

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd October, 2010

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Crozier (Chairman); and
Councillors Attwood, Austin, D. Browne, M. Browne,
W. Browne, Campbell, Hartley, Hendron, N. Kelly,
McCann, McCarthy, Newton, O'Reilly, Robinson,
J. Rodgers, Rodway and Stoker.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Mrs. J. Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, Legal Services Manager;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Adamson and Lavery.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th October, subject to the amendment of the minutes under the headings:

- (i) "Belfast Telegraph Roadshow" to provide that no charge be levied on the Belfast Telegraph for the use of the City Hall; and
- (ii) "Use of the City Hall Grounds – Poster for Tomorrow Exhibition" to provide that those images relating to hanging be displayed in Room 130b located off the Robing Room on the first floor of the City Hall.

Transition Committee Business

Review of Public Administration Update – Transferring Functions

The Committee was reminded that, as part of the Review of Public Administration process, a Transfer of Functions Working Group had been established, which comprised of senior officials from both central and local government and was chaired by the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council. Its purpose was to examine the package of functions which were proposed to be transferred from central to local government and to provide greater clarity in terms of the scope of the transferring functions; the resources, or otherwise, attached to the functions; and to examine those operational issues which needed to be addressed prior to the transfer.

The Chief Executive reported that that work had cumulated in the development of an initial draft baseline report which gave detailed consideration to those issues relating to each of the transferring function areas. The report contained a number of critical issues, which related particularly to resources, which needed to be resolved in advance of any formal transfer of functions. He pointed out that the recent deferral of a decision by the Northern Ireland Executive in respect of the future of the Review of Public Administration and the subsequent decision to hold elections to 26 and not 11 Councils in May, 2011 had further reinforced the uncertainty in regard to the transfer of functions.

He stated that there was clearly a need for a continued political conversation in respect to any future prospect of transferring functions, the scope of such transfer and the operational and financial implications for Councils. As part of its deliberations on the future of local government reform, it would be important that the Executive reaffirmed its commitment to the transfer of functions from central to local government and provided clarification on the proposed timetable for implementation. Given the current economic climate, the pending departmental budgetary cuts and growing pressures on the public sector to do more with less, there was an opportunity to reconfigure the conversation with central government departments to focus on the need for and benefits of service integration at the local level. There was a need also to explore potential scope for greater co-design and co-delivery of services.

The Chief Executive reported that, in an attempt to initiate and/or inform such discussions, the Transfer of Functions Working Group had prepared the aforementioned report which provided an update on discussions to date, outlined the key outstanding issues which still needed to be addressed and presented a case for the need for greater service integration. The report recommended also that consideration be given to the initiation of a number of integrated area-based pilots which would bring together, for example, regeneration, planning, community development and economic development. Such an approach would go towards strengthening the relationship between central and local government and could offer a managed response to dealing with the budgetary pressures facing the entire public sector whilst limiting the impact on services. It would be the intention that the Transfer of Functions Report, subject to any proposed revisions by the Members, would be submitted to the Environment Minister, with a view to securing Ministerial Support for the initiation of a number of integrated area-based pilots.

The Chief Executive pointed out that the Council would also need to continue to engage both at political and officer level with relevant central government departments and Ministers in regards to the transfer of functions issue and explore the potential for integrated area-based pilots or partnership projects in advance of any formal transfer. The Members might also wish to consider discussing with Political Party and Ministerial colleagues the potential for Belfast to take forward area pilots. The Council had already successfully established integrated service delivery models in the areas of health and community safety. Any consideration given to potential area-based pilots would need to be integrated with the Council's approach to community planning.

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) support the proposal that the Council advocate the potential initiation of integrated area-based pilots and that the Members lobby for Belfast pilots; and
- (ii) that the draft report of the Transfer of Functions Working Group be submitted to the Environment Minister.

**Review of Public Administration –
Suspension of Transition Funding**

The Committee was reminded that, in order to facilitate the Review of Public Administration reform process, voluntary Transition Committees had been established in each of the proposed new eleven Council areas. In terms of the Belfast Voluntary Transition Committee, it had been agreed that the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would undertake that role with a second Committee meeting scheduled each month to deal with Transition-related business.

The Chief Executive pointed out that the Transition Committees had been established to work towards setting up the new eleven Council model through the undertaking of the required preparatory work to facilitate the convergence of amalgamating Councils and the transfer of functions from central to local government. That was intended to pave the way for the Statutory Transition Committees to be established in early 2010 in order to take key decisions in advance of the new Councils coming into effect in May, 2011.

In order to support the work of the voluntary Transition Committees, the Department of the Environment had allocated a £150,000 annual transition grant to fund Members' Allowances for participation on those Committees, that is, £2,700 Member Allowance per annum, the temporary appointment of a Change Management Officer and any support costs directly associated with the Review of Public Administration transition process. The Chief Executive informed the Committee that he had received recently a letter from the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots, MLA, informing Councils that, given the absence of clarity on the way forward for the Review of Public Administration and the current financial pressures facing the Department, a decision had been taken to suspend the funding for voluntary Transition Committees with effect from 31st October, 2010. The Minister had indicated also that the funding for Change Managers would continue up until 31st March, 2011 in order to support Councils in their endeavours to find potential efficiency savings and that the established Review of Public Administration implementation structures, for example, the Strategic Leadership Board and Policy Development Panels, would be stood down with immediate effect.

He reminded the Committee that, while the decision to schedule a second monthly meeting of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had been predicated on dealing with transition/modernisation-related business, the Members might wish to consider retaining the two meetings per month until the end of the financial year as scheduled. That would provide the Committee with further scope to consider important corporate issues such as the development of the new Corporate Plan, financial planning and efficiency, capital programme, city investment, performance management, organisational development, alongside other routine Committee business. Alternatively, the Committee might wish to consider reverting back to the position prior to the establishment of the Voluntary Transition Committee whereby there would be only one scheduled Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting per month.

After discussion, the Committee:

- (i) noted the removal of funding for the Council's Voluntary Transition Committee with effect from 31st October;
- (ii) agreed that a letter be issued to the Environment Minister outlining the Council's concerns in regard to the impact that such a decision might have on any future prospect for local government reform; and
- (iii) agreed to continue to hold two meetings per month of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the remainder of the financial year as scheduled in order to deal with, in particular, financial matters.

