

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd January, 2010

## Meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

- Members present: Councillor Hartley (Chairman);  
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery); and  
Councillors Adamson, Attwood, Austin, M. Browne,  
W. Browne, Campbell, Convery, Hendron, N. Kelly,  
McCann, Newton, Rodway and Stoker.
- Also attended: Councillor Mullaghan.
- In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;  
Mrs. J. Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources;  
Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and  
Members' Services;  
Mrs. J. Minne, Head of Human Resources;  
Mr. R. Cregan, Improvement Manager; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Committee Administrator.

### Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor D. Dodds.

### Finance

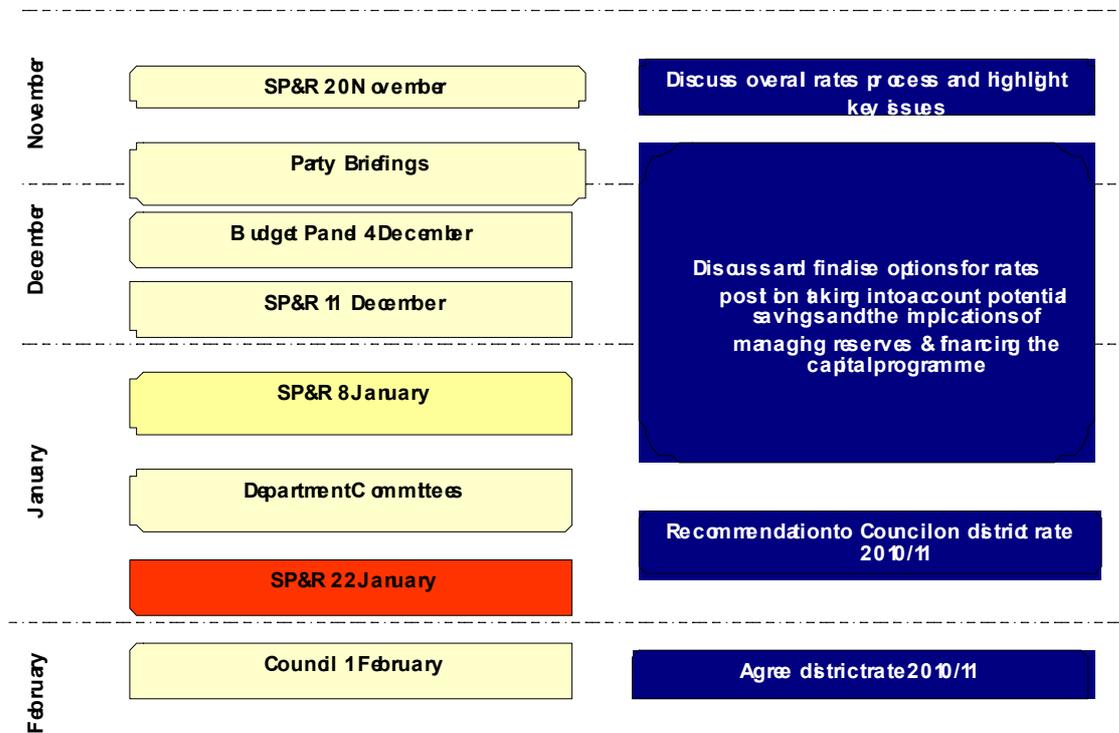
#### Financial Estimates and District Rate 2010/2011

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

#### "Relevant Background Information and Purpose of Report

**Members will recall that at the November meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the following process was agreed for setting the district rate and agreeing the estimates for 2010/11.**

## Timetable for Rate Setting Process 2010-2011



The purpose of this report is to:

- update Members on Department Committees discussions on the revenue estimates;
- agree the domestic and business district rate for 2010/11;
- agree the key messages associated with the setting of the rate; and,
- agree a way forward in terms of forward financial planning in the organisation.

### Key Issues

#### A. Rates Update

The table below summarises the decisions already made by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in relation to the estimates and the district rate for 2010/11 at its meetings on 11 December 2009 and 8 January 2010.

**Estimates & District Rate 2010/11**

	2010/11 Increase	% Rate Increase
Departmental Estimates	768,511	0.59%
City Investment Strategy	1,000,000	0.76%
Current Capital Programme	1,667,315	1.28%
General Exchequer Grant	(125,566)	(0.10)
<b>Rate Increase before Reserves</b>	<b>3,310,260</b>	<b>2.53%</b>
Movement in Reserves	6,900,000	5.28%
<b>District Rate Increase</b>	<b>10,210,260</b>	<b>7.81%</b>
<b>Average impact on domestic ratepayer</b>	<b>24.38</b>	<b>3.35%</b>

**(i) Departmental Estimates**

**At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 8 January Members agreed the cash limits for committees as follows:**

<b>Strategic Policy and Resources</b>	<b>£28,501,263</b>
<b>Health and Environmental Services</b>	<b>£43,057,644</b>
<b>Parks and Leisure</b>	<b>£30,792,206</b>
<b>Development</b>	<b>£22,743,507</b>
<b>Town Planning</b>	<b>£27,710</b>

The decision to agree the cash limits also included approval for efficiencies for 2010/11 totalling £2,001,969 and led to an increase in the district rate of some 0.59% arising from departmental estimates.

Since the last Strategic and Policy Resources Committee, each department committee has considered and agreed its revenue estimates in terms of the above cash limits.

**(ii) City Investment Strategy**

**At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 11 December 2009, Members agreed to an additional £1m of funding for the City Investment Strategy.**

**(iii) Current Capital Programme**

**At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 8 January 2010, Members agreed to increase capital financing by £1.67m in order to cover current capital programme commitments. In addition, it was agreed on 11 December 2009 that a maximum of £1.0m of the investment in reserves may be redeployed to finance new capital commitments, when capital plans are agreed.**

(iv) Reserves

At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 11 December 2009, Members agreed to set aside £2.5m as a contribution from the rates to reserves along with a further £2m from the voluntary redundancy exercise and the efficiency programme, with a maximum of £1m of this to be potentially invested in the capital programme when capital plans are agreed.

(v) Thematic Budget

The allocation of the thematic budget for 2010/11 has been agreed by Members as follows:

Older People	£82,000
Health & Well Being	£100,000
Safer City	£140,000
Better Care for the Environment	£78,000
Children and Young People	£100,000

**B. Setting of the District Rate 2010/11**

Based on the decisions outlined above Members are requested to agree a district rate increase of 7.81% for 2010/11. Based on the Estimated Penny Rate Product of £4,888,730 provided by LPS this means that the domestic district rate for 2010/11 is recommended to be 0.2929p and the non-domestic rate to be 25.5849p.

The table below summarises the impact of this increase on ratepayers by property type.

**Implications For Ratepayers**

PROPERTY	Ave Capital Value /NAV	Increase in Rate Bill
	£	£
<b><i>Domestic Properties</i></b>		
Terrace House	86,425	18.32
3-Bed Semi-Detached House	132,173	28.02
4-Bed Detached House	293,843	62.29
Apartment	83,379	17.68
Average Capital Value	115,000	24.38
<b><i>Non-Domestic Properties</i></b>		
Office Property	12,728	235.47
Retail Property	10,247	189.57

### C. Key Messages

The Head of Corporate Communications has drafted a set of key messages to accompany the rate announcement. He recommends that it is vital that there are no more than four overall key messages that Members should focus on.

It is recommended that these should be:

#### Overall position

The overall effect on rates bills this year for our citizens will be an increase of 3.35 per cent – which works out at around £2 per month (£24) per year for the average domestic ratepayer.

