

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th February, 2010

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, Convery, Crozier, Hendron,
N. Kelly, McCann, Newton and Stoker.
- In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services;
Mrs. J. Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and
Members' Services;
Mr. R. Cregan, Improvement Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Campbell, C. Maskey, Rodgers and Rodway.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 8th and 22nd January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February, subject to:

- (i) the amendment of the minute of 22nd January under the heading "Review of Public Administration" to provide that the Committee receive at its next meeting a detailed report on the Council's engagement with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the associated benefits and detriments to the Council of continuing membership; and
- (ii) the rejection of the decision of 22nd January under the heading "Rock Concert in Giant's Park" agreeing to defer consideration of a request to hold a proposed event at that location; the Council accordingly agreed to permit the site at the North Foreshore to be used for the proposed event, subject to:
 - (a) a risk assessment plan and event management plan being completed to the satisfaction of the Council's Events Advisory Panel;

- (b) those plans, which would include all appropriate licensing and health and safety requirements, being submitted to the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 17th February (to which all Members of the Council would be invited);
- (c) the Licensing Committee having the delegated power from the Council to give formal approval to the holding of the event, subject to it being satisfied as to the foregoing requirements; and
- (d) the completion of an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the Director of Legal Services.

Transition Committee Business

Review of Public Administration Update

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots, MLA, was negotiating currently with Ministerial colleagues within the Northern Ireland Executive regarding the Review of Public Administration Local Government reform process and progressing the necessary legislation, including the Local Government Boundaries (Northern Ireland) Order and the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill. Discussions were ongoing also in relation to how the reform programme would be funded. It was understood that, if no legal agreement around those critical issues were secured within the coming weeks, then the already tight legislative timetable would be unachievable and the Local Government reform programme as proposed could be at significant risk. He pointed out that, as a result of the recent Hillsborough Agreement, a Cross-Party Ministerial Working Group had been established to undertake a trawl of all Executive business, which would include the Review of Public Administration, with a view to recommendations being made on how progress could be achieved on all outstanding matters by the end of February.

The Chief Executive referred to a speech which had been made by the Environment Minister at the previous day's Northern Ireland Local Government Association Conference in relation to collaboration across Councils. The Minister had indicated that Councils would be given one week to commit to collaboration and efficiency savings arising from the creation of a single Waste Authority and a new Business Service Organisation or plans for the Reform programme would be at risk. The Chief Executive explained that Councils generally were of the view that it was not necessary for an additional level of bureaucracy to be imposed by way of the new Business Services Organisation. Rather, the Councils' opinion was that real and substantial efficiencies could be achieved through voluntary co-operation. He pointed out that there were a number of collaborative programmes which the Council was involved in currently through Information Services Belfast, the Legal Services Department and its association with arc21 and a number of other opportunities which the Council would be investigating in due course.

The Committee noted the current position in relation to the Review of Public Administration, endorsed officers exploration of collaborative opportunities with other Councils and noted that suggestions in this regard would be taken forward through the Efficiency Plan which would be brought before the Committee.

Engagement with Lisburn and Castlereagh

The Chief Executive explained that, notwithstanding that a final decision had yet to be taken on the new Local Government Boundaries, the Council had entered into a process of discussion and engagement at both Member and officer level with the voluntary Transition Committee and Transition Management Team of Lisburn and Castlereagh Councils. To date there had been two meetings of the Joint Transition Committees, at which a high-level joint programme of scoping work had been agreed. That work was essential to enable the relevant baseline information to be captured in relation to assets, liabilities, staffing and service delivery standards in order to inform future political discussion. It had been agreed that that information would be important to inform the planning process and ensure that the transition could be managed in an effective and efficient manner and service continuity maintained throughout. He stated that initial officer engagement with Lisburn and Castlereagh had been productive and some progress had been made with regard to the agreed programme of work. However, during recent weeks there had been limited engagement with officers from both those Councils and an apparent cessation to the release of information.

He advised the Committee that Council officers had compiled an initial asset log which had identified those assets located in Lisburn and Castlereagh which would fall within the proposed new Belfast City Council boundary. A detailed service audit had been prepared also by the Council which had identified potential harmonisation issues. Both sets of information had been passed to Lisburn and Castlereagh for consideration and input. Again, however, limited information had been forthcoming to date. The next joint meeting of the voluntary Transition Committees was to have been arranged by Lisburn/Castlereagh during January, 2010. However, despite continuous requests, that meeting had not as yet been scheduled. He pointed out that correspondence, dated 1st February, 2010, had been received on behalf of the Transition Committee for Lisburn and Castlereagh requesting a meeting between the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of both voluntary Transition Committees to discuss future engagement. While further clarification had been sought as to the proposed agenda for the meeting, there had been no response received to date.

After discussion, the Committee noted the comments of the Chief Executive and agreed the Council should respond to the request for a meeting between the Chairs of the Transition Committees, by indicating that they would prefer a full meeting with an agreed agenda between the full Transition Committees with a detailed agenda for the meeting being agreed and circulated beforehand and with the meeting being supported by Council officers.

Transfer of Functions

The Chief Executive reported that the Assembly Departments which were transferring functions to Local Government were finalising draft proposals with regard to how the transfers would be undertaken and those proposals were to be submitted to the Strategic Leadership Board on 25th February with a view to being issued subsequently to Councils for consideration. While Council officials were assisting with bringing the proposals together, under the auspices of the Transfer of Functions Working Group, the Council would clearly need to give full consideration to the emerging Departmental proposals and the potential resource implications for Belfast. The working assumption of

the Departments which were transferring functions was to move forward on the basis of an eleven Council delivery model, which could adversely impact on the level of resources available for Belfast. A number of Members commented on the need for Departments to take into account targeting social need and the fact that there were many areas of deprivation across the City. The Chief Executive undertook to submit a detailed report to the Committee in March outlining the emerging Departmental proposals and the associated implications for the Council.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

1.1 At the Council meeting on 1st February 2010 it was agreed that a report on the Council’s engagement with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the associated benefits and detriments to the Council of continuing membership be submitted for the consideration of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

2.0 Key Issues

2.1 Members will be fully aware of the ongoing discussions over the past number of years in regards to the Councils continued involvement and relationship with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).

Role of NILGA

2.2 The Council recognises the need for a strong Local Government Association (LGA) which is focused on its core business of advocating on behalf of local government on regionally significant policy issues and facilitating engagement between central and local government.

2.3 There is no doubt that NILGA has played a central role in the RPA process to date, supporting the ongoing work of the Strategic Leadership Board and Policy Development Panels to inform the work of the legislative programme. This work is substantially complete and the focus will now switch to implementation of proposals. This work will impact directly on resources and delivery of services at the level of the new Councils. It is therefore essential that this work is owned by and driven by the councils themselves, through the locally elected representatives, who will be responsible for setting the rate and ensuring that the appropriate facilities are provided and services delivered.

- 2.4 To deliver low rates, better services and a success of the reform programme, we therefore need to ensure that the energy, experience and expertise which resides within councils is fully mobilised to drive forward the implementation/operational aspects of the RPA.
- 2.5 NILGA has also established a large number of Member and officer Working Groups (e.g. e-Gov, European, Waste Management, Planning, Health and Environmental, Economic Development etc) to consider key policy areas. The Council is engaged on each of these groups.
- 2.6 There is a risk that NILGA (via its Working Groups and Committees) is duplicating work already being undertaken by councils e.g. BCC has its own internal expertise, capacity and support across these important policy and operational issues. While not undervaluing the role of such groups, there is a general view within the council that there is limited added value gained through its participation. It must be recognised however that some of the smaller councils may find benefit.

Subscription fee and cost structure

- 2.7 Given the current financial pressures, the Council is committed to the implementation of an efficiency programme with places greater scrutiny on budgets and spend. All services are being asked to demonstrate value for money. Similarly, any subscription paid by the Council to a third party should be reviewed within the context of its value for money.
- 2.8 Members will be aware that the Committee had taken a decision to pay a reduced subscription fee to NILGA of £76,230 for 2009/2010 (and not £106,000 requested by NILGA). The release of this payment has been held pending resolution of ongoing discussions with NILGA.
- 2.9 According to NILGA's annual report 08/09 the net operating cost for 2009 was £1,550,939. This has almost doubled from the previous year. Staff costs equate to approx. £857,719 for 21.5 full time equivalent staff. The Department of Environment currently provide substantial grant funding to NILGA.
- 2.10 The Council's reduced subscription fee still accounts for almost 18% of the total NILGA subscriptions and is 3xtimes that of the next highest subscription fee (i.e. Lisburn City Council at £27,239).

Future role of NILGA?

