnership) should include:

- To regularly consult and engage with the public to identify local priorities for action by the Safer Area Partnership, including the PSNI. This engagement should also ensure that local communities are involved in identifying and resolving these local community safety and policing issues.**
- To develop a three – four year Safer Area Plan which includes goals, high level intervention programmes and services as well as performance targets and measures.**
- To produce annual Safer Area Action Plans to meet the three year targets. The plan should include a mechanism to respond to emerging issues on an ongoing basis, as well as medium and long term projects.**
- To inform the formation of local and annual policing plans and to monitor performance against these. However consideration should be given over time to the policing plan becoming part of the overall Safer Area Plan. It is appreciated that the current approach to monitoring of PSNI involves public meetings and there would appear to be a desire to continue with this transparent approach.**
- To produce regular assessments of relevant data for monitoring performance against the annual action plans in the context of the longer term 3 – 4 year plan. This should also include specific details on the performance of the PSNI against the agreed action plan. The assessment should also inform annual priorities for action by the Safer Area Partnership.**

- To develop an evidence base of what programmes and interventions are the most effective. This should include evaluating the Safer Area projects and sharing good practice.

Belfast City Council believes that any functional framework which is developed should allow for a level of local flexibility.

Q5 Are there additional functions that could be performed by a new local partnership?

- These are outlined in the answer to four above.
- In addition, the new partnership needs to work closely with any Good Relations Partnership structures already established (as is the case in Belfast). Mechanisms could be put in place to enable the business of the Safety Belfast Partnership to be influenced by the Good Relations Partnership, particularly where the manifestation of poor community cohesion results in problems which are seen by the public as community safety issues e.g. rioting at interfaces, problems at bonfire sites, etc.

Q6. What should be the membership of the new integrated partnership?

The membership of the new integrated partnership should include Elected Representatives at all levels and it should be recognised that they hold a democratic mandate to influence priorities, investment and delivery of services and to monitor performance on behalf of the communities they represent. In determining how Elected Members should be selected, the principle of proportionality should be given primacy over any other consideration. Elected Members should be involved in both the monitoring and delivery groups.

Statutory organisations should also be represented where they have a core function that can impact on community safety. However, it is important that these organisations bring much more than a delivery mechanism to the new integrated partnership. There needs to be a clear mechanism for passing the information that flows from the communities they work with on an area basis up to the partnership which will in turn allow for better planning, appreciation of the impact of projects and programmes as well as an understanding of local tensions and conflicts. They should also be required to align their individual corporate plans with the safer area priorities and should align resources around these priorities. This is something that the Council would wish to see addressed through the community planning framework.

The following statutory partners should comprise the core membership of all the new integrated partnerships; police, council, Housing Executive, Youth Justice Agency, Probation Board, Health and Social Services Trust (drug and alcohol services, older people, children/teenager services), Ambulance Service, Fire and Rescue Service, Education (youth services and education welfare).

Community sector partners are also crucial, but it is recognised that it is not easy to achieve a truly representative approach and yet keep the membership of the partnership of a manageable size. Belfast Community Safety Partnership is working with the Belfast Area Partnership Boards to achieve a mechanism to access the wider community sector in the area.

The current DPP membership model includes membership of Independent Members who can also represent communities. There is considered to be merit in continuing this approach. However, again it is appreciated that the size of the partnership must also be manageable.

There are a number of voluntary organisations which should be considered when deciding on the membership of the new partnerships, for example Victim Support, Women's Aid, an older people's representative group and a young people's representative group as they can help the partnership keep a balanced approach. Participation of Extern and NIACRO are also considered important due to their knowledge and expertise in preventing re-offending and supporting people at risk of offending. Co-opting may be an option for some of these organisations as and when the agenda warrants it so as to keep the partnership to a manageable size. However, thought would need to be given to voting and decision making rights.

The participation of trade unions seems inappropriate for the new partnership. Similarly the participation of business representatives should be proportional to the needs identified in the regular assessment of community needs. In Belfast, these assessments seldom identify business crime as a key concern for the public and it may be more appropriate to co-opt members on as and when the agenda would warrant it.

