

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 23rd October, 2009

## MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;  
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Improvement;  
Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services;  
Mr. T. Salmon, Director of Corporate Services;  
Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and  
Members' Services; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Committee Administrator.

### Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor McCann.

### Mr. T. Salmon

The Chairman informed the Committee that this would be the last meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which would be attended by Mr. Trevor Salmon in his capacity as Director of Corporate Services before retiring from the Council. On behalf of the Members, he thanked Mr. Salmon for his services to and the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Council and wished him well in his retirement.

Mr. Salmon thanked the Chairman for his kind remarks.

### Presentation

#### Patient and Client Council

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th August, it had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Patient and Client Council. It was reported that Ms. L. Skelly and Mr. R. Dixon, representing the organisation, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Ms. Skelly advised the Members that the Patient and Client Council, which had taken over from the former Regional Health and Social Services Councils, had been established on 1st April, 2009 as a result of the reorganisation of the Health Service in Northern Ireland. She outlined the statutory functions of the new Body which were to:

- engage with the public to obtain their views on any aspect of health and social care;
- promote the involvement of patients, clients, carers and the public in the design, planning, commissioning and delivery of health and social care;
- provide assistance to people wishing to make a complaint relating to health and social care; and
- provide advice and information to the public about health and social care services.

She then reviewed the internal and external environments in which the organisation worked, its reporting structure, location and current work streams.

After discussion, during which Ms. Skelly and Mr. Dixon answered a number of questions from the Members in relation to the Patient and Client Council's budget and the provision of dental services, the Chairman thanked them for attending and they retired from the meeting.

### **Major Projects**

#### **Titanic Signature Project**

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

##### **"Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to
  - (i) provide Members with an update on the Titanic Signature Project;
  - (ii) confirm that the conditions on which the Council offer of funding was made have now been satisfied; and
  - (iii) seek approval for completion of the formal legal documentation.

##### **Background**

2. Members will recall that at its meeting on 16th December 2008 the Committee considered a Due Diligence Report on the TSP project prepared by Deloitte, reviewing the Economic Appraisal for the project. The Committee then agreed to commit a maximum of £10million towards the realisation of a £97million iconic Titanic Signature Project to be built in Titanic Quarter in the city. This decision was ratified by Council on 5th January 2009.

3. The Council decision was subject to the preparation of a legal agreement that committed the relevant parties to their share of the funding package (£43.5m from Government; £43.5m from the private sector; and £10m from the Council) and ensured that the risks to the public sector of cost overrun and non completion were minimised.
4. The Council also sought an acknowledgement from Government that the Council's contribution of £10m was a 'once and for all' commitment and that the Council should not be required to carry any funding risk (operational or capital) beyond that amount.

#### Key Issues

5. At the Northern Ireland Executive meeting on 1st October 2009 the Executive agreed to proceed with its funding of the Titanic Signature Project. In reaching that decision the Executive concluded that the guarantee arrangements to cover TQL's (the private sector contributors to the project) should provide a substantial mitigation of the funding and operating risks. In addition the Executive acknowledged that Belfast City Council should not be required to carry any funding risk (operational or capital) beyond its £10m donation and accepted that any additional financial risk for the completion of the project would be borne by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry.
6. DETI have now written to the Council by letter dated 5th October 2009 confirming the above, and further advising that their technical advisers to the project have confirmed that because TQL, at its own financial risk, has commenced work on the site in May, the project can be delivered by April 2012. At present it is estimated that TQL have spent over £6m in carrying out the groundworks and piling required for the TSP building. Belfast Harbour Commissioners have also confirmed their funding commitment to the project.
7. Arthur Cox, specialist banking solicitors, were instructed to act for the Council by the Director of Legal Services and the detailed legal negotiations have now been completed. The Director of Legal Services has confirmed that the Council's interests have been satisfactorily secured in the various legal documents, including the multi-party Funding Agreement, together with the under-pinning security documents and guarantee and assurance arrangements. In particular, the Funding Agreement provides that the Council contribution to the project is not due for payment until all the other funders have paid over the full amount of their grant commitments. In addition Deloitte have prepared an

addendum to their Due Diligence Report concluding that the Order of Payment clause in the Funding Agreement and the Executive's confirmation that the Council will bear no funding risk over its £10m contribution provides strong protection to the Council against any funding or construction risk associated with the project.

### **Resource Implications**

#### **8. Financial Resources**

The Council's £10m financial contribution to the project will be required in the financial year 2011/2012. The Director of Corporate Services has confirmed that the City Investment Fund will have sufficient funds available to it at that time to meet this commitment.

### **Recommendations**

9. **Members are asked to note the contents of this report and confirm that the formal legal documentation for the project can now be signed by the Council."**

A number of Members enquired about the development of the Memorandum of Understanding with Titanic Quarter Limited to ensure that local communities across the City would benefit from the development of the site. The Chief Executive assured the Committee that a detailed Memorandum had been developed and resources had been obtained from Titanic Quarter Limited and the Department of Education and Learning to assist in its implementation. He undertook to circulate full details of the Memorandum to Members prior to the meeting of the Council scheduled to be held on 2nd November and to bring back to Committee a further report on the oversight and engagement mechanisms through which the Council would be able to monitor the development of the site.

Following further discussion the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations set out in the report.

### **Transition Committee Business**

#### **Consultation Response on the Local Government (Finance) Bill**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **1.0 Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 **Members will note that the key legislative framework governing local government finances in Northern Ireland is in Part V of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Although this has been updated by subsequent legislation, the provisions on borrowing and council funds have remained substantially unchanged.**

- 1.2 Notwithstanding, it has been recognised for some time that this legislation needs to be updated to reflect modern accounting practices and, where appropriate, brought into line with best practice observed by local authorities in GB.
- 1.3 Accordingly, in July 2009 the Department of the Environment published '*The Draft Local Government (Finance) Bill*' consultation document. The closing date for written submissions is *31st October 2009*.

## 2.0 Key Issues

2.1 The draft Finance Bill seeks to modernise the current legislative framework relating to local government finance and councillors' remuneration in Northern Ireland. It sets out the parameters within which a district council may manage its finances and central government may regulate that activity. The draft Bill aims to modernise the legislative framework for local government finance by introducing the following provisions:

- removing the requirements for district councils to gain departmental approval for borrowings and the application of their funds or any proceeds from the sale of capital assets
- introducing new financial powers including, for example, the power to invest
- introducing a prudential regime for capital finance
- clarifying the nature of the general grant by replacing the two elements of the grant (i.e. the resources element and the de-rating element) with two separate grants – a rate support grant and a de-rating grant; and
- extending to all government departments the general power which allows the Department of the Environment to pay grants to councils.

2.2 In relation to updating the legislation regarding councillors' remuneration, the draft Finance Bill enables the Department to make the following regulations:

- requiring councils to make and publish a scheme of allowances; and
- establishing a remuneration panel to advise the Minister of the Environment on councillors' allowances.

- 2.3 It is important to note that the draft Local Government (Finance) Bill is largely enabling legislation and the detail around the specific provisions referred to above will be outlined in subsequent subordinate legislation (i.e. detailed regulations). Members will note that no regulations will be made without prior consultation with councils.**
- 2.4 In reviewing the draft Bill, the following observations should be made in relation to a number of key issues which need to be approached with caution by the Council. These issues are examined in further detail within the draft Council response to the consultation document attached at Appendix 2.**
- Whilst the Finance Bill provides councils with more freedom to operate, it also introduces a level of central control which may not be appropriate and needs to be approached with caution by the Council.**
  - Much of the Bill is replicating legislation which currently exists in GB. Whilst it is accepted that the larger and more complex councils that will result from the RPA will need the improved financial arrangements which this Bill introduces, concerns remain whether the level of central control placed upon local authorities in the rest of the UK should apply in equal measure with respect to Northern Ireland. This is particularly relevant given that the majority of Council funding (approx 74%) comes from the district rate, with Belfast City Council only receiving £4m from the central government general grant in comparison to the £150m annual budget of the Council.**
  - Some of the powers reserved by the Department, particularly in respect of their right to intervene both in terms of the overall borrowing by councils in Northern Ireland and in respect of what it thinks an individual council can afford appear to run contrary to the efforts of the RPA in providing strong local government.**
  - Whilst greater controls are being imposed on local authorities, the Bill does not address the role of these external agencies which impact upon and/or influence the financial processes of councils but which are not directly accountable to local government for their performance (e.g. Land and Property Services)**

### Organisational Consequences

2.5 If adopted, the proposals set out within the draft Finance Bill will potentially result in a number of organisational consequences which the Council will need to address in moving forward. For example

- the need to revise/update the Council's Standing Orders and/or financial regulations that enact the provisions of the Bill when it becomes law
- The designation of a Chief Financial Officer
- Greater priority placed on internal Audit procedures
- A need to introduce a prudential borrowing framework
- Potential need for a Treasury Management Strategy

### 3.0 Resource Implications

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

### 4.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. note the contents of this report and consider the draft corporate response to the Local Government (Finance) Bill consultation document attached at Appendix 2; and
2. approve the submission of the draft response to the DoE, subject to any revisions proposed by Members, before the 31st October 2009. The response would be submitted on the basis that it is subject to Council ratification on 2nd November 2009.

### 5.0 Documents Attached

Appendix 2      Belfast City Council Draft Response

Appendix 2

Consultation on the Local Government (Finance) Bill

Belfast City Council Response

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft Local Government (Finance) Bill issued for consultation by the Department of the Environment. The Council hope that the comments outlined within this response are constructive in nature and will add value to any revised Bill prepared and the drafting of the future subordinate legislation.
- 1.2 The Council has a number of general comments to make in regard to the content of the draft legislation as well as detailed comments on some of the individual clauses set out within the proposed Bill.

**2.0 GENERAL COMMENTS**

- 2.1 Belfast City Council is supportive of the need to modernise the legislative framework relating to local government finance and councillors' remuneration in Northern Ireland. Many of the comments set out in this response reflect views previously expressed by the Council as part of its ongoing engagement in the RPA process.
- 2.2 The Council is, however, conscious that much of the detail around the outworking of this legislation will be set out within the subsequent subordinate legislation (regulations) of which there is no detail at the moment. Therefore, the Council welcomes the stipulation set out within the consultation document that such regulations will not be brought forward without prior consultation with local authorities.
- 2.3 The Council would welcome the opportunity to engage closely with the Department in drafting the regulations under this Bill to ensure that they reflect the needs of local government in Northern Ireland and provide for the provision of a modern and responsive public service by district councils.
- 2.4 The Council would seek clarification on both the process and timescale anticipated for taking forward the drafting of the subordinate regulations to emerge under this Bill.



**Title**

- 2.5 The Council notes that the draft Bill comprises five Parts, two of which in fact relate to expenditure powers. The Council would suggest that, in terms of nomenclature of the Bill, perhaps the Bill should be styled as the Local Government (Finance and Expenditure) Bill 2009. This point is all the more relevant in the context of points which are made later on in relation to addressing the expenditure powers of district councils.