Finance

Revenue Estimates 2011/2012 Update

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

"Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The Council is statutorily obliged to set a district rate by 14 February every year. It is important to note that the rates bill received by ratepayers contains two principal elements. The first is the district rate which is set and received by local Councils. The district rate accounts for 45% of the total rates bill. The second element is the regional rate which is set and received by the Northern Ireland Executive and this accounts for the remaining 55%. In terms of the district rate, this provides 74% of the total funding of Council activities; the remaining amount comes from fees, charges, derating support and specific grants.**

- 1.2. The rates bill, including both the district and regional elements, is levied by the Land and Property Service (LPS) which is an executive agency of the Department of Finance and Personnel. Rates are a property tax, based on the valuation (the NAV) of how much the property would be rented for in the case of business premises, and how much it would be sold for (capital value) in the case of domestic premises.
- 1.3. Each year, normally in November, the LPS will issue to local Councils an estimate of how much it expects to raise from the total rate collected from their area. This amount is known as the estimated penny product (EPP). Economic conditions obviously play a major role in the growth or decline of the rate base. In times of economic prosperity the rate base will normally rise, whilst in times of recession the rate base will fall as businesses close and the level of bad debt increases. However neither of these things happen immediately as it takes time for new properties to be put on the rate base and similarly it takes time for properties to come off the valuation list.
- 1.4. Members will note that the amount to be collected by way of the rate is always an estimate. This means that once the rate is actually collected for the year of account, an actual penny product (APP) will be established and a finalisation figure will be provided by the LPS to the Council. This will mean either that less has been collected than estimated, in which case the Council will be required to pay money back to the LPS, or more has been collected than estimated, which means that the LPS will pay a balance payment to the Council. Members will be happy to note that the finalisation figure for 2009/10 has now been received from the LPS and shows a slight positive surplus of around £200k.
- 1.5. Apart from the notification of the EPP and APP the other main variables in setting the rate are the agreement of:
 - (i) the departmental estimates
 - (ii) the level of the capital programme
 - (iii) the level of the city investment strategy
 - (iv) special contingency budgets, eg Waste Plan
 - (v) the level of reserves.

1.6. The agreed Council process for setting the rate for 2011/12 is set out in the table below:

Mar	Budget Panel and SP&R 19 March	Agreement on rates process for 2011/12 and Overview of efficiency programme
May	Budget Panel and SP&R May	Indicative rate and efficiency target For 2011/12
Aug		Issue rates guidance to Depts. Progress efficiency programme
Sept	Member briefing on capital prog. Budget Panel 2 Sept Corporate Plan workshop 8 Sept SP&R 24 September	Preparation of draft estimates by Department Discussion on capital programme & SRFs Discussion on corporate priorities Financial position 2010/11 Update on efficiency programme
Oct	Budget Panel 12-14 Oct SP&R 22 Oct	First cut on rates position 2011/12
Nov	Member briefings Budget Panel	Second iteration of rates position Impact of Spending Review and EPP
Dec	Budget Panel and SP&R December	Discuss and finalise options for rates position taking into account potential savings and the implications of managing reserves & financing the capital programme
Jan	SP&R January Department Committees	Recommendation to Council on district rate 2011/12
Feb	Council February	Agree district rate 2011/12

Proposed rates setting process for 2011/12

- 1.7. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 21 May 2010 that an upper target for the indicative rate for 2011/12 should be set at 2.5%, followed by a direction to officers to work up three scenarios within this limit of 0%, 1% and 2.5%.
- 1.8. In addition an indicative efficiency target of £1.7m was agreed and officers were directed to develop an efficiency programme which in so far as possible would not impact upon the delivery of frontline services.
- 1.9. The purpose of this report is to give an initial assessment on the range of scenarios for the rates of 2011/12. It is important to note that much more detailed work is required and there is a range of external variables, most notably the EPP, which are still not fully established. More detail on these variables is set out at paragraph 3 below. The figures presented within this report are therefore subject to change and will be refined in the period between now and Christmas. Nonetheless Members have expressed a desire to engage early in this process and the initial scenarios are presented to assist Members in the party briefings and consideration of the capital programme which will take place over the coming weeks.

- 1.10 Members will also need to consider the issues arising from two other reports on the agenda: The Proposals for Use of the 2010/11 Underspend and the report on the Capital Programme.

Key Issues

2.0 **Current Position**

2.1 **Scenario 1 – zero growth in the rates**

The first scenario for the consideration of Members is one which means zero growth in the rates. Based on current estimates, this scenario would mean the following:

	2011/12 Increase £m	% Increase
Departmental Estimates	2.3	2.01%
City Investment Strategy	0.0	0.00%
Capital Programme	0.7	9.47%
Waste Plan	1.3	106.35%
Rate Increase before Reserves	4.3	3.40%
Movement in Reserves	-4.5	-100.00%
District Rate Decrease	-0.2	-0.18%

2.1.1 **Departmental Estimates** – This is the money required by departments to deliver services and typically covers expenditure on headings such as salaries, supplies and services. All departments have prepared estimates for 2011/12 and these are subject to ongoing review and challenge. Based on current estimates, this scenario would mean that net expenditure is budgeted to rise by £2.3m which equates to some 2% increase from 2010/11. Two of the main elements are increases in landfill tax and gate fees (£1.3m) and increased pension contributions (£0.6m), both of which are outside the Council's control. There has been considerable emphasis placed on minimising departmental estimates and absorbing inflationary pressures. The indicative efficiency target of £1.7m has therefore been surpassed. In order to achieve the overall zero growth scenario, Departments have identified efficiency savings of £2.2m.

2.1.2 **Capital Programme** - There is also a separate report on the agenda on the capital programme. Most of the capital programme is currently financed through loans and therefore the rates set need to cover the cost of borrowing to the council. This scenario provides the additional £700k

needed to finance existing ongoing schemes in 2011/12 and to finance the Mercury Abatement at the Crematorium and developments at Dunville and Woodvale Park. Additional capital schemes which are subject to Members' prioritisation cannot be funded from this current zero growth scenario.

2.1.3 City Investment Strategy – This scenario assumes no growth from the £3m per annum currently invested in the City Investment Strategy. This fund has been put in place to support major iconic projects and help lever in additional money into the city. This fund is currently supporting the Titanic Signature Project, the MAC, the Lyric and the Connswater Greenway. There is a separate report on the agenda on Investment in the City.

