

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th September, 2009

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Crozier (Deputy Chairman) (in the chair); the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery); and Councillors Adamson, Attwood, D. Browne, M. Browne, W. Browne, Campbell, Convery, D. Dodds, Hendron, N. Kelly, C. Maskey, McCann, Newton, Rodgers and Rodway.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor Hartley) and Councillor Stoker.

Transition Committee Business

Consultation on Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th August, it had approved a response to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for the Environment's consultation on the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. However, at the request of Councillor Crozier, the Council, at its meeting on 1st September, had agreed that that portion of the response in so far as it related to Part 1 of the Bill, that is, Contracts and Compulsory Purchase, be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

The Director of Legal Services reported that the request to refer that part of the minute back had been made on the basis of a concern in relation to that portion of the Bill which dealt with the powers of Councils to acquire land, otherwise than by agreement, for the purpose of waste disposal. In particular, a query had been raised as to whether that would enable, for example, arc21 to compulsorily acquire land belonging to the City Council. The Director explained that he had since spoken to Councillor Crozier who had raised the issue and explained that, although the proposed new legislation would indeed

confer a power of vesting, that is, compulsory acquisition, on the sub-regional waste authorities, including arc21, it would not be possible for arc21 to consider the compulsory acquisition of any land belonging to any of its partner Councils. That was because under the Terms of Reference pursuant to which arc21 was established, any decision of such a nature had to be approved, under the principle of consensus, by all of the partner Councils, including, of course, the Council within whose district the subject land was situated. In essence, any decision taken by arc21 to vest land in any of the Council areas could be vetoed by any of the constituent Councils.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to affirm its decision of 7th August and approve the Council's response to the consultation on the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Consultation on Planning Reform

The Committee deferred consideration of a report in relation to the Council's response to the Department of the Environment's consultation on the Reform of the Planning System in Northern Ireland to enable a special meeting, to which the Members of the Development and the Town Planning Committees would be invited, to be held for that purpose. The Committee agreed also that Party Group Briefings take place before the special meeting for those who so requested them.

Planning Seminar

The Director of Improvement advised the Committee that, in order to assist Members to prepare for the transfer of planning as a Local Government function, the Royal Town Planning Institute would be hosting locally two capacity building seminars during October and November.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee be represented at the events by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Transition Committee and the Party Group Leaders (or their nominees), together with appropriate Council officers.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Democratic Services and Governance

Political Nominations to the Belfast District Policing Partnership Sub-Group

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Council was required, under Schedule 3 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 as amended by the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2003 and by the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Bill, to establish the Belfast DPP and its 4 Sub-Groups before the expiration of a 3-month period following the Commencement Date for the legislation on 4th September, 2007. The Council was required to make the appointments so as to reflect the strength of the Parties on the Council.

Key Issues

Appointment of Political Members to the DPP Sub-Groups

A meeting was held with the Party Group leaders on 29th August, 2007 and the following political composition of the DPP Sub-Groups was agreed using the Council's system of proportionality:

Sub-Group Members - 6 Political Members on each of 4 Sub-Groups (24 places)

The breakdown of the total number of political places amongst the Party Groups was Sinn Féin Party 7, Democratic Unionist Party 6, Ulster Unionist Party 4, Social Democratic and Labour Party 4, Alliance Party 2, Progressive Unionist Party 1.

Since both Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Parties had a proportionate figure of 6.59, it was agreed that the 24th place would be rotated between the two Groups with Sinn Féin having the additional place initially. The leaders agreed the undernoted distribution for the period from 1st October, 2007 till 30th September, 2009:

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>
2 SF 1 DUP 1 UU 1 SDLP 1 All	2 SF 2 DUP 1 UU 1 SDLP	1 SF 2 DUP 1 UU 1 SDLP 1 All	2 SF 1 DUP 1 UU 1 SDLP 1 PUP

As the first two years of the DPP's term of office will end on 30th September, 2009 it is necessary to rerun the political choices for the Sub-Group membership with the Democratic Unionist Party having the 24th place instead of Sinn Féin.

A meeting of the Party Group Leaders was held on 4th September, 2009 and the undernoted membership of the Sub-Groups was agreed for the period from 1st October, 2009 till 30th September, 2011.

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>
2 DUP 2 SF 1 UU 1 SDLP	2 DUP 1 SF 1 UU 1 SDLP 1 ALL	2 DUP 1 SF 1 UU 1 SDLP 1 All	1 DUP 2 SF 1 UU 1 SDLP 1 PUP

Resource Implications

Financial

There are no additional financial implications.

Human Resources

None.

Asset and Other Implications

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agree to the allocation of political places on the District Policing Partnership Sub-Groups for the period from 1st October, 2009 till 30th September, 2011.

Decision Tracking

The Head of Committee & Members' Services will arrange for the change in Membership to take effect from 1st October.

Due date – 2nd October, 2009.

Key to Abbreviations

DPP – District Policing Partnership”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults - Training for Members

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th August, it had adopted the Council's amended policy and procedures on the protection of children and vulnerable adults. In addition, it had authorised the engagement of the Council in the Leisurewatch initiative which aimed to raise the awareness of staff at an early stage to potential sex offenders who might come onto Council premises to gain access to children. Subsequently, at its meeting on 1st September, the Council had agreed that consideration be given to the provision of appropriate training on the Council's revised policy for Elected Members and a report thereon be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

In accordance with the Council's decision, provision of awareness training on the protection of children and vulnerable adults would be included in the Members' Training Plan for 2010/2011. The Principal Committee Administrator pointed out that advice had been received indicating that the delivery of such sessions would best be undertaken early next year as, at that time, the awareness sessions could include details of the related Leisurewatch programme. Staff training on those issues was the responsibility of the Community Services Section and was undertaken by staff who were accredited child protection trainers. The proposed Members' awareness sessions would be co-ordinated by the Members' Support Unit in consultation with the Play Development Officer, and be undertaken by the aforementioned accredited staff.

It was recommended that the Committee approve the inclusion in the Members' Training Plan of awareness sessions on the protection of children and vulnerable adults as outlined.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that a further report on whether Elected Members were required to be screened under the policy be submitted to a future meeting.

**Requests for the Use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee was informed that the undernoted requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality had been received:

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Regional Regulatory Peptide Laboratory	International Regulatory Peptide and Neuroendocrine Tumour Symposium 6th September, 2010 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	It is estimated that 400 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £1,600

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators	75th Anniversary Dinner 14th November, 2009 Approximately 120 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	This event seeks to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £480
Chartered Institute of Building	175th Anniversary Dinner 19th February, 2010 Approximately 250 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	This event seeks to celebrate the 175th Anniversary of the Chartered Institute of Building and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £1,000

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Minutes of Memorabilia Working Group

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

Memorabilia in the City Hall

The Chief Executive referred to the minutes of the memorabilia Working Group of 15th September and the report of the Good Relations Manager contained therein which is set out below:

'Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the issue of memorabilia in the City Hall was raised at last month's Strategic Policy & Resources Committee meeting and at the September Council meeting. This report seeks to set out the relevant background information and clarify key points in relation to this subject so that current concerns are met and our move back to the City Hall can be carried out in a harmonious manner.

Advisory Panel

Members may be aware that in 2002 the Council established an independent Advisory Panel of external experts who provided an informed view on the issue of displays in the City Hall.

All of the Council's work around memorabilia since that time has been based on the recommendations of that Advisory Panel, which were adopted by the previous Policy & Resources Committee in February 2003. The opening paragraph of this report stated clearly that 'the items which form part of the fabric of the City Hall – stained glass windows, plaques, sculptures and war memorials – have important historical overtones and should be retained'. The report went on to state that 'As the principal public building in Belfast, it is important that the City Hall is as welcoming, appealing and interesting as possible. Symbolism is extremely important and the current display could be augmented to achieve a better balance and more inclusive representation of the history and heritage of the City. The contributions of the working class, women and minority communities to life in Belfast should be more adequately represented in future displays'.

Principles

In summary, the principles that have guided our approach in working towards a more balanced and inclusive display are that the City Hall should be:

- *welcoming*
- *attractive*
- *interesting*
- *representative of the history and heritage of Belfast*
- *representative of the diversity of the city.*

It follows also that the displays should be of good quality and in accordance with the status of the City Hall setting.

Progress made

Many of the short-term recommendations of the Advisory Panel have been implemented. The displaying of all the Lord Mayors' portraits, the re-naming of the Committee Rooms, the installation of works by Conor and Lavery, the commissioning of the Mary Ann McCracken bust, the No Mean City photographic exhibition and the installation of the Dockers' Strike stained glass window all represent actions taken to 'balance up' the current displays.

Following the closure of the City Hall for refurbishment in 2007, a large number of artworks and artefacts were removed from the City Hall and put into storage. Members should note that not all items were removed i.e. stained glass windows, plaques, large statues and the biggest artworks/portraits were left in situ and cased in for protection.

Report to Committee November 2008

The first report referring to the replacement of the artworks was submitted to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in November 2008 (copy attached Appendix A). This pointed out that since the City Hall was now a major tourist attraction with over 56,000 visitors taking public tours annually, we should capitalise on our success and use the closure of the City Hall to our best advantage by rationalising the tours and introducing a number of themed areas.

These were:

1	<i>History of the City Hall</i>	<i>Marble area</i>
2	<i>'Freedom of the City' recipients</i>	<i>Rotunda</i>
3	<i>Belfast in the 2 World Wars</i>	<i>Rotunda</i>
4	<i>Notable Belfast citizens</i>	<i>Reception Hall</i>
5	<i>Titanic & Belfast's Lord Mayors</i>	<i>Banqueting Hall</i>
6	<i>Civic regalia</i>	<i>Robing Room</i>
7	<i>Display of gifts received by the city</i>	<i>East Entrance</i>

This report explained that some artefacts and pieces of artwork would have to be relocated to optimise the tour themes and identified and listed the most significant of these. It specifically referred to the recommendations of the Advisory Panel, stating that "the re-displaying of items will give an opportunity to work towards the achievement of a more balanced and inclusive display which represents all aspects of former and contemporary life in Belfast".