**Autonomy**

- 2.6 Belfast City Council welcomes the intention set out within the Bill to give greater freedom to local authorities in Northern Ireland to manage their own financial affairs without having to obtain consent from the Department of the Environment. A key concern is that in the absence of knowing the detail of the subordinate regulations it is difficult for the Council to gauge the degree of central intervention. The Council believes such intervention should be the minimum practicable so that the potential freedoms that the Bill would seek to deliver are realised.
- 2.7 The Council would be of the view that over-intervention could potentially reduce the degree of freedom afforded to local authorities and would seem to contradict the basic principles of the RPA to create a 'strong, dynamic and responsive local government' sector and we would refer to the principles enshrined in the 'European Charter on Local Self-Government'. The Council would again stress the need for the local government sector to be closely involved in the drafting of these regulations and the Council would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Department on this.
- 2.8 The Council is also concerned that some of the powers reserved by the Department, particularly those in regard to the right to intervene both in terms of the overall borrowing by councils and in respect of affordability thresholds, also appear to undermine the basic principles of the modernisation process. The Council would seek further clarification on the circumstances under which the Department envisages potentially exercising these powers.

**Role of Central/Local Government Relations**

- 2.9 Whilst the Council recognises and supports the intention of the Bill to bring the local government financial regime in Northern Ireland in line with England, Scotland and Wales, it would be concerned that the funding of local government in Northern Ireland is different, with the majority of council funding (e.g. approx. 74% in the case of Belfast City Council) being derived from the district rate.
- 2.10 The Council is also concerned that the consultation document does not consider the unique way in which rates are collected in Northern Ireland. Whilst greater controls are being imposed on local authorities, the Bill does not address the role of external agencies (e.g. Land and Property Services) which impact upon and/or influence the financial processes of councils but are not directly accountable to local government for their performance. The Council believes that controls need to be put in place for these types of relationships to ensure that local authorities are not detrimentally affected by the behaviour or actions of any agencies which are outside their control.

**Borrowing & Expenditure**

- 2.11 The Council welcomes the introduction of more flexible arrangements for borrowing as set out in Clauses 11 to 18, including the need to comply with appropriate codes of practice. The Council would also suggest that the powers of borrowing and investment be mirrored by a further provision which creates a general power of expenditure of district councils to carry out their statutory functions. While the Council acknowledges that the point could be made that this power is already contained in section 17 of the Interpretation Act (NI) 1954, nevertheless, it is submitted that a general power of expenditure could usefully be re-stated in order to make it absolutely clear that district councils have a general power of expenditure, acting in accordance with principles of due diligence etc, in relation to the discharge of their statutory functions.
- 2.12 The Council would further suggest that, for the purposes of that provision, it should be made clear that the statutory functions of a district council include the recruitment and employment of staff and, furthermore, the training and development of Members and employees.
- 2.13 The Council welcomes the proposal to extend to all Departments the general power to pay grants to councils. However, the Council would seek an assurance that this extends to Joint Committees (in so far as it is relevant).

**Members' Remuneration**

- 2.14 The Council welcomes the proposals contained within the draft Bill in relation to the area of Members' remuneration. In the interests of transparency and openness the Council is fully supportive of the proposed new provision requiring councils to publish a scheme of allowances. Belfast City Council already publishes comprehensive details of payments made to its Members and would view the publication of a scheme of allowances as complementary to this.
- 2.15 The Council welcomes the proposals to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel to advise on councillors' allowances. The Council concurs with the view of the Councillor Remuneration Working Group (CRWG) that a single panel for the whole of Northern Ireland is the best option as this enable equitable treatment for all councillors in Northern Ireland. The Council also agrees that members of the panel should be appointed using the public appointments process. However, it is essential that a criterion for selection is that the individual must have appropriate expertise and knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of Elected Members and preferably be familiar with remuneration issues for councillors.
- 2.16 The Council would be in favour of the proposal to repeal Section 38 of the 1972 Act in order to remove some of the restrictions relating to the payment of expenses incurred by councillors in attending meetings and conferences. The proposed new clause 33 would provide much more flexibility to councils to make their own business cases which would help determine whether a particular conference/visit would be concerned with matters which relate to the interests of the district or the inhabitants of that district. The Council would suggest, however, that a further criterion is included pertaining to the advancement of the affairs of local government.

3.0 **Conclusion**

- 3.1 Belfast City Council reiterates its support for modernising the legislative framework relating to local government finance and councillors' remuneration in Northern Ireland. However, the absence of detail in key areas and the absence of the accompanying Regulations make it difficult for the Council to undertake an informed assessment of the likely impact of the proposals and the potential consequences for councils and citizens in the future.

- 3.2 The Council would like to take this opportunity to advocate the need for a closer working relationship with the Department in taking this Bill forward and on the drafting of the subsequent subordinate legislation.**
- 3.3 The Council has raised a number of issues in this response and would seek clarification on how the Department intends to incorporate these, and any other comments received from stakeholders, into the final legislation and any accompanying regulations.**

**“4.0 Detailed comments on the Draft Local Government (Finance) Bill – clause by clause” can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 4a within the Agenda pack.**

**B**  
**1462**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,**  
**Friday, 23rd October, 2009**

**“4.0 Detailed comments on the Draft Local Government (Finance) Bill – clause by clause” can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 4a within the Agenda pack.**

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**B**  
**1464**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 23rd October, 2009**

**“4.0 Detailed comments on the Draft Local Government (Finance) Bill – clause by clause” can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 4a within the Agenda pack.**



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**B**  
**1466**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 23rd October, 2009**

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**B**  
**1468**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 23rd October, 2009**

**“4.0 Detailed comments on the Draft Local Government (Finance) Bill – clause by clause” can be viewed by opening Appendix 2 of Item 4a within the Agenda pack.**

The Committee approved the draft response.

**Democratic Services and Governance**

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

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

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Health and Environmental Services Department - Building Control Service	Northern Ireland Building Control Annual Convention Dinner 12th November, 2009 Approximately 150 attending	The provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	It is estimated that 75 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' and 'Better Services – listening and delivering'.	The provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £600
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform	Northern Ireland Women's European Platform Conference Reception 3rd December, 2009 Approximately 50 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception.	It is estimated that 40 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 drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £200
Queen's University Belfast	Association of Directors of Estates Conference Reception 29th March, 2010 Approximately 250 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a 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 drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £1,000

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<p>The National Community Safety Network</p>	<p>National Community Safety Network Conference Gala Dinner 16th June, 2010 Approximately 400 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a Civic Dinner.</p>	<p>The conference aims to provide a forum for sharing knowledge and best practice in respect of tackling the issues of crime, fear of crime and antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>This event would contribute directly to the Council's Key Theme of providing support for people and communities and would be an extension of its role as the lead partner in the Belfast Community Safety Partnership.</p> <p>The Council's community safety team will work closely with the National Community Safety Network to showcase the work undertaken by Belfast City Council, specifically this will include initiatives such as our city-wide warden service and alleygating scheme.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together', 'Better Services – listening and delivering' and 'Better Value for Money – a can-do, accountable, efficient Council'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of a Civic Dinner.</p> <p>Approximate cost £14,000</p>

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Association of Port Health Authorities	Association of Port Health Authorities Conference Dinner 9th September, 2010  Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a Civic Dinner.	<p>The conference aims to update delegates on current and emerging port health issues, whilst sharing knowledge and best practice between member authorities and learning from approaches taken in other parts of the world.</p> <p>Belfast City Council is a corporate member of the Association of Port Health Authorities and the Chair of the Health and Environmental Services Committee is currently President of the association.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Health and Environmental Services Committee, at its meeting on 8th April, agreed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to provide hospitality at the event.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together', 'Better Services – listening and delivering' and 'Better Value for Money – a can-do, accountable, efficient Council'.</p>	The use of the City Hall and the provision of a Civic Dinner.  Approximate cost £5,250
Royal Military Police Association	Royal Military Police Association Annual Conference Dinner 21st May, 2011 Approximately 250 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre- dinner drinks reception.	<p>It is estimated that 200 delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'.</p>	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

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
British Society of Periodontology	British Society of Periodontology Conference Dinner 26th May, 2011 Approximately 200 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 250 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 £800
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister  Central Anti-Poverty Unit	Launch of 'Promoting Social Inclusion' Disability Report  3rd December, 2009  Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall	This event, which will launch the 'Promoting Social Inclusion' Disability Report, will take place on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.  The Report seeks to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• address the issues of rights, inequality and discrimination;</li> <li>• identify the extent to which disabled people have negative experiences in their everyday lives;</li> <li>• assess the current position in terms of service provision for disabled people and identify any gaps that may exist; and</li> <li>• consider ways of improving how services for disabled people are delivered.</li> </ul> This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'.	The use of the City Hall



Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
The HIV Support Centre	Reception to mark World Aids Day 2009 1st December, 2009 Approximately 70 attending	The use of the City Hall	This event, which will mark World Aids Day, seeks to raise awareness of HIV and Aids around the world and to breakdown the associated stigma. The theme for World Aids Day focuses on the 'reality of HIV today' and promotes human rights along with the need for the appropriate access to treatment. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'.	The use of the City Hall
Stop Climate Chaos Northern Ireland Coalition	Reception to mark the United Nations Climate Change Conference 5th December 2009 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception.	This reception will follow an event taking place at the front of the City Hall which will include music and other on street entertainment. The event and reception seeks to demonstrate public support for the international climate change negotiations which will be held in Copenhagen on 7 <sup>th</sup> December. The aim of the negotiations in Copenhagen is to establish a new global treaty on climate change. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better care for Belfast's environment'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of a drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £400

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister Machinery of Government Division	Annual regional Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration 27th January, 2010 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall	This event seeks to provide an opportunity to remember the victims of the Holocaust and of genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur and to reflect on the horrors of the past and the lessons to be learned. In addition, the event aims to emphasise the importance of remembering those who have died and the sufferings of survivors with a view to learning from their experiences and seeking to improve the future for our young people.  This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'.	The use of the City Hall
Association for Real Change NI	'Telling It Like It Is' Awards Ceremony 30th November, 2009 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception.	The Association for Real Change aims to work with its members to help improve the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families.  This awards ceremony seeks to celebrate the achievements of people with learning disabilities who have taken part on the 'Telling It Like It Is' training programme.  This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of a pre-event drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks.  Approximate cost £600