2.1.4 Waste Plan – The costs of managing waste continue to rise. Indeed, it is estimated that costs to Belfast City Council will be some £5m higher in 2014/15 compared to 2010/11. The council needs to prepare financially for this increase in order to avoid a one off hike in the rates in 2014/15. The zero growth rates scenario therefore assumes a stepped increase of some £1.3m to help meet this financial commitment in 2014/15, building on the £1.2m set aside in 2010/11. This money will primarily be directed to actions which enhance recycling, thus reducing the amount of waste for landfill and assisting the Council to meet its landfill diversion targets. Future reports will provide more information on the financial implications of the Waste Plan.

2.1.5 Reserves – Members will recall that a significant element of the rate increase in 2010/11 was attributable to the need to increase reserves to an acceptable level. Given that approach and the 2010/11 underspend, this zero growth scenario assumes that there does not need to be a contribution from the rates to reserves in 2011/12.

2.1.6 Summary

Taking into account departmental cost increases, the additional financing needed for the capital programme and the funding needed for the Waste Plan, reductions of almost £8m are needed in order to achieve this zero growth rate scenario. These reductions represent some 6% of rateable income.

2.2 Scenario 2 – 1% growth in the rates

This scenario reflects the same position as scenario 1, except that it also allows some £1.5m to be made available to fund City Priorities. These could be used to fund additional revenue projects and/or additional capital projects. For ease of reference, the £1.5m would fund some £15m of capital expenditure if it was all invested to finance capital schemes.

2.3 Scenario 3 – 2.5% growth in the rates

This scenario reflects the same position as scenario 1, except that it also allows some £3m to be made available to fund City Priorities. These could be used to fund additional revenue projects and/or additional capital projects. For ease of reference, the £3m would fund some £30m of capital expenditure, if it was all invested to finance capital schemes.

2.4 The separate report on the agenda on the capital programme sets out potential capital projects which could be prioritised for investment within scenario 2 or 3 and Appendix 2, which has been circulated to the Members sets out some information on potential options for investment in revenue programmes on a local area basis.

3.0 Future Variables Impacting on Rates Setting

As already advised, there are some significant variables which are still uncertain at this stage which could significantly alter the scenarios outlined above. The key outstanding variables are:

3.1.1 Clarity on the EPP – the estimated penny product (EPP) is provided by LPS to the Council as an estimate of what the rates will yield in income for the Council in 2011/12. As the Council is dependent on the district rate for some 74% of its income, this figure can make a significant difference to the rates that the council needs to set in order to cover its planned expenditure. The EPP will only be available in November, although engagement is continuing in the interim with LPS officials.

3.2 Effects of cuts in government funding – the implications of the Spending Review on the council for 2011/12 are not known at this stage but should external funding be withdrawn, this would have an impact on council services and potentially staff. Further work is needed around the risks to external funding as the situation becomes clearer.

- 3.3 **Decisions on the use of the 2010/11 underspend** – there is a separate report on the agenda on this issue. If the proposals within the report are agreed, they would provide £700k of additional savings in 2011/12 which are not factored into the scenarios above.
- 3.4 **Review and Challenge** – much work is still ongoing to review the figures presented and ensure their accuracy.
- 3.5 **Level of the Regional Rate** – whilst this has no direct impact on the estimated expenditure of the council, the regional rate represents some 55% of the rates bill experienced by rates payers. It will therefore be a relevant factor in determining the level of district rate and is currently unknown.

4.0 **Proposed Process For Moving Forward**

It is recognised that this is only an initial assessment of the current position and that much more work and engagement is needed with Members in the coming weeks and months to provide Members with the necessary information and advice to support their decisions about the level of rates to be set.

In particular more work is planned on:

- Obtaining greater clarity on the future variables;
- Developing the detail on what can be achieved within the various scenarios;
- Working up proposals for any investment in City Priorities, including prioritisation of the capital programme;
- Providing further advice and information on the Waste Plan;
- Providing further advice on reserves.

This will enable the scenarios to be worked up in more detail for Members' consideration. Ongoing engagement is planned with Members during November through the Budget and Transformation Panel, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and party briefings. A further report will be provided to Members for the Strategic Policy and Resources meeting on 19 November.

5.0 **Decision Required**

To note the information provided and that a further report will be provided to Committee at its meeting on 19 November.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- (a) note this update report on the rates and that further engagement is planned on this issue in the coming weeks and months;**
- (b) agree that the efficiency programme should achieve a minimum of £2.2m in 2011/12 in the areas outlined; and**
- (c) approve the appointment of a permanent graphic designer in order to facilitate the achievement of some of these efficiencies”**

During discussion, the Head of Corporate Communications indicated that the Council employed currently one permanent and one temporary graphic designer. The temporary graphic designer affected annual savings of £135,000 by performing work in-house. If the Committee did not agree to retain the post and make the appointment on a permanent basis, this would require the work to be outsourced and would result in additional costs to the Council.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (i) noted the contents of the report and that further engagement was being planned on the issue in the forthcoming weeks and months; and**
- (ii) approved the appointment of a permanent graphic designer in order to facilitate the achievement of some of those efficiencies.**

Capital Programme Prioritisation and Financing

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

- 1.0 The purpose of this paper is to outline the current status of the Capital Programme and to seek approval for a number of urgent schemes. The report will also provide Members with an indication of potential future schemes that could proceed depending on Members’ decisions relating to the level of rate and the amount of loan finance it would support.**

Context

- 1.1 In order for a capital scheme to get underway in accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations two fundamental decisions are required by SP&R Committee:**

- (a) Departmental Committees will consider schemes and request the SP&R Committee to approve the scheme as part of the indicative capital programme and
- (b) the SP&R Committee must separately make available funding for the scheme as part of the Council's overall financial planning – through agreeing the level of the rate and/or through agreeing some other type of funding packages such as Grant Aid

Depending on the type of project there may be a number of other Committee and Council decisions such as particular options, grant submissions etc, associated with the financing of the project.

The Capital Programme therefore consists of three types of projects:

1.2 Committed and funded

These are projects that have been approved by the Departmental Committee, Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Council and for which loan funding has been made available through provision in the rates or other means. The vast majority of these schemes are underway and will be completed in the next few years. A list of the current committed and funded schemes has been circulated for the information of the Members.