- 2.11 Role clarity is important in moving forward. NILGA should not confuse representation with implementation and delivery which is the responsibility of councils. It is councils who are responsible for striking the rate, delivering services, securing efficiencies and are accountable to the citizen (and political process) for their performance.
- 2.12 Consideration should be given to the sustainability and relevance of the current NILGA organisational structure and associated costs given that it was put in place as an interim measure to assist the policy formulation phase of the RPA process which is now complete. NILGA needs to be a lean and focused organisation which provides added value and value for money to its members.
- 2.13 If NILGA is to remain sustainable it will need to refocus its attention on those VFM services which will bring added value for the local government sector. It may wish to concentrate its efforts on those issues which may need regional coordination and consistency. For example:
- Coordinating sector responses to relevant regional policy issues
 - Enhancing future central / local government relations
 - Exploring options alongside councils and Transition Committees as to the future role, remit and governance of a new Local Government Association.
- 2.14 In order to provide Members with the necessary assurances that the Council is getting appropriate value for money from its continued participation within NILGA, it is suggested that a recommendation be made to NILGA that it enters into a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Council which is attached to the 2010/2011 subscription payment.
- 2.15 By doing this, it is argued that the Council would be better placed to work with NILGA to ensure that it provides value for money services. Members will be aware that a similar approach had been introduced to underpin the relationship between Land and Property Services and the Council.

2.16 The MOU would set out the agreed outcomes to be achieved and provide a framework for NILGA and the Council to work in a spirit of collaboration to deliver them. It is suggested that Council officers would work with NILGA officials to develop the draft MOU and submit for the future consideration of the Committee before it is brought into affect.

2.17 Formal reviews of the MOU and its outcomes will be held biannually and reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

3.0 Resource Implications

If agreed, payment of the NILGA annual subscription fee will be approximately £75,000 - £80,000.

4.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (i) note the contents of the foregoing report;
- (ii) agree that the Council's NILGA subscription payment for 2010/2011 be calculated on the basis of its population base and not penny rate product; and
- (iii) consider the proposal that the Council's subscription payment be based on a Memorandum of Understanding being entered into by NILGA."

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that an All-Party Working Group be established to consider the Council's relationship with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association; further agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Association should be developed and that a report on the options for the future shape of a Local Government Association post the Review of Public Administration be submitted for consideration to a future meeting of the Committee.

Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

The Director of Legal Services reported that the Northern Ireland Assembly's Regional Development Committee was proposing to make a new Roads (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill and was seeking comments in relation to its proposals. He advised the Members that he had convened a group of officers to carry out a detailed review of the draft Bill and the clauses which were contained therein. However, it would appear that there was nothing in the draft Bill which would raise any concerns and necessitate the Council making any specific submission.

He explained that the Bill was intended to address two particular issues, namely, the introduction of traffic restrictions and road closures to enable road works to take place; and the prohibiting or restricting of the use of roads for the holding of special events. In relation to the carrying out of works on roads, the Bill would introduce a permit scheme arrangement whereby permits, which would be made and granted under regulation, would set out the provisions under which the road works would be carried out. The provision enabling the closure of roads would be of particular interest because the function of allowing events on roads would be vested in Councils. The legislation was essentially a forerunner to the introduction of the Review of Public Administration, since it had always been envisaged that the Review would involve the transfer of particular roads functions from central to Local Government, including the ability to make provisions for the holding of certain events on roads, including, for example, the Hallowe'en celebrations and the Christmas lights switch-on. The Director indicated that there was a minor issue regarding the closure of roads for temporary fairs and sporting events and he wished to make a response to the Regional Development Committee in this regard.

Several Members expressed the view that there was a need for utility companies to collaborate when carrying out repairs and other works on roads. In addition, following the undertaking of the aforementioned works, there was a need for the reinstatement works to have a uniform level of quality assurance specified.

The Director indicated that the legislation in relation to the permit scheme would address such issues as collaboration between utility companies undertaking road works and he undertook to forward the comments in this regard as part of the Council's response to the consultation exercise.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

Modernisation and Improvement

Rightsizing Exercise

(At this point in the meeting, all officers present, with the exception of the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Legal Services and the Business Improvement Consultants, left the room while this item was being discussed.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, 21 August 2009 granted approval for a trawl for voluntary redundancies (VR) as part of an organisational rightsizing exercise in preparation for the 2010/11 rate setting process.

Committee was advised in November 2009, that as a result of this trawl, 64 applications had been received for VR and these were being evaluated against criteria/principles previously agreed by SP&R Committee.

On 11 December 2009, Committee was advised that:

- The 64 applications had been individually assessed against the payback period and criteria agreed by Committee and 25 applications were potentially acceptable.
- The one off cost to the Council of releasing these 25 staff would be some £2.3 million. It was estimated that this initial investment would lead to staff savings of some £1 million each and every year (i.e. leading to £5m after 5 years), after making the structural changes needed to facilitate the release of some staff.
- The estimated costs of implementing the VR exercise could be accommodated within the financial position for 2009/10.

Members agreed to the voluntary redundancy exercise within the following parameters:

1. 25 staff to be released at a cost of £2.3M with a pay back of 2.3 years and a saving over 5 years of £5m.
2. Net saving of £1M to be achieved in 2010/11;
3. Total cost to be no more than £2.3M with a payback period of no more than 2.3 years;
4. Supernumerary staff to be managed in a time bound manner and resolved by the end of the financial year;
5. Reviews to be conducted and implemented in accordance with BCC HR policies and procedures;
6. Trade Unions to be fully consulted and agreement sought in relation to all releases and structural changes;
7. Further reports to be made to Committee on the progress of this exercise with final structures being reported to Committee for notation;
8. Implement the completed Building Control review, given the costs and savings which have already been identified; and
9. Delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Budget and Transformation Panel, to release staff on voluntary redundancy, subject to the principles set out above and the final staff structures being established to achieve the savings required in the areas below:
 - Chief Executives and Legal Services Department;
 - Financial Services (considering future direction of efficiency and performance management) and BIS;

- Parks and Leisure Business Support; and
- Parks and Leisure Operational Management
- Property Maintenance within Property and Projects
- Building Control (*previously reported to Committee Dec 2009*)

In addition, these reviews also support the strategic direction of the Council.

Key Issues

Since the 11 December 2009, the affected departments have been undertaking detailed work with the Council's Business Improvement Services (BIS) on their structures to ensure organisational rightsizing is undertaken within the parameters agreed by Committee. Following this work, the circumstances of one application have been reviewed and the savings can be achieved through the release of 24 staff, rather the original planned 25 staff. The key issues resulting from this work are set out below.

Summary of efficiency savings from reviews by Departments/Service

Department/Service	Vol Redundancies	Savings
Chief Executives and Legal Services	8	£375,364
Finance and Resources	2	£157,777
Parks and Leisure	7	£217,685
Property and Projects	1	£51,136
Building Control	6	£181,307
Total Savings	24 posts	£983,269

Overview of key issues by department

Chief Executive's and Legal Services Departments

The overall aim of these reviews was to rationalise and integrate the workload across both departments.

The following areas were included in this review:

Legal Services Department; Chief Executive's Support; Committee and Members' Services (including the Lord Mayor's Unit); Departmental Business Support including Records Management; Corporate Communications; Good Relations; Strategic Policy and Planning; Registration Services. The overall senior management structure was also considered and the key recommendations were:

- Deletion, creation, re-designation and re-grading of posts have all allowed improved and streamlined functional arrangements for the new Chief Executive's Department.
- All posts previously identified for voluntary redundancy can be released.
- It is also proposed that the function of Planning and Policy would transfer to the Chief Executive's Department. The function would incorporate all elements of strategic policy and planning (including Community Planning), support to the Chief Executive and Chief Officers as a team, including the support previously provided by the Chief Executive's Business Support Manager.
- Business support is now centrally located within the new department.
- The post of Head of Committee and Members' Services is deleted; the post of Principal Committee Services Administrator is re-designated as the Democratic Services Manager who will manage the new Democratic Services Unit and a re-constituted Lord Mayor's Unit, to enhance civic dignitaries' support
- The Director of Legal Services is re-designated as the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive, to take onboard day to day operational management of the functions within the new Chief Executive's Department.
- Legal Services will also gain a new post of Legal Services Manager; a revised functional structure and dedicated support for the senior legal staff.
- Registration (BDM&CP) moves under the departmental business support function.

The financial outturn following these reviews is a total saving of **£375,364** (including on-costs for employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions).

Parks and Leisure Services Department

The overall aim of the review was to rationalise the Parks Operational Management tier and Business Support structures to develop streamlined structures which will deliver improved decision making processes and promote accountability across all tiers of management.

The following outcomes are required to enable the council to meet the challenges ahead:

- Deletion, creation, re-designation and re-grading of a number of posts have all been necessary to provide the opportunity to create improved and streamlined functional arrangements for the Parks Operational Management tier and the business support function servicing the department.
- The release of all posts previously identified for voluntary redundancy
- The approval and implementation of a Parks and Leisure Improvement programme across the Parks and Leisure Department.
- The approval of the business case for the creation of the new post of Head of Parks and Leisure Services to provide a focus for the integration and delivery of services across the department and the delivery of the Parks and Leisure Improvement programme.