The council's district rate increase is 7.81 per cent but as the regional rate has remained at zero the overall effect is 3.35 per cent.

#### Efficiency

Belfast City Council recognises that every citizen and business is facing huge financial pressures given the current economic climate and we remain committed to providing value for money services.

To that end, we have achieved efficiencies of £7 million by March this year and have set a target for a further £2 million by the end of 2010/11, bringing the total to £9 million. Further efficiencies will continue to be identified in future years.

These efficiencies have been achieved without affecting frontline services, which we continue to maintain and improve

#### Reserves

The major part of the increase (5.3 per cent) is due to the need to build up reserves in readiness for the Local Government Finance Bill which will formalise the need to maintain reserves. We are also responding to the advice of the local government auditor who has indicated that our reserves should be higher compared to the forecasted level of just over £4m by the end of March 2010.

Building up reserves will place the council on a much sounder financial footing to deal with future economic uncertainties including any downturn in rates income, unplanned expenditure and implications of the review of local government.

### Investment in the City

We recognise times are hard for in these economically stringent times but believe people want investment in facilities and services to be maintained and improved.

We are developing a City Investment Fund of £30 million to invest across the city in new landmark facilities. We are currently investing around £13m in the Titanic Signature Project, the Connswater Greenway Project and the new Lyric and MAC Theatres. This has assisted towards a total investment of £153m in these projects.

Further details of the key messages are provided at Appendix One.

### D. Way Forward

The current rate setting process has been challenging for both Members and officers as the organisation has to deal with operating in a difficult financial environment. The impact of the economic downturn will continue to hit hard and further reductions in public sector spending are inevitable because of the need to rebalance national debt. This means that Belfast City Council must continue to improve both its short term and medium term financial planning. The following areas are of particular importance:

- Maximise collectable rates income – a report will be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March which will recommend a number of key performance indicators to be used by Members to better hold LPS to account for their performance based on the Memorandum of Understanding which has already been agreed between the two organisations.
- Efficiency – the organisation needs to further develop its approach to efficiency which both reduces costs and improves value for money in the delivery of both back office and front line services. This will require tough decisions to be made about changing how the organisation works and developing collaborative efficiency projects with other areas of the public sector in Belfast. Further engagement is planned with the Budget and Transformation Panel on the efficiency programme and a more detailed report is planned to be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March.

- Further integrate financial planning with business planning - so that Members can make more informed decisions about the allocation of resources to priorities.
- Future financial planning – given the economic environment it is vital that Belfast City Council has a sound medium term financial plan and the ability to forecast future spending commitments and anticipated income streams. Work on future financial planning is intended to be carried out with the Budget and Transformation Panel in the first instance including consideration of a target for future rates increases.

### **Recommendations**

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and agree:

1. A district rate increase of 7.81% for 2010/11. Based on the Estimated Penny Rate Product of £4,888,730 provided by LPS this means that the domestic district rate for 2010/11 is recommended to be 0.2929p and the non-domestic rate to be 25.5849p.
2. The key messages associated with the rates increase as outlined in section C and detailed in Appendix One of this report.
3. The proposed way forward and the planned engagement with the Budget and Transformation Panel and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.”

The Committee discussed the need for the ongoing challenge of Departmental budgets and greater clarity regarding the prioritisation of resources to outcomes and noted that the process to consider the Council's expenditure for future financial years had already commenced with a number of meetings of the Budget and Transformation Panel having been arranged.

Accordingly, It was

Resolved – That the Council be recommended to approve the expenditure contained within the Departmental Estimates and further to this that the following District Rate be fixed to meet the estimated expenditure of the several Committee's of the Council for the financial year commencing 1st April, 2010:

Non-Domestic Rate	-	25.5849 pence
Domestic Rate	-	0.2929 pence

The Committee approved also the key messages associated with the rates increase and the proposed way forward in relation to the rate setting process.

**City Investment Framework –  
Alternative Financing Models**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1. Relevant Background Information**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that under existing arrangements the Council has only limited resources in terms of what it can bring to City Investment.**
- 1.2 To date the Council has played its part through:**
- the Capital Programme which is totally rate funded and restricted to Council assets
  - the City Investment Strategy/Fund which is funded by rates and capital receipt and has to date realised £154m of investment in City assets for a Council commitment of £16m
  - a series of City promotional events and research activities on best practice
  - input to and support for relevant planning and transport policies
  - considering long run maintenance commitment for public financed projects undertaken by others eg Connswater Greenway
  - convening various forums where key players from the private, public and community/voluntary sectors can come together to focus on the future of the City
  - mustering political consensus to lobby Ministers and the Assembly.
- 1.3 While these activities have had a certain level of success, the Committee in its response to a City Investment Framework paper in November, accepted that further work was needed in regard to alternative funding mechanisms and how the Council might work better with public and private sector partners.**

2. **Key Issues – Funding Mechanisms**

- 2.1 It is not unique that Belfast is considering other ways to attract and finance investment as many other Cities in the UK and Europe are in a similar position eg:
- 2.2 Price Waterhouse Coopers have recently published a major report for the Core Cities Group – *'Unlocking City Growth Interim Findings on New Funding Mechanisms'*.
- 2.3 The All Party Urban Development Group has completed an inquiry into City Regeneration entitled *'Regeneration and Recession – Unlocking the Money'* which also looks at new financing tools.
- 2.4 *'Closing the Investment Gap in Europe's Cities'* by the Urban Land Institute again looks at various methodologies through which new investment can be channelled.
- 2.5 HM Treasury is pursuing a *'Total Place'* initiative that is attempting to map and redirect all public spending ie Whitehall Departments, Local Authority and National Health Service in particular localities such as Birmingham, with a view to getting a better return for the public.
- 2.6 There are a range of mechanisms considered in the above publications but they all have one thing in common and that is the need for a clear view of where the City's Leaders want the place to go.
- 2.7 Partnership is tricky and complicated; it is slow; has conflicting agendas and needs to have flexibility for a longer term programme so it is important that Members continue to spend time on considering what they believe is best for the City and build for example upon the N/S/E/W debates.
- 2.8 While City leadership and strong strategic oversight are the primary considerations the mechanisms or vehicles for delivery of city investment is also an important issue to consider. In simple terms the private sector will just want the money it invests out again with profit. To ensure that the private sector gets its due return and also that the overall objectives of City Investment happens needs strong leadership from the public sector particularly the elected representatives.
- 2.9 In terms of the mechanisms themselves table 1 below sets out the advantages and drawbacks of each:

Funding Approach	Summary	Advantages	Drawbacks
Use of Assets (e.g. LABVs)	<p>Belfast uses property assets as the basis of attracting additional investment from the private sector.</p> <p>The nature and quality of assets (e.g. income generating, development sites) will determine their potential to drive investment</p>	<p>Cash neutral</p> <p>Potential for better use of existing assets</p>	<p>Availability of assets?</p> <p>Current values depressed</p> <p>Market appetite?</p>
Planning gain	<p>The public sector captures a contribution from developers to pay for infrastructure from additional value created on granting of planning.</p>	<p>Understood by developers</p> <p>Tried &amp; tested</p>	<p>Drop in value impacts potential to generate funding</p> <p>May further delay developer activity</p>
Accelerated Development Zones	<p>A proposal to allow a local authority to retain future business rates growth in a defined area to create an income stream to service borrowings used to fund enabling infrastructure</p>	<p>De-risks opportunities for the private sector.</p> <p>Enables value created by infrastructure to be captured</p> <p>Allows investment to be made up-front</p> <p>Potential to join other funding streams together to create viable funding "cocktail".</p>	<p>Still remains at proposal stage</p> <p>Requires local authority to take risks</p> <p>Does not lend itself to residential development.</p> <p>How is upfront investment cash flowed?</p> <p>May require legislative change.</p>
Joint European Investment in Sustainable City Areas ("JESSICA")	<p>The use of ERDF funding to invest in regeneration activity (as opposed to grant aiding).</p>	<p>Tap into existing budgets</p> <p>Offers potential for a return (which can be recycled/reinvested)</p>	<p>Not yet in place</p> <p>Need to avoid state aid issues</p> <p>Competition for scarce funds</p> <p>Not currently being considered for NI</p>