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Girlguiding Ulster	100th Anniversary Dinner  5th June, 2010  Approximately 300 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 100th Anniversary of Girlguiding Ulster 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 £1,200
Northern Ireland School Caterers Association	Northern Ireland School Caterers Association Awards Ceremony  10th July, 2010  Approximately 300 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception.	This awards ceremony aims to acknowledge school caterers at primary, post primary and management level who have clearly demonstrated their commitment to continuous service development within their particular school or area.  The event seeks to recognise the strong leadership of the school caterers as they worked in partnership with local schools, local communities, Local Government and health authorities in driving forward the recently established nutritional standards.  This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of a pre-event drinks reception in the form of wine and soft drinks.  Approximate cost £1,200

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
<p>Army Cadet Force Association</p>	<p>Army Cadet Force Association Awards Ceremony 19th September, 2010 Approximately 500 attending</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.</p>	<p>The Army Cadet Force Association aims to develop young people physically and mentally, improving self-confidence, teamwork, friendship and leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Awards Ceremony seeks to recognise the vocational qualifications, which is equal to four GCSEs, achieved by its senior cadets.</li> </ul> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of a pre-dinner drinks reception in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £1,250</p>
<p>Upper Springfield Development Company Ltd</p>	<p>Upper Springfield's Got Talent 27th February, 2010</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall</p>	<p>This community event seeks to showcase the talents of the children and young people in the Upper Springfield area with a view to promoting the message that young people can contribute positively to the community within which they live.</p> <p>The event aims to bring together the people of the area in a social capacity and will allow many people who have never had an opportunity to attend an event in the City Hall to do so.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'Better Support for People and Communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall</p>

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Ulster Sports Museum Association	Reception to mark the launch of the Ulster Sports Museum Exhibition 30th November, 2009 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of Finger Buffet reception.	The Exhibition, which will be on display in the City Hall East Entrance throughout December, seeks to tell the story of Ulster's many sporting heroes and will display memorabilia which will capture their sporting achievements.  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 Finger Buffet reception.  Approximate cost £6,000
The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the Environment and Planning Law Association	Annual Planning and Development Forum 3rd March, 2010 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall	This event aims to bring about the successful regeneration of the city through discussion on the latest theory on planning law and practice.  The event also seeks to improve the lives of those living and working in the city and empower communities to participate on the future plans for housing, employment and open space.  Unfortunately, the criteria relating to the use of the City Hall does not permit the holding of conferences by external organisations.	Not recommended

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### Finance

#### **Peace III Priority 2.1 – Creating Shared Public Spaces**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th September, it had considered a report detailing possible projects for submission for funding under Peace III Priority 2.1 – Creating Shared Public Spaces. The Committee had agreed that the Cultural Corridor and the Public Service Centre at Girdwood projects be further developed and submitted for funding and that further investigation be undertaken in relation to the HMS Caroline.

The Council, at its meeting on 1st October, at the request of Councillor McCann, had agreed that the matter be referred back to the Committee for further consideration. The Committee, at its meeting on 9th October, had agreed to affirm its previous decision regarding the projects to be submitted for funding and had agreed also that, in the meantime, discussions be held with the Party Groups in order to identify any further projects which could be developed and submitted for funding.

The Director of Improvement advised the Committee that he had met with representatives of the Party Groups. Support had been expressed for the inclusion of the Gasworks Bridge Project within the proposals to be further developed and submitted for funding, subject to agreement with the South Belfast Partnership Board, while a major project which was being developed at Templemore Avenue was felt worthy of support, subject to consultation with the representatives of the East Belfast Local Community Association.

The Director of Improvement pointed out that he had contacted the representatives of the South Belfast Partnership Board and they were in agreement that the Gasworks Bridge Project should be included for submission for funding. With regard to the project in Templemore Avenue, he indicated that, despite several attempts, he had been unable to contact representatives of the East Belfast Local Community Association and, given the time commitment required to develop the business cases and full costings of any projects selected for submission for funding, it would not be appropriate to include this project at this time. He advised the Committee that a second tranche for funding was likely to take place in 2010 and that the consideration of projects for submission for funding could commence now so that when applications were requested the Council would have a prepared list of possible projects ready for submission.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that, in addition to those projects already selected, the Gasworks Bridge Project should be further developed and submitted to the Special European Union Programmes Body for funding under the Peace III Priority 2.1 – Creating Shared Public Spaces.

### **Minutes of Meeting of Budget and Transformation Panel**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 16th October.

### **2009/2010 Budget and 2010/2011 Estimates**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

**The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee have requested that they receive regular updates on budgetary performance throughout the year. This report will update Members on the current year’s budget at period 5, the forecast outturn for the financial year and will highlight budget risk areas.**

## Key Issues

### Revenue Budget Position

BCC has a net departmental budget of £54.4m for the period. Outturn for the year to date is £52.3m giving an under-spend of £2.1m.

It should however be noted that a number of departments have variations in their budgets due to budgetary control issues. For example, budget profiling, grant accruals and internal journals have not been processed. Financial Services have subsequently developed a training programme for operational budget holders. The first module of this programme has been delivered to Parks and Leisure Services.

### Budgetary Risks / Pressures

An analysis of budget risks was carried out by Financial Services and Business Support Managers at the end of Quarter 1. A register of all the risk areas, their financial implication and the action required to manage the risks is revised and updated monthly.

A number of key risks that are going to put pressure on the current year's budget are highlighted:

1. Investment income is profiled for the last quarter of the year and as such has no impact on the year to date performance. However, if the current low level in interest rates prevail to the end of the year, this is likely to cause a £460,000 loss of income.
2. A balance sheet review, including the reserves balance, is currently being carried out by Financial Services which will require approval by the Chief Local Government Auditor. This will form part of the closure of the 2008/09 annual accounts. Nevertheless it is likely that reserves will come under pressure in 2009/10. The 2009/10 rates were struck on the strength of a £2.4m contribution from reserves to support the departmental budgets. There are several other factors that will impact on reserves throughout the year. For example the level of bad debt in 2009/10 is likely to increase given the wider economic climate, so the provision for doubtful debts has been increased from 5% to 10% of total debt. This in turn becomes another pressure on reserves should the level of un-recovered debt rise in line with the provision.

- 3. Building Control show a loss of income due to the downturn in the housing market. This has resulted in a net expenditure of £116,610 above budget for the period.**
- 4. The Facilities Management budget is under pressure due to having under recovered internal income. The income for the Property Maintenance Section is under recovered by £1,253,420. Their main customer, Parks and Leisure Services Department, has made the decision to commit to only 'Priority 1' maintenance which has resulted in an under spend within Parks and Leisure Services of £450,750 against the repairs to property budget.**
- 5. ISB has experienced a loss of external income of £70,000 at Period 5. The service is currently looking at redundancies to address the loss of demand.**
- 6. ISB has moved forward with Voluntary Redundancies and Early Retirements for 15 staff. No budgetary provision has been made for these redundancies and retirements either in the service revenue account or the corporate pension's budget. In totality the cost of these changes is in the region of £1.1m. However, as the redundancies and retirements are likely to take place at the end of Period 6 there is approximately 6 months of savings that will be available in 2009/10 as a result of the decision. These savings amount to approximately £300,000.**
- 7. The voluntary redundancy exercise currently underway has attracted in excess of 120 expressions of interest. Consideration must be given as to how this will be facilitated in the current financial year.**
- 8. The City Investment Fund has a budget for period of £833,330 against which no spend has been made. The annual budget of £2m was set up for three purposes:**
  - as a resource for the City Investment Strategy**
  - as a contingency to assist the departmental budgets where they come under pressure due to the worsening economic situation, and**
  - to support the reserves position.**



### Forecast Outturn 2009/10

After considering forecasts for departmental net expenditure (including risks) and rate income, and allowing for voluntary redundancy in ISB the forecast outturn for 2009/10 is an under-spend of £86,000. This however does not allow for the current voluntary redundancy exercise.

### Capital Programme 2009/10

The draft Capital Programme for 2009/10 and future years outlines a programme of expenditure of £10,221,000 for 2009/10 to be financed by loans plus £2,112,250 to be financed by revenue contributions, giving a total budgeted expenditure for the year of £12,333,250.

Expenditure for the period amounts to £7,870,430. The most significant areas of expenditure are Ulster Hall Major Works of £1.6m and City Hall Major Works of £1.7m.

The Council's capital finance policy is that expenditure to be financed by loan remains within the target of £15m per year up to a maximum of £45m. Our existing loan obligations up to 31.03.09 amount to £26.3m, plus projected loan obligations for 2009/10 of £13.1m. This gives a total loan obligation of £39.4m by the end of the current financial year. This only allows for £5.6m expenditure on capital schemes in future years until such times as existing loan obligations have been met. It is therefore important that other means of financing Capital Schemes are considered.

### Forecast Outturn 2009/10

Forecast capital financing requirement for the year is within budget. Capital expenditure for the year will be met from the debt charge budget of £3.5m and the revenue contribution budget of £2.1m.

### Conclusion

Members are asked to note that processes have been put in place to manage budget risks. Forecast outturn for the year is within budget, however financing of the voluntary redundancy exercise currently underway requires consideration and is not included in forecast figures."

In response to a number of questions, the Director of Corporate Services stated that, whilst the Parks and Leisure Services Department was currently committed only to priority 1 maintenance, it was expected that any underspend would be utilised for other priority maintenance before the end of the financial year. He pointed out that the voluntary redundancy exercise within the Information Services Belfast Section had been separate from the current exercise and had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 22nd May.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that detailed reports on vacancy control and voluntary redundancy be submitted to future meetings of the Budget and Transformation Panel or the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as appropriate.

### **Debt Management**

In accordance with Financial Regulations, the Director of Corporate Services sought the Committee's authority to have a number of bad debts amounting to £32,643.47 written off. A schedule of which was submitted for the Committee's information. He pointed out that all reasonable measures had been undertaken to recover the debts, which in some instances dated back to 1999.

The Committee made a number of points in relation to the content and accuracy of the report before granting the authority sought.

### **Capital Programme**

The Director of Improvement reported that the Capital Programme for 2010/2011 and Future Years was being developed currently to enable budget estimates to be prepared and it was anticipated that the Programme would be submitted to the Committee in November. In the absence of any prioritisation or a capital financing strategy, a significant number of potential proposals remained uncommitted. However, two of those proposals, which had been approved by the Parks and Leisure Committee, subject to external funding being awarded to cover all the initial capital costs, had received offers of grant-aid. These were:

- the provision of a playground at Eversleigh Street, off My Lady's Road. The Department of Social Development had offered 100% grant-aid of approximately £170,000 for the capital costs of the project; and
- Sliabh Dubh, off the Springfield Road, provision of a playground. The Department of Social Development had indicated that it might be in a position to offer 100% grant-aid, in the sum of approximately £250,000 to fund the capital costs, subject to the outcome of a contaminated land assessment of the site which it had given a commitment to fund.

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) include the playgrounds at Eversleigh Street and Sliabh Dubh as "Committed" Capital projects, subject to 100% external funding being received to cover all the initial capital costs; and
- (ii) approve the invitation of tenders relating to the aforementioned works, with the tenders to be evaluated in accordance with the Council's Procurement Procedures and the most economically advantageous offers based on cost and quality criteria being accepted.