This new structure has been supported by the Parks and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 11 February 2010. The financial outturn following this review is a total saving of £217,685 (including on-costs for employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions).

Finance and Resources Department

The key functions considered in this review were operational and strategic finance; policy and planning; efficiency; organisation development and improvement; performance management; and customer focus.

The following recommendations are proposed following the review to enable the council to meet the challenges ahead:

- Delete the posts of Head of Financial Services, Core Improvement Manager and Principal Consultant
- Move the function of performance management from the outgoing Core Improvement Department to the Finance and Resources Department
- Create a new and enhanced Head of Service post with responsibility for Finance, Performance Management and Efficiency.
- Move the function of Policy and Planning from the outgoing Core Improvement Department to the Chief Executive's Department.

- Move the people aspects functions of organisation development and the responsibility for organisation establishment and structures (including job evaluation; categorisation and job descriptions) to HR to support the framework currently being developed to ensure the robust monitoring and management of all employee costs.
- Move the functionality of 'Customer Focus' from Core Improvement Department to the Finance and Resources Department.
- Agree a programme of work to align existing staff to the functions of policy and planning; efficiency; organisation development and improvement; performance management; and customer focus.

The financial outturn following these reviews is a total saving of **£157,777** (including on-costs for employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions).

Property and Projects Department

The organisation structure for Property Maintenance was examined and verified to ensure the business case for the release of one post on voluntary redundancy.

The financial outturn following this review is a total saving of **£51,136** (including on-costs for employer's National Insurance and Superannuation contributions).

The detail of each review area can be found in the attached appendices.

Current Status of VRs and Supernumerary staff

In terms of the VR exercise, 21 staff out of the 24 staff discussed above have been placed on their notice. It is anticipated that the remaining 3 staff will be released during the first quarter of 2010/11. There has also been an additional transferred one to one redundancy to support the release of a supernumerary member of staff (see below).

At its meeting in December 2009, Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed that supernumerary staff should be managed in a time bound way. There were four such staff in posts above the establishment. Since then one supernumerary employee has been redeployed into a vacant established post; one has been redeployed into an occupied established post on a one to one transfer VR; one has been deployed to a task and finish piece of work to be released on VR in Feb 2011 unless employment status changes; and one has been placed on three months notice of compulsory redundancy. The Council will continue to seek suitable alternative employment for this employee during the notice period.

Resource Implications

Financial

If the recommendations contained in this report are accepted then they will result in a net saving of £983,269 annually on an ongoing basis.

Human Resources

It was agreed by SP&R Committee on the 11th December 2009 that all the reviews would be conducted and implemented in accordance with BCC HR policies and procedures.

For those reviews which do not have full agreement at this stage there will be further consultation with Trade Unions and employees to agree final positions and implementation will be in accordance with the relevant HR policies and procedures.

Recommendations

1. To note the contents of this report.
2. Agree that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Budget and Transformation Panel, to implement these reviews and achieve the savings, subject to the relevant HR policies and procedures and consultation with staff and trade unions.
3. If members approve recommendations 1 and 2, agree to delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Resources to recruit and appoint the post of Head of Finance and Performance. This post would be recruited in accordance with the RPA Vacancy Control procedure, in consultation with the Local Government Staff Commission, with the outcome reported to the Committee for notation.

Decision Tracking

The responsible officer to oversee the implementation of these recommendations will be the Director of Finance and Resources.

Key to Abbreviations

BCC – Belfast City Council
BDM&CP – Birth Deaths Marriages and Civic Partnerships
BIS – Business Improvement Section
HR - Human Resources
RPA – Review of Public Administration
SP&R – Strategic Policy and Resources
VR - Voluntary Redundancy”

An extensive debate took place on the recommendations during which Members emphasised the need for a continuous challenge across the organisation on staffing levels and the need to examine further efficiencies. During the discussion a Member suggested that each Department should be tasked to examine the potential of further rightsizing and voluntary redundancy exercises. It was agreed that this should be done in the context of the efficiency programme which would be considered by the Committee over the coming months.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Democratic Services and Governance

Consultation - Draft Local Government (Indemnities for Members and Officers) (Northern Ireland) 2010

The Director of Legal Services reported that the Department of the Environment was undertaking a consultation exercise in relation to its proposals to make an Order for the purpose of dealing with indemnities for Members and officers. The purpose of the proposed Order was to clarify the present uncertainty which existed in relation to the power of District Councils in Northern Ireland to provide indemnities to Members and officers for any personal liability which they might incur arising from actions or decisions taken by them in the course of their official duties, particularly where Members and officers had become involved with external bodies to which they had been appointed by their Councils.

The Director indicated that the Department had set out a number of questions for consideration by consultees and draft responses to those questions, which he commended as the Council's response to the consultation, were set out hereunder:

“Belfast City Council response to the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland consultation on the draft Local Government (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order (NI) 2010.

Question 1: *Do you agree that Council should be able to indemnify all or such of their members or officers as they determine for liabilities incurred when they are acting by virtue of their membership of, or employment by, their councils and for the purpose of their councils?*

The Council agrees that the power to indemnify specific individuals should be at the discretion of each council and should apply to circumstances in which members or officers act by virtue of their membership of, or employment by, their councils and for the purposes of their councils.

Question 2: *Do you agree with the above circumstances or are there other circumstances in which councils would want to provide indemnities and which should be covered by the 2010 Order?*

The Council is content with the power set out in the draft legislation which provides that an indemnity may be provided in relation to any action of, or failure to act by, the member or officer in question, which:

- (a) is authorised by the council ; or
- (b) forms part of, or arises from, any functions conferred upon that member or officer, as a consequence of any function being exercised by that member or officer -
 - (i) at the request of, or with the approval of the council, or
 - (ii) for the purposes of the council

Question 3: *Are the restrictions on councils' power to provide indemnities proposed above appropriate?*

The Council is content with the suggested provisions.

Question 4: Do you agree that the Department is right to:

- *limit indemnities from council reserves to situations where individuals have acted honestly and in good faith?*
- *permit councils to insure against the risk that indemnities might be called upon?*
- *prohibit councils from providing indemnities, either directly or through insurance, for the cost of starting proceedings for defamation?*

The Council agrees that indemnities should not be provided where the action by or the failure to act by a member or officer constitutes a criminal offence or is the result of fraud, or other deliberate wrongdoing or recklessness on the part of that member or officer. It is agreed that an indemnity should be provided in relation to the defence of any action for defamation against that member or officer

Question 5: *Are there other express prohibitions that should be attached to the power to give indemnities?*

The Council is content that the limitations set out in the draft Order are appropriate.

Question 6: *The Department seeks views on this approach to indemnifying members or officers who provide guarantees, opinion letters or letters of comfort to third parties or become liable through activities that are subsequently found to be ultra vires?*

The Council agrees that councils should be able to provide indemnities to members and officers to cover cases in which individuals are subject to proceedings in relation to matters authorised by their councils but which are later found to be ultra vires if:

- (a) the individual indemnified, at the point at which he or she acted, believed that the action he or she was taking was within the law or, where the actions consist of providing an opinion letter of comfort, that the contents of that letter were true: and
- (b) that those beliefs were honestly and reasonably held.

Question 7: *Are there any other issues that need to be covered in 2010 Order?*

The Council believes that the draft Order provides sufficient clarification of the position regarding the granting of indemnities to members and officers in local authorities in Northern Ireland.”

The Committee approved the draft response and noted that the Director of Legal Services would undertake a review of those outside bodies on which the Council had representation in order to identify the representatives who would have to be covered in this regard.

Publication of Members' Information

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of Report

To submit for the consideration of the Committee a report regarding proposed changes to the information which is published annually on the Council’s website relating to Members’ allowances and expenses.

Relevant Background Information

The Former Policy and Resources (Members) Sub-Committee at its meeting on 4th August, 2003 agreed the nature and format of information to be published on the Council's website relating to Members allowances, mileage claims and details of costs incurred by attending conferences and undertaking visits.

The Sub-Committee approved the publication under the following headings:-

Allowances

Basic
Attendance
Special Responsibility

Conferences/Visits

Subsistence (including the cost of accommodation and out of pocket expenses)
Travel (by public transport or car)
Conference Fees

Travel Expenses

Mileage, etc. to and from meetings

The Sub-Committee agreed also that explanatory notes should be published in relation to each of the proposed headings outlining the nature of each payment and indicating that all of the costs were in accordance with relevant legislation, Council policies and procedures, that Allowances were subject to the normal Income Tax and National Insurance deductions and that expenses associated with attendance at conferences or for travel were related to the costs actually incurred and should not be considered as being of a financial benefit to Members.