- 2.10** In terms of the mechanisms available Local Asset Backed Vehicles (LABV) depend largely on private sector investment which may be difficult to attract at the present moment in a depressed market although may be a strong possibility in the future and Officers will keep abreast of possibilities especially in regard to Council sites.
- 2.11** Planning gain is currently largely within the remit of DOE at present and will be affected by the changing planning legislation.
- 2.12** We understand that the DFP are not supportive of a Joint European Investment in Sustainable City Areas (JESSICA) as ERDF funding is largely already committed.
- 2.13** Accelerated Development Zones (ADZ) could potentially be a possibility although they do have various pros and cons.
- 2.14** The current rate take for Northern Ireland is over £1billion pa and an ADZ may provide more innovative ways of using some of these monies.
- 2.15** Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) who are looking at this type of model for Derry City Council and the development company Ilex have produced a scheme for developing a case for ADZs in both Belfast and Derry with a view to obtaining any necessary legislative change.
- 2.16** The potential for ADZ areas in Belfast set out in the PWC document are only indicative and further thought will be required as to the best potential site - see appendix 3 for suggested areas. Any such area would need to have major commercial potential.
- 2.17** A further issue to be considered is the different way in which business rates in Northern Ireland are split between local government and central government which may require a specialist delivery vehicle to develop an ADZ.
- 2.18** Regardless of how an ADZ might work in Belfast the key risks of the proposed development happening or not happening quickly enough to raise sufficient rates and how the Council might finance debt during the development phase needs to be addressed. Business as usual also needs to continue using existing rate expenditure.

- 2.19 Officers would wish to obtain the Committee's view on whether BCC should approach Derry Council/Ilex to consider a joint piece of work on ADZ's
- 2.20 Obviously depending on where an ADZ was situated a number of other partners may be involved including both private and public sectors. Similarly the legislation is different here than in Great Britain eg in Great Britain business rates are pooled and redistributed by Westminster. The scoping exercise would tease out such anomalies.

### 3. Key Issues – Partnerships

- 3.1 As part of the RPA transfer discussion BCC have engaged with DSD/DRD/DOE and SIB on the potential of creating a joint framework for city investment. Officers have also acted on the suggestions made by Members in consideration of the PWC Report on local government reform that the Council should now actively consider how it might work in collaboration with others.
- 3.2 While the RPA future remains uncertain it is clear that there will be less money available from the public sector for capital investment and for that reason it will be important to work up collaborative solutions.
- 3.3 Whether transfer of functions occur or not it is becoming clear that a City Investment Framework that resonates with the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) would help to attract investment into the City. Even greater shared understanding of planned investment by government departments would be a step forward and help inform private sector thinking.
- 3.4 More importantly the Council is about to revisit its City Masterplan and this document could pull together existing and proposed projects and reflect these against Councillors views on City Investment and also those of the community as articulated within the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRFs).

- 3.5 Whether RPA happens or not there is now a better working relationship between Belfast City Council and relevant government agencies. To build on this and perhaps explore the potential and possibility of pilot exercises in terms of neighbourhood regeneration or planning both groups of Officers are undertaking desk research as to best practice in Scottish authorities. A site visit to some of these authorities may help to cement a serious working relationship between the Council and central government in the context of community planning.**
- 3.6 The Committee is asked to note the ongoing work by Officers in developing a broader approach to City Investment with government departments and note that a further report will be brought in the context of RPA discussions in due course.**

#### **Resource Implications**

**Should Committee agree to commissioning a discrete piece of work with Derry City Council costs depending on Derry City Council's response, should be shared and would be within existing budgetary provision.**

#### **Recommendations**

- (i) The Committee is asked to agree to commission a joint piece of work with Derry City Council to scope out the case for Accelerated Development Zones.**
- (ii) The Committee is also asked to note the ongoing discussion with DSD and SIB and to endorse further discussions on City Investment with other partners.**

#### **Decision Tracking**

**The first step would be to contact Derry City Council/Ilex and work up an agreed specification which we could probably do by the end of February 2010."**

During discussion in the matter, a Member questioned whether there was a need for the Council to commission a piece of work in relation to Accelerated Development Zones when such work was the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly. In addition, it was suggested that other Councils in the Greater Belfast Area should be requested to take part in the commissioning of the work on Accelerated Development Zones.

The Chief Executive explained the reasons for commissioning the piece of work with Derry City Council and emphasised that it was vital for Local Government to take the lead in order to attempt to draw down funding for investment in the City. He pointed out that the Committee had agreed previously to host a special meeting, to which the Members of the Development Committee would be invited, to consider the report which the Council had commissioned from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which made a number of recommendations regarding delivery of future investment in the City and suggested that a special meeting be convened in March to discuss the report.

Accordingly, it was,

Moved by Councillor McCann,  
Seconded by Councillor Attwood,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations set out in the report and further that the Chief Executive be authorised to seek expressions of interest from other Councils in the Greater Belfast area to ascertain whether or not they would be interested in participating in the commissioning of the piece of work in relation to Accelerated Development Zones.

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

### **Peace III Priority 2.1** **Capital Bids for Shared Space**

The Committee was reminded that a number of projects had been submitted to the Special European Union Programmes Body for funding under Peace III Priority 2.1 – Creating Shared Public Spaces.

It was reported that two of the bids, that is, the Public Service Centre (Community Hub) at Girdwood and the Crusaders and Newington Sports Village at the North Foreshore, had been successful during an initial assessment and would now be progressed to the economic appraisal stage. Due to the large volume of applications received, the other two projects, namely, the North Belfast Cultural Corridor and the Gasworks Bridge, were still at the preliminary assessment stage, the outcome of which would be known in due course.

As part of the next stage, the Special European Unions Programmes Body had appointed consultants to undertake the economic appraisals. Following completion, the findings of the appraisals would inform the overall score applied to the applications, a final decision on which was expected in late Spring, with any successful projects expected to be completed by the end of 2013.

Noted.

## **Public Consultation Document**

### **A Modern and Public Library Service for the Greater Belfast Area**

The Committee was advised that Libraries Northern Ireland had issued a consultation document entitled "Meeting the Demands for a Modern Public Library Service within Northern Ireland – Stage 1: Greater Belfast Area" and was seeking comments thereon. The public consultation process would take place from 7th January till 5th March and would be supported by seven public meetings, an equality impact assessment and a questionnaire process.

The Committee agreed that a special meeting be held to receive representatives from Libraries Northern Ireland in relation to its consultation document on the Strategic Review of Libraries in the Greater Belfast area. It was agreed also that officers should consult with the relevant stakeholders, including the Party Groupings on the Council, in order to prepare a briefing paper for the special meeting.