The report pointed out that over 1300 art and artefact items had been removed from the City Hall and the closure provided an opportunity to clean and restore these where necessary, collating an updated inventory. It was not considered necessary for the report to list all items individually along with their future location.

The report also proposed that ‘the six elected Members of the Good Relations Partnership act as a cross-party reference group in any future discussions regarding the display of City Hall memorabilia in the longer term. This will ensure that the City Hall is as welcoming and as representative of our community as possible, in line with previous Council decisions’. (This Group was known as the Memorabilia Working Group).

The recommendations in this report were adopted without amendment. Following this, the Head of Facilities Management proceeded to develop the plans for the 7 themed areas as described above.

Memorabilia Working Group

This Working Group has met monthly since Christmas 2008 and has considered various options but, despite much discussion, received very few proposals.

It agreed to invite suggestions from the general public (through City Matters, Interlink, our website and a media release, Feb 2009). This resulted in a number of proposals, some of these were impractical, e.g. to use the City Hall as an art gallery. Some related to items already underway e.g. display the original Charter in a more prominent position; establish a café/coffee shop; set up a display showing Belfast’s industrial past and its famous citizens.

The Working Group considered recent Equality Commission guidance on Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment and agreed that in the return to the City Hall, as general principles, the major public areas – the marble, Great Hall, Banqueting Hall, Reception Hall and Rotunda etc - should be kept free of any permanent memorabilia that could be construed as being partisan in nature. However, temporary exhibitions or installations in these public areas and function rooms should be permitted, to allow for diversity of expression e.g. emblems, flags or banners which are expressions of cultural identity and form key elements in a particular event/exhibition; such objects are to be removed immediately after the event/exhibition.

The Working Group received regular up-dates from Civic Headquarters staff on the progress being made in relation to the City Hall refurbishment, the tour themes and the new interactive No Mean City exhibition.

Moving of artefacts

At its meeting on 29 May 2009, the Head of Facilities Management reminded the Group that the Council had agreed to the rationalisation of the City Hall displays into 7 main themes and stated that work was now at the stage of designing and installing relevant furniture and display cases etc. He said that although the vast majority of the artefacts would be replaced in their original position or moved to a more appropriate location to fit in with the themes, a small number of items did not 'fit' easily within the themes. Since the acquisition and/or commissioning of new items and disposal of existing items was a matter for Members, he referred these to the Memorabilia Working Group.

The Memorabilia Working Group agreed that 2 items could be made available on long-term loan to other organisations, rather than be put into storage. These were:

- a large flag in the Banqueting Hall which had been presented to Sir Crawford and Lady McCullough, who had a close association with the Guide movement; this is to be offered to the Girl Guide Association.*
- the Accounts of the Paymasters General of 1690, being offered on a long-term loan basis to the Grand Orange Lodge.*

Irish language suggestions

The Memorabilia Working Group also had a lengthy discussion at this meeting on a range of requests from the Irish language community. The Working Group noted that some suggestions made were already in place:

- tour information is already available in Irish and will be up-dated and reprinted on return to the City Hall; the Group acknowledged that there was a need for wider publication of the fact of its availability*
- tours for Irish medium schools have been and can be facilitated*
- the Welcome Guide has already been translated into Irish and can be downloaded from the Council's website.*

The Working Group also agreed to proceed with the following new proposals:

- *Irish will be included in the multi-lingual Welcome Sign at Reception*
- *Irish will be included in the No Mean City exhibition information*
- *a 16th century Irish manuscript presented to Cllr. Alex Maskey, as Lord Mayor, can be displayed in the 'Gifts to the Lord Mayor' section as an illustration of Irish heritage*
- *an Irish language event can be included in the official City Hall re-opening programme, to be designed in association with Pobal.*

The Working Group considered the request for bi-lingual signage but, after discussion, re-affirmed its current policy on language and signage. The Group rejected the suggestion that the ability to speak Irish should be included as an essential recruitment criterion for tour guides and reception staff, given current employment legislation.

These Working Group recommendations were reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 19 June.

Discussions with groups from the Irish language community in Belfast around a possible artwork to represent the contribution of that community are continuing.

At its meeting on 14 August, the Memorabilia Working Group agreed a final list of 68 names to be included in the newly updated interactive No Mean City exhibition.

New artwork agreed

The Working Group also agreed that the Council should commission 2 pieces of artwork, on the themes of boxing and young people, to improve the overall balance within the City Hall, to be located in the newly re-furbished East Entrance area. This was agreed by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 21 August and will be commissioned in line with standard procurement guidelines. Also at that meeting, the Head of Facilities Management submitted another report on Memorabilia (Appendix B) which gave further information regarding the 7 themes and locations of art and artefacts.

Equality implications

Members are reminded of their equality obligations and of the advice of the Senior Counsel engaged in 2002-3; the QC stated that:

'The City Hall was built in the Victorian era. It is typical of civic buildings which were constructedat that time. It is inevitable that the style and decoration of these buildings will reflect the social and cultural views and aspirations of those who built them.....Over the years such buildings have inevitably become the repositories of various artefacts and memorabilia of local significance. Thus they perform a function....similar to that performed by a museum or archive...with particular reference to the City's own history.

These items...placed in the City Hall over the years....are clearly part of the cultural history and heritage of the city. However, no-one would claim that they are representative of all aspects of the cultural history or heritage of Belfast.'

Although some progress has clearly been made in this area, more could be done and the re-opening of the City Hall provides an opportunity to move this forward and achieve a more favourable balance of artefacts with greater representation of all the communities in the city.

KEY ISSUES

The development of the Bobbin coffee bar and exhibition space, which focuses on the contribution of the workers of Belfast and its industrial past, is another example of the Council's commitment to the principle of greater balance as it addresses directly the themes of the contribution of the working class, women and mill girls.

Members will be aware that the portraits of Lord Mayors themselves provide an indication of the political spectrum in Belfast and reflect the change in the city's political dynamic. There will shortly be 2 Sinn Fein, 3 SDLP and 3 Alliance Lord Mayors' portraits on view in the re-opened City Hall (next year 4 Alliance).

Possible short term actions

To address current concerns, it appears that the Reception Hall, with its theme of Belfast Citizens, is the most promising location for any additional displays, although a significant amount of other wall space is currently unused in other areas within the City Hall and could be used to add balance.

The portraits in the Reception Hall at present are not of former civic dignitaries but of former officers/Town Clerks; these could be re-located in less high profile areas. This would allow future displays, when selected and commissioned, to be placed there.

As an immediate action, a wall-hanging of the ancient Irish poem, the Blackbird, currently hanging in the Lord Mayor's offices, could be hung in a more central location.

In the meantime, we have been having recent discussions with a number of other organisations, including the Ulster Museum and Linen Hall Library, regarding the possibility of borrowing items on short or long-term loan. There is an abundance of material on Belfast within local archives.

Current suggestions include:

'Ready-made' exhibitions which have already been collated and which could be hired on a short term basis e.g. from the Linen Hall Library include those on the United Irishmen; Posters and Images of the NI Conflict, which reflect all sides in the conflict; A Cartoon History of Ulster in the Twentieth Century, which covers the home rule crisis, partition and the Troubles.

Other possible exhibition themes, drawing on a range of archival material, which could be expanded over time, include:

Caring and Sharing - looking at the tradition of charitable and voluntary work on the part of philanthropic individuals, churches and voluntary organisations, hospitals etc over the decades e.g. the RVH, the Mater, St Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army etc.

Creating the Way – a celebration of Belfast's artists, writers, painters and musicians.

Famous Women of Belfast – from Ruby Murray, Mary O'Malley, Mary Peters, Sister Genevieve to Mary McAleese.

The pictures on display in the Conor and Lavery Committee Rooms are high quality reproductions of originals and this method could be repeated for other artworks. There are available many landmark and landscape paintings; portraits of e.g. United Irishmen, writers; extensive photographic collections; and images of old Belfast, reflecting all traditions and ways of life in Belfast across the decades.

Possible future exhibitions

The East Entrance area is to be reserved for temporary community exhibitions/displays. These could be very varied, demonstrating the diversity of life in Belfast and assist in providing cultural balance.

Applications already been received include the following proposed exhibitions:

- *160th Anniversary of the School of Art & Design, from the University of Ulster, which would showcase the work of their students/young people; pencilled in for Oct/Nov 09*
- *A Sports Museum, being collated by Brian Morrison, former Head of Leisure, which will feature a number of sports, with special features on the GAA (including football, hurling, handball and camogie), boxing, rugby and football; pencilled in for Dec 09*
- *Shared History Interpretative Project (SHIP) photographic exhibition illustrating the history and heritage of the Dockers in Belfast.*

Financial Implications

Appropriate artworks could be commissioned through existing budgets.