## Human Resources

### Recruitment of Director of Property and Projects

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 4th September, it had agreed that a report be submitted on the proposed recruitment process for the post of Director of Property and Projects following work on the job description and grading and clarification on the Review of Public Administration Vacancy Control Procedure. The Committee had been advised subsequently, at its meeting on 9th October, that the Vacancy Control Procedure had come into effect on 1st October in respect of Chief Executives, Directors, Heads of Service, Personal Assistants and Members' Services posts. This meant that the Council must consider trawling any vacancies it had for such posts to the appropriate "at risk" pool to mitigate against possible redundancies within the Sector.

The "at risk" pools contained in the procedure were as follows:

- within the individual Council;
- within the amalgamated Council cluster;
- within all 26 Councils; and
- across all the sectors in the Review of Public Administration – Affected Group.

Each vacancy had to be looked at individually in the circumstances of the case but the practical implications of implementing the Scheme in Belfast City Council differed to the other Local Authorities since the Council did not have the same degree of risk as amalgamated Council clusters. Also, the final definition of "at risk" was still the subject of ongoing discussion with the Local Government Joint Reform Forum. Consequently, it had been agreed that advice should be sought from the Local Government Staff Commission in relation to the filling of Director posts within the Council.

The Commission's view was that in its broadest definition Belfast City Council was listed as one of the Review of Public Administration Affected Bodies and, as such, posts could be considered to be potentially at risk. A vacancy therefore for a Director's post could be trawled within the Council, this being the first step in the process. Alternatively, should the Council consider the risk to its employees to be sufficiently minimal to move to the next pool, then it was the Commission's view that the post should be trawled to the 26 Local Authorities. The Commission had advised that it considered each option to be acceptable in terms of implementing the agreed Vacancy Control Procedure and in terms of equality considerations it represented a "proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim", that is, making every possible effort to avoid redundancies as accepted and endorsed by the Northern Ireland Executive. It was pointed out that should no suitable candidate be appointed from the agreed trawl option then consideration must then be given to moving to the next pool before advertising externally.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the:

- (i) vacancy be trawled within the Council on 26th October for two weeks, with a closing date of 6th November;
- (ii) applicants be short-listed on 11th November;
- (iii) short-listed candidates be invited to attend an assessment centre on 13th November;
- (iv) panel interviews be held on 16th November;
- (v) selection panel comprise the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman (or their nominees) and another Member of the Committee, together with the Chief Executive and another Chief Officer; and
- (vi) Chief Executive, in the interests of making an early appointment, be authorised, in consultation with the selection panel, to offer the post to the recommended candidate with the outcome being reported to the Committee for notation only.

The Committee noted that the entire panel was required to be representative of gender and community background and that an observer from the Local Government Staff Commission and a professional assessor would be in attendance for the recruitment process but would have no voting rights.

### **Asset Management**

#### **Connswater Community Greenway**

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 a key part of the Greenway was the creation of a network of paths and associated landscaping on an area of land located between the junction of the Knock and Loop Rivers adjacent to Clanmill Housing Association's properties at Linen Court off Woodcot Avenue. Council officials had agreed, subject to Committee approval, to purchase two small plots of land measuring 0.291 acres at that site for £10,000.

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

### **Acquisition of Land at Carrick Hill Playground**

The Committee was reminded that Carrick Hill Playground had been acquired by the Council from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on a 10,000 year lease dated 31st October, 1994, for a nominal sum, subject to restrictions as to the use of the property. The maps associated with the 1994 lease showed a street layout and arrangement of buildings which had since been altered and it had recently come to light that a small portion of the playground site fell outside the area defined in the 1994 lease. Discussions with representatives of the Housing Executive had confirmed a willingness to correct the anomaly and arrange for the transfer of the land to the Council on terms similar to those contained in the aforementioned lease.

The Committee approved the acquisition of approximately 33 square metres of land from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on a long lease (10,000 years or similar) for a nominal sum, subject to the future use of the land being restricted to playground purposes and on appropriate terms to be included in a suitable legal agreement.

### **Disposal of Land at 67 Schomberg Avenue**

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee was advised that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 12th February, had agreed to the disposal to members of the public of three portions of land at different locations across the City. The Committee was advised that officers had been in contact with all three prospective purchasers and with regard to the land at 67 Schomberg Avenue, agreement had been reached on the terms of the disposal which were as follows:

- (i) the area for disposal comprised approximately 82 square metres;
- (ii) use of the land would be restricted to open space and to garden use in particular;
- (iii) the disposal price had been agreed at £10,000; and
- (iv) the purchasers would relocate the boundary fence at their own expense.

The Director of Improvement reported that, following agreement on the above-mentioned terms, the owner of the property had requested that the restriction, which would limit the use of the land to open space, be varied to allow a small part of a single-storey house extension to be constructed on the land being acquired. From plans which were available currently the extent of the proposed building on Council land would be minimal – approximately 0.13 square metres – but would contravene the proposed restriction as agreed by the Parks and Leisure Committee.

After discussion, during which a Member expressed concern that the Committee was being requested to approve the disposal contrary to the terms which had been agreed by the Parks and Leisure Committee, the Committee approved the disposal on the terms outlined, subject to a suitable legal agreement being prepared by the Director of Legal Services, with such agreement subject to no further building being permitted.

### **Conditions of Hire for Council Facilities**

The Director of Legal Services advised the Members that certain issues in relation to the conditions of hire applied by the Council regarding the hire of community and leisure facilities had been discussed by the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 10th September, and by the Development Committee during its meeting on 16th September.

The issue which had been raised at the Parks and Leisure Committee meeting had concerned the use of the Whiterock Leisure Centre for a Hunger Strike Commemoration event. There had been discussions by the Committee in relation to the event, with a particular reference to its political nature, in the course of which the Director of Parks and Leisure had indicated that there was a need to review the conditions of hire for Council premises in order to ensure consistency of approach. That Committee had agreed that a review be undertaken corporately.

At the meeting of the Development Committee on 16th September there had been a discussion in relation to the current conditions of hire for Community Centres, which included a clause that the facilities should not be used for Party Political or religious activities. After discussion, that Committee had agreed to amend the conditions of hire for Community Centres to enable religious groups to use such premises. The decision of the Committee had been referred back by the Council at its meeting on 2nd October, with the matter having been reconsidered and the decision affirmed by the Committee at its meeting on 14th October.

The Director of Legal Services explained that, following a review by the relevant Chief Officers of the above decisions, it had been agreed to establish a Working Group of officers from the Legal Services, Development and Parks and Leisure Departments for the purpose of reviewing the conditions of hire which the Council applied in relation to community and leisure facilities but including also park pavilion facilities and similar premises, as well as facilities provided by the Council at Belfast Castle, Malone House, the Waterfront Hall, the Ulster Hall and Belfast Zoo. The intention of the Working Group was to ensure that a consistent approach was adopted by the Council in relation to the hire of those facilities and work was now ongoing in that respect. Given the corporate nature of the issue, it was considered appropriate to report the matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, with a further report being submitted on the development of a policy in due course.

In response to a query from a Member, the Director confirmed that he would look also at the issue of ensuring consistency in the conditions which the Council applied to its various grants schemes.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### London 2012 Cultural Olympiad – Live Sites Screen

(Mr. G. Copeland, Events Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “Relevant Background Information

In May, August and December 2008 the Development Committee of the Council received details of plans for the Cultural Olympiad to be staged leading up to and during the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. As part of the original ethos, Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, mirrored the classical Greeks in maintaining that the purpose of the Olympic Games was to celebrate mind, body and spirit. Up until 1948 medals were awarded for sculpture, music, literature and art. The modern Cultural Olympiad, which will be part of the 2012 Games, will focus on the following themes:

- Bringing together culture and sport
- Encouraging audiences to take part
- Animating public spaces – through street theatre, public art, circus skills, live big screen sites
- Using culture and sport to raise issues of environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing
- Honouring and sharing the values of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Encouraging collaborations and innovation between communities and cultural sectors
- Enhancing the learning, skills and personal development of young people by linking with education programmes

The key to this process for the 2012 Games has been the development of a series of ‘live sites’ which involve large LED screens being installed within public performance spaces across the United Kingdom. In December 2008 the Development Committee received formal details on the costs for such a project. The Development Committee agreed the concept, which was then subsequently referred to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in January 2009 for formal consideration. At this point the report was withdrawn due to a lack of financial resources being made available.

Since this date DCAL and LOCOG have restructured the financial commitment required from Council, which has been reduced from an original figure of £70,000 to £20,000. A report detailing the new financial arrangement was then presented to the Development Committee in September and again in October 2009 when the Committee agreed to provide funding for a three year period towards the costs of the Live Sites Screen.

Members of the Strategic, Policy and Resources Committee are now being asked to approve the use of the City Hall grounds for this project.

**Key Issues**

**London 2012 Cultural Olympiad –  
'Live Sites' Public Screen**

The proposal would see a 25sq m screen, valued by the BBC and LOCOG 2012 at £500,000, positioned in the heart of the city centre. Therefore LOCOG, along with DSD, are proposing that the screen be located within the grounds of City Hall – probably facing into the lawn from Donegall Square West. The initial concept was for the screen to be positioned as a permanent feature, but LOCOG will now accept a three year term for the screen at City Hall. This would mean that a secondary position, post 2012, will need to be sought along with funding for the removal and installation from all partners. It is likely that the new site would be somewhere in the city centre.

The concept would mean that the BBC, LOCOG 2012 and BCC would share broadcasting time on the screen which would operate approximately between twelve and sixteen hours a day, 364 days a year. The screen could also be utilised for major events including a number of London 2012 events. After the Council's rejection of the December 2008 report, due to its indicative costs, LOCOG and DCAL have resubmitted new proposed costs, which are stated below.

- Installation - £50k and planning £6k (DSD) one-off fee
- Maintenance - £20 k (BCC) per year
- Event programming & management - £30k (NITB's event funding) per year for 3 years
- Screen programmer - £20k (DCAL) per year for the first three years

In total BCC would have an estimated annual cost of £20,000 for maintenance of the screen, inclusive of security costs, plus have input to the screen programmer funded by DCAL. Should the Council agree to support this initiative BCC officers have agreement in principle from DSD, as part of their 'Streets Ahead' programme, to meet the installation costs which includes the cost of a 1 m x 1 m control room in the basement of City Hall. For the 3 year period leading up to the 2012 Olympics the screen would be the property of LOCOG with a guaranteed link to the BBC's national public screens programme for BCC. After this period the screen would become the property of BCC and its local partners with a similar link to the BBC's public broadcast network.