## **Transition Committee Business**

### **Review of Public Administration**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 Discussions are ongoing within the NI Executive with regard to the future progress of the RPA process and the associated reform of local government. Members will be aware that the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots MLA is locked in ongoing negotiations with Ministerial colleagues within the NI Executive on a number of outstanding issues including the proposed new council boundaries; the release of the draft Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill; and securing the necessary funding for the reform programme.**
- 1.2 If there is no political agreement around these critical issues secured within the coming weeks, then the already tight legislative timetable would not be unachievable and the local reform programme could be at significant risk. At a meeting of the RPA Strategic Leadership Board in December, the Environment Minister indicated that there would be clear direction given on the way forward in early 2010 (i.e. imminently).**

**2.0 Key Issues**

**2.1 Continuing Engagement in Developing the Way Forward**

**2.1.1 NILGA has recently written out to all councils, dated 17th December 2009, seeking initial views on the undernoted issues.**

- (i) Developing an acceptable model to facilitate regional collaboration - given the unanimous opposition within Local Government to the PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) proposal to establish a centralised Business Services Organisation, the Environment Minister has sought views on what alternative options are available to secure greater collaboration among councils and realise potential efficiencies and improvements within local government;**
- (ii) Consideration of the provision of funding from local government to support reform – in order to inform and facilitate future Ministerial and Executive discussions on funding, the Environment Minister has sought the views of local government as to what elements of the reform programme, if any, would it be reasonable for local government self-fund.**

**2.1.2 On receipt of initial comments from councils, NILGA would intend to initiate a further consultation process in early February 2010 on its emerging views.**

**Enabling Collaboration**

**2.1.3 The NILGA correspondence makes reference to the establishment of an enabling body such as an Improvement Agency to facilitate collaboration among councils. It is suggested that the Council may wish to indicate that it would not be favourable, at this stage, to the establishment of another new body, however, would recommend that further consideration be given to identifying existing mechanisms within local government through which greater collaboration could be achieved e.g.**

- Collaboration across council clusters on an informal basis**
- Collaboration across council clusters on an formal basis (i.e. Joint Committees)**

- **Collaboration with other partnership bodies (Total Place)**
- **Delivery of services on a Lead Council or Centre of Excellence basis**
- **Building on existing models of collaboration, eg Arc 21**

**2.1.4** Clearly, any collaborative approach being considered must be subject to a robust 'value for money' test for participant councils.

**2.1.5** The current financial and efficiency pressures facing the local government and wider public sector will undoubtedly act as a compelling driver for encouraging greater collaboration where real benefits, greater value for money and efficiencies can be demonstrated at no detriment to council.

**2.1.6** The Council already provides direct services and works in collaboration with a range of other councils across Northern Ireland in areas such as: Legal Services; Procurement; ICT, Building Control; Human Resources; Project Management and Capital Projects. Below are some specific examples of collaboration.

- **Procurement Unit has developed a range of procurement frameworks (e.g. stationary and computer consumables; vehicles; employment agency framework) which are utilised by a large number of local authorities.**
- **Legal Services provide legal advice to Arc21 which is a Joint Committee comprising of 11 councils dealing with waste.**
- **Building Control has recently been awarded (on behalf of all local government) the contract to coordinate, manage and oversee the promotion, education and enforcement of 'Energy Performance Certificates' for all public buildings across Northern Ireland.**

**2.1.7** The Council is also a lead partner and provides strategic support for a range of inter-agency programmes/initiatives including, for example, Community Safety Partnership and the newly established Joint Public Health Unit.

- 2.1.8 **NILGA have suggested that they should facilitate the creation of an improvement service for local government and offered to use their existing seconded officers to offer expert advice on collaboration. Given the existing cost of supporting NILGA and their lack of front line officer expertise it is suggested that the Council explore these opportunities itself.**
- 2.1.9 **Given the scale of operation and the level of expertise and capacity which exists within the Council, there are potential opportunities for the Council to further strengthen its collaborative working with the wider local government and public sector. In moving forward, it is important that the Council harnesses, refines and builds upon its strengths to the good of Belfast albeit other councils may wish to avail of the services provided. It is suggested that officers explore, within the context of efficiency and value added, what opportunities exist (e.g. examine the potential of the Council becoming a 'Centre of Procurement Excellence').**  
**Consideration of the Funding Model to support reform**
- 2.1.9 **As stated within the Council's recent response to the draft PwC Economic Appraisal for funding the RPA process, clearly there still needs to be significant work undertaken to examine the robustness of the baseline cost projections (and associated assumptions) for implementing the various strands of RPA. Further work is also required to examine and identify which costs are directly attached to enabling and supporting the restructuring of councils (e.g. convergence costs, programme delivery and support costs etc) and those costs which support modernisation and reform initiatives where potential benefits and savings should be realised by councils.**
- 2.1.10 **It should be noted that given the circumstances of Belfast and the fact that it is not fully merging with another council, it is unlikely that it would incur the same level of overall transitional related costs attached to the restructuring and merging of councils, but rather, potential costs would be primarily attached to any modernisation and reform activity agreed by Council. Depending on the decision taken with regard to the new local government boundaries, there may be costs attached to the possible geographical extension and harmonisation of services as well as harmonisation of rates.**

- 2.1.11** Given the current financial climate and the budgetary constraints on the Executive, it is highly probable that local government will be expected to bear some of the costs of the RPA reform process. In fact, at a recent meeting between the Environment Minister and the Minister responsible for Finance and Personnel, Sammy Wilson ML, it had been highlighted that local government would ultimately benefit from the efficiencies and savings flowing from the reform programme and that there was a strong argument therefore that local government should fund the up-front costs of reform in return for the obvious benefits.
- 2.1.12** Whilst further detailed work is clearly required to identify and quantify the level of funding support which may be sought from councils and in examining the potential funding mechanisms through which this could be supported, it is suggested that in responding to NILGA the Council should outline the following general principles:-
- Cost to the ratepayer must be managed & large initial rate rises avoided at point of transfer
  - Councils accept and are committed to securing real efficiencies and taking out costs as a direct result of the reorganisation of councils (e.g. rationalisation of assets, rightsizing of staffing numbers etc)
  - Central Government should provide up-front funding on a conditional loan basis (e.g. established payback model), however, such conditions should be discussed and agreed with the local government
  - Councils to contribute in proportion to the benefits accrued e.g. on the basis of an 'invest to save' business case
  - Functions transferring should be fully funded to meet direct and indirect costs.
  - Belfast City Council welcomes further engagement in more detailed discussions in regards to this important issue and would offer its support in exploring potential funding models.
- 2.1.13** Local Government now need to enter into real conversation and the negotiation process with the Environment Minister, DoE and DFP in relation to the funding of the RPA and, in particular, how councils may fund elements of the reform programme whilst ensuring that any impact upon the rate is moderated.

- 2.1.14 It is suggested that detailed consideration be given to the potential for central government to fund the necessary up-front costs through a conditional loan and on the basis of a robust business case. This would enable individual councils to plan for and self-finance elements of the RPA on a phased basis, through the realisation of efficiencies and, therefore, minimising the potential impact upon the rate. Again it should be stressed that the conditions of any centrally funded loan should not have an adverse impact upon any individual council or cluster proportionate to the benefits realised.