1.3 Committed but not yet funded

These are projects which have been approved by the SP&R Committee and Council but for which funding in terms of rate increases to support borrowing have not yet been agreed. A proposal to make provision of £700k is built into the zero rate scenario, which if accepted would permit these schemes to proceed. Schemes included here are projects deemed necessary in the coming years eg cemetery provision, mercury abatement at the crematorium, Dunville and Woodvale Parks etc. A list of these schemes has been circulated.

1.4 Uncommitted and unfunded

These projects are schemes that the various standing committees and departments would like to progress. The projects are being worked through the Gates process which challenges the need, the scope and addresses necessary economic appraisal issues should the SP&R Committee give approval to fund loans. The process to date has refined this list of schemes and further decisions are needed by Members on prioritisation and the implications for the setting of the rate. A list of these schemes has been circulated.

2.0 Finance Position

2.1 The committed and funded projects loan requirement will be £45m by 2011/12. If the committed and unfunded projects are also funded the loan requirement would rise to £62m by 2015/16 based on current estimates of project costs. This would require additional funding to be put in place, which would require support through the rate. In the case of Mercury Abatement and Dunville/Woodvale Parks £700k has been provided in the estimates this year which would permit these schemes to proceed, if other conditions are met. In the case of new cemetery provision further work is presently being undertaken which may result in changes in current provision.

However the Committee also needs to be aware of a number of other developments which will have an impact in the medium term.

2.2 Firstly, the financing of the capital programme for 2011/12 is being considered as part of the rates setting process. When the new corporate plan is agreed a longer term capital financing strategy will be needed as part of the development of the medium term financial plan for the council.

2.3 Secondly, the capital programme is made up of physical projects which are based on estimated costs and include a number of external uncertainties relating to land acquisition, planning, site remediation, community/user agreements, grant aid and so on. This means that the programme is a dynamic process that does not always precisely align to the forecast capital financing which sometimes leaves additional capacity for smaller schemes.

- 2.4 Thirdly, as planned projects are worked up internal factors mean they can change radically in terms of scale and scope and consequently required financing. The Gates process is a means of controlling this ensuring we have tighter specifications, more accurate estimates, realistic timetables and a reduction in the need for variations or compensation events. The most current example of this is the new cemetery provision which is committed but unfunded but has a forecast estimate of £13.6m. The Cemetery Working Group is now considering various options which may result in a recommendation to Committee for a major reduction in regard to this level of financing.

Additional Financing

2.5 Provision for Committed but not yet funded

The current rate setting process will provide the necessary funding for 2011/12 to meet the required financing of those projects that have not yet been funded but which commence during this financial year. This is currently estimated to be approximately £700k of additional capital financing. This will be dependent on the progression of existing schemes and all the necessary approvals being in place for any schemes that will commence. It should be noted this financing includes the Mercury Abatement Scheme for the crematorium and Dunville and Woodvale Parks up to a total of £1m each subject to match funding of £2m being provided by the DSD. The DSD have bid for this funding as part of the CSR process.

2.6 Impact of £1m Reserves Position

In the current financial year £4.5m was included to support the Council's Reserves position. It was agreed at Committee on 11 December 2009 that £1m of this money be redeployed to finance new capital commitments. At this point this money has not yet been allocated to capital schemes but some portion could be used to advance urgent schemes this year as detailed later in this report (priorities for immediate approval).

2.7 Outcome of Options Evaluations on Existing Projects

Should the options being considered for existing projects (eg. The Cemetery Above) achieve any reduction in the forecast estimate for projects then any shortfall could be applied to new projects within the prioritisation list. However, the financing of these schemes will of course have to be linked to the broader rates questions and allocation of resources.

3.0 Priorities for Immediate Approval

Of those projects that have been put forward as part of the indicative capital programme we would now seek approval to proceed with the four listed below for reasons outlined. This would require the use of approximately £300k of the existing £1m held as a reserve for the potential use of the capital programme;

- 3.1 Re-use facilities at Household Recycling Centres must proceed to avail of the available grant funding of approx. £100k with a net cost to the Council of £16k otherwise the grant will be lost.**
- 3.2 Clement Wilson Bridge replacement with a net cost to the Council estimated at £180k. At present there is a health and safety risk which will become seriously detrimental if not addressed soon.**
- 3.3 Waterworks / Westland – Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) with a net cost to the Council of £NIL as Groundwork NI have sourced 100% grant aid via SEUPB but require Council to undertake the works.**
- 3.4 In order to be ready for the World Police and Fire Games in 2013 the Mary Peter's Track 2013 (8 lane track and spectator stand) with a current net estimate of £3m cost to the Council needs to be in a position to commence construction if Council give approval to fund this as part of the rate setting process. Committee is asked to agree that officers work with others in DCAL and Sports NI to establish if any further funding is available. It would also be sensible to undertake a number of design stages which will have some related cost so that if it is agreed to support this project as part of the capital programme there is sufficient time to undertake actual construction next year.**

4.0 Other Issues on Prioritisation

A list of schemes on the indicative capital programme that are uncommitted and unfunded, which has been circulated for the information of the Members.

The number of schemes that can be progressed will depend upon agreement on how the schemes might be funded.

Two issues are presently being considered by the Council that might impact upon this. Firstly, the use of the underspend on one off non recurrent issues, which serve to reduce base costs in future years. If for example the Council agree to fund a further targeted redundancy programme and other savings proposals as part of the underspend proposals for 2010/11, this could release £700k which would fund a further £7m borrowing.

Secondly, the level of the rate which is set for 2011/12. Members have already been advised that a 1% rise would provide £10m additional funding and a 2½% rise would provide up to £30m additional funding (if the additionality is all invested in the capital programme).

- 4.1 A series of Party Briefings will take place between now and the end of November which will request Members to prioritise the capital programme related to each rate scenario provided, ie 1% and 2½%. A further report will then be made to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for consideration at the same time as the level of rate is being decided.

4.2 Vehicle Replacement Programme

Given the financial constraints that exist and the demand for available finance within the Capital Programme we would propose to carry out a Value For Money review of the Vehicle Replacement Programme. This will ensure that the limited monies available for capital investment are spent in the most cost effective manner by the Council.