### Live Screens Location

The proposed location, if approved by Members, would be within the grounds of City Hall, with a suggested location being the west side of the grounds (CGI images of the screen will be presented to Members at Committee). The installation of the screen would not only be subject to approval by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee but also subject to an economic appraisal by DSD, planning approval by the NI Planning Service and full legal agreements with all the relevant bodies and funders.

### Resource Implications

#### Financial

The Council funding would involve £20,000 annually. This has been approved for a three year period by the Development Committee at its October 2009 meeting.

### Recommendations

Members are requested to approve the use of the City Hall grounds for the project for three years and to agree to the use of an area 1m x 1m in size for use as a control room for the screen.

### Documents Attached

None.

### Abbreviations

BCC – Belfast City Council  
DCAL – Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure  
LOCOG 2012 – London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games 2012  
DSD – Department of Social Development  
CGI – Computer Generated Image.”

After a lengthy discussion, during which the Committee discussed the suitability or otherwise of locating the screen in the grounds of the City Hall, it was

Moved by Councillor Newton,  
Seconded by Councillor Campbell,

That the question of the location of the live sites screen be deferred to enable the Party Groupings on the Council to receive briefings in the matter.

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

**Further Proposal**

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

That the Committee approves the use of the City Hall grounds for the project for a period of three years and agrees to the use of an area one metre by one metre in size in the basement of the City Hall for use as a control room for the Screen.

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

**Additional Proposal**

After further discussion, it was

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

That an appraisal be undertaken of all possible sites in the grounds of the City Hall for the location of the live sites screen in order to ascertain the most appropriate location.

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

**Good Relations and Equality**

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

**Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership**

In considering the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 16th October, a Member drew the Committee's attention to the decision under the heading "European Coalition of Cities Against Racism" agreeing to appoint the Chairman of the Good Relations Partnership to attend the third General Conference of the European Coalition Against Racism. A Member pointed out that it was normal protocol that if an invitation were forwarded to the Lord Mayor and the Lord Mayor was unable to attend then the invitation would be passed to the Deputy Lord Mayor and subsequently to the High Sheriff. He sought clarification as to whether this was in fact the case. The Head of Committee and Members' Services affirmed that that was the normal practice.

The Good Relations Manager explained that the Notice of Motion in relation to racism had been referred to the Good Relations Partnership by the Committee and therefore the Lord Mayor had felt that it would be appropriate for that Group to consider the matter of attendance at the conference.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed that the normal protocol regarding invitations for the Lord Mayor to attend events be implemented in relation to the attendance at the third General Conference of the European Coalition Against Racism.

### **Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 16th October and adopted the recommendations contained therein, including:

#### **Peace III Procurement Inter-Community Forum**

The acceptance of a tender in the sum of £285,150 which had been received from the Falls Community Council for the procurement of an Inter-Community Forum Programme under Action 2.3 of the Belfast Peace Plan. The Members noted that the tender had 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 2.3 which had been established in the Plan.

#### **Disability in Local Councils – Appointment of Champion**

The nomination of the Chairman of the Partnership (Councillor Hendron) to act as the Council's Elected Member Disability Champion.

#### **Good Relations Plan**

The Committee approved the updated actions in relation to the Good Relations Plan.

#### **Belfast City Council Bonfire Management**

The recommendation of the Partnership to approve the current level of funding in the sum of £50,000 in respect of the Council's Bonfire Management Programme.

### **Minutes of Memorabilia Working Group**

The Committee was advised that the Memorabilia Working Group, at its meeting on 16th October, had agreed the following actions in relation to memorabilia in the City Hall:

- the possibility of the Council developing a exhibitions management policy is to be investigated;
- the logistics and legalities of loans from the Ulster Museum is to be investigated;
- further options around the boxing exhibition to be brought to the next meeting;
- all Councillors will be invited to attend a meeting to collect their ideas and suggestions for exhibitions – this will take place in the New Year;
- wall space in the Reception Room is to be prepared for clearance and replacement material for this area to be considered;

- professional display fittings should be provided for the new display space in the Reception Hall and other appropriate areas, in keeping with the style of the building;
- visits will be arranged to the Linen Hall Library to view suggested exhibitions/archives. Archives in the Central Library and PRONI will also be checked;
- a list of what is currently available will be brought to next month's meeting for consideration; what is available in the medium term will also be collated;
- artwork to reflect the Ulster - Scots heritage and tradition can be considered at a future date; and
- the production of proper interpretive signage for portraits and paintings in the City Hall should be progressed as a matter of urgency.

A Member pointed out that the Committee, at its meeting on 18th September, had agreed that, in order to demonstrate the Council's commitment to the principle of greater balance, a timetable be drawn-up, with a detailed report being made within three months, identifying short-term plans and longer-term proposals to address the issue of balance and better representation within City Hall displays. Accordingly, if the brain-storming session in relation to ideas and suggestions for exhibitions were to take place in the New Year then it would not be possible to produce the report within the three month time period. Therefore, he requested that the Committee agree that that session take place before the end of November.

After discussion, the Committee approved the list of actions in relation to the memorabilia in the City Hall, subject to the brain-storming session for all Councillors taking place before the end of November.

### **Plaques in the City Hall**

A Member drew the Committee's attention to the minute of the Working Group under the heading "Plaques in the City Hall". He referred to the decision of the Group not to replace the plaques which had been displayed on the East Staircase on the basis that the East Entrance area had now been designated for use for community exhibitions. He pointed out that the area in the East Wing where the plaques had been located previously was not open to the public and therefore the plaques should be replaced there on a permanent basis, since they would not be in the area to be used for public displays and would not affect such use of that area of the building in any way.

Several Members expressed the view that they would not be opposed to the plaques being located in that area on a temporary basis in order to permit further discussions to take place regarding any permanent arrangements.

After further discussion, it was

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

That the various plaques which had previously been located on the East Staircase of the City Hall be replaced on a permanent basis.

### **Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Hendron,  
Seconded by Councillor Convery,

That the question of the location of the plaques be referred back to the Memorabilia Working Group for further consideration.

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

The amendment was thereupon put as the Substantive Motion, with nine Members voting for and nine against. There being an equality of votes, the Chairman exercised his second and casting vote in favour of the Substantive Motion and it was accordingly declared carried.

### **Cross-Cutting Issues**

#### **Consultation Response – Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2009**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“Relevant Background Information**

##### **Purpose**

To bring to the attention of Members details of a consultation by NISRA – Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2009.

##### **Background**

NISRA have commenced work on updating the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005 (also known as the ‘Noble’ measures). A consultation document proposing the way in which the measures will be updated was published on 27th July 2009. The consultation process will end on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

The consultation documents are available at [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/update\\_of\\_nimdm\\_2005.htm](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/update_of_nimdm_2005.htm)

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2005 is the current measure of the spatial distribution of deprivation in Northern Ireland. Government and others use spatial deprivation measures to target resources on the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland and to monitor the spatial impact of policy interventions.

The 2005 measures of deprivation provide information on seven types or 'domains' of deprivation (Income; Employment; Health Deprivation and Disability; Education, Skills and Training; Proximity to services; Crime and Disorder and Living Environment) and an overall measure of multiple deprivation comprising a weighted combination of the seven domains.

### Key Issues

NISRA is recommending that the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005, based mostly on data relating to 2003, is now updated. A fuller methodological review of the measures will follow after publication of the small area results from the 2011 census.

The scope of the update is broadly limited to temporal updating of the indicators and domains used in the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005 research, i.e. using the most recently available data. The intention is to revise statistical indicators only where explicitly recommended in the 2005 report, where indicators are no longer available or where administrative data have been significantly enhanced.

There are a number of changes recommended to each domain which are outlined in full at Appendix 1

The Council's proposed response to the update of Multiple Deprivation Measures for 2009 is attached at Appendix 2. The central premise being that areas of deprivation must be effectively and efficiently identified across Northern Ireland.

It is important to note that this is not a full review of the Measure. A fuller methodological review of the measures will be needed post RPA and the 2011 Census.

### Resource Implications

N/A.

### Recommendations

The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee is asked to note the content of the report and to approve the response to the consultation document and its submission to NISRA. Members are asked to outline any additional comments that they would wish to make in the response.

### Key to Abbreviations

NISRA – Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency  
NIMDM – Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure

### Documents Attached

APPENDIX 2: Draft copy of response to NISRA.

### Appendix 2

Northern Ireland  
Multiple Deprivation Measure 2009:  
Consultation Document  
Belfast City Council Response

#### 1. Introduction

Belfast City Council welcomes the intention to update the Multiple Deprivation Measures 2005; it is important that the most current information possible is used to inform policy development. This paper outlines Belfast City Council's response to the update of *Multiple Deprivation Measures for 2009*. The Council's central premise is that areas of deprivation must be effectively and efficiently identified across Northern Ireland.

Multiple Deprivation Measures are used to identify those deprived areas most in need and, accordingly, will heavily influence regeneration spending and intervention activity. As such it is crucial that MDM accurately measures real deprivation.

The Council recognises that this is a timely review of the data given the changes in the economic climate of Northern Ireland since the last review. People across Northern Ireland are feeling the effects of the economic downturn and it is likely that this will continue for the foreseeable future and may be exacerbated by proposed cuts in government spending.

We would concur that a fuller methodological review of the measures is needed post RPA and the 2011 Census.

Belfast City Council acknowledges that using 2003 data and prior for the purposes of planning and intervention is limited and believes that every attempt should be made to use 2008/09 data where available.

The Council notes that the consultation document, does not detail the impact that the proposed changes to the domains is likely to have on the indices and would welcome further clarification with respect to this.

The Council would highlight Belfast's unique position in Northern Ireland as the capital city and regional driver. The resident population of Belfast is approximately 16% of the total Northern Ireland population. Belfast has been disproportionately impacted by the years of conflict which affected the region. Large concentrations of multiple deprivation exist in the north and west of the city and there are pockets all across Belfast including 8 of the 10 most deprived wards in Northern Ireland in terms of Multiple Deprivation. In light of this the Council would propose that consideration should be given to representation by Belfast City Council on the Steering Group for the next review of the measures.

#### Impact of RPA

The Review of Public Administration is gathering momentum with key decisions to be taken in the coming months; including decisions on the boundaries of local government. The Council seeks clarification on what mechanisms will be put in place to take account of the future proposed changes to boundaries brought about by the Review of Public Administration. We would also seek clarification that the data can be aggregated up to the new proposed District Council Areas

The Council would stress that it is important that the SOA and OAs can be aggregated to align with the new Belfast boundaries and the local, ward and district geographical area as this will be critical in ensuring that appropriate statistical intelligence can be captured to inform both service planning and delivery at the local level. This is also important in relation to the community planning process and ensuring that future delivery of public services meets local needs.

#### Funding allocation

In response to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2004 Belfast City Council highlighted the potential impact on funding streams following the update of the measures. It was stressed that where a commitment had been made to support projects or activities under the measures this should continue without prejudice to potential funding allocations resulting from the output of the measures. The Council would again highlight that consideration should be given to the impact on current funding streams of any adjustments to the measures at this time.