**Draft Local Government RPA Severance Scheme**

- 2.1.15 Members will note that the Local Government Reform Joint Forum, which consists of representation from Trade Unions, central government and local government (including Cllr Tom Hartley and the Council's Head of Human Resources), has recently issued a draft Severance Scheme for consultation.
- 2.1.16 The proposed scheme which will operate up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 reflects standard public sector severance package policy and is in line with schemes used in Health and Education.
- 2.1.17 While the draft scheme has been issued to all transition committees for consultation, Members should note that it is unlikely to impact on Belfast City Council as we are not likely to have any redundancies as a direct consequence of the RPA.

**2.2 Big Lottery Fund (BIG) tender for community planning pilots**

- 2.2.1 As Members are aware, the creation of a Council-led community planning process was one of the key recommendations of the review of public administration. The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) recently advertised a tendering process seeking proposals from one or more service providers to develop and deliver three pilot projects on community planning in Northern Ireland. In addition, BIG is seeking separate tenders for the evaluation and support of these projects.
- 2.2.2 BIG's overarching aim is to provide a model and a toolkit of good practice in community planning that will help to ensure the genuine engagement of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in the new/emerging formal processes.

Under these tender processes BIG are seeking to fund two main areas of work:

1. Contract to deliver three community planning projects in Northern Ireland
2. Support contract for the three community planning projects in Northern Ireland

The total contract value for the three projects will be in the region of £380,000 to £420,000, with the support contract worth £80,000-£90,000.

- 2.2.3 BIG have highlighted that its preferred option for delivery is to appoint one or more external providers to deliver the three projects and that it would value a consortium approach reflecting the importance of cross-sectoral working in a formal community planning process. To provide best learning and practice and geographic coverage across Northern Ireland each project must take place in a different council area, based on boundaries of the future new eleven councils. The areas chosen will be decided by BIG from the bids received, based on rank scores. BIG have stressed that there will not be more than one pilot in any council area.
- 2.2.4 Expressions of interest are requested by 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010. By expression of interest, BIG are seeking information, via a pre qualification questionnaire (PQQ) on the potential service providers or consortia with a view to determining whether they have the potential capacity and experience to deliver the contracts. BIG will only invite those who get through the PQQ stage to submit formal tender bids.  
Trying to ensure that Belfast is one of the pilot areas
- 2.2.5 Members are asked to consider whether the Council should make an expression of interest in making a bid for a pilot in the Belfast area. The advantages of Council involvement in the process would be:
- A direct link to the emerging community planning process for the city, which will be led by the Council;
  - An opportunity to influence the nature of the project to ensure that it has coverage city-wide – North, South, East and West;
  - An opportunity to build on some of the thematic work, such as safety, health improvement or environmental improvement around which the Council has been working with the Voluntary and Community sector,

All with a view to developing the capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector to engage with any eventual formal process and to inform effectively the development of that process.

**Making an expression of interest**

2.2.6 In terms of what is required immediately; for expressions of interest, BIG require the return of a pre-qualification questionnaire by 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010. The purpose of the questionnaire is for the service provider to provide sufficient information for the Big Lottery Fund to decide whether to invite the service provider to submit a tender. Detailed proposals are not required at this stage. However, information about all members of any proposed consortium would need to be provided.

2.2.7 BIG have stated that they would value a consortium approach and, therefore, Members are asked to agree that an approach can be made to potential partners, such as the Area Partnership Boards or other appropriate organisations, for example, umbrella Voluntary and Community organisations so that they could be included in any expression of interest. Details on any proposal that would be made should a tender be sought from the consortium would be brought to Committee for consideration and approval before being submitted.

3.0 **Resource Implications**

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

4.0 **Recommendations**

Members are recommended to:

- (i) agree to write to NILGA outlining the tenor of the Councils position on the issues of collaboration and funding (as set out in section 2.1 of the report above)
- (ii) note the draft Severance Scheme as circulated; and
- (iii) consider and agree to the submission of a Council led expression of interest to the Big Lottery Fund's call for community planning pilots."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Local Government (Contracts)  
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010**

(Mrs. D. Thornton, Principal Solicitor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was advised that the Department of the Environment's Local Policy Division had issued for consultation on 2nd November, 2009 the draft Local Government (Contracts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010. The proposed regulations contained within the consultation document were essentially technical in nature and set out certain requirements in relation to the certification of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) type contracts. The purpose of the regulations was to clarify the legal power of District Councils to enter into such contracts.

The Director of Legal Services had confirmed that there was nothing in the draft regulations which would raise any concerns or controversy for the Council. It was understood that the regulations had been considered by arc21, which had indicated that it was content with the drafting of the proposed regulations, subject to a minor revision to ensure that the provisions as set out within the regulations applied to the two Joint Committees, arc21 and SWamP, which had already been established pursuant to separate regulations. It had been suggested also that it would be useful if the proposed Contracts Regulations made provision for a pro-forma certificate in order to ensure consistency of administration.

It was recommended, therefore, that the Council respond to the Department of the Environment in a similar fashion, stating that it was content with the draft regulations as set out within the consultation document.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Northern Ireland Local Government  
Association Annual Conference 2010**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th December, 2009, it had authorised the attendance at the Northern Ireland Local Government Association Annual Conference on 18th and 19th February of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman and the Head of Committee and Members' Services (or their nominees), as well as the Council's representatives on the Association. It was pointed out that, given the focus and content of the conference, in addition to the attendance of the Members as outlined, it would be beneficial for an appropriate number of relevant senior officers to attend the event to enable them to engage in the debate around the future of Local Government and consider any associated organisational consequences.

In addition, the Northern Ireland Local Government Awards Ceremony, which aimed to recognise exceptional performance and achievement by both officers and Members, would be held on the Thursday evening. Correspondence had been received recently from the Association indicating that the Council had been shortlisted as finalists in three categories, that is, Best Local Authority Service Team - Community Safety; Best Sustainable Development Initiative – Lord Mayor's Big Clean-up; and Best Improvement Project – Building Control Partnership and the Ulster Hall Redevelopment. The Council had been provided with two complimentary places per category shortlisted and it was suggested that the Chairmen and the Deputy Chairmen of the relevant Committees, namely, the Development and Health and Environmental Services Committees, might wish to attend the Ceremony.

The Committee noted that the Council had been shortlisted as finalists for four projects in the Local Government Awards and authorised the attendance:

- (i) at the Annual Conference of an appropriate number of relevant officers based on a business case being completed in line with the Council's Travel Policy; and
- (ii) of the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of the Development and Health and Environmental Services Committees at the Gala Dinner Awards Ceremony.

### **Democratic Services and Governance**

#### **Live Streaming and Archiving of Council Proceedings on the Internet**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

Members will recall that on 1st December, 2009 the Council considered the undernoted Notice of Motion.

#### **Live Streaming and Archiving of Council Proceedings on the Internet**

‘This Council recognises that there is a need to encourage wider interest among the public, and particularly young people, in the affairs of the Council.

One means of creating enhanced awareness and participation would be to follow the lead set by the Northern Ireland Assembly and authorise the live streaming and archiving of Council proceedings on the Internet.

To this end, the Council directs that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee give consideration to this matter in terms of constraints, benefits and costs with a view to bringing a recommendation to the Council at an early date.’

In accordance with Standing Orders, the motion was referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

#### **Key Issues**

The live streaming of the Monthly Meetings of the Council would enable anyone who has access to the internet to watch and listen to the proceedings as they take place. The process of archiving the video footage of the meetings would enable individuals to view past meetings via the internet at any point in time. The constraints, benefits and costs of providing such a service are set out below:

### Constraints

There is nothing in legislation which would prevent the live streaming and archiving of Council Meetings and the Director of Legal Services has confirmed that there would be no impediment to such a course of action.