Resource Implications

Decisions on the number and cost of schemes to be financed under the capital programme will have an impact on the level of the rate needed to support the borrowing required. Essentially 1% on the rate equates to funding of £10m of capital spend.

Recommendations and Decisions

Members are requested to:

1. In accordance with paragraph 3, agree to the allocation of £300K, from the £1m of reserves allocated for potential support to the capital programme, to progress the capital scheme outlined: namely the Clement Wilson Bridge, Waterworks/Westland MUGA, Re-use Facilities at Recycling Centre and necessary preparation work for the Mary Peter's Track;

2. Agree a series of Party briefings on the prioritisation of the capital programme before the end of November;
3. Agree a value for money study review of the vehicle replacement programme.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

City Hall - Major Works Programme

The Committee agreed that a report in relation to the City Hall – Major Works Programme be submitted to a future meeting.

Proposals for the Use of 2010/2011 Underspend

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

As discussed at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 24 September, there is a potential forecast underspend of £2.9m in 2010/11. Given the early stage of the year it was agreed that up to £1.9m of this underspend is subject to debate at this stage, with any remaining underspend considered at a later point in the year, when the financial position is clearer.

In terms of the utilisation of the £1.9m forecast underspend to be discussed at the moment, it was agreed that Members would take into account:

- (a) that this is an in year underspend which should be utilised to support one off revenue initiatives rather than ongoing revenue expenditure, to avoid an implication for the 2011/12 rates setting exercise; and
- (b) in order to maximise the benefit for the 2011/12 rates setting exercise, it would be preferable if such one off revenue initiatives either pulled expenditure forward into 2010/11 from 2011/12 (eg. invest in reserves in 2010/11 rather than as part of 2011/12 rates setting etc) or lowered the cost base of the council in 2011/12 (invest to save type initiatives); and
- (c) the monies must be capable of being planned for and spent by 31 March 2011

It was agreed that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would consider a report on specific proposals for the utilisation of the £1.9m underspend at its meeting on 22 October 2010 and Members were asked to liaise with officers regarding any such proposals.

Key Issues

Proposals for Utilisation of £1.1m of the 2010/11 Underspend

A range of proposals have been developed for the consideration of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which would utilise some £1.1m of the underspend. These are set out in the table below and are described more fully in the appendix which has been circulated for the information of the Members.

Proposal	Cost £k	Cost £k
<u>Savings Proposals</u>		
Targeted Voluntary Redundancy	800	
Energy Savings	110	
Water Savings at the Zoo	60	
Subtotal		970
<u>Investment Proposals</u>		
Investing in Local Places	100	
Dealing with Derelict Properties	60	
Subtotal		160
TOTAL		1130

As set out in Appendix 1, the specific utilisation of the Investment proposals would be worked up with the relevant Standing Committee, if approval is given by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to proceed on this basis.

Implications for Rates Setting for 2011/12

Together these saving proposals are estimated to make some £700k savings available for consideration as part of the 2011/12 rates setting process and would provide additional services in relation to local areas and derelict properties. For information, £700k of savings could finance £7m of capital expenditure. Given the mid point of the year, approval is sought for the above proposals so that the savings can be achieved for 2011/12 and/or the services provided by 31 March 2011.

Consideration of the Remaining £0.8m Underspend at this time

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed on 24 September that up to £1.9m could be considered for utilisation at this stage of the year. Therefore, Members can identify and agree additional proposals (which meet the criteria) of up to £0.8m or indeed, replace any of the above proposals. Party groups are asked

to liaise with the Director of Finance and Resources urgently regarding any such alternative proposals, so that, if agreed by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its next meeting, they can be actioned by 31 March 2011. If there are no further proposals, any unutilised underspend can be considered in the Financial Report for Quarter 3 2010/11, as set out below.

Consideration of any Unutilised Underspend

Should the actual outturn remain at £2.9m, there will still be an unutilised underspend, the scale of which will depend on the extent of proposals agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee above. It is proposed that decisions on the utilisation of this remaining underspend should wait until the Financial Report for Quarter 3 2010/11, but possible uses could include:

- as first priority, investment in the District Fund Reserve, thus avoiding any further contribution to the District Fund Reserve in the rates setting process for 2011/12. Strategic Policy and Resources Committee was advised on 11 December 2009 that the reserves of Belfast City Council should be in the range of £8m to £10m. Some £1m of the 2010/11 underspend would be needed to provide District Fund reserves of £10m by 31 March 2011;
- investment in other reserves such as Repairs and Renewals Fund (which allows the Council to financially plan for the cost of future major repairs), Election Fund, City Investment Strategy etc; and
- offsetting any reductions in the planned level of rate income in 2010/11 from the write off of rates debt.

Resource Implications

Proposals have been identified which would utilise some £1.1m of the 2010/11 underspend and achieve savings of £700k from 2011/12. Based on current estimates, this would leave some £1.8m of unutilised underspend at this stage.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- (a) consider and approve the proposals set out in Appendix 1, a copy of which has been circulated, would utilise £1.1m of the 2010/11 underspend:

- £248k is used for the VR exercise in Parks;
 - agree that work is now undertaken with the Council's departments to identify any areas of potential redundancy with a view to a report being brought back to standing Committees and SP&R in relation to any detailed proposals for VR up to a maximum cost of £1.2m, including the type and number of posts; redundancy costs; payback period and potential savings.
 - £110k is used to secure energy savings at a number of council properties;
 - £60k is used to secure water savings at the Zoo;
 - £100k is used to improve the tourism offer in local areas;
 - £60k is used to carry out a pilot programme to more proactively manage derelict properties.
- (b) liaise with the Director of Finance and Resources regarding any further proposals, which would be considered at the next Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, up to a maximum of £0.8m; and
- (c) agree that any remaining unutilised underspend is considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in the Financial Report for Quarter 3, 2010/11."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Budget and Transformation Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 14th October.

Debt Management

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided details in relation to the Council's current debt position, together with proposals for improvements to the billing and collection of outstanding accounts. The Committee noted also the advice of the Town Solicitor regarding the provision of services to companies whose directors were also directors of a company in liquidation which owed amounts to the Council.