#### Concluding remarks

Belfast City Council's comments are intended to be constructive and positive and the Council looks forward to working with NISRA to ensure that the update of the measures will effectively identify those people in Belfast living with deprivation.



Although social and cultural divisions are prevalent throughout Northern Ireland they are most evident in Belfast. The segregated patterns of life in the city are marked at all levels. In many areas there is little cross-community contact or interaction between Catholic/Nationalist and Protestant/Unionist communities, with neighbourhoods side by side in geographical terms but often living parallel lives with little in common. Of the 52 built interface barriers throughout Northern Ireland, 42 of these are in Belfast. The Council would again highlight comments made in the 2004 response that a measure of distance to a service is not necessarily a measure of accessibility of that service given the community geography of the city. Measuring access to services on a geographical basis only will not provide a true reflection and distort the index. The domain for proximity to services should also take into account other barriers to access to services including segregation and perceptions of territory and safety.

Comments concerning each domain are included at *Appendix 1* in the question template.

#### Appendix 1

*Consultees are invited to comment on the following:*

#### Income Deprivation Domain

*Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?*

#### Specifically

*1 Whether Adults and Children in Households in receipt of Housing Benefit should be included in the domain?*

1. Belfast City Council notes that Tax Credit data from HRMC is no longer available to NISRA for the purposes of this domain and we would be concerned that this would have a detrimental effect on the overall measure. We acknowledge that administratively this data is not currently available to NISRA however we would welcome the inclusion of this data should it become available.

The Council would note that the Income Deprivation measure relies heavily on benefit data which is somewhat limited in that it cannot accommodate a number of groups specifically pensioners in low-income households, low income families (working) and poverty due to debt. We would draw attention to the recent report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation '*Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2009*' which highlights these issues.

We support the inclusion of adults and children in receipt of housing benefit. The link between income and health inequalities is well established. We feel that it is beneficial to include data on both rent and rates elements of Housing Benefit as proposed.

The Council would also highlight that, given the restrictions imposed on migrant workers in terms of accessing out-of-work benefits, this domain may fail to take account of the income deprivation experienced by those in that group.

The Council notes that the Equality Directorate, OFMDFM has considered the final proposal to create a child specific multiple deprivation measure and considered it outside the remit of the current update. Given the levels of child poverty in Northern Ireland and the current political focus on child poverty-related issues we would strongly recommend that this measure is given full consideration when the review of the measures take place post the 2011 census.

The Council highlighted in the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004 response that an income deprivation affecting older people measure could be created. With the increasing importance of this issue Belfast City Council again recommends that a measure be fully incorporated in the next review of the measures.

Whilst acknowledging that the domains are weighted in line with previous NIMDM, this domain is critical and the weighting given to Income Deprivation needs to reflect that all other domains are directly or indirectly related to available incomes.

#### Employment Deprivation Domain

- 1 *Whether, given the recommendations and changes to data availability, the proposed updated domain is acceptable?*
1. Belfast City Council acknowledges that this domain seeks to identify all those of working age involuntarily out of the labour market. It is unfortunate that a specific indicator relating to hidden unemployment as recommended in the previous report will not be included. It is appreciated that the possible sources of information for this indicator namely the Labour Force Survey and the Family Resources Survey have too small a sample size to produce robust results at the small area level. However the Council would propose that further consideration is given to the inclusion of these surveys in the future possibly with a larger sample size that would lend itself to the small area level given the increased number of migrant workers in Northern Ireland.

Because of restrictions placed on some migrant workers in accessing out-of-work benefits, this section of the population may be disproportionately impacted by not including a measure on hidden unemployment.

The Council notes that the Steps to Work programme subsumes the main New Deal programmes and as yet has not been operating across Northern Ireland and will not be included in this domain. The Council is concerned that this may have a negative impact upon the robustness and completeness of determining employment deprivation. The Council would emphasise the need to include this data as soon as it becomes available across Northern Ireland in order to ensure that this domain is more robust.

#### **Health Deprivation and Disability Domain**

*Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?*

#### **Specifically**

- 1 *Whether an Emergency Hospital Admission indicator should be included in the domain?***
- 2 *Whether Mental Health Hospital Admissions should be included in the Mental Health Indicator?***
- 3 *Whether a Children's Dental Health indicator should be included in the domain?***
- 4 *Whether a Low Birth Weight Indicator should be included in the domain?***

- 1. The Council supports the inclusion of the Emergency Hospital Admission indicator as a welcome addition to the Health Deprivation and Disability domain.**
- 2. Mental disorders and problems have a direct major impact on health and wellbeing, as they typically affect all areas of life, including social relationships. The Council welcomes the inclusion of Mental Health Hospital Admissions in the Mental Health Indicator as there currently is limited information available on mental health issues in Northern Ireland. The Council supports the proposal that this information is gathered alongside mood and anxiety prescription information and suicide data to form a mental health indicator which will in turn provide a more robust domain.**

3. Good dental health is important in its own right, and also contributes to general health and wellbeing; therefore the inclusion of a Children's Dental Health indicator is considered a welcome addition to this domain.
4. It has been reported that smoking and poor nutrition during pregnancy are known to increase the likelihood of a mother giving birth to a baby of low birth weight. It is believed that there is a link between social disadvantage and higher risk of low birth weight. In light of this the Council supports the inclusion of this indicator in the domain.

Overall the Council welcomes the above additions to the Health Deprivation and Disability Domain and considers that the combination of these additions will enhance and strengthen the domain.

#### Additional Comments

When considering future revision of the domain, the Council would welcome consideration of other data, such as:

- GP referrals to mental health services e.g. psychiatric nurse;
- Alcohol/ drug misuse and smoking statistics;
- The length of waiting times for outpatient appointments.

#### Education, Skills and Training Domain

*Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?*

#### Specifically

- 1 *Whether Key Stage 2 performance data should replace the 'proportions of children aged 11 and 12 not attending a grammar school'?*
- 2 *Whether primary level absenteeism rates should be included in the domain?*
- 3 *Whether the proportion of primary school age pupils with Special Education Needs should be included in the domain?*
- 4 *Whether the destination of school leavers indicator should include those not entering Further Education or training?*

**5 *Whether three sub-domains should be introduced, decreasing the importance of 2001 Census data in the overall domain?***

1. In line with the Council's response to the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2004, Belfast City Council welcomes the replacement of the 'proportions of children aged 11 and 12 not attending a grammar school' with Key Stage 2 performance data. In line with the previous response, the Council would also recommend that data from Key Stage 1 is also included as an indicator in this domain as actions to address educational deprivation can prove more effective if identified at an early stage.

2, 3, 4 and 5. The Council is supportive of any enhancements which mean a more robust understanding of the extent of education, skills and training related deprivation. Alleviating the reliance on 2001 Census data is welcomed. Development towards a more spatially and temporally dynamic deprivation measure should be the aim.

**Proximity to Services Domain**

*Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?*

**Specifically**

- 1 *Whether cross border service centres and accident and emergency hospitals should be included?*
- 2 *Whether a general service indicator should be included?*
- 3 *Whether the food shop indicator should be broadened to include convenience stores?*
- 4 *Whether dentists, opticians and pharmacists should be combined into a single indicator?*
- 5 *Whether council leisure centres should be included?*
- 6 *Whether the service centres should be based on service provision rather than having a population of at least 10,000?*
- 7 *Whether the calculation of proximity be based on time rather than distance?*

In preface to the specific comments below, the Council would highlight as mentioned earlier, that although social and cultural divisions are prevalent throughout Northern Ireland they are most evident in Belfast. Therefore, Belfast City Council would highlight that proximity to a service be it based on time or distance is not

necessarily a measure of accessibility of that service given the community geography of the city and Northern Ireland generally. As outlined in our Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2004 response, the domain should take into account other barriers to access to services including segregation and perceptions of territory and safety.

The Council would also highlight that whilst a measure of travel by public transport cannot be included at this stage, we would strongly recommend that the Department of Regional Development works with Translink to allow this information to be gathered, in advance of the post 2011 Census.

In Belfast, there is a heavy reliance on public transport and this has a direct impact on access to services in the city. In research commissioned by the Council, the significance of transport and connectivity was stressed in terms of promoting access to shared spaces in the city. In particular, deprived communities tend to lack mobility and the diseconomies of segregation are borne disproportionately by the most disadvantaged communities in the city.

Poor access to job opportunities is exacerbated by low car ownership, low travel horizons, poor public transport connections across the city and perceptions of risk to personal security. There is a heavy reliance on public transport or local taxi services within these communities and therefore there are restrictions on the areas to which they can freely travel.

It is therefore critical that a domain is developed before 2011 in order to measure the linkages between mobility, access to public transport and deprivation.

1. The Council would welcome further information as to whether the proposed change will have any impact in the Belfast context.
- 2, 3 The Council agrees in general with expansion of the indices where this will give a fuller understanding of deprivation, but would refer you to our earlier comments about proximity not equalling access in the Belfast context.
4. The Council would recommend that pharmacies should be considered exclusively due to the development of the Building the Community-Pharmacy Partnership
5. The Council would wish to point out that to focus purely on leisure centres is to take a narrow view of the definition of 'access to leisure' and this will need to be addressed in any future review.

An important issue with respect to accessing leisure centres in Belfast is that geographical proximity to a centre does not necessarily make the facility 'accessible', since there are barriers to access which are economic, social, physical and cultural. In developing its new leisure strategy the Council is examining the issues impacting upon access to leisure across the city and would hope that this can inform a future review of the statistics. The Council would therefore like further clarification around the definitions that would underpin any proximity indicator and the gradation that would apply.

It is an accepted industry standard that 'proximity' to a leisure 'facility' (not specifically a leisure centre) would be rated as good if a resident was based within 20 minutes travel time (i.e. 1 mile walking or 3 miles driving) of that facility. In the Belfast context however, it should be noted that, historically, the purpose of the 1986 Recreation and Youth Service order was to develop a number of leisure centres, many of which were located in areas 'of need' and which are not particularly geographically dispersed from one another or the areas of significant deprivation.

6. The Council would support the recommendation to revert to service provision as opposed to population scale in relation to service centres.
7. In terms of proximity calculated on time rather than distance, neither necessarily gives an accurate picture of accessibility of services. In a city as divided as Belfast, there is evidence to suggest that many residents, particularly those in the most segregated areas of our city, make decisions to access services on the basis of safety and the location of interfaces. While it may be difficult to factor in some of the perceived 'boundaries' in the city, it is possible to quantify the interfaces as identified by the Northern Ireland Office and the NI Housing Executive. This overlay would give a more accurate picture of the complex access patterns in the city.