2.2 Recommendations

- *To note the information in this report*
- *To agree that suitable wall space be made available in the Reception Hall and other areas and designated for appropriate artwork to represent the diversity of the city, to be agreed by the Memorabilia Working Group.*

- *To agree that an Advisory Panel be established of appropriate external advisors, i.e. Maureen Mackin, already commissioned, plus 2 others (to be approached) who would provide expertise and guidance to the Council in this matter; this Panel to have both gender and community balance.*
- *To consider the options outlined above and give direction on the short-term and longer-term proposals possible*
- *To demonstrate the Council's commitment to the principle of greater balance, to agree that a timetable be drawn up, with a detailed report back within 3 months, identifying short-term plans and longer-term proposals to address the issue of balance and better representation within the City Hall displays."*

The Chief Executive further referred to the summary of the decisions of the Working Group set out below which were being recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for acceptance:

- “• **To agree that suitable wall space be made available in the Reception Hall and other areas and designated for appropriate artwork to represent the diversity of the city, to be agreed by the Memorabilia Working Group.**
- **To agree that an Advisory Panel be established of appropriate external advisors, i.e. Maureen Mackin, already commissioned, plus 3 others (to be approached) who would provide expertise and guidance to the Council in this matter; this Panel to have both gender and community balance.**
- **To consider the options outlined above and give direction on the short-term and longer-term proposals possible**
- **To demonstrate the Council's commitment to the principle of greater balance, to agree that a timetable be drawn up, with a detailed report back within 3 months, identifying short-term plans and longer-term proposals to address the issue of balance and better representation within the City Hall displays.**

In addition, the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that:

- The 100 year old Trade Union banner should be displayed as soon as available
- The name of the individual from the Irish language community should be re-instated in the No Mean City interactive display
- The Blackbird wall hanging should be displayed in the Reception Hall
- Artwork, not to exceed £20,000, should be commissioned, to reflect Irish history and heritage in the city; this to be displayed in either the Reception Hall or East Entrance
- Wall space should be made available in the Reception Hall by relocating portraits of former Town Clerks
- The 16th century Irish manuscript and presentation crystal bowl should be displayed in the East Entrance
- That the primary role of the Advisory Panel, reporting through the Memorabilia Working Group, would be to bring back an expert report with specific proposals to introduce greater balance within the City Hall.
- A meeting should be convened as soon as possible with the consultant to identify options and which items could be obtained most quickly
- The Director of Legal Services to provide advice to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on the Council's legal obligations under Section 75 of the NI Act on this matter."

A Member pointed out that there was no need for an Advisory Panel and that an expert report could be prepared for the Working Group by the Council's retained adviser Maureen Mackin supported by the Heritage Officer and other specialist officers already employed by the Council.

Accordingly, he requested that the Committee agreed to proceed on this basis without the establishment of an Advisory Panel.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

During a lengthy discussion in the matter, the Good Relations Manager pointed out that suggestions had been sought from the general public through City Matters, Interlink, the Council's website and a media release in relation to what type of artefacts, memorabilia or artworks they would like to see displayed in the City Hall. She explained that there had been no suggestions received from the Chinese, Indian and other ethnic minority communities but submissions had been received from Irish Language groups, which was why these were being considered as part of the overall recommendations being made to the Committee.

Moved by Councillor D. Dodds,
Seconded by Councillor Campbell,

That, with the exception of the decision taken earlier in the meeting in relation to the establishment of the Advisory Panel, the summary of decisions which had been taken by the Memorabilia Working Group and submitted to Committee for approval be referred back to that Group for further consideration.

On a vote by show of hands eight Members voted for the proposal and eight against. There being an equality of votes, the Chairman exercised his casting vote for the proposal and it was accordingly declared carried.

Finance

City Investment Framework

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Purpose

The purpose of this report is to begin to establish a firm Council agenda in terms of what investment we can support within the limitations of budget, people and political constraints.

Background

The Council has stated ambitions of wanting to take a leadership role in the City to improve the quality of life of citizens through place shaping and a number of other measures as set out in our Corporate Plan 2008/11.

The physical aspects of place shaping are contained in some proposals within the Councils Capital Programme; the commitments by Council to a City Investment Strategy; the emerging priorities from the North, South, East, West debates and the various discussions ongoing with other agencies both within and outside of RPA discussions regarding assets and projects.

As always resources particularly money is in short supply and therefore a major limitation on what can be actually be delivered.

Key Issues – Ambitions – What does the City need or want

- **Capital Programme**

The Councils Capital Programme is a mixture of basic facility replacement to enable service delivery e.g. depots or crematoria; people based facilities e.g. centres, pitches and health and safety or investment schemes e.g. Gasworks, North Foreshore, demolition of Grove, Maysfield etc

The current financial position is that:

Committee has committed projects which require loans up to £56m. In addition, there are a large number of uncommitted schemes which if they all went ahead would easily go beyond a further £70m - £100m of expenditure.

Some of these uncommitted projects can make strong business cases e.g. a heat recovery proposal on the North Foreshore with a short payback period; Woodvale and Dunville Parks which have a large percentage of grant funding or alley gates which are socially and politically viewed as value for money.

Regardless of the merits of each case the bald fact remains that our affordability limit in terms of borrowing is deemed by Financial Services as £45m and hence we have an £11m shortfall on committed projects already. Never mind any further expenditure.

The advice from Financial Services is that there should be a moratorium on further capital expenditure until finances recover.

Members however, have taken a different view in that they have asked for a review of our Capital Financing Strategy to test the £45m affordability limit and see if it can be stretched.

The bottom line on this means finding further revenue to support new loans from within existing resources.

Obviously this will raise a political dilemma should any savings be found of where and on what do the Members wish to allocate the ratepayers money.

- **City Investment Fund/Strategy**

The City Investment Fund/Strategy is a fund based on an annual % rate contribution and capital receipts from asset realisation that is aimed at supporting major iconic projects for the city. To date, commitment has been given to four projects – Titanic Signature Project; Lyric and Mac theatres and Connswater Community Greenway. The committed cost to Council for the next four years is £16.2m of which so far we have raised £4.4m. The total expenditure on the four projects is £153.5m but there is a Council funding gap of £11.8m.

Although we have recently received a £581,000 settlement for a land issue which should be added to the fund.

There are a number of other ideas that have been suggested for funding within the scheme but nothing is being moved forward until the current funding gap is addressed.

Details of asset realisation are considered below under resources.

- N, S, E, W emerging Priorities

N, S, E, W debates have occurred over the past few months with some clear preferences emerging where Council should expend its resources.

Details of a written response in regard to North Belfast relating to a range of projects within and external to the Council including the obvious potential of Girdwood and the North Foreshore has been circulated for the information of the Members.

East Belfast has a preference for a leisure/sport based complex with a private sector partner at Tommy Patten/Blanchflower and freeing up existing community and leisure space for inner city housing along with potentially vacant school sites.

South Belfast has a range of projects it would like to see moving forward including Mary Peters development, Shaftsbury Square enhancement, Lagan Canal, Maysfield and Gasworks Northern Fringe.

West Belfast has identified a number of projects but has yet to propose a definitive list but wants doable projects such as St Comgalls, Beechmount and the Gaeltacht quarter to go ahead while others are kept pending awaiting resources.

The N, S, E, W projects obviously need prioritised and there are some common themes such as tourism, sport, city gateways which could perhaps be built into a programme with other government departments.

Over and above the N, S, E, W debates there are also important proposals and ideas for the city and city centre which need to be at least considered. There are various proposals for private office developments, the Council will have more permanent office accommodation requirements post RPA which will also bring demand from new boundary areas. There are also some business tourism ideas such as a Convention Centre and new Welcome Centre and of course the Rapid Transit proposal is beginning to take shape while the stadia discussions remain ongoing.

The key action emerging from the above is to get an agreed City Investment Framework around what the Council can support relating to our key place shaping and quality of life objectives. The framework must also be sufficiently flexible to allow some projects to go ahead of others as finance, opportunity and other partners permit.

In other words we need an overall plan for the city but we also need to action those projects that are immediately doable. In the long run most new investment is rateable and so can build the city taxbase.

Key Issue – Resources – what can the Council bring

In broad terms the Council can bring a number of things to the table both now and post RPA as set out below

Council Contribution

Soft

- Political mandate for the city
- Planning Support/community gain
- Land assembly
- International city marketing/branding
- Community planning/convening role

Hard

- Money
- Land
- Skills and experience
- Long term commitment

The most pressing question at present is money and this is addressed below.

There are four basic sources of funding for investment – loan, capital receipt, grant and public private partnership.

(i) Loan

As mentioned above Council is currently over committed in terms of loan and unless the mini budget review can squeeze further revenue to support new loans the de facto position will be as advised by Financial Services of a moratorium on any loan based investment or capital programme.

Even if money is found there will be a hard choice of whether to allocate such monies to four key areas to keep the rate down; renew reserves; invest in capital or service enhancement. Any such decision will have to be mindful of potential medium term costs such as waste fines or penalties, requirements for carbon reduction, major building maintenance issues and of course RPA impact.

Until the budget review is complete in October it is difficult to move projects forward on a loan basis.

(ii) Capital Receipt

Realising assets is slow and difficult and the poor state of the economy and property market makes it difficult to get value for money. However, we are progressing a number of disposals as detailed in the tables below:

Agreed Disposals:

Asset	Disposal Sum
Land adj. Beechmount	Previously valued at £3.685m but awaiting an updated valuation from LPS on behalf of DENI (likely to be lower)
Loughside	£14m net £8m
Land at Glen Road adj. St Teresa's GAC	£647,000 (net receipt)
Primrose Street former CAS	£85,000
Seapark Drive former CAS	£70,500

Proposed Disposals – Negotiations/Discussions underway:

Asset	Total Value
Land at Glen Road (Large Site)	Total Circa £8/9m
Land at Colin Glen	
Land at Templemore Avenue	

Total: Approx £20m

Note: This assumes however that all above sales proceed at current values, but given the current economic conditions and volatile property market these sale prices and potential for all sales to complete at these figures must be treated with caution.

Further Potential Disposals Include:

Maysfield
Cathedral Gardens
Former Grove Leisure Centre
Ravenhill Road Former PCs and Rest Garden
Land at North Foreshore
Stranmillis Car Park
Seymour House
Old Zoo

The receipts from these sales are currently allocated to the City Investment Fund which as mentioned has a shortfall of £11.8m over the next few years.

Depending on what can be agreed on an overall city investment basis further consideration may need to be given to using such funds to capital programme schemes and/or other projects or indeed the other financing choices as stated.