City Investment Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report which had been submitted by the Director of Property and Projects in relation to the City Investment Strategy:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 There is no doubt that the current economic climate and budgetary pressures (squeeze) facing the entire public sector within Northern Ireland will have an adverse impact upon the future level of investment within the City. It should be noted that central government departments are anticipating cuts of 8% in flat cash term over the next CSR period, which will amount to around 20% in real terms. The biggest cut however is anticipated in capital expenditure with reductions of up to 40% being anticipated over the period. This will undoubtedly affect the level of public investment in the city.
- 1.2 City investment is important in terms of the City tax base (i.e. rates), the Council's principal source of income. Investing in necessary infrastructure also provides a platform for growing the City's economic competitiveness, while the rates growth allows enhancement of public service delivery and further improvements to quality of life.
- 1.3 Despite the recent economic downturn, the Council has continued to invest in the development of the City including, for example, the recent refurbishments of the City Hall and Ulster Hall as part of its capital programme, and continued investment in new and improved facilities and services (e.g. leisure, community development, community safety, waste and recycling, parks and open spaces, supporting good relations etc.). The Council has also developed a City Investment Fund to support major projects that will leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

2.0 Key Issues

- 2.1 Belfast has benefited substantially from the amount of private and public investment in the city over the past 5 years. However the present recession, coupled with the cut in public expenditure, poses a real threat to continued investment. In these circumstances real civic leadership is now required from the Council to engage with Government and work with individual departments in a mutual endeavour to support further investment in the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the city.

2.2 The commitment of the Council in investing in the continued development of the City was highlighted with a recent notice of motion moved at Council by Councillor Rodway on 5th October, - *'This Council acknowledges that the United Kingdom is facing the most severe economic downturn for many decades and that, in such times, there is an obligation on the Council to retain its vision of strategic, equitable and sustainable development of the City. To this end, the Council recognises that adequate funding needs to be made available in the medium to long term and accordingly agrees to plan for year upon year increases in the Council reserves'*. It was agreed that the Notice of Motion would be passed to the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

2.3 Two important levers which underpin the Council's continued investment within the City is its Capital Programme and City Investment Fund.

1. Capital Programme

- Funded through rates based loans, this is a rolling programme of capital investment which either improves/replaces existing facilities/assets/infrastructure (e.g. parks improvements; leisure; civic buildings) or provides new facilities/investment property (e.g. Gasworks, leisure provision, pitch provision etc).
- While there are growing affordability pressures on the capital programme and an ongoing need to secure greater efficiencies, it is important to strike a balance by taking a long-term strategic approach and continue to invest in the development of our City and important Council facilities. Major issues such as safety, healthy lifestyles, culture, sport, the environment can all be usefully supported via the capital programme.

2) City Investment Fund

- The establishment of the City Investment Fund (CIF) is a clear demonstration of the Council's commitment to action and its wish to contribute to the vibrancy, prosperity, competitiveness and attractiveness of the City. It seeks to support the development of major iconic capital projects and lever (pump-prime) additional public and private sector investment into the City.

- The CIF is currently financed, up to a ceiling of £30m, through an annual % rate contribution and capital receipts obtained through the realisation of surplus assets.
- To date, the Council has committed £16million (approx.) under the CIF, profiled up until 2012-2013, to four iconic projects including Connswater Community Greenway; Titanic Signature Project; Lyric theatre and the Mac which will have major impacts on communities, tourism, culture and the economy.
- The CIF investment has levered in access of £160million of public and private sector investment in the City.
- Members' engagement will continue over the coming months to further explore and identify other potential CIF projects and to secure political consensus on project priorities.

2.3 City-Wide Projects

Members previously authorised officers to have discussions with other public service providers (including Government Departments and the Strategic Investment Board) to discuss the potential of creating a joint framework for city investment and to deliver key strategic projects for the city (e.g. provision of rapid transit system; stadium; tourism & cultural infrastructure; further regeneration of the City Centre; investment in gateways etc). Through working in partnership with key stakeholders, the Council seeks to establish a common understanding of the needs of the City and a shared commitment to investing in 'Place'.

- 2.4 It is becoming clear that a City Investment Framework that resonates with the new Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI II) would help to support investment into the City. Furthermore, a greater shared understanding of the planned investment activities by government departments and the Council would be a step forward and enable potential opportunities for collaborative solutions with added benefit to emerge.

- 2.5** Work on the Framework, and discussions within the political process have now reached the stage where it is important that the Council now engages at a political level with the Ministers of relevant Departments. The Committee has already expressed its wish to meet with relevant Ministers on a systematic basis (eg those Ministers with responsibility for DoE, DSD, DRD, DCAL and DARD) to discuss the current economic challenges facing the City, potential risks to future infrastructure investment and to explore how delivery can be progressed. A list of the immediate issues Members may wish to discuss with particular Ministers has been circulated.
- 2.6** Derry/Londonderry and Ilex has recently produced a draft Regeneration Plan and has sought professional advice on examining potential funding options to support the implementation of the Plan.
- 2.7** In line with a Committee's previous decision, preliminary discussions have been initiated with Derry City Council and ILEX to examine their approach to city development and to jointly consider potential opportunities for alternative forms of funding models such as Accelerated Development Zones (ADZ) (whereby a local authority is allowed to ring-fence future business rate growth within a designated area to pay for borrowings to fund enabling infrastructure in that area).
- 2.8** It is also understood, that work is currently underway to develop a strategic framework/strategy and resources plan for the regeneration of the Maze/Long Kesh site.
- 2.9** It is clear that there is going to be much less money available in Northern Ireland as a whole and it will be important that Belfast seeks to maximise the level of investment in the City. In progressing the development of a City Investment Framework and given the competing pressures from Derry/Londonderry/Ilex and Maze/Long Kesh, it will be important that we are clear on the focus and unique selling proposition of the city. There can only be one creative media centre, one financial services hub, possibly a few agreed Accelerated Development Zones (ADZs). It will be important that Belfast elected Members meet with their counterparts at Ministerial level on a range of issues, immediate, medium and longer term.

2.10 Place Shaping is a key civic leadership issue and Members may wish to consider the establishment of a cross-party Members' Working Group to drive these important issues forward. It is suggested that this Group comprise the Chairs of the relevant Committees or their nominees, together with one other Member of each of the political groups represented on the Council. This Group could then seek a series of meetings with Government Ministers on the City Investment Framework and related issues. Details of some of the issues Members may wish to raise has been circulated.