There would be aesthetic implications in the installing of cameras in the Council Chamber.

### Benefits

The Committee is reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd May, 2008, it adopted a set of recommendations of the Audit Panel in relation to a Code of Governance for the Council. Part of that Code committed the Council to 'taking informed, transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny.....' It is certainly the case that the live streaming and archiving of Council Meetings would be in line with this commitment. Furthermore, the Council's promotion of a Customer Focus approach commits it to providing the public with as much information as possible about the Council's decision-making processes and the live streaming and archiving of meetings would be consistent with such a customer focussed service delivery.

The Council is in the process of developing a number of strategies around improving services and information for its customers in terms of consultation and engagement. New technology is the link between all these strategies. Citizens want news and information and in particular access to services 24 hours a day. The 'nine to five' culture of service delivery is a thing of the past and it is vital that the council adopts a digital approach and maximises the use of modern technology to provide the full range of services and information on-line.

New technology can also assist elected representatives to perform their functions even more effectively. It can enable the organisation to help them become more accessible to the electorate and can ensure that they receive information, updates on Council business and news alerts in a timely and effective manner. There are currently over 50 Council's in England, Scotland and Wales which live stream a range of meetings through their websites. If Belfast City Council decides to proceed with the live streaming and archiving of Council meetings it would be the first Council to do so in Northern Ireland and would be showing leadership to other Councils.

Whilst, it remains vital that Belfast City Council continues to develop its progressive approach to the traditional forms of communications, it would now appear to be appropriate for the Council to consider investing more time and resources in the new channels of communications, particularly in its efforts to reach younger and older audiences which are regarded as harder to reach.

### Options

Following initial research, primarily with the Northern Ireland Assembly and Dublin City Council in respect of their live streaming and archiving systems, it has been identified that there is a diverse range in relation to the type of systems available.

The Northern Ireland Assembly, due to its obligation to record meetings of a suitable quality so as to be broadcast by the BBC, operates an extremely elaborate live streaming and archiving system. However, this system, which would cost the Council between £250,000 to £400,000, is extremely advanced.

The system used by Dublin City Council would seem to be effective in delivering the service. This service provides live streaming of high quality video feed from moveable cameras and will provide viewers with on-screen information, including details of the meeting agenda and of individual speakers.

A system such as that used by Dublin City Council could be delivered in two ways:

Firstly, purchase the required equipment up front at an approximate cost of between £40,000 and £50,000. An additional cost of approximately £10,000 would be payable annually.

Secondly, as is the case in Dublin City Council, the system could be leased from a company which specialises in providing this service. There would be no initial capital payment but it would require an annual leasing charge of between £20,000 and £30,000.

In addition to the costs outlined above there would be a requirement for a member of staff to be trained so as to be able to operate the equipment.

Members will be aware that no provision has been made in the 2010/2011 estimates of expenditure to cover the incurring of costs of this nature. Accordingly, the Committee is requested to indicate whether it is prepared to agree in principle to the provision of such a facility. If so, a detailed report will be brought to the Committee for its consideration after further preparatory work has been undertaken and prior to the invitation of tenders.

### Resource Implications

Provision has not been made within the 2010/2011 revenue estimates for the costs which would be incurred in the purchase of such a system.

### Recommendation

The Committee is asked to decide whether it wishes to agree, in principle, to the provision of a system to facilitate the live streaming of the Council meetings. If so, a further report will be brought before the Committee identifying the detailed costs and timescales for the introduction of an appropriate system.

Furthermore, as provision has not been made in the 2010/2011 revenue estimates, the Committee is advised that the installation and implementation of the system would not be possible prior to the 2011/2012 financial year.

### Decision Tracking

If the Committee agrees in principle to the provision of a live streaming and archiving facility within the Council then a more detailed report will be brought before the Committee for its consideration.”

The Committee agreed in principle to the provision of a system to facilitate the live streaming of the Council meetings and noted that a further report would be submitted in due course.

### 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:

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Mary Peters’ Trust	Launch of Annual Report 22 <sup>nd</sup> February, 2010 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall	The Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 10 <sup>th</sup> December, 2009, agreed to host the launch of the Trust’s Annual Report in the City Hall. The decision was subject to a request being submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee	The use of the City Hall

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
British Society of Animal Science	Annual Conference 13 <sup>th</sup> April, 2010 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall for the holding of the conference Dinner and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre- dinner drinks reception.	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £800
University of Ulster	Displaying Word and Image International Conference 4 <sup>th</sup> June, 2010 Approximately 180 attending	The use of the City Hall for the holding of the conference reception and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception.	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £720
The Federation of Music Services	The Federation of Music Services National Conference 17 <sup>th</sup> June, 2010 Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall for the holding of the conference Dinner and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre- dinner drinks reception.	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £800
National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers	Preventing Sexual Abuse: Risk, Restoration, Reintegration 21 <sup>st</sup> September, 2010 Approximately 70 attending	The use of the City Hall for the holding of the conference reception and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception.	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £280

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
British Association of Paediatric Surgeons	Annual Conference 19 <sup>th</sup> July, 2011 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall for the holding of the conference Dinner and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £800
Action Renewables	Action Renewables Awards Ceremony 10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2010 Approximately 120 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to accredit individuals and organisations for their commitment to sustainable energy projects. Furthermore, the event will recognise those who have identified the importance of renewable energy and sustainability, as well as looking at alternatives to fossil fuels. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better care for Belfast's environment'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £240
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	Northern Ireland Tourism Awards 2010 3 <sup>rd</sup> June, 2010 Approximately 350 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 recognise those businesses which are providing leadership within the hospitality and tourism sectors. Furthermore the event aims to celebrate the success of local business in attracting tourists and corporate visitors to the city and beyond. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together, 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better Services – listening and delivering'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £1,400

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Young Enterprise Northern Ireland	Young Enterprise Innovation Awards 6 <sup>th</sup> May, 2010 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception.	This event aims to recognise the achievements of students who have successfully completed one of three programmes organised by Young Enterprise. The Programmes, which actively include students with learning and physical disabilities, seek to develop business skills as well as the personal development of those who take part. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together, 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of soft drinks. Approximate cost £800
Cinemagic International Film and Television Festival	Awards Ceremony 26 <sup>th</sup> November, 2010 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception.	This event seeks to acknowledge those young people who have demonstrated the most promising and creative talent in the field of Film and Television. The event aims to provide an opportunity to interact with young people and their communities and to provide an international platform so as to engage in dialogue and to learn and share ideas. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together, 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks . Approximate cost £1,600

<b>Organisation/ Body</b>	<b>Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Ulster Reform Club	Ulster Reform Club 125 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner 5 <sup>th</sup> November, 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 125 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ulster Reform Club 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 hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £1,200
Springfield Primary School	Centenary Celebration 3 <sup>rd</sup> December, 2010 Approximately 100 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 100 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Springfield Primary School 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' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £400
Confederation of British Industry	Celebrating Economic Success in Belfast and Beyond 22 <sup>nd</sup> September, 2010 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall	This event seeks to highlight the importance of Belfast as a key driver of the regional economy and to facilitate partnerships between the public and private sectors so as to encourage and support economic regeneration and enterprise. The event also aims to bring key business leaders together with Councillors and Local Government Officials to raise awareness of the changing face of Local Government in Northern Ireland. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city'	The use of the City Hall

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **2010 Somme and Gallipoli Pilgrimages**

(Councillor Adamson declared an interest in this item in so far as he was Chairman of the Association and took no part in the debate.)