(iii) Grant

Grants are a welcome source of income but they have specific criteria that may not suit council projects or objectives; they often require match funding and are front loaded in that the Council must fund the expenditure upfront. A further complication is that they are process heavy in that they are often accompanied by a huge bureaucracy and the ratio of process expenditure to actual project delivery is often poor.

Having said that we must continue to seek out grant and tailor our proposals accordingly.

Grant aid may be a key factor in moving some projects ahead of others especially as we have limited loan options.

In a separate paper on today's agenda are proposals for a Peace III bid which is 100% grant aided and if successful could address some of the ideas coming from the N, S, E, W debates.

(iv) Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

Core Cities in GB are increasingly turning to PPP models to take forward capital investment. Included among these are Local Asset Backed Vehicles (LABV), Accelerated Development Zones (ADZ) and JESSICA Urban Development Funding. There are pros and cons to all of these but in essence they all involve matching Council assets (money or land) with private money to create investment opportunity or else are another way of Council borrowing money.

Council officers have been exploring these but they could be risky, difficult to set up, require new legislation and so on. However, they may be the only option for things like the North Foreshore.

The key to any of these schemes is knowing what you want to deliver before agreeing to any of these as delivery options.

Council officers will continue to keep abreast of these options as we further develop a City Investment Framework.

Recommendations

It is recommended that officers pull together an overall framework of investment projects based on Capital Programme proposals, City Investment Fund schemes and N, S, E, W outcomes and correlate that with a Capital Financing Strategy which is a piece of work Committee have authorised together with the mini budget review.

It is further proposed that officers prioritise the projects in terms of strategic fit to Council objectives; wholelife costs; funding; invest to save etc and then test that with the SP&R Committee to agree a way forward.

Decision Tracking

It is proposed to bring an overall affordable programme of work for consideration in October/November."

The Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to the North, South, East and West emerging priorities being referred to and discussed with the Party Groupings on the Council prior to being incorporated within the Capital Financing Strategy, with a report on the Strategy being submitted for the Committee's consideration during November. In addition, the Committee agreed that further North, South, East and West briefings for Members be facilitated by the Director of Improvement, if required.

Peace III : Priority 2.1
Creating Shared Public Spaces

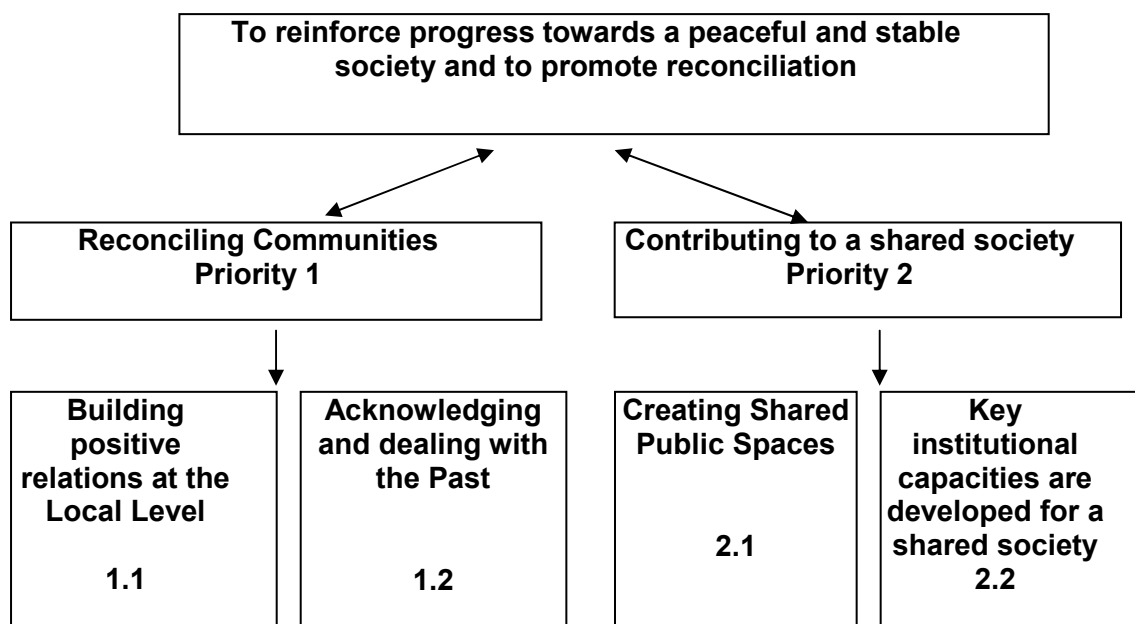
The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the funding of projects under Priority 2.1 of the Peace III Programme:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been participating in the Peace III programme through the Good Relations and EU unit officers. The Good Relations unit has managed the process to date to develop and secured funding under priority 1.1 of the Peace III programme to provide a multi annual programme of Peace initiatives 2008-2011.

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update regarding priority 2.1 of the Peace III programme and seek agreement with regard to current opportunities.

The framework of the Peace III programme 2007-2013 is represented as follows;



Members may be aware that in August 2007, the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) opened a call under the Creating Shared Public Spaces Call of the Peace III programme. From the period August to October 2007 the European unit coordinated a process of identifying and submitting eight council proposals under this call. Following feedback from SEUPB the council later refined this submission and in December 2007 agreed to the re-submission of the North Foreshore Bridge proposal as well as the Skatepark project.

Members will be aware that since this time, the Skatepark project consequently succeeded in securing £375,000 and is underway and the North Foreshore Bridge project was rejected.

Current Situation

In line with the Good Relations Plan and the objective of 'Building Shared City Spaces' in the current Peace Plan, the 2.1 capital bids present real opportunities to realise this ambition. The Good Relations partnership recognises that high quality shared public spaces will be an economic benefit to the city, in terms of reputation, city attractiveness, reducing the costs of duplication and increased sharing across a range of facilities.

It is important the economic and social value of sharing is more explicitly promoted and 'designed in' when planning, delivering and managing shared spaces in the city. The SEUPB will rigorously test the 'shared' aspect of any bid. Based on initial discussions and relevant research, the Good Relations Partnership recently recommended to Council that a working definition for shared space is:

- *Welcoming* – where people feel secure to take part in unfamiliar interactions, and increase an overall sense of shared experience and community.
- *Accessible* – well-connected in terms of transport and pedestrian links within a network of similar spaces across the city and managed to promote maximum participation by all communities.
- *Good quality* – attractive, high quality unique services and well-designed buildings and spaces.
- *Safe* – for all persons and groups, trusted by both locals and visitors.

Importantly, it must be understood that 'shared space' is not neutral; it is a place where a diversity of identity, culture and heritage can be expressed and enjoyed in an environment of safety, tolerance and acceptance.

The Peace III network measure 2.1 has re-opened for a second call and will close on 13 November 2009. In order to identify Council Priorities for submitting proposals, the European unit has looked at the councils current 'Place Shaping Projects' priorities and assessed these against the measure 2.1 criteria.

Priority 2.1 Creating Shared Public Spaces

Under 2.1 second call, the SEUPB is seeking strategic physical project submissions to meet the following criteria;

- To act as a catalyst for transforming the local community
- Be iconic with a capacity to provide a lasting legacy to the Peace III programme
- Incorporate high design and environmental quality
- Demonstrate long term sustainability
- Range in size from 1.5M to 10M euros

Under this measure the SEUPB wants to support 6-8 very large strategic and iconic projects across the eligible Peace III programme area funded at between 2-10 million euros each. The idea of this measure is to produce iconic structures that can be easily recognised as a Peace III project long after the programme ends. For a project to be successful, it must achieve 70 or above in relation to the following listed criteria.

- Shared space potential
- Catalyst for transforming
- Capacity to be iconic
- Sustainable development
- Capacity to implement
- Financial competence (fund yourself up front and claim in arrears)

The weak areas for most projects submitted to date have been the capacity to be iconic and the catalyst for transforming.

SEUPB particularly wants to see physical projects that address some of the following;

- Segregated areas
- Sectarian graffiti, flags and emblems
- Peace walls and demarcation lines
- Sectarianism
- Under used and unwelcoming areas
- Creation of shared public spaces

Any bid to SEUPB would need to significantly contribute to the desired outcomes that they outline in the Peace III Programme, for example: the removal of interface barriers; a reduction in violence and tension; and increased levels of trust and tolerance.

In initial draft of a 'shared space' plan has been prepared for discussion with the Crusaders and Newington Football Clubs, outlining possible actions and a performance management framework. Similar 'shared space' plans would need to be prepared for each of the Council bids to underpin the capital expenditure, demonstrating the sustainability and integrity of the 'sharing'.

As a starter, it is suggested that a series of actions, with associated targets, are considered under each of the following headings, as part of each of the action plans:

<p><u>Welcoming</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Branding and symbols b. Promotion and publicity c. Management and governance d. Volunteering e. Community engagement <p><u>Good quality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> j. physical design k. programming events l. sharing high-quality resources m. Recruitment, development and progression of locally recruited volunteers and staff n. promoting unique cultural heritage 	<p><u>Safe</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Physical design g. Policing/Stewarding h. Codes of conduct and enforcement i. Managing critical incidents <p><u>Accessible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o. Location p. well-served by public transport q. well-served by pedestrian and cycle links r. Affordability s. Involving under-represented groups e.g. disabled groups t. Youth programming u. monitoring participation of all groups and targeted campaigns/programmes
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Other actions may emerge and will be tailored to the particular objectives of each bid.

Additionally, many of these actions will also deliver outcomes for the Council in terms of other corporate strategic objectives, such as place-shaping, health and well-being, community safety and economic regeneration.

It is hoped that this multi-layered approach to delivering shared space, will amply demonstrate both the iconic nature of the bids to SEUPB but also the multiple transformative benefits for neighbouring communities and the city itself.