Q7 What would be the optimum size and combination?

The size and structure of the partnership should ideally ensure that no more than 25 people should be around the table at any one time. This is considered to be the maximum number that would still enable effective discussions and decision making. However it is appreciated that this is not likely to be possible given the number of elected representatives, independent members and partner organisations that need to have representation. Perhaps the tiered approach suggested could assist with managing numbers.

Q8 Who should chair the partnership?

It is the Council's view that the principle of political primacy is reinforced through the appointment of an Elected Representative as chair. The appointment could be accommodated within the Council's annual allocations under the proportionality mechanisms or a system similar to the DPP could be adopted where the Chairmanship is rotated annually between the 4 largest parties on the Council over a 4-year term. However further consideration will need to be given as to the preferred model once the proposals for overall governance arrangements post 2011 have been finalised by the Policy Development Panel 'A' and the Strategic Leadership Board.

Q9 What do consultees think of the potential model set out in Appendix C?

Given the current arrangements and the political reasons behind a number of the functions, the development of any new model is going to be a significant challenge.

The model described in Appendix C sets out to combine two partnerships and their functions but uses two substructures to continue most of the existing current roles of the community safety partnership and district policing partnerships. This model does not on the face of it seem ideal. However, Belfast City Council appreciates the constraints that the NIO is attempting to take a pragmatic approach.

The proposed membership of the monitoring board in the new partnership arrangement is the same as the current membership of the district policing partnership. Consideration should be given to whether this is the most appropriate form to take. In particular the number and role of the Independent Members should be examined, particularly in light of the fact that there will be a wide range of sectors represented on the overall partnership.

The proposed membership of the delivery group should also include elected representatives as they have the political mandate to challenge delivery organisations.

There is some ambiguity and contradiction in the document as to whether the scope of the review should consider whether the monitoring role should be restricted to the PSNI and the policing plan or to the entire community safety agenda. Although in principle, all organisations should be held to account for their part in delivering the agreed area safety plan, Belfast Council is not currently in a position to give specific comments on this given the

stage that RPA is at. However it is important to consider the role of the future community planning partnerships in these deliberations and it is suggested that input on the proposed changes to DPPs and CSPs should be sought from the appropriate bodies involved in driving the RPA process.

Although the community planning framework for Northern Ireland has not yet been agreed, local community planning partnerships, and accountability arrangements introduced alongside them, are likely to present an opportunity to better monitor the performance of a wide range of partners. It is likely that many of the organisations involved in the Safer Belfast Partnership will have senior/chief officers represented on the community planning partnership, so it is hoped priorities will become embedded in member organisations in a much more connected and sustainable way.

The question of oversight on how police performance is monitored at a local level is a matter for political debate at a high level. The issue of the accountability at a regional level complicates the picture as Community Safety Partnerships and District Policing Partnerships are responsible to different bodies, namely the Community Safety Unit and the Northern Ireland Policing Board. The model described on page 33, although complicated envisages that these two accountability channels are maintained. Again the Council appreciates that the NIO is attempting to be pragmatic in the circumstances. However this is an area that a new devolved justice department should review as a matter of urgency when it is established.

In this proposed model the elected members involved in the monitoring of police should be the same elected members involved in the Safer Belfast Partnership so that the work done with local communities could provide additional information to councillors to assist in their role in monitoring the police. This monitoring role should continue to be carried out in public.

In addition, although the separation of Tiers within the partnership is again not ideal, this is considered to be pragmatic at this point in time and should also be subjected to a review by the new Department of Justice.

Q10 To whom should an integrated partnership be accountable for each of its functions?

See comments to Question 9 above.

The model set out on page 33 describes a number of accountability arrangements which have the potential to lead to confusion and duplication of effort.

The Council considers that these structures and arrangements will be a matter for the new Department for Justice to consider once established. In addition, as the community planning framework develops over the next few months, the question of scrutiny over the delivery of the community plan will be tested and new arrangements may emerge.