The Sub-Committee agreed also that locally-held training sessions and meetings such as boards of outside bodies, since they were part of the routine work of Councillors and were clearly distinguishable from conferences should not be included among lists of conferences attended.

It was agreed that the information would be updated on an annual basis and that prior to publication each Member would be circulated with the information applicable to them personally to allow verification of the information being provided.

Current Position

In accordance with the Sub-Committee's decision, the information as authorised has been published on the Council's website each year in June and has been included in the Council's Publication Scheme.

Publication of the information in this manner has removed the need for the Council to respond to individual requests for information which the public is entitled to receive in regard to the above-mentioned items under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It also permits the information to be collated on the basis of a full financial year which results in more consistent and accurate reporting of the financial information.

Key Issues

Over the past number of months several Freedom of Information requests have been received from individuals seeking information about Members' allowances and expenses. It has been the practice to refer these individuals to the Council's Publication Scheme and the information published annually. Recently one such individual asked for the response to be reviewed on the basis that the information provided was not complete and not sufficiently up-to-date.

Having conducted a review as required under the Act, the Director of Legal Services concluded that publication of such information on an annual basis was not unreasonable, however, it was determined that the nature of the information published required to be reviewed given the changes in Members' allowances and expenses which had been introduced since 2003.

In light of the Director of Legal Service's determination it is necessary to re-assess the information published in relation to Members' allowances and expenses. It is also clear that there is increased public interest in payments made to elected representatives at every level from Central Government down. It is essential for the Council to be transparent in relation to all payments made to Elected Members and, accordingly, the Committee's authority is sought to revise the Council's Publication Scheme in so far as it relates to allowances and expenses paid to Councillors to include all payments made by the Council.

The main changes required are the removal of Attendance Allowance which is no longer applicable and the inclusion of information on Members' allowances associated with membership on the District Policing Partnership Board and the Council's Transition Committee. These allowances are 75% and 100% funded respectively and will require an explanatory note if they are to be published or otherwise provided to the public. It is suggested a revised list of allowances and expenses are published under the following headings:-

Allowances

Basic
Special Responsibility
District Policing Partnership
Transition Committee
Civic Dignitaries Personal Allowances

Conferences/Visits

Subsistence (including the cost of accommodation and out of pocket expenses)
Travel (by public transport or car)
Conference Fees

Travel and Other Miscellaneous Claims

Mileage, etc. to and from meetings
Home Phone Rental/Broadband Fee
Hands Free Car Kits

Explanatory notes relating to each of the above elements should also be published to provide details of the nature of each allowance or claim and the extent, if any, of outside funding which applies (for instance 75% funding for District Policing Partnership payments).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee authorises the revision of the details of Councillors' allowances and expenses published on the Council's website as outlined above and agrees that the information be updated on an annual basis and that prior to publication each Member would be circulated with the information applicable to them personally to allow verification of the information being provided.

Decision Tracking

To be undertaken by Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services, by 31st July each year."

During discussion in the matter a Member suggested that the current scheme should be retained since it provided enough information in relation to Members' allowances and expenses. It was pointed out that any publication scheme in relation to Members should include details regarding to the number of Committee meetings attended. After further discussion it was

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

That the Committee agrees that full details of all costs and expenses incurred by officers attending conferences be published on the internet.

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

The Committee accordingly adopted the recommendation in relation to the revision of the details of Councillors' allowances and expenses to be published on the Council's website and the Chief Executive confirmed that details of the cost of travel incurred by officers was presently published as part of the Council's publication scheme.

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
Queen's University Belfast	'Built Environment' and 'Entrepreneurship and Employability' Conference 18th June, 2010 Approximately 60 attending	The use of the City Hall 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 Themes of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £240

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Society of Occupational Medicine	Society of Occupational Medicine Annual Scientific Conference 15th June, 2011 Approximately 280 attending	The use of the City Hall 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 £1,120
Confederation of Registered Clubs Association	Confederation of Registered Clubs Association Conference 26th May, 2010 Approximately 50 attending	The use of the City Hall 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 £200
Accord Trade Union	Accord Bi-Annual Conference 20th April, 2010 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a dinner for the organising Committee of the Conference.	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 a dinner. Approximate cost £1,200
Linfield Football and Athletic Club	125th Anniversary Dinner of Linfield Football Club 27th May, 2011 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 125th Anniversary of Linfield Football 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 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 £1,200

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
St Teresa's Community Project	Centenary Dinner 4th November, 2011 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 celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Parish of St Teresa and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well- being of 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 £1,400
Belfast Royal Academy Old Boys Association	225th Anniversary Dinner 27th 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 225th Anniversary of the Belfast Royal Academy and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well- being of 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 £1,200
Titanic Schools Project	6th Annual Thomas Andrews Prize Awards Ceremony 5th May, 2010 Approximately 70 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to recognise the achievements of engineering students who have undertaken projects associated with the Titanic. This event will also aim to promote the positive aspects of the city's shipbuilding history and to inspire a new generation of engineers. 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 tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £140

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
National Deaf Children's Society	Young Authors and Artists Prize Day 8th June, 2010 Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to celebrate the artistic achievements of deaf children and young people in the areas of creative writing, drawing and photography. 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 tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £400
The Department for Employment and Learning	National Training Awards 2010 12th October, 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 event seeks to recognise and reward individuals and organisations from both the public and private sector which have demonstrated an increase in the skills of their workforce through a commitment to training and development. 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.

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Fold Housing Association	Launch of the Mobile Therapy Unit for Dementia Sufferers 4th May, 2010 Approximately 80 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	This event seeks to launch the Mobile Therapy Unit which aims to improve the quality of life for dementia sufferers and their carers. The event also seeks to raise awareness among the general public on dementia and dementia-related issues. 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 tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £160

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Arising out of discussion in the matter, the Head of Committee and Members' Services undertook to provide to individual Members information in relation to the allocated budget and associated spend for the provision of hospitality for the previous and the current financial year and to provide clarification on the criteria for the use of the building.

Transitional Governance Arrangements for the Education Sector

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th December, it had considered a report concerning correspondence which had been received on 8th December from the Minister for Education inviting the Council to make nominations to the Transitional Board of the Belfast Education and Library Board, pending the establishment of the new Education and Skills Authority. The Minister, in order to comply with the Code of Practice of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, had requested that two nominees be put forward for each of the four places to which the Council would be entitled. The names of the eight nominees were to be sent to the Department by 16th December.

The Head of Committee and Members' Services pointed out that Members had been given two options to consider. The first option had been to determine the Council's representatives using a one-off selection process based on d'Hondt which resulted in the undernoted choice sequence:

SF - Choices 1, 5 and 7
DUP - Choices 2, 6 and 8
UUP - Choice 3
SDLP - Choice 4.

The second option had been to take the view that the Council, at the commencement of the Council term, had already nominated fourteen representatives to the Belfast Education and Library Board using the d'Hondt process and if the Minister wished to reduce this figure from fourteen to four she should make her selections from that pool of Councillors.

The Committee had agreed to nominate only four Members to the Belfast Education and Library Board and, based on the use of a one-off d'Hondt selection process, these had comprised one Member from each of the four main Party Groupings on the Council, that is, Sinn Féin, the Democratic Unionists, the Ulster Unionists and the Social Democratic and Labour Party Groupings.

A letter advising the Minister of the Council's decision and the names of the four nominees, Councillors Convery, Hartley, Rodgers and Rodway, had been emailed to her officials on 14th December.

The Head of Committee and Members' Services reported that further correspondence from the Minister had been received by the Council on 17th February. In her letter, the Minister reiterated the need for the Council to nominate at least two nominees for each vacancy, claiming that to do otherwise might hold up the selection and appointment process. She requested that the names of further nominees be forwarded to her by 19th February.

The Head of Committee and Members' Services indicated that the Committee had two options to consider. Firstly, it could decide to confirm its original decision to nominate four Members only, or secondly, it could agree to provide four additional nominees based on the next four choices under the one-off d'Hondt process which had been run in December. This would result in two further nominees from each of the Sinn Féin and Democratic Unionist Party Groupings, that is, choices 5 and 7 for Sinn Féin and choices 6 and 8 for the Democratic Unionist Party.

The Committee agreed to affirm its decision of 11th December to nominate only four Members to the four places to which the Council was entitled under legislation on the interim Belfast Education and Library Board.

The Committee noted that Standing Order 27 provided that a Motion to alter or rescind a resolution of the Council within six months of the date of such resolution would not be competent unless the motion was brought forward as a recommendation of the Committee concerned. Since the Committee had not recommended any change to its previous decision of 11th December, the Committee's decision could not therefore be altered at the Council meeting on 1st March.

Meeting of Budget and Transformation Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 9th February.

Meeting of Audit Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Panel of 15th February.