Having considered the Place Shaping projects, a number have been identified as possible contenders for this Peace III 2.1 funding. A shortlist of projects was developed by an officer working group led by the Director of Development. These may be summarised as follows;

- North Foreshore (N)
- Seaview Allotments (N)
- Floral Hall (N)
- Maysfield (WTC) (CC)
- CS. Lewis Project (E)
- Gasworks Northern Fringe (S)
- Gasworks Bridge (S)
- Cultural Quarter (SS/N)
- (Cathedral & Gaol)
- Public Service- Service Girdwood (N)
- Convention Centre (CC)
- Sports Village (N)
- Mary Peters Track (S)
- Green Corridor (NW)
- Gaeltacht Quarter (W)
- HMS Caroline (CC)

Having considered the list and examined it in the context of the Peace III criteria the projects outlined below led by Belfast City Council are deemed relevant for submission;

Projects that were considered potentially viable under Peace III 2.1 call are the following;

- (i) Cultural Corridor (CC/N) - linking the Cathedral Quarter to Carlisle Circus, Crumlin Road Jail to Shankill and Conway Mills (environmental, cultural, tourist and physical developments as well as creating shared space and increased community mobility)
- (ii) Public service centre at Girdwood (N) - this project will only be viable if key partners are willing and commit within the required November timescale
- (iii) Peaceful Trail (N&W) - Peace Trail linking North and West Belfast green areas including the Seaview allotments
- (iv) HMS Caroline (CC) - to add to the Belfast maritime heritage
- (v) Gasworks Bridge (E/CC) - linking the Gasworks to the Ormeau Park

Members are required to consider the five project options and make recommendations on which proposals should be further developed bearing in the mind the closing date of 13 November for full applications to the SEUPB. Members should note that projects must be fully costed, accompanied with a business case and ready for delivery with no planning or implementation barriers or implications.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members consider and select project proposals for submission under the anticipated Peace III 2.1 call for submission by 13 November 2009.”

In response to a number of questions, the Director of Improvement stated that any projects which were approved under the Peace III Programme would receive 100% funding. He stated that the five projects outlined were those which had been deemed to be most likely to be viable under the programme and meet the Peace III criteria.

The Committee agreed that projects (i) the Cultural Corridor and (ii) the Public Service Centre at Girdwood be further developed and submitted for funding under Priority 2.1 of Peace III. The Committee agreed also that further investigation be undertaken in relation to project (iv) the HMS Caroline and a report thereon be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on the likelihood of it being successful in receiving funding under the Peace III Scheme.

Minutes of Meeting of Audit Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel of 2nd September and adopted the recommendations contained therein.

Authority to Seek Tenders

(Mr. G. Wright, Head of Facilities Management, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee granted authority for the commencement of tendering exercises for the supply and delivery of the following goods and services:

<u>Goods/Services Sought</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Value</u> <u>(£)</u>	<u>Total Duration</u>
Protective gloves	55,000	One year plus two year optional renewal
Marquees for Belfast City Council Events	115,000	One year plus two year optional renewal
Porterage services	120,000	One year plus two year optional renewal

<u>Goods/Services Sought</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Value</u> (£)	<u>Total Duration</u>
Broken stones and screening	115,000	One year plus two year optional renewal
Promotional items	130,000	One year plus two year optional renewal
Protective footwear	35,000	One year plus two year optional renewal
Plumbing supplies	45,000	One year plus two year optional renewal

The Committee noted that the tenders would be evaluated using pre-determined criteria.

(In the absence of the Deputy Chairman, the Committee agreed that Councillor Convery take the Chair.)

(Councillor Convery in the Chair.)

Request for Funding - Be Your Best Foundation

(Mr. G. Wright, Head of Facilities Management, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was advised that a request for financial assistance had been received from the Be Your Best Foundation in respect of the Belfast Rock Challenge 2010, a drug crime prevention event which was scheduled to be held in the Belfast Waterfront Hall.

The Committee was advised that legal opinion had been sought and that the Council could, if it so wished, use Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 to make financial contributions of this nature. Accordingly, it was recommended that funding in the sum of £3,000 be awarded to the Be Your Best Foundation. It was pointed out that, if it was so minded, this would be the third year the Council would be supporting the event and, in light of the financial pressures facing ratepayers, it was recommended also that this be the final year in which financial assistance be provided.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and

Resolved – That funding of £3,000 be approved in respect of the aforementioned event 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 the inhabitants of the district, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefits so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

Human Resources

Standing Order 55 - Employment of Relatives

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Order 55 and the authority delegated to him, the Director of Corporate Services had authorised the appointment of a number of members of staff who were related to existing officers of the Council.

Asset Management

Ormeau Business Park Lease, Gasworks Estate

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to the Ormeau Business Park Lease at the Gasworks Estate:

“Relevant Background Information

At its meeting of 19th June 2009 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee deferred consideration of a report in relation to rental payments due to Council from Ormeau Business Park (OBP) under the terms of their Lease for a development plot in the Gasworks Estate.

OBP have indicated that the impact of imposing an equity rent, effective from December 2009, would impact on their ability to deliver on the objectives of their organisation whilst located in the Gasworks Estate. They have requested that Council consider not charging OBP any rent to continue their occupation in the Estate.

Members wanted to obtain further legal advice and, following which, to receive if necessary representatives of the Board of Ormeau Business Park.

Key Issues

The Policy and Resources Committee (Economic Development Sub-Committee) of 29th January 1997 approved the Lease terms entered into with OBP (formerly Ormeau Enterprises Ltd) which provided for a capital payment in lieu of rent for the initial 10 years of the 125 year term. Thereafter the Leases provides for an equity rent of 10% of gross rental income received from OBP's occupational tenants. The equity rent provisions are similar to all other Leases in the Gasworks Estate. There is no obligation on OBP to pay an equity rent to Council on unlet and vacant accommodation. Currently the business park is 91% occupied with only two unlet units.

Legal Services have advised that it is doubtful if any successful legal challenge by OBP could be mounted against the existing Lease terms given the length of time they have taken benefit under same and due to the fact they had legal representation at time of entering into the Lease.

Legal Services have also advised that each of the four options contained in the previous report could legally be agreed between the Council and OBP. Some of these options will require approval from Department of Environment and be the subject of further conditions prescribed by Council's Economic Initiatives.

To recap the options that can be offered to OBP are as follows:

Options:

1. to maintain relativity with other tenants in the Estate and seek an income stream from this Plot through payment of an equity rent as provided for and agreed by both Council and OBP as set out in the existing Lease
2. extended 'rent free' period for a further 10 years subject to payment of a further capital premium to be agreed
3. extended 'rent free' period for a further 10 years without the requirement to pay any capital premium, this would require Council to seek approval from the Department of Environment to effectively dispose of this Plot at less than best value
4. accept a reduced level of equity rent (currently 10%) again this would require Council to seek approval from Department of Environment to effectively dispose of this Plot at less than best value

Options 3 & 4 would be subject to imposition of conditions prescribed by Council's Economic Initiatives aimed at supporting and promoting Council's wider economic development agenda.

At its meeting of 22nd May 2009 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved a package of measures aimed at reducing the level of service charge in the Gasworks as part of Council's response to the economic downturn. The level of service charge paid by OBP fell from £41,107.50 (year ending 31/03/08) to £15,839.92 (year ending 31/03/09). These cost cutting measures were applied proportionally across the board to all Council tenants within the Gasworks Estate.

No measures to reduce or forgo rental income from any other Council tenants, either in the Gasworks Estate or other industrial estates (Balmoral, Duncrue) have been proposed. The Development Department have confirmed that no rental subsidy is given to Council tenants who occupy retail units in St George's and Smithfield markets.

There are 6 enterprise agencies within Belfast; furthermore Council's Economic Initiatives team has positive relations with each agency but has no formal relationship with any of them. Therefore any potential subsidy offered to OBP would have to be considered solely in the context of the landlord/tenant relationship rather than in the context of support for economic development since OBP does not provide a unique service.

The projected occupational rental income received by OBP (excluding the two vacant units) is £232,232.88 (excl service charge) which would produce an equity rental income for Council in 2009/10 of £23,223.29. This equity rent would increase to £25,545.62 for a commercial tenant (11% equity share) representing an effective subsidy to OBP of £2,322.33.

Resource Implications

Financial

Under Section 96(5)(a) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 there is an obligation to achieve best value in any property transactions. Options 3 and 4 would require Council to seek approval from Department of Environment to effectively dispose of this Plot at less than best value.

Foregoing equity rental income from this plot, assessed at £23,233.29, would further reduce income from the Gasworks Estate over and above the assistance towards service charge costs already agreed to by Members at its meeting on 22nd May 2009.

Potential impact on income from Council's industrial estates and St George's & Smithfield Markets should tenants seek similar relief in respect of their rental payments.

Human Resources

No impact over the existing Council resources already committed to managing the Gasworks Estate.

Asset and Other Implications

Implication for other developers in the Gasworks Estate who continue to make equity rental payments under their agreed Lease terms.

Wider economic development responsibilities of Council through support of all the other enterprise agencies across Belfast where Council are not the landlords.

Recommendations

From an estate management prospective we would recommend Option 1 as that is the agreed legal position and we have already moved some way toward assisting all tenants in the Gasworks by reviewing the level of service charge.

Should Members wish to support any other options as outlined above to approve, where necessary, a submission seeking sanction from the Department of the Environment together with any subsequent conditions considered appropriate by Council's Economic Initiatives.

Given the advice from Legal Services it is not felt that Members would require to receive any further representation from the board of OBP.

Decision Tracking

Estates Surveyor to contact Ormeau Business Park to convey Committee's decision in September 2009 and agree any revision of present agreement necessary prior to December 2009 (date of equity rent liability)

Key to Abbreviations

OBP – Ormeau Business Park.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Connswater Community Greenway Update

The Committee was reminded that the Council, as part of the City Investment Strategy, had agreed to co-ordinate the acquisition of lands to enable the Connswater Community Greenway Programme to proceed. The Council would secure rights over the land needed for the Greenway and would be responsible for the management and maintenance of that land and any aspects of it. The Greenway would have to be accessible for forty years to comply with the Big Lottery fund letter of offer, although the intention was to secure rights for longer if possible.