Whatever arrangements are put in place, there is a political aspiration that elected members are involved in determining the allocation of resources in pursuit of a safer area and also in monitoring the performance of the police service and other agencies at a local level. Thinking around this proposal needs to be developed further with local councillors and MLAs through the appropriate political systems.

Q11. How should an integrated partnership be resourced?

Resources should be coordinated through the local council, with the council contributing a capped percentage to the administration of the partnership. The remaining costs should be met by the Department of Justice.

It is vital that the resources currently allocated to both DPPs and CSPs from the Policing Board and CSU are not reduced even if savings are made by reducing the number of partnerships. There is currently significant under investment in community safety work and Belfast City Council believes that any savings should be re-invested in programmes to improve safety.

It is also important to emphasise that DPP's are currently funded only to undertake monitoring and a degree of public consultation. They have little or no operational capacity and this gap needs to be addressed in the new arrangements.

Q12. How much is needed in the future for administration?

Until the function and structure of an integrated partnership is finalised it is impossible to estimate the cost of future administration.

It is clear that there will be efficiency savings by reducing the number of partnerships. However this money should be re-invested in programme work. There will be considerable expectations from the community when the two partnerships are brought together and if there is not more money to invest in interventions, there could be considerable frustration.

Q13. What would an integrated partnership plan look like?

It should be formatted to include medium (1 year) and longer term aspirations and projects (3 -4 years) as well as requiring a mechanism to respond to emerging issues on an ongoing basis. This is in line with the development of annual and 3 – 4 year Safer Belfast Plan.

The plan should eventually align to the strategic framework set by the Community Planning Partnership.

An integrated plan means that it will include actions around all of the functions agreed for the partnership, including consultation and monitoring of the policing plan. Eventually the local policing plan could potentially form a section of the integrated plan.

There should be clear actions and targets. A public version of the plan would be helpful to help communicate a joined up approach to the safety agenda.

Q14. What should the new partnership be called?

The new name of the partnership should reflect a change from what currently exists and should not imply that one partnership is 'taking over' the other. The suggestion in this response is 'Safer <<area name>> Partnership', e.g. Safer Belfast Partnership.

Q15. What measures could be taken to bring community safety partnerships and district policing partnerships closer together, short of integration into a single partnership?

Belfast City Council recommends that area specific measures are developed locally and agreed with the Policing Board and the NIO, Community Safety Unit.

In addition, the Council considers that better integration could be achieved by:

- One senior manager should ideally have responsibility for the safety agenda within each council and ideally the staff teams should be brought together. It is important to recognise that the aspiration of better joint working may require some changes to the roles of both teams; this will have to be agreed with Belfast City Council, the staff and with the Policing Board and the Community Safety Unit.
- The meetings in public and forums for discussion should be scheduled to inform the wider community safety planning and ongoing tasking process. To succeed in this, agreement should be reached about the format of these meetings to make them meaningful, to show action

and to allow for the District Policing Partnership to meet its statutory requirements. This will require the co-operation of the NIPB and changes will be required to the Code of Practice and, potentially, to legislation.

- Both partnerships should share information about the groups they are working with across the area, and any opportunities to rationalise this work should be pursued.
- There should be joint agenda setting for the two partnerships.
- The DPP and CSP should be involved in any community engagement planning undertaken by the other partnership or other parts of the Council (for example area based delivery in Belfast) so that a more joined up approach can be developed.
- The public consultation due in 2010 should be commissioned jointly by both partnerships (this happened in Belfast in 2007).
- The planning cycles of both the DPP and the CSP need to be synchronised.

It should be noted that many of the above suggestions will require agreement between the Policing Board and the CSU. It is also vital that the review group be tasked with identifying what legislative change will be necessary to enable an integrated partnership in the longer term and that steps are taken to move this forward.

Q16. Should the working group be tasked with agreeing these measures and overseeing their implementation, as an early priority?

Belfast City Council agrees that the working group should be tasked with taking this forward as soon as possible. However, as the situation with RPA and the devolution of criminal justice will continue to change and take shape in the coming months, it is considered vital that an ongoing dialogue is maintained with councils as the proposals progress.”

The Committee approved the foregoing comments as the Council’s response to the consultation document.

Chairman