Request for Funding – City of Belfast Youth Concert Band

The Committee was advised that a request for financial assistance had been received from the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band in relation to a tour of the United States of America. The cost of the tour was approximately £90,000 and, while Members of the Band would be paying the majority of the expenses, sponsorship from third parties was being sought.

A legal opinion had been obtained and the Council could, if it so wished, use Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 to make financial contributions of this nature. The Committee had made similar donations to the Band and to the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra in the past and it was recommended that funding in the sum of £5,000 be awarded to the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band in respect of its tour of the United States of America.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and

Resolved – That expenditure of £5,000 in respect of the aforementioned tour be approved under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, it being the opinion of the Committee that the expenditure would be in the interest of, and would bring direct benefit to, the District and the inhabitants of the District, with the Committee being satisfied that the direct benefit so accruing would be commensurate with the payments to be made.

Corporate IT Middleware Solution

(Ms. R. Crozier, Head of Information Services Belfast, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee granted authority for the commencement of a tendering exercise for a cost-effective corporate information technology middleware solution, a software system which enabled the transmission of information between computer systems and electronic forms, at a cost of £50,000 for the initial purchase, with annual support costs of £10,000. The Committee noted that the tenders would be evaluated using pre-determined criteria.

**Publication of the History of Belfast
to Mark the City's 400th Anniversary**

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the town of Belfast had been established formally by the grant of a charter by James I on 27th April, 1613, so in 2013 it would mark its 400th Anniversary. That had prompted a renewed interest in the City's history and the undertaking of important research, the findings of which were not yet available to the public. Queen's University of Belfast, in conjunction with the Liverpool Press, had proposed the production of a new multi-author history of Belfast, which would be edited by Professor Sean Connolly and modelled in part on the highly successful 800th anniversary history of Liverpool. The last comprehensive history of Belfast had been published in the 19th Century.

The new book would be comprehensive, be well illustrated and accessible and cost £15 for around 400 pages in the paperback edition. For the first time, the history of Belfast from pre-history to the present would be addressed by a series of distinguished authors. The book would enhance civic pride and citizen ownership in connection with the story of Belfast, past and current. The book would be available in Autumn, 2012. The financial model which had been proposed was based on each of the three partners providing £15,000. Queen's University was providing substantial input in terms of staff time and was seeking additional research funding externally. The Council would receive a 12% royalty on each copy sold, which would recoup the costs if the print run was completely sold. Additionally, the Council would receive 150 soft bound copies and 100 hard cover copies.

Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee agree to:

- (i) enter into a partnership with the Queen's University of Belfast and the University of Liverpool Press to publish the 400th Anniversary History of Belfast; and
- (ii) provide £15,000 as the Council's contribution to the costs of production and publishing.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Human Resources

Security Unit Update

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

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

The Committee may recall that, during its meeting of October 2009, a number of questions were raised by individual members in respect of matters concerning the security unit. These questions related to the provision of CCTV in the City Hall, working conditions

in the Control Room and more general issues surrounding the unit's operations. As a consequence, the Head of Facilities Management agreed to bring a report in early 2010 updating the Committee on all relevant issues and the relevant details are set out below.

Industrial Relations

Members will recall that a package of changes to numbers, working hours, duties, locations, pool cover, pay & grading and contractual overtime arrangements etc. was developed and put to staff by way of ballot in late 2009. The Security Officer grade (30 staff) voted overwhelmingly to accept the proposal and it was duly implemented. The Control Room grade (8 staff) initially rejected the proposal - largely due to issues around the requirement for some modest lone-working in the new shift structures - but in a subsequent ballot have recently also voted to accept the package, which has now been implemented. These changes will not only result in enhanced efficiency and flexibility but will also reduce overall overtime expenditure by approx. £75,000 per annum.

CCTV infrastructure

Most of the CCTV cameras in place inside the City Hall until 2007 were removed during the recent refurbishment. The opportunity was also taken at that time to enhance cabling in order to permit the use of IP-based CCTV cameras (meaning that the images could be viewed using standard internet protocols from anywhere with a broadband connection) and a provision of £225,000 was made in the capital programme to purchase replacement cameras and associated infrastructure and hardware. However, in the light of emerging financial constraints and the consequent need to re-prioritise the projects within the capital programme, the CCTV item was removed following discussions with the then Director of Corporate Services.

This in turn meant that, for a relatively brief period of time, the building has had to operate with a 'skeleton' CCTV system which is limited in coverage and is clearly not ideal. However once this situation arose it became necessary to consider possible alternatives, and it has been identified that the BCC Waste Transfer Depot at Duncrue has a modern, relatively new and fully functional CCTV control matrix and associated equipment which has recently been decommissioned, as this property has now transferred to the corporate land-bank.

We have sought and obtained permission to transfer this CCTV equipment to the City Hall, and this will allow us to provide CCTV coverage both inside and outside the building, providing coverage almost as comprehensive as before, and for a revenue cost of just £18,000 (including the purchase of some new high-resolution monitors etc). This equipment is IP-compatible and will therefore allow us to improve the system over time by means of relatively modest additional revenue expenditure without the need for a large capital financing requirement, and this is obviously a highly desirable outcome as it has resulted in a saving to the council of nearly £¼m.

Control Room

It is also our intention to proceed with a fairly significant refurbishment of the Control Room area, in order to render it more useable for staff. This will involve increasing the size of the area by opening up the adjacent room (formerly the emergency management room) and re-designing the area to re-position and improve kitchen and other facilities.

It is recognized that the Control Room is not an ideal location for staff as it is located in the basement, has no natural light and can be quite restrictive in terms of its size and layout. This project will make significant improvements in terms of increased size, enhanced kitchen and washroom facilities, better lighting and air-conditioning, rationalized layout and the removal of old cabling and infrastructure etc, but it must be emphasized that it is not a complete refurbishment as it is constrained by the available revenue funding of approx. £80,000. Control Room staff will be consulted about design and layout issues before the plans are signed off and work commences, which we anticipate will be mid-April 2010.

New Security Manager

Members will be aware that we have had no Security Manager in post for quite some time, and that this role has been covered by temporary arrangements of various types, with varying degrees of success. We are therefore very pleased to confirm the appointment of Mr Maurice Baillie, formerly Security Manager at Queens University, to the post. Mr Baillie commenced employment on 8th February 2010.

Key Issues

The Committee is asked to note and endorse the actions, planned improvements and associated expenditure as set out above.

Resource Implications

The costs associated with the installation of the transferred CCTV equipment and some additional procurement of monitors and cameras will be approx. £18,000. The building and associated work necessary on foot of the refurbishment of the Control Room will be in the order of £80,000.

Both sums are provided for in the relevant revenue budgets of the Section, and it will not now be necessary to seek capital funding for the replacement of the CCTV back-office infrastructure.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:-

- (a) the Committee notes and endorses the transfer of existing CCTV equipment to the City Hall together with the associated expenditure; and
- (b) the Committee approves the carrying out of a substantial refurbishment programme in the Control Room area, together with the associated expenditure.

Decision Tracking

If approved the new CCTV system should be fully operational by 31st March 2010, and the refurbishment of the Control Room should commence in April and be complete by June 2010."

Several Members expressed concern that the installation of the closed circuit television equipment had not been included within the contract for the refurbishment of the City Hall and sought clarification in this regard.

In response, the Head of Facilities Management pointed out that while, the procurement of monitors, cameras and other equipment had not been included in the contract, the rewiring associated with the installation of the equipment had. He explained that the Waste Transfer Depot at Duncrue had been declared surplus to requirements and therefore the equipment at that property was no longer required. The closed circuit television equipment which was being relocated to the City Hall was approximately two and half years old but contained all the features which were necessary in order to offer adequate protection to the City Hall.

With regard to a number of questions in relation to the re-staffing of the Security Unit, he indicated that the operational changes and associated financial settlement had resulted in a one-off buy-out cost of approximately £250,000. However, this would effect savings of approximately £100,000 in the first year, with savings of £75,000 to £80,000 per annum thereafter. He explained that the new structure provided sufficient cover for a standard working week but that overtime payments would be required to be paid depending on the types of events and functions which were being held in the City Hall.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Refurbishment of the City Hall

Arising out of discussion in the previous item, the Chief Executive advised the Committee that the final stage of the Council's Gateway Process for Capital Projects required a post-completion review to be undertaken to deal with any lessons which had been learnt and to provide for feedback. The contract for the refurbishment of the City Hall was at that stage currently and a report would be submitted to the Committee in due course. That would provide the Members with an opportunity to raise any issues regarding the contract.

Noted.

Standing Order 55 - Employment of Relatives

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Order 55 and the authority delegated to her, the Director of Finance and Resources had authorised the appointment of a number of individuals who were related to existing officers of the Council.

Noted.