It was reported that there were two portions of land which had been identified as being required to complete the Greenway route and associated landscaping. The first was 1.227 acres of land stretching from the Beersbridge Road through Elmgrove Hollow, including the Conn O'Neill Bridge, along the Knock River to Dunraven Avenue and along the Loop River adjacent to Linen Gardens. Council officials had agreed, subject to Committee approval, to purchase that area of land at a cost of £45,900.

The second involved the proposed route of the section of the Greenway from the Castlereagh Road to the Council-owned Loop River Open Space which was along the West Bank of the Loop River and adjacent to private houses at Loopland Court. Committee approval was being sought to purchase nine small plots of land at Loop Land Court for £750 each, with negotiations ongoing in order to acquire an additional two plots on the same terms.

The Committee granted approval for the purchase of the lands as outlined.

Suffolk Community Centre – Interactive Outdoor Play Area

The Committee was advised that the Suffolk Community Centre was a directly-managed facility which had been opened officially on 27th February, 1999 and was the hub of community activity in that area. The Suffolk Community Centre Committee had actively contributed to successful partnership approaches to provide a broad-based programme of activities at the Centre. The Centre Committee, in seeking to develop and improve services, had been exploring possibilities to develop a vacant site to the rear of the Community Centre. The site was within the perimeter of the Centre and was owned by the Council.

The Director of Improvement reported that the Centre Committee had now been awarded funding from the Groundwork Northern Ireland Alpha Programme in the sum of £48,890.50 which would finance all capital costs associated with the development of an interactive outdoor play facility. The facility would be accessed via the Community Centre and would therefore be subject to supervised use at all times.

There would be no capital cost implications to the Council as these would be met in full by funding from Groundwork Northern Ireland. However, on completion, the project would be owned by the Council and therefore it would be the Council's responsibility to manage and maintain the facility. This would be undertaken by the Parks and Amenities Section at a cost of £4,000 per annum, which would not include the replacement of damaged equipment.

The Director pointed out that the Members would be increasingly cognisant of the pressures on resources and within this context it was proposed, whilst not wishing to discourage local communities seeking to improve service provision, that all such schemes in the future be discussed by the Asset Management Group prior to a decision being taken by the Principal Committee. That would enable a more robust discussion around the strategic fit of the proposal, existing provision and the associated financial implications.

The Committee granted permission for the construction of an interactive play area at the Suffolk Community Centre, subject to all statutory approvals being maintained and to the Council having an acceptable input in relation to the practical completion arrangements, handover and defects list. The Committee agreed also that, in future, similar schemes be discussed in the first instance by the Asset Management Group.

Good Relations and Equality

(Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager, attended in connection with these items.)

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 11th September and adopted the recommendations contained therein, including:

Peace III Procurement – Cultural Diversity in Sport Programme

The Committee approved the acceptance of a tender in the sum of £266,400 which had been received from Belfast Community Sports Development Network for the procurement of a Cultural Diversity in Sport Programme under Action 3.3 of the Belfast Peace Plan. The Members noted that the tender exceeded the budget which had been approved by the Partnership, at its meeting on 17th April, and ratified subsequently by the Committee but was within the resource allocation for Action 3.3 which had been established in the Plan.

Notice of Motion - Re Racist Attacks

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st September, had agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 11 (e), that a Notice of Motion in relation to Racist Attacks be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee without debate. The Committee was advised that the Council had established the Good Relations Partnership and, since the issue fell within its remit, it was felt that it would be appropriate for the matter to be referred to that Group in the first instance. In addition, since the Partnership had been established as a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, all recommendations of the Partnership would be subject to the agreement of the Committee and ratification by the Council.

The Committee agreed that the matter be referred to the Good Relations Partnership, with a view to a report thereon being submitted to the Committee in due course.

Cross-Cutting Issues

(Mr. W. Francey, Director of Health and Environmental Services, attended in connection with these items.)

Consultation on a Strategy Promoting the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems within Northern Ireland

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Across Northern Ireland, the historical approach to managing disposal of storm and foul water has been the combined sewer system, which has been used to transport both types of effluent to a treatment works. In recent years however, the practice has been to

install separate drainage systems within new developments for each type of effluent. Accordingly, foul sewage is now typically collected in a dedicated sewer for transportation to a treatment works whereas storm water is normally channelled into a convenient watercourse with little or no treatment. A large number of combined sewers still remain in operation, particularly in built up urban areas where population growth and the loss of permeable surfaces has meant that these sewers are increasingly unable to cope with the volume of waste water being generated. This issue has been exacerbated further by both the legal requirement to comply with the provisions of the Water Framework and Floods Directives and the intermittent intense rainfall experienced across Northern Ireland over recent years.

In order to address these issues and in response to sustainable drainage system commitments articulated within the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy, government has developed a Strategy for Promoting the Use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within Northern Ireland. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are hard and soft engineering solutions designed to mimic closely natural catchment processes in the management and treatment of stormwater. Source control SuDS seek to reduce stormwater discharge from developments by dealing with run-off close to source whereas permeable conveyance SuDS slow the velocity of run-off and then reduce its volume via filtration, infiltration and evaporation. An established benefit of SuDS is that the engineering techniques are easily scaled from for example, good housekeeping measures and soakaways for individual premises through to the use of infiltration devices, storage tanks, basins and wetlands for more significant developments.

In developing the Sustainable Drainage Systems Strategy, government convened a working group comprised of representatives from Northern Ireland Water, Department of Regional Development Roads Service, Department of the Environment Planning Service, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Rivers Agency, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, DoE Planning and Environmental Policy Group, Department of Finance and Personnel Central Procurement Directorate, the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute and Belfast City Council. Mr. Reg Maxwell (Area Manager) represented Belfast City Council on the working group with the Council's Sustainable Development Manager joining in the latter stages of the strategy development.

Key Issues

In publishing the SuDS Strategy for consultation, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has included a range of questions for consideration by consultees. The attached draft Council response addresses these questions where applicable.

Of particular relevance to Belfast City Council however, is a strategy recommendation that local authorities, post Review of Public Administration implementation, should be given responsibility for maintenance, subject to funding, of vegetative and soft-engineered SuDS features meeting the criteria for adoption into the public realm.

Arising from the Environment Minister's Statement in March 2008 on the future shape of local government, a Transfer of Functions Working Group was established under Policy Development Panel C. Following discussions between senior officials of transferring Departments and local government, the Strategic Leadership Board adopted a recommendation of Policy Development Panel C that the Minister be requested to seek early discussions with Ministerial colleagues on a number of specified changes to the transfer of functions. These changes included a recommendation that a number of the 11 public realm roads functions should not transfer on grounds that included that there would be limited added value through their transfer without significant investment by local government. This recommendation has not yet been considered by the relevant Executive Sub-Committee.

Furthermore, although the SuDS Strategy highlights that the maintenance obligation will require appropriate funding, it does not explicitly identify where this funding should be obtained, instead highlighting that the use of Article 40 agreements, under the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, or direct charging could be considered in order to secure financial contributions. Moreover, the consultation document asks respondents to consider whether a SuDS maintenance charge, instead of a charge for conventional drainage, should be introduced if water charges are eventually introduced.

In view of the Strategic Leadership Board recommendation, and since a source of funding has not been explicitly identified at this juncture, it is recommended that Belfast City Council opposes transfer of responsibility for maintenance of vegetative and soft-engineered SuDS features meeting the criteria for adoption into the public realm. It is recommended instead, that Belfast City Council proposes that appropriate funding should be provided directly to existing agencies to undertake maintenance. This approach would enable the immediate introduction and promotion of SuDS, as opposed to delaying until 2011 when the Review of Public Administration is scheduled to be completed.

Resource Implications

Financial

It is considered that the proposed maintenance obligation for vegetative and soft-engineered SuDS features meeting the criteria for adoption into the public realm would require significant additional funding, particularly as CIRIA (Construction Industry Research and Information Association) publication C697 'The SuDS Manual' indicates that 'soft' options for hydraulic control structures are the preferred approach. The SuDS working group has not however, attempted to quantify likely local authority maintenance costs prior to publication of the draft Strategy.

Human Resources

If Belfast City Council was required to provide maintenance for vegetative and soft-engineered SuDS, additional staff resources would likely be required.

Asset and Other Implications

If Belfast City Council was required to provide maintenance for vegetative and soft-engineered SuDS, additional maintenance equipment and vehicles would likely be required.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to consider the SuDS maintenance charging proposals as articulated in Appendix A questions 9 and 10 in light of the proposal that the Council should oppose transfer of the responsibility for maintenance of SuDS and to consider whether specific comment should be made.

The Committee is also recommended to endorse the attached draft Council response in respect of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Strategy for Promoting the Use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within Northern Ireland consultation and to recommend that, taking account of Committee views concerning funding, it be submitted to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency by 16th October 2009.

Key to Abbreviations

CIRIA - Construction Industry Research and Information Association.

SuDS - Sustainable Drainage Systems.

Documents Attached

Appendix A – Belfast City Council consultation response to the strategy for promoting the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within Northern Ireland.

Appendix A

Belfast City Council Consultation response to the Strategy for Promoting the Use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within Northern Ireland.

Belfast City Council General Comments in Relation to the Provisions of the Building Regulations.

It is important to note that the Building Regulations control only drainage layouts, sizes, design etc., whether foul or storm, when within the confines of individual sites or when connected within individual buildings. Where two or more drainage lines join in a development, then that drain becomes a public drain, adoptable by Northern Ireland Water and subject to its legislation. Equally, once a drainage line leaves the confines of an individual site, it is also classified as a public drain.