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Somme Association enquiring if the Council wished to be represented on the 2010 Pilgrimages to the Somme, France from 28th June until 2nd July and to Gallipoli, Turkey in March.

The Somme Pilgrimage, to mark the 94th Anniversary of the Battle, would follow the route taken by the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions during their service in the First World War. Services of Commemoration would be held in both Thiepval and Guillemont, in addition to attendance at the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres. The Somme Association had not undertaken a pilgrimage to Gallipoli for a number of years but had maintained formal relations with the Governor and Mayor of the Province of Cannakale since 2002. During the Pilgrimage, the foundation stone would be laid for a new memorial to the 10th (Irish) Division at Chocolate Hill. Updated costs had been received for attendance at both events which were approximately £640 per person for attendance at the Somme and £1,200 per person for attendance at the Gallipoli Pilgrimage.

The Committee was reminded that, in previous years, it had authorised the attendance on the Somme Tour of a representative from each of the Party Groupings on the Council. Members who had attended had found the event to be informative and worthwhile and that several of the ceremonial occasions were attended by many public dignitaries and officials, which afforded an opportunity for contacts to be made and relationships to be developed on a range of topics and for the profile and image of Belfast to be promoted.

The Council, in 1997, 1999 and 2000, decided it should not be represented on the Gallipoli Pilgrimage as those visits had not marked any particular Anniversaries. However, in 2002 the Council, during the Association's last Pilgrimage to Gallipoli, had approved the attendance of an All-Party Deputation.

The Committee authorised the attendance on both the Somme Tour and the Gallipoli Pilgrimage of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council and the Chief Executive (or his nominee).

### **Vacant Properties – Response from the Minister**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th October, it had, in authorising the use of the Building Control Service to verify the status of new vacant properties and investigate returned rates bills, agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Finance and Personnel expressing concern that the Council had to pay for an exercise which should be undertaken by Land and Property Services.

The Head of Committee and Members' Services reported that correspondence had been received from the Office of the Minister for Finance and Personnel, indicating that whilst he had noted the Council's concerns it was not possible, given the current budget pressures, for funding to be provided for this exercise.

Noted.

### Human Resources

#### Work Experience for the Young Unemployed

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### "Purpose of report:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to engage with the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) and Bryson Charitable Group in the provision of work experience to disadvantaged young people from across the city.

##### Relevant background information:

In February and May 2008, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to widen the scope of the Council's Community Outreach Programme and engage with the Citywide Employability Consortium (CEC) to develop pre-employment training for the long term unemployed on a pilot basis for one year. To date the council has facilitated five site visits and 10 work experience placements. An evaluation of this year's programme will be carried out before moving into the next year of the programme.

The Council has recently been approached by DEL and Bryson Charitable Group to engage in another programme for the long term unemployed. This programme provides disadvantaged young people (aged 18-24), who have been unemployed for more than one year, temporary waged work experience lasting up to 26 weeks. The Council has been asked to facilitate up to 60 placements and 10 graduate placements. The proposal is based on employing disadvantaged young people from across the city in projects of public value which will have a social impact across all Belfast City Council wards. It will potentially provide a pathway into the labour market by offering paid work experience, employability, training and personal development.

**Key Issues:**

**Potential benefits for participants**

The key benefits of this programme for the participants will be:

- Access to 26 weeks paid work experience at a time when one in three people in Northern Ireland under the age of 25 is unemployed
- Access to at least one accredited training course and other training and development
- A focus on key growth employment areas such as environmental services, waste management and leisure.
- Access to broad experience in the day to day activities in areas such as street cleansing, waste collection, waste management and parks.
- A personal benefit assessment, carried out by the lead contractor to ensure clients are financially better off in employment
- Assistance with job search and provision of ongoing support
- Securing permanent employment is the main focus of the programme, not just training

**Potential benefits for Belfast City Council**

The benefits for the council include:

- Civic leadership and corporate social responsibility - addressing unemployment in the city in the economic downturn
- A direct link between the proposed project and the council's strategic themes.
- Projects, not currently financially viable could be delivered with no cost to the Council.
- The Council is not required to provide any funding

**Potential Belfast City Council projects**

Discussions have taken place with departments and the following potential projects have been identified:

- Green butlers- to encourage householders to consider re-using and recycling as opposed to disposal
- Replanting in parks
- Policy development- carrying out background research on topics such as waste collection, health and wellbeing

- Projects to enhance the Council's response to the blights of graffiti and fly-posting
- Neighbourhood inspections to investigate environmental problems

To date departments/sections have agreed to facilitate the following:

Leisure	three graduate placements
Cleansing	up to 10 operative placements and two graduate placements
Waste	up to 16 operative placements and one graduate
Parks	up to 12 operatives and four graduate placements.

The flexibility of the project is such that the Council can determine working patterns and conditions to meet our needs.

#### Proposed partners for the delivery of the project

The funding body for this proposal is the Department for Employment and Learning who will also have overall responsibility for the programme. Bryson Charitable Group, through its strategic business unit North City Training (NCT) will be responsible for employing the participants, paying wages, delivering employment training, providing ongoing support and managing the administrative elements of the programme. Belfast City Council will be required to identify and provide opportunities across a range of services that will provide real work experience and employability skills to participants.

Research has shown that employability schemes not directly marketed as government schemes tend to be more successful and DEL, while providing full funding, is keen that Belfast City Council and Bryson Charitable Group take the lead on the public relations and marketing of this project.

#### Paid work experience for a period of 26 weeks.

The programme proposes to provide young people with paid work experience of 30 hours per week over a 26 week period. Any necessary training and ongoing monitoring and support will be provided by NCT. The hourly rate of pay will be £6.17 per hour, higher than national minimum wage rates (currently £4.83 for under 22 and £5.80 for over 22).

### Equality

The managing agents, Bryson House and NCT, will have responsibility for ensuring fair selection of the participants on a city-wide and equal basis and the normal equality screening procedure has already been carried out.

### Resource Implications:

#### Financial

No additional resources would be required to participate in this programme.

#### Human Resources

Given the scope and scale of this project, initial communication and consultation has taken place with relevant council sections and the trade unions. If engagement in the project is agreed, this will continue in order to ensure its effective planning, project management and communication.

No offer of permanent employment will follow at the end of the 26 week placement, without adherence to normal council recruitment and selection processes.

#### Asset and Other Implications

There are no assets and/or other implications contained within this report.

#### Decisions required:

The Committee is recommended to agree to the Council's engagement with DEL and Bryson Charitable Group in the delivery of this long term unemployed project on a pilot basis. Future participation would be dependent on a successful evaluation which will be carried out after the pilot."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### Asset Management

#### Old Belmont School Preservation Trust

The Committee was advised that in 2000 the Council had acted as a facilitator on behalf of the Old Belmont School Preservation Trust for the purchase of the former Belmont Primary School Building from the Education and Library Board. The Trust had been established by local residents with the aim of acquiring, restoring and preserving

the building for the benefit of the local community. At its meeting on 16th November, 2000, the Development Committee had granted approval for the Council to take a long leasehold interest in the property, subject to a back to back contract being entered into by the Trust and no other costs being incurred by the Council. The Agreement dated 11th May, 2001 granted from the Board a 99 year lease to the Council, which in turn granted a 99 year lease to the Trust. Both leases provided for a sum of £1 per annum to be paid if demanded.