Asset Management

Capital Programme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

This report has three purposes:

- (i) to seek approval to apply for loan sanctions which are required for a number of capital schemes which are currently underway;**
- (ii) to seek approval to hold party group briefings on the development of a process for the future prioritisation of capital projects; and**
- (iii) to seek approval to progress four new schemes which are dependent on time bound funding**

Key Issues

(i) Loan Sanctions

Members will be aware that there are four main ways to pay for schemes in the capital programme – grants, loans, capital receipts and revenue contributions. In the case of loans, the Council must apply to the Department of Environment for a loan sanction.

At this point in time, 11 schemes totalling £5,925,750, which Members have previously agreed to progress, now need loan sanctions in order to ensure that the council's cash flow position is sustained at acceptable levels. A list of the schemes which require loan sanctions is provided at Appendix 1.

Members should note that the principal and interest payments on these loans have already been budgeted for as part of the rate setting process.

(ii) Prioritisation of the Future Capital Schemes

Members will be aware that there are a number of proposals for new capital schemes which have yet to be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Director of Property and Projects has progressed these schemes through the 'starting gate' element of the 'gates process'. This means that the outline business case for each scheme is challenged in terms of business need and how it will contribute to meeting the priorities of the organisation.

The gates process, however, only prioritises individual schemes and does not take into account the issue of affordability. In essence, the Council will not be able to afford to do all these schemes which get through the first stages of gates process and therefore the Council needs to develop ways to prioritise schemes in the context of affordability. It is therefore recommended that, on the return of the Director of Property and Projects, party group briefings are held to discuss the development of a prioritisation framework for future capital schemes.

(iii) Time Bound Grant Funded Schemes

Within the list of new capital scheme proposals, there are four schemes which are dependent on grant funding which must be accessed before the end of March 2010 otherwise the funding opportunities will be lost. These Schemes have already passed the 'starting gate' part of the 'gates process' and permission is now sought to progress the schemes immediately to tender and implementation stage so that the grant funding can be accessed. The council contribution to these schemes for 2010/11 would be financed through the £1m (yields £10m of borrowing) which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to hold in reserve for new capital schemes as part of the 2010/11 rate setting process.

These schemes are:

(a) Woodvale and Dunville Parks

In October 2009 the Parks and Leisure Committee agreed to commend proposals for Woodvale and Dunville Parks to advance to the 'committed' section of the capital programme. These two parks were selected for re-development as part of the parks improvement agenda in conjunction with the Belfast Regeneration Office neighbourhood renewal work. The re-development of both parks will cost £4m in total with the Belfast Regeneration Office and the council providing funding of £2m each. The availability of funding from the Belfast Regeneration Office is time bound with the work needing to be completed by March 2011.

(b) Alleygates

The Health and Environmental Services Committee agreed in June 2009 to request the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to include a £500,000 proposal for phase II of the alleygating project and develop an economic appraisal for match funding from the Belfast Regeneration Office and the Northern Ireland Office.

(c) Duncrue Industrial Estate – Waste Heat Utilisation

This is an invest to save project which will be included in the council's efficiency programme. Currently, the heat created by the landfill gas generators is lost to the atmosphere. With some initial capital investment this heat can be captured, and then used to provide heat to nearby locations such as the Duncrue Complex. This scheme will save the council £50,000 a year in utility costs as well as reducing carbon emissions.

The initial cost of the scheme is £260,000 but grant funding amounting to £25,000 from the NIE SMART scheme has already been secured and additional sources of finance are also being investigated.

Resource Implications

The repayment of the loans detailed Appendix 1 of this report has already been accounted for in the capital financing requirements of the agreed 2010/11 budget.

The council contribution to the four schemes outlined in section (iii) of this report for 2010/11 will be financed through the £1m (yields £10m of borrowing) which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to hold in reserve for new capital schemes as part of the 2010/11 rate setting process.

Recommendations

Members are requested to agree to the following:

- (1) Applications being made to the Department of Environment for the raising of loan sanctions for the schemes outlined in Appendix 1 of this report;
- (2) Party group briefings being held to discuss the development of a prioritisation framework for future capital schemes;
- (3) Advance the four capital schemes detailed in section (iii) of this report to tender and implementation, with award being made to the most economically advantageous tender received on the basis of cost and quality, subject to the budget limits stated and the relevant grant-aid and to make application to the Department of Environment for the raising of loan sanctions for these schemes.

Capital Schemes Requiring Loan Sanctions

Waterfront Hall Chilled Water Plant upgrade	£462,000
Recreation Grounds – Renovation of Pitches	£450,000
Palmerston Road – Household Recycling Centre	£575,000
Strangford Avenue PF – Changing Accommodation	£165,000
Mary Peters Track – 2012 Elite Sports Facility Funding Bid	£160,000
Ancillary Equipment & Software Support	£666,750
Recycling Centres – Development of Staff Toilets	£510,000
Gasworks Northern Fringe	£310,000
City Hall Telecom-IS Strategy	£567,000
IT Security – Virtualised Data	£560,000
City of Belfast – Mercury Abatement	£1,500,000”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Titanic Signature Project

The Committee agreed that a special meeting, to which the Members of the Development Committee would be invited, be held in order to:

- (i) receive a presentation on the proposed Titanic Signature Project construction process;
- (ii) discuss the Memorandum of Understanding and associated governance arrangements; and
- (iii) receive an update on the emerging proposals with regard to marketing and tourism activities in 2012 around the Titanic Product.

The Committee agreed further that Party Group briefings on the Memorandum of Understanding should be undertaken.

**Use of City Hall Lawns –
Belfast Community Circus**

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

The Committee was advised that a request had been received for the use of the City Hall East Lawn on 29th April for one evening only as the venue for the opening act of the “Festival of Fools” event. The Council’s Culture and Arts Unit felt that the event would offer a number of benefits, including:

- providing a positive opportunity for people to come together in a celebratory atmosphere in a shared space;
- providing a platform for the Council to raise awareness through the media of what it is doing to position Belfast as a City of Festivals; and
- increasing footfall in the City centre, thereby helping to support the evening economy.

The Festival was supported financially by the Council through an annual grant which was administered by the Culture and Arts Unit and, if approved, it was anticipated that the event would attract an audience of approximately 200-300. All additional stewarding would be provided by the organisers at their expense and no access to the main building was required for the event itself, although the organisers would require access to an area of the building for changing facilities. From a practical point of view, there would be minimal disruption to the normal routine within the grounds and there were no potential clashes with other scheduled events.

The organisers would be required to provide the usual necessary assurances in that:

- an appropriate level of indemnity in respect of loss, damage or personal injury would be provided for the Council;
- the impact on the normal operation of the grounds would be minimal;
- all incidental costs associated with the event, including additional stewarding costs, would be borne by the organisers; and
- the lawns would be kept intact in so far as possible and any damage made good where necessary.

The Committee agreed to accede to the request by the Belfast Community Circus for the use of the City Hall grounds for the purpose outlined, subject to the Director of Property and Projects being satisfied as to the level of indemnity and other necessary safeguards and obligations being provided by the organisers.

Good Relations and Equality

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

Minutes of Memorabilia Working Group

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Memorabilia Working Group of 4th February.

Minutes of Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 12th February and adopted the recommendations in respect of the following:

Peace III Shared Cultural Space – Open Call for Projects in Line with Action 3.1 City of Festivals

The Committee adopted the Partnership's recommendation to approve:

- implementation of the City of Festivals Programme and the publication of an open call for proposals for Shared Cultural Space Festival events in line with the assessment criteria;
- the allocation of approximately £20,000 towards the development of the framework for sharing and associated festivals action plan and the delivery of an exchange programme; and
- the Terms of Reference for external consultancy support in the assessment of the applications received at a cost of approximately £5,000.

Templemore Avenue Artwork

To provide funding, not to exceed £5,000, for the cost of an artist, community engagement and materials, 75% of which would be recouped under the District Council's Good Relations Programme through the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, for the removal and replacement of a mural at Templemore Avenue.

International Women's Day

The approval of expenditure of up to £3,000 associated with the holding of an International Women's Day event on 8th March, 75% of the costs of which would be recouped under the Good Relations Programme through the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Networking Event

The costs associated with the holding of a small reception for a networking event being organised by the Good Relations Unit which would be held on 2nd March.

Plaques in the East Entrance, City Hall

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

In September 1999, the Policy & Resources Committee agreed that a large number of plaques, previously displayed in the Robing Room and Reception Hall, should be moved to the East Entrance area, following the refurbishment of the Robing Room. At that time, the Head of Civic Buildings reported that there were over 200 plaques in the City Hall collection, most of which had been presented to the Council by visitors; he noted that the collection was only going to increase. He reported that they had been displayed at an inappropriate height and in no particular order and the Committee agreed that they should be grouped under *Cities* and *Organisations*, *Naval* and *Regimental* themes and repositioned in the East Entrance/East Staircase area.