#### Living Environment Domain

*Whether the proposed changes from the 2005 domain are acceptable?*

#### Specifically

- 1 *Whether Central Heating information from the 2001 Census and SOA level housing stress should be replaced by the Decent Home Standard?*
- 2 *Whether the Housing Health and Safety Rating System should be included?*

**3 *Whether Household Overcrowding information from the Census should be excluded?***

1, 2 and 3 Belfast City Council would highlight that whilst probably less robust than the Census data, the Decent Home Standard will aid the dynamism of the measure.

The Council acknowledges that the Household Overcrowding information is now somewhat out of date given that the only data available is the data from the 2001 census and because of this it is proposed to be excluded. Given the considerable migration into Northern Ireland as mentioned earlier, the Council would recommend that the household overcrowding indicator is considered for inclusion in the full review of the measure when new data is available.

**Additional Comments**

The council would be interested to learn how the presence of litter is measured and subsequently categorised as a score. In order to give an accurate and consistent assessment, the approach would need to be objective, structured and with relatively detailed criteria guidance for scoring, such as the Tidy NI methodology for scoring the presence of litter. This may be something for consideration as part of the methodological review, which the consultation indicates will be carried out in the future.

Other suggestions for inclusion in the domain in the future include:

- Including Energy scoring ratings for households in the future.
- Considering the number and length of time void properties are present in local SOA.
- Number of registered private landlords or buy to let mortgages for properties in SOA are potential indicators that may be developed.

**Crime and Disorder Domain**

**1 *Whether, given the recommendations and changes to data availability, the proposed updated domain is acceptable?***

1. Belfast City Council supports the extension of the number of years data included is a welcome development. The new measures will be very useful, particularly in developing the Vulnerable Localities Index as a third of the index is based on deprivation statistics (employment and income) which will inform the work of the Belfast Community Safety Partnership.



It is recommended that incidents of hate crime across the 5 groupings as recorded by PSNI are included as a measure, alongside monitoring anti-social behaviour.

The Council would suggest that it may be more beneficial to weight neighbourhood crime/ disorder with greater priority – for example Anti-social Behaviour.

#### Any other comments

Another issue we would like to raise relates to access to the data. While we appreciate that much of the data is already available from the NISRA site, we would appreciate as much access as possible to as many of the data sets as NISRA can allow, while maintaining the confidentiality restriction place upon them. Ideally these data would be available in standard formats such as .csv, xls, etc. It would also be useful if geo-coded datasets could be made readily available in a format that makes them easy to add as layers to mapping software such as MapInfo

We would strongly recommend that a domain is developed before 2011 in order to measure the linkages between mobility, access to public transport and deprivation. Separation and lack of safety will continue to produce nodes of hyper-growth and ongoing areas of concentrated deprivation and disillusion; it is therefore critical that the complex and interwoven relationship between deprivation and segregation in Belfast and appropriate resources can be appropriately targeted.”

After discussion, during which several Members expressed concern in relation to the changes to some of the “domains” referred to, the Committee approved the draft response, subject to particular Members being contacted in order that their comments in relation to the employment, health deprivation and disability and living environment domains could be included.

#### Swine Flu

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “Relevant Background Information

The Committee has over the last 6 months received a number of reports regarding Pandemic Flu, detailing the Council’s planning processes for ensuring continuity of critical services, implications for staff absence procedures and information to be issued to all staff and managers.

The number of new cases of Swine Flu in Northern Ireland has been generally showing an increase over the last few months, although the levels are not as high as predicted earlier in the year and there is not yet a sustained week on week increase. It must also be noted that clinical diagnosis is now being used to confirm swine flu in most cases, as opposed to laboratory testing and so the figures reported are considered as estimates. .

Since 2007 the council has had in place a specific corporate contingency plan (Strategic Pandemic Plan) to cope with a pandemic situation. It is supported by individual pandemic contingency plans for critical services such as refuse collection, burials and cremations and some environmental health functions. All Services also have more general business continuity plans. All of these plans have recently been reviewed and subjected to appropriate desk-top testing.

Information has also been issued to all staff and managers on swine flu, detailing how to minimise the spread of infection, sickness procedures, special leave arrangements, etc. Improved cleaning procedures have also been put in place.

#### Key Issues

The Department of Health is still planning for further more severe waves of this illness in the very near future and the Government has issued revised planning assumptions based on the estimated worst case situation, to enable authorities to plan for this eventuality. It is expected that there will be a peak period sometime in the next two months which will have an impact not only on the health service, but also on the business continuity of public services.

Antiviral drugs such as Tamiflu are being offered to those who have contracted the illness, but it is a matter of clinical discretion as to whether they are being prescribed in individual cases, although a number of high risk groups have been identified for early priority access to antiviral medicines.

In Northern Ireland, the responsibility for ensuring effective supplies of antiviral medicines rests with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). At present the drug is being dispensed via community pharmacists in the normal way. However, as part of the Board's contingency arrangements for a major second or third wave of the virus, it has asked district councils for support with the distribution of antiviral medicines during the peak period (likely to last for 2 – 3 weeks), should the normal methods of distribution be overwhelmed. In periods of higher demand, large scale access to antivirals may be required. When this critical stage is reached the Board may be required to quickly mobilise a number of additional Antiviral Collection Points (ACPs).

The Board has been working through the Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG) to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between it and district councils to agree the support which might be called upon from councils in respect of ACPs. A copy of this MOU is provided in the Appendix, along with a covering letter. The MOU envisages that, where pharmacies are overwhelmed during a peak period, temporary ACPs will be set up in Council premises with the support of Council staff. A workshop has also been held for some key members of staff and a number of community and leisure centres have been identified as possible locations.

The Principal Solicitor in Legal Services has had sight of the MOU and is satisfied with the legal framework to enable the Council to perform this role and also the level of risk to the Council in terms of its role and the level of indemnity stated.

The MOU outlines the Council role as being to identify and provide appropriate facilities for the provision of ACPs. The Council will, where possible, identify staff to support the service and as their employer, manage any human resource elements. All costs to the Council associated with this work can be reclaimed from the Board.

One concern regarding this arrangement for Belfast will be the ability of the Council to provide the required numbers of staff for this purpose should there be high absence levels and a focus on the delivery of its own critical services. However the MOU allows for this, in that it states:

*Councils will endeavour to provide agreed levels of service to HSCB in support of the distribution of anti-virals, but any support provided will be conditional upon the ability of the individual council to make staff available having regard to prevailing circumstances:*

Council Officers will be meeting with the Board officials in the next few weeks to discuss in detail the arrangements for Belfast and the expectations in terms of buildings and staff.

### Resource Implications

#### Human

Further training of staff will be needed. Communication is also ongoing with the Unions.

#### Financial

All costs will be recoverable from the HSCB. Additional funding has now been agreed by the Assembly for dealing with swine flu.

### Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to authorise the Chief Executive to sign the MOU with the Health and Social Care Board.

### Key to Abbreviations

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding  
HSCB: Health and Social care Board  
LGEMG: Local Government Emergency Management Group  
ACP: Antiviral Collection Point

### Decision Tracking

The Head of Environmental Health will report back on any further developments with the MOU and will provide updates to Committee as required.

### Appendix 1

#### Memorandum of Understanding between the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board and Local Government District Councils in Northern Ireland

September 2009

### Index

- 1 Purpose
- 2 Background
- 3 Circumstances of initiation
- 4 Role and Responsibility of HSC Board
- 5 Role and Responsibility of District Councils
- 6 Communication
- 7 Resource Implications

Signatures of authorising officers

Annex

#### 1 Purpose

In times of national emergency such as Pandemic Flu there may be exceptional demands on health and social care services which may require co-operation and support from other public service organisations to deliver vital services to the community. This document describes the circumstances under which such support may be sought by the HSC Board from District Councils and addresses the management of such arrangements, the risks for both parties and the need for resources.

## **2 Background**

There is a legislative provision which permits local government to offer support in to other organisations in emergencies. Section 105 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 allows for arrangements to be entered into for the supply of goods and services or the interchange of staff. A district council may make arrangements with another council, public body or government department, inter alia, for the provision by one party of support to another for any for administrative, professional or technical services.

There are pre-existing relationships between District Councils and Health and Social Care in the field of emergency planning including agreements for the provision of rest centres. This is helpful in building arrangements in preparation for a flu pandemic.

A flu pandemic (level 6) was declared by the World Health Organisation in June 2009 and countries throughout the world are activating plans to manage outbreaks as they emerge. The Health Service in Northern Ireland must gear up to ensure that all appropriate elements of care are in place in anticipation of the first and subsequent waves of pandemic flu cases. It is expected that with each wave, there will be strain placed upon all elements of the service. It is important therefore to consider contingencies and to have planned and appropriate resources identified in order to ensure continuity of service alongside the management of flu. The strategic context for the development of antiviral distribution arrangements is set out in the Annex.

## **3 Circumstances of initiation**

It is anticipated that there may be a large surge of demand on the health system in response to Pandemic Flu in Northern Ireland in November 2009. An important component of the health service response will be to ensure there is ready access to antiviral medicines. In periods of higher demand, large scale access to antivirals may be required. When this critical stage is reached the Board may be required to quickly mobilise a number of Antiviral Collection Points (ACPs).

It is a fundamental intent within this large scale mitigation strategy that the person with flu should stays at home and that antivirals are collected on their behalf from a designated local Antiviral Collection Point (ACP) by a 'Flu Friend'.

Antivirals will be issued from the ACP to Flu Friends, following assessment of the patient by the National Flu Service or a GP, on submission of an authorisation number which has been provided by the flu line or an authorisation form issued by a GP.

This stage of initiation will be introduced in a situation where normal supply mechanisms via community pharmacies can no longer meet the demand. The extent of this need will vary in each locality and will be informed by flu status reporting in each locality.

#### **4 Role and Responsibility of HSC Board**

The Board is responsible for ensuring the appropriate availability of antiviral medicines for the population of Northern Ireland. It will provide guidance on the development of ACPs, deliver training, ensure access to a stock management system, provide daily professional support in the management of ACPs. It will ensure appropriate delivery of stock. It will provide advice and training on infection control and the necessary equipment required for personal protection as appropriate. All public information including centre signage will be provided by the HSC Board.

The Board will liaise closely with Councils in the initial set-up of ACPs and in standing down these venues. Communication is set out in section below.

The Board will indemnify the Councils against any claim made by a Third Party for damages for any damage, loss, injury (including death) arising out of any act or omission in relation to any activities or obligations covered by this agreement, subject to the Councils accepting liability for any acts or omissions of their employees, servants or agents, which may give rise to such claims.

#### **5 Role and Responsibility of Councils**

The Council will identify and provide appropriate facilities for the provision of the service. It will, where possible, identify council staff to support the service and as their employer manage any human resource elements including liabilities.

Councils will endeavour to provide agreed levels of service to HSCB in support of the distribution of anti-virals, but any support provided will be conditional upon the ability of the individual council to make staff available having regard to prevailing circumstances.