The Committee was advised that the Trust now wished to purchase the freehold of the site. In order for this to take place, the lease from the Education and Library Board to the Council and the lease from the Council to the Trust required to be extinguished.

The Committee agreed to extinguish the leasehold interest from the Education and Library Board to the Council and from the Council to the Trust to enable the Trust to purchase the freehold of the site.

### **Rock Concert in Giant's Park**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a request to hold a major event on Saturday, 8th May, 2010 in Giant's Park to enable the relevant risk assessment, management plan and event management plan to be completed and submitted to the Committee for consideration.

### **Good Relations and Equality**

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

### **Minutes of Good Relations Partnership**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 15th January, including the expenditure associated with the launch of the Re-Imaging Community Programme Exhibition to be held in the City Hall in March.

### **Cross-Cutting Issues**

#### **Development of a Council-Led Climate Change Action Plan for Belfast**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

**The 2006 Stern Review concluded that the scientific evidence for climate change is now overwhelming and that climate change should be regarded as a serious global threat demanding urgent global action. Lord Stern's views have been echoed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) whose Fourth**

Assessment Report concluded that global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased markedly as a result of human activities and now far exceed pre-industrial values. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) has been identified as the most important anthropogenic greenhouse gas, with global concentrations having increased from a pre-industrial value of around 280 ppm to 386 ppm in 2009. Moreover, the annual carbon dioxide concentration growth rate was larger during the last 10 years than it has been since the beginning of continuous direct atmospheric measurements.

Recognising the Stern Review's call for prompt action, the Council's 2008-2011 Corporate Plan has identified reducing the city's impact on climate change as a key priority within the strategic theme of 'Better care for Belfast's environment - a clean, green city now and for the future'. In terms of indicative actions supporting this key priority, Council committed to the adoption of a Declaration on Climate Change for the city and to the subsequent development of a prioritised action plan to address the causes and consequences of climate change within Belfast in collaboration with outside bodies and local communities. Accordingly, the Council formally subscribed to the Eurocities' Declaration on Climate Change at the Eurocities' Annual General Meeting in Stockholm on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

### Key Issues

#### Development of a Climate Change Action Plan for Belfast

Reflecting upon the principal sources of greenhouse gas emissions within Northern Ireland, the 2008 DoENI State of the Environment Report identifies carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) as the most prevalent greenhouse gas with 34% of emissions arising from energy generation, 33% from transport, 18% from residential sources, 9% from businesses, 4% from industry and agriculture and the remainder from the public sector.

In order to develop an effective prioritised Climate Change Action Plan for the city, it is suggested that the Council would have to demonstrate civic leadership by developing initially actions to minimise greenhouse gas emissions associated with its own activities. The Council would also have to identify how its Departments could contribute individually towards the Action Plan through their everyday business activities. Furthermore, the Council would also need to consider how its services and functions could be adapted to account for the predicted future impacts of climate change within Northern Ireland.

The Climate Change Action Plan would also have to include a range of measures to reduce emissions across Belfast associated with energy generation, transport and residential premises and businesses, etc. Developing such actions would require the Council to foster partner working with a range of government Departments including, for example, those with responsibility for the environment, transportation, energy and housing. It would also be important to involve key representatives from industry, education establishments and communities from across the city in the development of the Action Plan.

The Council's anticipated role in the development of a Climate Change Action Plan would be to act initially as a convening body and to function then as a co-ordinating and managing organisation for its implementation and monitoring.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from road transport through the introduction of zero emission vehicles

In order to begin to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from road transport, Government has recently announced the UK Strategy for Ultra Low Carbon Vehicles. The Strategy provides an overview of government's activities for the next 5 years in terms of research, demonstration and incentives for consumers and industry. The Strategy also includes a reference to £250m of consumer incentives designed to stimulate the take up of electric and plug-in-hybrid vehicles, scheduled to become commercially available across the UK from 2011 onwards.

Government has recognised however, that an electric vehicle charging infrastructure framework will have to be developed in advance of the introduction of fiscal incentives for consumers. This is to be achieved via the Department for Transport (DfT) Office for Low Emission Vehicles 'Plugged-In Places Infrastructure Framework'. Launched on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009, the Plugged-In Places Infrastructure Framework is designed to support the creation of a critical mass of vehicle recharging infrastructure in 3-6 lead cities or regions of the United Kingdom. The infrastructure will help to support the early market for plug in rechargeable zero emission electric vehicles (ZEV) that government wishes to develop across the UK as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving ambient air quality.

The Office for Low Emission Vehicles has stated that seed funding of up to £30 million will be made available to consortia in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland comprised of local authorities, businesses, electricity distributors and suppliers and other organisations like the Regional Development Agencies. This funding will support installation of various types of recharging

infrastructure both on street and in local authority, work, retail and leisure facility car parks. Funding will be available between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 when applicants can apply for grants of up to 50% of eligible costs. Indicatively, the £30 million funding will be spread equally over the three-year period.

The Council's Sustainable Development Manager has undertaken preliminary informal discussions with the DoENI Climate and Waste Division during which DoENI indicated that it wishes to lead the development of a recharging infrastructure funding bid for the Belfast area. DoENI acknowledges that a successful funding bid will require partner working with bodies such as the Council, Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and Electricity Supply Board (ESB), as well as the involvement of a range of commercial partners. DoENI has indicated that the Department for Regional Development and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment are also, in principle, in favour of developing a Northern Ireland bid for funding.

At its meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> August 2009, the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee recommended that research be undertaken to enable the development of a detailed carbon abatement strategy for the Council's vehicle fleet. It is considered that the development of electric vehicle recharging infrastructure across Belfast would assist the Council to introduce greater numbers of zero emission vehicles (ZEV) across its vehicle fleet, thereby cutting both greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Green electricity generated at the Council's North Foreshore site would constitute a suitable energy source for charging electric vehicles.

DoENI has indicated that it wishes to convene a working group early in 2010 in order to develop a recharging infrastructure funding bid for the Belfast area. It has requested that Council considers participating in the development of the bid.

### **Resource Implications**

#### **Financial**

There are no immediate financial implications for the Council associated with the development of a prioritised Climate Change Action Plan for the city.

Similarly, there are no immediate financial implications for the Council associated with participating in a DoENI led working group to develop a Belfast electric vehicle infrastructure funding bid. Members are advised, however, that government funding will meet up to 50% of eligible costs and consequently, partner organisations may be invited to provide financial support to the bid. A further detailed report will be provided to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee should a financial contribution be sought from the Council.

#### **Human Resources**

It is proposed that the Director of Health and Environmental Services, together with the Council's Sustainable Development Steering Group and Sustainable Development Manager, will lead the development of a Climate Change Action Plan for the city. All Council departments will, however, need to identify how they can contribute individually towards the Action Plan through their everyday business activities. Departments will also be encouraged to consider how their services and functions can be adapted to account for the predicted future impacts of climate change within Northern Ireland.

It is further proposed that the Council's Sustainable Development Manager will also represent the Council on the DoENI led working group to develop a Belfast electric vehicle infrastructure funding bid.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Council convenes a cross-sectoral working group in order to commence the development of a prioritised Climate Change Action Plan for Belfast.

The Committee is also recommended to agree that the Council's Sustainable Development Manager represents the Council on the DoENI led working group to develop a Belfast electric vehicle infrastructure funding bid."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Chairman