In 2002 an Advisory Panel of external experts was established to examine ways of achieving a more favourable balance of artworks and artefacts within the City Hall. The Advisory Panel made a number of recommendations, reported to the Policy & Resources Committee in February 2003, including one that stated that 'the large numbers of plaques in the east Entrance should be archived; they are of little historical or artistic value and could be replaced by items of greater merit'.

In February 2004, the Policy & Resources Committee agreed that the plaques under the headings of *Cities* and *Organisations* (located on the ground floor East Entrance) should be archived but deferred consideration of those under the headings *Naval* and *Regimental* (located on the landing area of the staircase).

All the remaining plaques (i.e. *Naval* and *Regimental*) were removed during the major refurbishment of the City Hall and at its meeting on 16 October 2009 the Memorabilia Working Group agreed that any decision to relocate them should be considered within the wider context of City Hall memorabilia and the fact that the East Entrance area had now been designated to be used for community exhibitions; the Working Group agreed that the plaques should not be replaced in the interim.

The decision of the Working Group not to replace the plaques was discussed at the meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 23 October and became the subject of a vote, when the Committee agreed to refer the question of the plaques back to the Memorabilia Working Group for further consideration.

The Council, however, at its meeting on 2 November 2009, agreed that the plaques should be replaced on a temporary basis and that the Memorabilia Working Group give consideration to their location on a permanent basis.

At the end of November, when the Remembrance Day commemoration events were over, the plaques were removed. This led to discussion and a vote at the meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 11 December, since the Council minute had not defined what was meant by “temporary” and there had been genuine confusion over the issue. The Committee was informed that, given the debate that had taken place at the Committee’s meeting on 23 October, it was understood that the plaques were to be displayed only during the month of November while the various wreath-laying ceremonies took place.

The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee was also informed at its meeting on 11 December 2009 that research in relation to the plaques was underway and that a report would be submitted to the Memorabilia Working Group in the near future outlining which plaques should be replaced.

Key Issues

The Good Relations Manager has sought the advice of two local experts, who are recognised as having particular authority in their respective specialist fields i.e. naval and regimental memorabilia. The external experts are aware of the importance of the City Hall in the life of Belfast and of the sensitivity of this subject.

In each case, the expert has submitted a list highlighting which plaques are of greatest importance or which have the closest relationship to the city of Belfast.

In the list of 42 Naval plaques, the expert^{1[1]} has highlighted the 16 that are of significance; he is not aware of the other names on the list and assumes that they are from ships that merely visited Belfast.

In the list of 64 Regimental plaques, the expert^{2[2]} has highlighted the 23 that have a clear and unequivocal relationship with Belfast; the others have a tenuous connection and she suggests that the plaques may have been presented during the course of casual visits.

It is therefore recommended that the reduced number of plaques (39 from 106) identified as having a close or significant relationship with the city of Belfast should be retained as being of greatest value and interest, to be replaced in the East Staircase area on a permanent basis, and that appropriate explanatory signage be provided.

The Committee will be aware that external organisations have been very grateful for items given by the Council on long-term loan e.g. Schomberg House, which now proudly houses the Accounts of the Paymasters General of 1690. Members may therefore wish to consider offering on long-term loan, or donating, the remainder of the plaques to appropriate organisations, which would certainly appreciate receiving them.

The Sea Cadets or Naval Association and the NI War Memorial Home Front Exhibition or Somme Association have been suggested as possible recipients for the naval and regimental plaques respectively and a formal handover ceremony could be arranged. Members may wish to suggest other suitable organisations.

Financial Implications

Minimal – included within existing budgets.

Recommendation

The Memorabilia Working Group considered this report at its meeting on 4 February 2010 and agreed unanimously with the recommendations outlined above.

Members pointed out that 2 additional plaques – from the Royal Sussex Regiment and the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas – also had significant local connections. The Royal Sussex Regiment had been formed in Belfast in 1701 and was originally known as the Belfast Regiment; in addition, the Regiment had been granted the Freedom of the City of Belfast in 1961. The Gurkhas had been founded by General Frederick Young, from Culdaff in Donegal and have strong connections with the predecessors of the Irish Fusiliers.

The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee is therefore requested to endorse the recommendations of the Memorabilia Working Group and agree that:

- the reduced number of plaques identified as having a close or significant relationship with the city of Belfast, with the addition of those from the Royal Sussex Regiment and the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, should be retained as being of greatest value and interest, to be replaced in the East Staircase area on a permanent basis, with appropriate explanatory signage.
- the remaining plaques be offered on long-term loan, or donated, to an appropriate external agency, as outlined in the report.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor M. Browne,
Seconded by Councillor Lavery,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the recommendations in respect of the placing of the plaques in the East Entrance of the City Hall to enable a full and comprehensive report on all the memorabilia which would be placed in the East Entrance to be submitted in due course to the Committee.

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

The Committee accordingly agreed to adopt the recommendations and agreed also that a report on the recipients of the plaques not being re-erected be submitted to the Working Group in due course.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Consultation Response – Future Provision of Learning Disability Services in Belfast

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Purpose

To bring to the attention of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee details of a further “Excellence and Choice” consultation by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust) on its future service delivery, this time in relation to Learning Disability Services in Belfast, and to present a draft response for further comment and endorsement.

Background

Towards the end of 2008 the Trust issued the consultation: “New Directions: A Conversation On The Future Delivery Of Health And Social Care Services In Belfast” which set out its strategic thinking regarding future service delivery generally. This consultation document builds on the thinking set out in New Directions and outlines the strategic direction and plans for the future of learning disability services in Belfast and at Muckamore Abbey Hospital. Some consultation has already taken place with people with learning disabilities and their families in developing the strategy. The purpose of the paper is to seek views on the strategic direction for adult learning disability services from the wider population.

Key Issues - Strategic Context

Policy

The regional policy for learning disability services is set out in the Equal Lives report (2005), developed as part of the Bamford review on mental health and learning disability, and in the subsequent Implementation Action Plan (2009) which sets out the Government’s proposals on how to take forward the recommendations of Equal Lives. The strategic direction of the Belfast Trust as outlined in the consultation paper is in line with the recommendations in the government’s Action Plan.

The Equal Lives report highlighted that people with a learning disability in Northern Ireland do not enjoy equality of opportunity and that they are often excluded from the opportunities that other citizens enjoy.

Financial Implications

The Equal Lives report made 74 recommendations and the cost of implementing these in full was estimated at approximately £175 million over a fifteen to twenty year period. Initially an extra £17m has been secured by the Minister of Health to begin this process over the 3-year period 2008/09 to 2010/11. The Belfast Trust's share of this is almost £3.8m. The Belfast Trust currently has around £52m available annually from the Health and Social Care Board to support the delivery of adult learning disability services. However, the Trust has to achieve efficiency savings of 3% a year from 2008 – 2011 as well as managing an underlying deficit. This equates to £5m efficiency to be achieved over the 3-year period for adult learning disability services. The Trust recognises that there will be challenges in delivering its vision for Learning Disability Services in the current financial climate and that the implementation of some of the proposed elements will rely on appropriate levels of funding being secured. The Trust therefore aims to make the best use of existing resources and any new funding to invest in more modern services and achieve efficiencies in order to deliver the services that people with learning disabilities have said they want and which are detailed in Equal Lives. Some of the recommendations within the report are therefore subject to resources.

Young People

Elected Members have previously expressed the view that there are limited facilities provided for people with learning difficulties, particularly young adolescents, and as such additional resources needed to be targeted in that area. Within this consultation, the Trust states that as part of the further enhancement of the Trust's community based (non centre) daytime provision for adults with a learning disability, an initial focus will be on the needs of school leavers.

Guiding Principles

The Trust has developed a number of guiding principles, in collaboration with service users, their families and carers, to guide the approach to learning disability services. The fundamental principle underpinning reform in learning disability services is individualisation. The direction of travel for the service is away from congregated living and large institutional establishments towards services that are flexible and tailored to suit the needs of an individual.

Summary of the Consultation

The Trust currently delivers services to people with learning disabilities through three strands. They are:-

1. Somewhere to live and a fuller life.
2. Access to additional support in the community, including specialist community treatment and support services and respite.
3. Access to specialist inpatient assessment and treatment services.

Within these parameters The Trust is proposing:

1. Somewhere to live and a fuller life:
 - An expansion of supported housing across the city of Belfast.
 - The replacement of the four remaining residential homes with a range of supported housing options for the people who live there to improve their quality of life.
 - The further enhancement of its community based (non centre) daytime provision for adults with learning disability, focusing initially on the needs of school leavers.
 - The re-provision of existing out dated centres with purpose built facilities providing no more than forty places at a time.
 - That in future day centres will only provide services for people who are unable to meaningfully participate in integrated community opportunities.
 - The further development of the supported employment model and supported employment opportunities in Belfast.
2. Access to additional support in the community, including specialist community treatment and support services and respite:
 - The re-provision of residential respite services in dedicated respite facilities no more than four beds in any one facility.
 - Enhancement of Community/ leisure - based respite.
 - Increase of Family respite placements as a form of respite break.
 - Increased access to mainstream services where appropriate.