#### **6 Communication**

District councils and the HSCB local offices will nominate lead officers so that communication can be initiated promptly to:

- Implement the antiviral distribution plan locally
- Ensure there is day to day supervision and management
- Manage any operational aspects
- Take decision to stand down

## **7 Resource Implications**

It is anticipated that there will be resource implications should District Council facilities and staff be required to support the implementation of any emergency response situation. Resources are currently being sought and the HSCB is awaiting interdepartmental approval. Until the Executive approves funding for Pandemic Flu, the HSCB cannot yet stand over the resource envelope required.

The HSCB will reimburse Councils in respect of the costs of any staff deployed to provide support to the Antiviral Collection Points and any ancillary costs associated with the provision of this service. Both parties will ensure that their respective payments and receipts are recorded and accounted for under agreed relevant organisational procedures.

## **8 Effective Date**

This Agreement will come into effect on ----- and will be subject to review as appropriate on 31st March 2010 and thereafter annually.

**Signed and Dated**

\_\_\_\_\_ Chief Executive \_\_\_\_\_ Council

\_\_\_\_\_ Mr John Compton, Chief Executive, HSCB”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

## **Consultation Response – Bioenergy Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2009-2014**

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

The Director of Health and Environmental Services Committee submitted for the Committee’s consideration the undernoted report:

### **“Relevant Background Information**

Within Northern Ireland, the government Department with principal responsibility for energy generation is the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI). Commensurate with its renewable energy policies, DETI has established a range of generating targets including 12% of Northern Ireland electricity to be generated from indigenous renewable sources by 2012.

DETI has indicated that this target can be met by Northern Ireland's developing onshore wind sector but has recommended also that other forms of renewable energy should be encouraged to develop in parallel. Consequently, DETI has published a Bioenergy Action Plan for Northern Ireland covering the period 2009-2014 for consultation, which draws upon contributions from a range of government Departments. The Bioenergy Action Plan is also underpinned by findings and recommendations of an AEA Energy and Environment study into the current and future potential of bioenergy within Northern Ireland.

### Key Issues

DETI has indicated that the overall aim of the five-year action plan is to increase the deployment of bioenergy, with particular emphasis on heat and electricity, which will help to secure Northern Ireland's energy supply, deliver carbon emission reductions, generate economic and environmental benefits and contribute to our renewable energy targets. Accordingly, the plan proposes four strategic objectives:-

- to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits and opportunities of bioenergy.
- to create a policy and regulatory framework to support bioenergy development
- to encourage investment in the bioenergy supply chain, and
- to continue to undertake research into bioenergy.

### Air Quality

DETI's recognition that biomass fuels can have a detrimental impact upon air quality and in particular, ambient concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>) in urban locations is an important issue for Council. DETI has suggested that since much of Northern Ireland can be regarded as rural or semi-rural, this will not be a significant problem. Nonetheless, DETI has indicated that it will take account of DEFRA research, which shows that impacts of biomass on air quality can be reduced to a manageable level to avoid breaches of European and national air quality legislation. DETI has also indicated that in collaboration with DoENI, it may seek to amend the Clean Air Order to provide greater consistency between current air quality objectives and biomass combustion in order to move towards an approvals system, which removes the need for individual testing of boilers.



It is considered that DETI comments regarding the potential impact of biomass installations do not adequately differentiate between the potential cumulative impact of numerous small-scale biomass installations and larger plants that may be subject to control under the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, and whose air quality emissions are consequently easier to control. It is suggested therefore, that larger and cleaner installations should represent the preferred approach to biomass energy in urban locations or where Air Quality Management Areas have been declared.

In relation to Air Quality Management Areas, Part III of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 places a statutory duty upon local authorities to assess periodically air quality within their districts against a series of national and European health-based standards. Where a local authority determines that an air quality standard is likely to be exceeded in the compliance year, then the authority must designate an Air Quality Management Area and develop an action plan in collaboration with other relevant authorities.

In 2006, Belfast City Council designated four regions of the city as Air Quality Management Areas for a combination of NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>, principally associated with road transport. The Council subsequently developed an Air Quality Action Plan in collaboration with the Department for Regional Development Roads Service and Translink. It is considered that an increase in particulate or nitrogen dioxide emissions from biomass installations could materially impact upon implementation of this Action Plan and the city's ability to achieve the nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter air quality standards. Moreover, the wide scale deployment of biomass, as proposed via the DETI Bioenergy Action Plan, would have to be carefully managed within Belfast to avoid the need to declare further Air Quality Management Areas.

#### 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 DETI Bioenergy Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2009 – 2014 and to recommend that it be submitted to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment by 30<sup>th</sup> October 2009. At the time of submission, DETI will be advised that comments are subject to Council ratification at its meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009.

### Key to Abbreviations

- DEFRA - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- DETI - Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.
- DoENI - Department of Environment.
- PM<sub>10</sub> - particles with an aerodynamic diameter smaller than or equal to 10 micrometers.
- PM<sub>2.5</sub> - particles with an aerodynamic diameter smaller than or equal to 2.5 micrometers

### Documents Attached

- Appendix A - Belfast City Council response to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment consultation on the Bioenergy Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2009 - 2014.

### Appendix A

#### Belfast City Council response to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment consultation on the Bioenergy Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2009 - 2014.

Having reviewed the draft Bioenergy Action Plan for Northern Ireland 2009 – 2014, Belfast Council submits the following comments in response.

### Air Quality Considerations

Strategic objective 2 (page 18) of the draft Bioenergy Action Plan states that there is an intention 'to create a supportive and encouraging policy and regulatory framework within which the bioenergy sector can develop and thrive'.

In addition, paragraph 16 of this section refers to air quality issues stating, 'It is important to ensure that increased use of biofuels to generate energy does not have a detrimental impact on air quality.' Belfast City Council would concur fully with this statement.

In the same paragraph however, the text states 'Given that much of Northern Ireland could be described as rural or semi-rural, it is not considered that this issue would be of a similar scale as potentially in other parts of the UK'. Belfast City Council considers this statement to be a generalisation and that the installation of biomass appliances in urban locations of Northern Ireland, of which Belfast would be the largest, should be carefully controlled.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has commissioned a UK-wide study of the potential air quality impacts of a major expansion of biomass heating. There are numerous 'Key Messages' from this research, which are pertinent to the development of a Bioenergy Action Plan for Northern Ireland. These are summarised as follows:-

- To meet its 2020 renewable energy targets, the United Kingdom needs to increase substantially the amount of heat generated and biomass heat is one of the key technologies.
- The potential conflicts between these goals and air quality can be avoided through the use of high quality low emission plant. The replacement of old coal and oil fired plant with high quality wood-fired plant, located off the gas grid and away from densely populated urban areas may actually benefit air quality.
- In urban areas or where an Air Quality Management Area has been declared, Defra would expect biomass heat deployment to be less common and larger (and therefore cleaner) biomass plant to be more prevalent.
- Encouraging the use of larger plant, for example in conjunction with the development of heat networks, will result in a system where air quality emissions are easier to control than from a larger number of small plant.

Defra, whilst supportive of the need to employ biomass heating techniques, has raised concerns regarding the possibility of making air quality worse in certain areas. Indeed, Defra has accepted that implementation of the abovementioned 'Key Messages' will not be entirely straightforward.

#### Specific air quality issues of concern

##### Emission levels

In common with other combustion plant, the combustion of biomass can impact upon air quality in a variety of ways. Emission levels of pollutants such as particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), carbon monoxide (CO) and sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) depend upon the completeness of the

combustion process. The temperature in conventional biomass combustion is generally insufficient to oxidise atmospheric nitrogen and therefore, nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) are almost exclusively formed from the fuel. Accordingly, emission levels of nitrogen oxides are heavily dependent on the chemical composition of individual fuels, as are emissions of oxides of sulphur. Consequently, overall emissions are determined by the design of the combustion plant, the chemical and physical qualities of the fuel and the presence of emissions abatement equipment.

#### Approvals and consent

In addition to meeting regulatory requirements, all but the smallest biomass installations will require planning consent. From an air quality management perspective, it is considered that a key component of the planning assessment process should involve an appropriate air quality impact assessment. Planning applications containing a biomass boiler should follow a risk-based approach and it is recommended that the assessment should consider:

- Geography – what is the planned location of the biomass boiler, and could it potentially negatively affect any areas of poor air quality?
- Fuel substitution/alternatives – will the biomass boiler be displacing a boiler running on a different fuel, and if so what fuel? If the development containing the boiler is on a new site, what other fuels might be available and what would be their comparative effect on air quality?
- The likely emissions performance of the boiler
- The type of biomass fuel that the boiler will be using

If the assessment suggests that the biomass boiler may pose a risk to air quality, then detailed information about the biomass boiler will be required which may include the need for an atmospheric dispersion modelling study to quantify the spatial extent of any air quality impacts. Atmospheric dispersion modelling studies typically require significant technical air quality skills.

#### Boilers, fuel standards and certification

The emissions performance of a biomass boiler depends substantially on its design and the nature of the fuel used. Most boilers are designed to use fuels of a specific type and quality, and deviation from this fuel type generally leads to poor combustion efficiency and increased emissions of ambient air pollutants.

It is considered that current European Union and United Kingdom emission standards for biomass boilers are largely inadequate as tools for setting demanding air quality conditions, as they typically do not prescribe directly NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> emission levels. Emission standards and eco labels have been developed by other European countries however, these are difficult to transpose to the United Kingdom owing to the wide range of approaches to testing and emissions measurement.

Wood fuels are available in a variety of different forms and qualities and the performance of a biomass system is strongly dependent upon on the use of properly specified fuels. To aid the matching of biomass systems with the correct fuel supply, fuel standards have been introduced by several European countries. In the absence of United Kingdom specific standards, European standards are being adopted by some UK suppliers. In order to harmonise United Kingdom biomass fuels, it is recommended that UK specific standards should be developed.

#### Cumulative impacts

Assessments of potential cumulative air quality impacts of multiple biomass installations will become increasingly important as the number of biomass installations increases over coming years. Whilst a single biomass boiler is unlikely to affect air quality outside its immediate vicinity, the cumulative impact of a number of biomass installations could potentially lead to localised air quality standards exceedences and also raise background pollutant levels. Steps should be taken therefore to ensure that biomass deployment is monitored and that screening assessments flag developing air quality issues. This is considered particularly important in urban locations where smaller biomass systems including stoves, room heaters and boilers may be installed in domestic premises. It is recommended therefore, that DETI considers working with local authority Building Control Services to monitor the prevalence of biomass appliances with a view to establishing installation trends.

#### Maintenance

Biomass boilers, flue stacks and emission abatement equipment need regular maintenance to ensure that combustion efficiency is kept to a maximum and emissions are minimised. Many countries have already introduced a requirement for regular compulsory maintenance checks and it is recommended that similar provisions be considered for the Northern Ireland.”

The Committee approved the draft response.