Questions asked within the Consultation Document

Question 1 - do you agree that traditional drainage systems are inadequate in dealing with the issue of storm drainage in new developments, especially the more intense and increasingly unpredictable rainfall arising from climate change?

It is accepted that in many cases, there may be inadequate storm drainage provision within new developments but it is considered an over-generalisation to state that this is always the case. The problem is that individual buildings are now designed on a twin system but that system could be merged at the main drain, which might be only a single combined system.

Question 2 - do you agree that the loss of permeable surfaces which can absorb rainfall is both exacerbating existing drainage problems and creating new flooding problems in the urban environment?

It is accepted that the loss of permeable surfaces that can absorb rainfall is exacerbating existing drainage problems and creating new flooding problems in the urban environment. This is particularly prevalent where large houses are 'harvested' and replaced by multi apartment buildings with large car parking spaces and little or no gardens. The reduction in urban green space is increasing but this loss of amenity needs to be balanced against governmental objectives of growing the population in urban areas in order to limit urban sprawl and reduce commuter travel.

Question 3 - Taking account of the increase in flood risk arising from climate change do you agree that alternative options to traditional drainage systems need to be considered and that SuDS should be considered as one such viable option?

It is considered that alternative options to traditional drainage systems do need to be considered and that SuDS should be considered as one such option, although it is probably more prudent to say that there need to be additional methods of dealing with storm water drainage to supplement or replace traditional systems. Preventing stormwater from entering combined sewerage systems will have a beneficial effect on the operation of sewage plants and, moreover, SuDs are also beneficial in conserving valuable water resources that would be otherwise used to irrigate gardens, etc.

Question 4: - Should the automatic right to connect to a public sewer be amended for new sites and redevelopments?

The general matter of connection rights is currently the subject of ongoing debate between Northern Ireland Water, Building Control and the Department of Finance and Personnel although no definitive position has been reached on the issue to date. Therefore, Belfast City Council offers no comment in relation to question 4.

Question 5: - do you agree that Sustainable Drainage Systems offer mitigation against the current flooding and water pollution problems caused by traditional drainage systems, and exacerbated by the intense and increasingly unpredictable rainfall arising from climate change?

It is considered that Sustainable Drainage Systems can offer mitigation against the current flooding and water pollution problems caused by traditional drainage systems although it is emphasised that care needs to be taken with design, especially in urban areas, where permeability of the ground is a critical factor. There is no point in preventing storm water from surging drains if this results in flooded gardens.

Question 6: - do you agree that a holistic approach involving developers working with a number of disciplines and agencies (planners, drainage engineers, architects, landscape architects, ecologists and hydrologists) from the earliest stage of the planning process can enable SuDS to be integrated into the design of the site thus maximising the flood alleviation and water pollution prevention benefits of SuDS?

Involving developers working with a number of disciplines and agencies from the earliest stage of the planning process is an eminently sensible approach but will require clear regulations setting out accountability, guidance on design, testing for permeability of soils, adequate geophysical mapping of watercourses and an identified agency with the necessary enforcement powers to ensure that any agreed design is properly implemented and maintained.

Question 7: – do you agree that the benefits of SuDS outweigh the constraints of the system?

It is not clear that this will be true in every case but it is accepted that with increasing flooding problems, particularly in Belfast, any efforts to address this problem are welcome. It is imperative however, that adequate information is available to ensure that local circumstances are properly considered so that sound design decisions are taken. Where SuDS systems have been introduced already, such as in Freiburg Germany, the installations do seem to be beneficial, but they must be brought forward through a co-ordinated approach.

Question 8: - do you agree that SuDS will be a useful tool in meeting the aims, objectives and requirements of the policy and legal drivers. If you have indicated no, please provide reasons.

It is agreed that SuDS will be a useful tool for meeting the aims of policy and legal drivers although it is difficult to imagine that economic factors will not be a barrier to full compliance, particularly within the private sector. The present system assigns the responsibility for managing storm water to other bodies such as Northern Ireland Water and the Rivers Agency since the drainage system is principally designed to move water offsite. By employing SuDS, an extra though correct burden is imposed on the developer. This approach may prove particularly useful, in cases where developments would otherwise be refused because of inadequate main storm drainage provision.

Question 9: - do you consider that if SuDS are a replacement for existing traditional drainage systems that those who currently pay for the maintenance of those systems should continue to do so? Please state your reasons

Question 10: - Do you consider that if water charges are introduced a SuDS maintenance charge, instead of a charge for conventional drainage, should be a component of the bill for those customers served by SuDS systems? Please state your reasons

Question 11: - do you agree that the proposed recommendations are a realistic way forward in the promotion of SuDS as the preferred method of storm drainage in Northern Ireland? Please identify any important measures that we have missed.

As highlighted previously, it is difficult to see how SuDS will be successfully embraced within the private sector without some tangible advantages to the client. Previous experience has shown that unless there is a legal requirement to comply, there will be limited deployment of a system on a voluntary basis. Examples of reticence to adopt emerging provisions include access and facilities for people with disabilities. Few building developers adopted these provisions, despite the fact that many people experience disabilities, until they became a Building Regulation. Moreover, most buildings still only comply with basic thermal and sound insulation standards despite the obvious financial advantages to owners and the environmental benefits of making additional provisions. Consequently, it is considered that some form of financial incentive could be considered as a way of encouraging greater uptake and awareness of SuDS.

However, a more effective method to ensure success would be to ensure that appropriate enforcement powers are provided for the Planning Service and local authority Building Control to be exercised in liaison with statutory agencies such as the Rivers Agency and Northern Ireland Water. This would entail amending the current Planning Order and Building Regulations to make it mandatory to consider incorporating SuDS into the design and construction of all building work.

In terms of Building Regulations, recent amendments to the governing Order have introduced the provision to make Regulations in this regard and it is strongly recommended therefore that the Building Regulations Unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel be involved in further development work on the strategy.

In addition, with planning and development control responsibility scheduled to be transferred to local authorities in 2011, the opportunity potentially exists for closer links to be established with Building Control in order to ensure that planning conditions regarding sustainable drainage are properly implemented at the construction stage.

Question 12 - do you consider that we identified the correct organisations responsible for each recommendation? Please give your reasons

Within the recommendations section of the strategy, it has been proposed that local councils, post Review of Public Administration implementation, should be given responsibility for maintenance, subject to funding, of vegetative and soft engineered SuDS features meeting the criteria for adoption into the public realm.

Arising from the Environment Minister's statement in March 2008 on the future shape of local government, a Transfer of Functions Working Group was established under Policy Development Panel C. Following discussions between senior officials of transferring Departments and local government, the Strategic Leadership Board adopted a recommendation of Policy Development Panel C that the Minister be requested to seek early discussions with Ministerial colleagues on a number of specified changes to the transfer of functions. These changes included a recommendation that a number of the 11 public realm roads functions should not transfer on grounds that included that there would be limited added value through their transfer without significant investment by local government. This recommendation has not yet been considered, however, by the relevant Executive sub-Committee.

Belfast City Council considers therefore, that responsibility for the maintenance of public realm aspects of soft-engineered SuDS should not be assigned to local authorities. The Council recommends instead that appropriate funding should be provided directly to relevant existing agencies to undertake maintenance. Such an approach would enable the timely introduction and promotion of SuDS as opposed to delaying until 2011 when the Review of Public Administration is scheduled to be concluded.

Question 13 - what suggestions do you have to develop further SuDS in Northern Ireland?

Suggestions have been included within the response to question 11.

Question 14 - can you suggest how SUDS features can be regulated so that they remain effective?

Once installed, a form of continuing control will be required to ensure that designed and constructed SuDS remain viable. This provision does not exist currently within the Building Regulations, although there is scope to include continuing control within that Order. It must be stressed however, that the practicalities of administering and enforcing the systematic control of SuDS would be problematic."

The Committee approved the draft response and agreed that, in relation to questions 9 and 10, the Council should include the following comment:

"the Council understands that the likely cost of maintaining sustainable drainage systems has not been evaluated prior to publication of the draft strategy for consultation. The Council would therefore urge that further research and consultation be undertaken in relation to the matters raised in questions 9 and 10."

**Consultation on a Draft Strategic
Energy Framework for Northern Ireland**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

In 2004, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment published its first Strategic Energy Framework, which tasked government with reducing Northern Ireland’s energy costs relative to other UK/EU regions, building a competitive energy market, enhancing the sustainability of Northern Ireland’s energy and maintaining a reliable energy supply.

A performance review of the 2004 Framework was completed during 2008 and concluded that the abovementioned four objectives should remain key priorities for Northern Ireland. DETI subsequently sought Assembly approval for the development of an updated Strategic Energy Framework, which would also take account of the increasing need to tackle climate change and ensure security of energy supply, set against a backdrop of supporting continuing economic development.

Key Issues

The 2009 Strategic Energy Framework describes its main objectives under the four interrelated themes of competitiveness, security of supply, sustainability and infrastructure. Key actions under these themes are summarised as follows:-

Competitiveness - DETI will continue to promote the Single Energy Market with a view to securing the lowest wholesale electricity price and will encourage more companies to enter the energy supply market. DETI will also encourage greater links with other European regional energy markets. Within Northern Ireland, DETI will continue to extend the gas network, encourage investment in combined heat and power, improve ‘smart’ metering provision and promote greater energy efficiency within industrial and commercial sectors.

Security of supply – DETI will work with partners to strengthen the electricity grid and will maximise the consumption of indigenous renewable electricity and heat. DETI will also investigate the feasibility of establishing underground gas storage facilities, of utilising compressed air energy storage and of maintaining oil stock in Northern Ireland.