2.11 To further inform its thinking on a City Investment Framework, the Committee may wish to receive a full briefing on the experiences of other good practice exemplar cities such as Manchester, which has made substantial progress in recent years (now seen as the 2nd Core City in the UK ahead of cities such as Birmingham and Liverpool) and Edinburgh, which is also making good progress in this area. Members may also wish to consider the potential benefits of a cross-party delegation undertaking a site visit to Manchester and/or Edinburgh to explore experiences and lessons learnt.

2.12 EUROPEAN FUNDING

Officers are continuing to explore other options regarding potential European funding including a Jessica. It is understood that the ERDF is underspent by £22m which in theory is ringfenced for local economic development monies, but in the absence of fully thought through plans forthcoming from councils, a Jessica may be a better use of the funds.

2.13 Other possibilities include monies (i.e. under the European Recovery Fund) for green energy projects and the North Foreshore is a key potential beneficiary from such funds. The new Members' Steering Group for the North Foreshore will be fully appraised of these options at its first meeting.

2.14 PEACE III

Work is also underway to explore opportunities for potential capital funding under the Peace III Priority 2.1 'Creating Shared Public Spaces'. While the Council had made a number of submissions to the first call for bids, only the Girdwood submission had been deferred to enable further consideration to be given to the deliverability of the project. The Council will need to make a decision by around January 2011 if it would intend to progress or not, otherwise the tight delivery timetable for the project may not be possible.

- 2.15 A second call for Peace III projects is reopening in November 2011 and is dealt with in a separate report on the Committee's Agenda.
- 2.16 In addition, officers have also acted on the suggestions made by Members on consideration of the delay in the RPA process, that the Council should now actively consider how it might strengthen its relationship with key government departments. Discussions are ongoing between Council and Departmental officials to explore the potential to initiate a number of voluntary integrated area based pilots. A separate report on this work is included on the Committee agenda for discussion.

Resource Implications

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

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and:

- (i) agree that the Council push forward with the development of a City Investment Framework;
- (ii) agree to continue to explore the potential linkages with the regeneration proposals for ILEX/Derry/Londonderry and Maze/Long Kesh and work with Government Departments/agencies to try to get a consolidated approach to the limited investment opportunities which exist;
- (iii) consider the proposed establishment of a cross-party Members' Working Group to progress consideration and engagement in respect to City Investment, and to arrange a series of meetings with Government Ministers to progress the issues outlined in the Appendix; and
- (iv) consider a best practice visit to Edinburgh and/or Manchester, to look at emerging urban regeneration funding models."

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that the Working Group be comprised of the Chairmen of the Strategic Policy and Resources and Development Committees, together with a representative from each of the other Party Groupings on the Council.

Notice of Motion –
Financial Planning in an Economic Downturn

The Committee was reminded that at the Council meeting on 4th October, the undernoted Notice of Motion had been proposed by Councillor Rodway and seconded by Councillor W. Browne:

“This Council acknowledges that the United Kingdom is facing the most severe economic downturn for many decades and that, in such times, there is an obligation on the Council to retain its vision of strategic, equitable and sustainable development of the City. To this end, the Council recognises that adequate funding needs to be made available in the medium to long term and accordingly agrees to plan for year upon year increases in the Council reserves.”

In accordance with Standing Order 11e, the Motion stood referred without discussion to the Committee.

The Committee noted the details of the Motion and that this would be taken into account in considering the Council’s Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme.

Approval to Invite Tenders

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

- (i) manned security guarding for Council-owned properties, at a cost of approximately £885,000 per annum, for a two-year period, with an option to extend for a further one year period;
- (ii) stewarding of events, in the sum of approximately £60,000 per annum, for a period of two years, with an option to renew for a further one year;
- (iii) a first response/key holding service for a period of two years, with an option to renew for a further one year period. The approximate cost of which would be £16,000 per annum; and
- (iv) the supply and delivery of stationery supplies and computer print consumables for a maximum period of three years.

Democratic Services and Governance

**Request for the Use of the City Hall
and 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	12th Annual Conference Dinner of Association of Education Assessment – Europe 11th November, 2011 Approximately 120 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 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland	Institute Conference Dinner for Council Members and Executives 25th November, 2011 Approximately 400 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 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
St. Gall's Gaelic Athletic Club	Centenary Dinner 11th December, 2010 Approximately 350 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality.	<p>This event seeks to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of St. Gall's Gaelic Athletic Club and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city.</p> <p>The Committee, at its meeting on Friday, 21st, May 2010, considered a Notice of Motion in relation to the achievement of St. Gall's Gaelic Athletic Club, in this its centenary year, in becoming the first team from Belfast to win an All-Ireland Senior Gaelic Football Club Championship.</p> <p>The Committee was advised that the Club was this year celebrating its 100th Anniversary and was seeking to use the City Hall for that event and if the Committee were minded then discussions could be undertaken with the Club to establish how its achievement could be recognised by the Council at that event.</p> <p>Following discussions with the organisers the Committee is recommended to make a contribution of £5,000 towards the cost of the Centenary Dinner.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality up to a maximum of £5,000.</p> <p>Approximate cost £5,000</p>

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Irish National Foresters	125th Anniversary Dinner 1st August, 2011 Approximately 300 Attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	<p>This event seeks to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the Irish National Foresters and to acknowledge its contribution to the general life and well-being of the city.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>
Citizens Advice Belfast	Volunteer Award Presentation 3rd June, 2011 Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception.	<p>This event seeks to recognise those volunteers who have demonstrated a commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society, their community, the environment or individuals.</p> <p>The event also seeks to promote the positive effect which volunteering has in combatting poverty, helping those who are disadvantaged and promoting social inclusion.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception.</p> <p>Approximate cost £500</p>

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date – Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Belfast Media Group	Belfast Sports Volunteer Awards 23rd June, 2011 Approximately 150 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 the achivements of people and the subsequent contribution made by these individuals who gave of their time voluntarily to help support their sport and insure young people can enjoy their games and fulfill their ambition. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership, Strong, Fair and Together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception. Approximate cost £500

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Proportionality for the Offices of
Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Committee, at its meeting on 20th August, agreed that a report be submitted for its consideration concerning the possible extension of the d'Hondt system of proportionality to the offices of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor.