- The expansion of Multidisciplinary Community Learning Disability Teams to provide proactive services and support to people with learning disability to access mainstream & learning disability specific services.
 - Development of Specialist service networks including epilepsy services, genetics, complex health services, autism services, primary care mental health services, dementia services, and addictions services.
 - Development of Specialist Mental Health and enhancement of Behavioural Services.
 - Enhancement of specialist treatment options provided across the city of Belfast, including a community forensic service.
3. Access to specialist inpatient assessment and treatment services:
- To provide access to acute inpatient mental health beds for people with high levels of adaptive functioning/mild learning disability who require therapeutic intervention as a result of mental health problems.
 - To bring forward a plan to resettle all remaining longstay patients from Muckamore Abbey hospital by 2014 subject to the appropriate levels of funding being available.
 - To commence a discussion with all relevant stakeholders on the future of inpatient specialist assessment and treatment services at Muckamore Abbey hospital.

The full consultation document can be accessed at:

http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net/involving/reference/Excellence_and_Choice_Learning_Disability_Nov09.pdf

Recommendations

The deadline for the consultation is 25th February 2010 (new extended closing date); therefore the Committee is asked to approve the draft response and its submission to the Belfast Trust subject to Council ratification on March 1st.

Key to Abbreviations

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust - the Trust.

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL (DRAFT) RESPONSE

**Belfast Trust Excellence and Choice Consultation: The Future
Provision of Learning Disability Services in Belfast**

February 2010

General Comments on the Consultation Document

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation document. Our Elected Members are particularly interested in the issues affecting health and social care services and had previously requested that ongoing dialogue be established between the Trust and the Council to explore the ongoing implementation of the high level proposals set out in the New Directions report.

The Council provides a range of services which can impact on people's health and well-being – leisure services, parks, playgrounds and open spaces, community services, community safety etc; many of which are provided directly within communities. The Council has a number of facilities, such as community and leisure centres, and operates a range of programmes and initiatives which taken holistically contribute to improved health promotion and well-being. It is important that services such as these, which exist outside the traditional Health and Social Services field, are considered and utilised where appropriate.

The Council is committed to working in partnership to improve the quality of life for all people of the city. One of our key priorities is to create a healthy and active city through the services we provide directly and through those we provide in partnership with others. The Council is currently completing a strategic review of leisure where the future leisure provision requirements of the city are being considered. This includes examining the partnerships required to deliver effective and affordable services to address agreed priorities throughout the community. We would therefore like to highlight the willingness of Council in working in partnership with the health service and other partners, to assist in service provision where appropriate and shared asset usage, providing information on services available and in providing a civic leadership role in terms of partnership working across agencies.

The Review of Public Administration will give councils a new power of wellbeing, and Belfast hopes to use this new power to become much more involved in promoting health and wellbeing. Four Councillors from BCC will be represented on the Local Commissioning Group and plans are well advanced for local collaborative working arrangements between the Council and the new public health agency, and in particular through the creation of a joint health development unit.

The Council is supportive of the guiding principles outlined in the consultation document and welcomes the focus on the individual and supports a more joined-up approach to addressing the needs of people with learning disabilities. We look forward to working with the Trust to identify and maximise potential opportunities to work in a more coordinated and holistic person-centred manner in relation to improving health and wellbeing generally.

In the following sections we provide more specific responses to the question posed on the future provision of Learning Disability Services in Belfast.

Consultation Questions:

Somewhere to live and a fuller life

1. Do you agree with the above Trust proposals in relation to having somewhere to live and a fuller life?
2. What are your concerns about accommodation and day services and do you think these plans will answer your concerns? If not, why not?
3. Do you have any suggested additions to these plans?
4. Are there any other issues that you think need to be taken into consideration?

The Council welcomes the Trust's key objective to support people with learning disabilities in their own home first and foremost and the concept of 24 hour access to support. We are therefore supportive of plans to expand supported housing across the city of Belfast in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

However, the Council notes with some concern that the proposed replacement of the four remaining residential homes is subject to resources being available. It is critical that before any closures or changes to service delivery are made that the necessary resources are in place to enable, at the very least, continuity of care. Service users must have the necessary support packages in place before changes are made to their care arrangements. Given the vulnerable nature of this group of people, it is also important that meaningful consultation is undertaken in advance with service users and their families. In addition assurances are sought that people who need continuing residential accommodation or who may need access to this in the future will not be adversely affected by the proposed policy closures.

The Council welcomes plans to enhance community based provision and the creation of purpose built facilities to support the aim of 'fuller lives'. The Council is keen to work in partnership with the health and voluntary and community sector to develop more holistic approaches to health and wellbeing generally. More specifically we encourage approaches that support and make better use of local community facilities, particularly those which also enhance community development and community cohesion. The council is currently reviewing the facilities and provision available and this may inform and enhance proposed community based provision. The Grove Wellbeing model is a working example which can be developed or act as a baseline for the future development of integrated community provision.

The Council particularly welcomes the proposed initial focus on the needs of school leavers as part of the further enhancement of the Trust's community based (non centre) daytime provision for adults with learning disability. Our Elected Members have previously expressed the view that there are limited facilities provided for people with learning difficulties, particularly young adolescents, and as such additional resources need to be targeted in that area.

The Council is also supportive of plans that lead to improved economic success and welcome plans to further develop the supported employment model and supported employment opportunities in Belfast. The Council's Economic Initiatives section is keen to encourage collaborative working and explore opportunities that maximise employability, skills and wealth creation.

Access to additional support in the community, including specialist community treatment and support services and respite

1. Do you agree with the above Trust proposals in relation to the development plans for community treatment and support (including respite) services?
2. What are your concerns about community services and do you think these plans will answer your concerns? If not, why not?
3. Do you have any suggested additions to these plans?
4. Are there any other issues that you think need to be taken into consideration?

The document makes reference to the enhancement of community/leisure based respite. One of the Council's corporate priorities is to enhance health and well-being. As a provider of community and leisure based services within local communities we are keen to explore opportunities that would better utilise these assets to the advantage of local people and their improved quality of life. The Council has a number of local facilities, such as community and leisure centres, parks, playgrounds and pitches, as well as a range of programmes and initiatives that support health and wellbeing. It is important that services such as these, which exist outside the traditional Health and Social Services field, are also considered and utilised where appropriate. Therefore; joined-up approaches between the Council and the health sector are particularly welcomed. The development of the joint health development unit should provide a useful learning and support tool in this regard and should provide a driver and focal point for developing joint projects and initiatives. The Council looks forward to working together with the Trust in developing a cohesive health improvement agenda for the city. Opportunities for community / leisure based respite may provide one visible way of doing delivering this. Access to provision is also an issue, and the Council is endeavouring to work in partnership to improve access for all sections of the community.

The Council would also welcome ongoing dialogue with the Trust, and other relevant agencies, about the future use of facilities in the city in order that opportunities for shared and integrated facilities can be availed of for the benefit of local communities.

The Council is supportive of proposals to expand multi-disciplinary Community Learning Disability Teams and the concept of a proactive service and support. Through our experience of working with local communities, we have found that issues are often interdependent and therefore a cross-cutting approach is required to effectively and efficiently address need. Equally, individuals will be better served when there is a seamless service and connectivity, rather than a silo approach to needs and issues.

The Council recognises that increased access to mainstream services is desirable both in terms of efficiency and for ensuring that individual service users receive all the support and care they may need. The role of the community teams therefore will be important in ensuring that individuals with learning disabilities are given the necessary support to access these services. It is not clear from the document how this service will be enhanced and resourced. Assurances are sought therefore that the necessary resources will be made available to ensure the support is provided to enable users to fully access mainstream services where required.

Given the rather specialised nature of residential and respite care; we do not feel it would be appropriate for the Council to comment on the more specific elements of this service. However the Council would stress that the needs of people with learning disabilities are distinct from the needs of those with mental health problems and the approaches need to be very different. This should be clearly reflected in the proposed future service provision.

Access to specialist inpatient assessment and treatment services

- 1. Do you agree with the above Trust proposals in relation to the development plans for specialist inpatient assessment and treatment services?**
- 2. What are your concerns about specialist inpatient assessment and treatment services and do you think these plans will answer your concerns? If not, why not?**
- 3. Do you have any suggested additions to these plans?**
- 4. Are there any other issues that you think need to be taken into consideration?**

Given the specialised nature of inpatient assessment and treatment services; the Council is not in a position to comment meaningfully on the proposed changes to this service. However the Council strongly endorses the need for full, open and honest dialogue with all relevant stakeholders on the future of inpatient specialist services at Muckamore Abbey hospital, particularly those individuals and their families / carers who will be affected by any potential changes.”

The Committee approved the proposed response to the consultation exercise.

Chairman