Sustainability – DETI will improve electricity grid infrastructure to enable 40% of electricity to be generated from renewable sources by 2020. DETI will also implement the Strategic Action Plan for offshore wind and marine-based renewables and will increase the amount of heat from renewable sources to at least 10% by 2020.

Infrastructure – DETI has committed to strengthening the electricity grid, identifying opportunities for installing district heating systems, investigating opportunities for distributed generation and encouraging a shift from oil to gas for domestic heating.

The Framework also outlines a range of actions for encouraging better engagement and for fostering collaborative working between government Departments and NIAUR. Finally, the Framework considers the financial implications of developing the electricity grid, generating renewable electricity and extending the gas network.

In publishing the draft Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland 2009 for consultation, DETI has included a range of questions for consideration by consultees. The Council has sought to respond to questions where applicable by way of its consultation response. The draft response is detailed in Appendix A.

Resource Implications

Financial

N/A

Human Resources

N/A

Asset and Other Implications

N/A

Recommendations

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is invited to endorse the attached consultation response in respect of the draft Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland 2009 consultation and to recommend that it be submitted to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment by 30th September 2009. At the time of submission, DETI will be advised that comments are subject to Council ratification at its meeting of 1st October 2009.

Key to Abbreviations

- DETI - Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.
EU - European Union.
NIAUR - Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation
(responsibility for regulation of the electricity, gas and
water and sewerage industries within Northern Ireland).

Documents Attached

- Appendix A - Belfast City Council Consultation response to the
draft Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland
2009.

Appendix A.

**Belfast City Council Consultation response to the draft
Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland 2009**

Chapter 2 – Competitiveness

Question 2 - Is greater availability of natural gas the most effective means of delivering greater fuel choice, security of supply and lower carbon emissions?

Although natural gas is one of the least polluting fossil fuels, it is recommended that the draft Strategic Energy Framework does not prioritise this fuel at the expense of incentivising the development of other more sustainable energy sources such as inshore and offshore wind and solar power, which have been identified as viable long-term energy sources.

Question 5 - How can the job creation potential of the renewable energy sector be maximised?

Northern Ireland is highly dependent upon fossil fuel for electricity and heat and virtually all of this fuel is currently imported, in the form of oil, coal, gas and electricity. Given that around 40% of Northern Ireland's electricity will have to be generated from indigenous renewable sources, if an appropriate regional contribution to the European Union 20:20:20 targets (a 20% cut in emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020, compared with 1990 levels; a 20% increase in the share of renewables in the energy mix; and a 20% cut in energy consumption by 2020) is to be made, Belfast City Council considers that delivering this contribution presents significant opportunities for new business creation, existing business development and the creation of significant value-added jobs. Given Northern Ireland's rich engineering heritage, it is evident that

significant experience and skills exist already within the manufacturing sector, much of which can be relatively easily adapted to the development of the 'clean technologies' required to help meet these stringent targets. However, given the current low level of renewables development, it is considered that a fresh approach to the stimulation of this market is required. The development of a consortium / cluster of expertise and experience may be one method of stimulating local industry in order to fulfil its potential.

Question 6 - Do you think that supporting businesses to increase their resource efficiency will lead to improved competitiveness?

Increasingly, businesses are becoming aware of the need to become more sustainable from both a financial and environmental standpoint. However, all too often businesses believe that these two areas are mutually exclusive, given the enduring perception that environmental improvement is associated with higher costs. Belfast City Council believes that there is considerable merit in working with the business community in order to educate them in the compatibility of these two areas. It is considered that any support that can be provided to businesses to make them more energy efficient, particularly in the challenging economic times we find ourselves in will provide a significant boost to their competitiveness. Increased energy efficiency can translate into cost savings and thus provide competitiveness improvements.

It is considered that a holistic approach to resource efficiency can help overcome the significant barriers to progress within the environmental improvement agenda. Support to help businesses truly understand the financial and environmental impacts of their waste and inefficiencies, the use of raw materials, water, consumables and energy throughout their business processes would be welcome. Indeed, it is estimated that the true cost of business inefficiencies can be up to 10 times more than the cost of providing support at the outset to tackle these inefficiencies. Successful national role models, as well as more locally relevant case studies, could be utilised to encourage the stimulation of this important area of business performance. Practically speaking, resource efficiency should equate to reducing or even eliminating wastage at source. Although a substantial amount of current and historical emphasis has been placed upon recycling, it is considered that significant savings can also be found in reducing or eliminating inefficiencies in the first instance.

Chapter 3 – Security of Supply

Question 1 - Do the consultation document proposals sufficiently address security of supply issues? Are there other aspects to consider?

Section 3.6 of the draft Framework document highlights that increasing the amount of energy derived from indigenous renewable sources has a vital role to play in enhancing Northern Ireland's security of supply. Although the strategy acknowledges that onshore wind will continue to produce the majority of renewable electricity consumed in Northern Ireland, it is considered that there should be greater consideration within the strategy around the contribution from other non-wind based renewable energy sources. The costs associated with supply issues also need to be transparent.

Question 4 – How should research and development of new energy technologies be encouraged or supported?

It is considered that government and industry should seek to create opportunities and support the development of 'energy networks' where technological research can be nurtured towards a commercial outcome. Government will undoubtedly have the greatest obligation towards incentivisation.

Chapter 4 – Sustainability

Question 2 - Is the proposed scenario for a renewable heat target to 2020 sound and achievable?

The draft Framework proposes that 10% of Northern Ireland's heat should be sourced from renewable sources by 2020 but although the draft strategy acknowledges that energy from waste offers a significant opportunity to diversify the energy mix and reduce reliance upon fossil fuels, DETI has highlighted that EFW projects need to be balanced with wider environmental and social considerations. Nonetheless, in order to make an appropriate contribution towards the 2020 target, it is considered, that where energy from waste plants are established, DETI should take appropriate steps to incentivise and support the utilisation of any associated heat energy.

Belfast City Council is currently utilising landfill gas at its North Foreshore site in order to generate a form of sustainable electricity, which in turn is to be exported to the electricity grid. The Council is also investigating the feasibility of a mini district heating system between the electricity generators on the North Foreshore site, and the Council's Duncrue Complex located some 350 metres away. The heat required for the complex is only a small percentage of what is available from the on-site generators however, and consequently, the distribution network could be extended to provide renewable heat to other nearby premises, if appropriate funding and incentives are made available.

Question 4 - Is a cross-departmental group the right mechanism to stimulate a joined up approach to sustainable energy across all NI departments? What would you expect a joined up mechanism to deliver over and above what is being delivered with the existing provisions across a number of departments as at present?

Within Annex A of the Framework document, DETI has detailed that its statutory duty in relation to electricity is to principally protect the interests of electricity consumers by promoting effective market competition and in relation to gas, DETI is required to promote the development and maintenance of an efficient, economic and co-ordinated gas industry in Northern Ireland. Given this relatively constrained remit, DETI has highlighted that an Inter-departmental Working Group on Sustainable Energy was convened in November 2008, to ensure a more coordinated approach across government to the promotion of sustainable energy.

Belfast City Council considers that an Inter-departmental Working Group on Sustainable energy is fundamental to stimulating a joined up approach to sustainable energy across NI departments. In terms of actions to be delivered over and above what is being delivered with existing provisions, Belfast City Council considers that the working group should seek to develop initially a coherent overarching sustainable energy policy for Northern Ireland with associated targets and then identify how individual sectors including for example energy from waste can contribute to the achievement of the targets.

Question 6 - Should energy efficiency interventions be on as broad a base as possible or should they only be targeted at specific sectors?

It is considered that energy efficiency interventions should be on as broad a base as possible. For example, energy efficiency could be promoted within the workplace and the techniques continued into the home.

Question 8 - Compliance with Part F of the Building Regulations is based on meeting a target CO₂ emissions rate for a building. Following this most, if not all, new buildings will incorporate some form of micro-generation as Building Regulations move towards zero-carbon standard. Do you agree with this approach, which is being adopted by the Department of Finance and Personnel in the Building Regulations, to mainstreaming micro-generation in new buildings?

It is recommended that the use of microgeneration be mainstreamed within in new buildings via the Department of Finance and Personnel Building Regulations. Indeed, if government wishes to achieve its stated energy targets, then the introduction of microgeneration also needs to be incentivised within existing domestic properties since they constitute the largest proportion of premises needing energy improvement. It is suggested that existing domestic properties need to achieve a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating of between 70-80 and therefore the challenge for government is to persuade owners to install renewable energy sources within existing properties.

Chapter 6 – Cross Cutting Themes and Engagement

Question 2 - How can the contribution of other players in the energy arena be harnessed and maximised for the benefit of Northern Ireland plc?

Since 1993, Northern Ireland public sector organisations have been able to apply to the Department of Finance and Personnel managed Central Energy Efficiency Fund. The fund is well established within the public sector with organisations relying predominantly upon it to ‘pump prime’ their energy efficiency initiatives and renewable energy projects. Unfortunately, the financial support underpinning the fund has diminished substantially over recent years, forcing organisations to look elsewhere for financial assistance. Moreover, as the need to tackle the causes of climate change has become more widely accepted, so the fund has become more oversubscribed each year with the result that eminently viable projects are being turned down due to a lack of funding. Accordingly, Belfast City Council recommends that in order to ensure that the contribution from public sector players is harnessed and maximised, the Central Energy Efficiency Fund should be robustly supported by government and organisations should be encouraged to apply, since those projects that are implemented will deliver ongoing energy and carbon savings.

Question 3 - Do consultees agree with the approach of developing a unifying communications strategy that incorporates all stakeholders and Departments equally?

It is considered that since stakeholders and government departments are subject to common overarching energy efficiency objectives, all stakeholders will have a vital role to play in reaching a consensus as to how ongoing energy provision within Northern Ireland should be secured, supplied, regulated and tarified. It is recommended therefore, that any communications strategy should be directed at stakeholders and government departments equally.”

The Committee approved the proposed response.

Chairman