The Council has for a number of years accepted the principle of proportionality for the allocation of places on Committees and on outside bodies and for the allocation of Chairmanships and Deputy Chairmanships of Committees and these arrangements are included in the Council's Standing Orders. However, the election of the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor is not currently included in the proportionality arrangements and it could be argued that it would be in keeping with the principle of proportionality to extend the scheme to cover the Civic Dignitaries. If the Committee were minded to include these positions within the proportionality arrangements, then it would be necessary to do so at the beginning of a Council Term. Elections to the new Council are expected to be held in May, 2011.

Key Issues

Unlike the appointment of Members to Committees and outside bodies, or the allocation of Chairmanships and Deputy Chairmanships of Committees, the election of the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor is subject to statutory regulation. Section 11 (1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 makes it a requirement for these positions to be 'elected' annually by the Council and, in order to fulfil this requirement, it is necessary for the election of the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor to appear as separate items on the summons for the Annual Council Meeting. The introduction of proportionality to the process cannot override this legal obligation.

The Committee would, however, be entitled to establish a protocol as to how the election of the Civic Dignitaries should be administered. After the Local Government Elections, officers meet with the Party Group Leaders to decide on the allocation of Committee places, the appointment of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees and the appointment of Members to outside bodies. At the moment, these appointments are dealt with in separate 'pools' and the d'Hondt system is used to allocate the order of choices to Party Groups, based upon their strength within the Council. Should the Committee so wish, the identification of the Party Groups entitled to nominate Members to fill the positions of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor on an annual basis for the full 4-year term could be determined as a separate 'pool' at the same meeting of Party Group leaders. This would give 8 places (4 Lord Mayors and 4 Deputy Lord Mayors) over the 4-year term.

As pointed out earlier, the Member allocated to each position each year would still require to be formally 'elected' at the Annual Council meeting and the protocol cannot prevent a Member of Council from nominating a different Member at the Annual meeting. In such circumstances, a vote would have to be taken at the Annual meeting to decide upon the appointments.

It would seem not to be appropriate to include the High Sheriff position within these arrangements as this is not an appointment made by the Council. Although custom in practice determines that the Council submits one name only for consideration to the Secretary of State, this is decided annually by the Council and he/she would be entitled to reject that nominee and require the Council to submit alternatives. It is the Secretary of State and not the Council who then makes the appointment. For these reasons the process for the appointment of the High Sheriff is different from that for the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor and it is considered that this nomination should continue to be decided annually by the Council.

There are, essentially, two decisions which the Committee is required to consider:

1. Does the Committee wish to establish a protocol to extend the proportionality arrangements to cover the identification of the Party Groups which will be entitled to nominate Members to fill the offices of the Civic Dignitaries? Members should note however that a formal vote on this would be required at Council if more than one nomination for the positions was received.
2. If so, does the Committee wish the position of High Sheriff to be excluded from these arrangements?

Decisions

1. The Committee is requested to decide if it wishes to agree to the extension of the proportionality arrangements to include the identification of those Party Groups which will be entitled to nominate Members to fill the offices of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor on an annual basis for the full 4-year term. If so, the Committee is requested further to agree that these appointments be considered as a separate 'pool' which will be allocated at the meeting of Party Group Leaders immediately following the Local Government Elections every 4 years.
2. Does the Committee wish the position of High Sheriff to be excluded from these arrangements? Members should note that whatever decision is taken, the Local Government Act requires a formal vote on the election of Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor if more than one nomination is received."

After discussion, it was

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

That the Committee agrees to the extension of the proportionality arrangements to include the identification of those Party Groups which would be entitled to nominate Members to fill the offices of Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor on an annual basis for the full 4-year term and that these appointments be considered as a separate "pool" which would be allocated at the meeting of the Party Group Leaders immediately following the Local Government Elections every four years.

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

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

The Democratic Services Manager submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

Members will recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 22nd January, 2010, agreed in principle to the provision of a system to facilitate the live streaming of Council meetings on the internet, subject to a further report setting out the costs being submitted for its consideration in due course.

Key Issues

The live streaming of the Monthly Meetings of the Council would enable anyone who has access to the internet to watch and listen to the proceedings as they take place. The process of archiving the video footage of the meetings would enable individuals to view past meetings via the internet at any point in time.

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

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

However, the Committee will be mindful of the current challenging financial environment and the need to exercise prudence and to challenge costs which are to be incurred by the Council.

If Belfast City Council decides to proceed with the live streaming and archiving of Council meetings it would be the first Council to do so in Northern Ireland and would be showing leadership to other Councils.

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

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

Option 1

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

Option 2

The system used by Dublin City Council would seem to be effective in delivering the service. This system provides live streaming of high quality video feed from moveable cameras, providing viewers with on-screen information, including details of the meeting agenda and of individual speakers, and will archive the footage in a manner that can be retrieved and viewed through the Council's website.

The system would be leased from a company which specialises in providing this service. There would be no initial capital cost but it would require an annual leasing charge of approximately £20,000. It would be the responsibility of the company providing the service to update the equipment and to provide maintenance when appropriate. These costs are included within the aforementioned figure. This option could result in an approximate cost to the Council of £60,000 over three years.

Option 3

The Council could also chose to purchase the required equipment up front at an approximate cost of between £40,000 and £50,000. An additional maintenance cost of approximately £10,000 would be payable annually and, depending on advancements in technology, it may be necessary to upgrade the equipment. Furthermore, as this equipment would be owned and maintained by the Council, technical staff will have to be trained and deployed as and when appropriate. This option could result in an approximate cost to the Council of £80,000 over three years.

Option 2 appears to be the most advantageous to the Council and is the method which has been utilised by over forty Local Authorities across the United Kingdom.

Members should be aware that, in addition to the costs outlined in all of the options above, there would be a requirement for a member of staff to be trained and for them to be present to operate the equipment during the Council Meetings.

Furthermore, as a result of the Committee's decision of 22nd January, 2010, provision has been made within the draft 2011/2012 revenue estimates to cover the costs associated with the implementation of a system which will permit the live streaming and archiving of Council proceedings on the internet.

Resource Implications

- Option 1 – £250,000 - £400,000
- Option 2 - £60,000 over three years
- Option 3 - £80,000 over three years

Provision has been made within the draft 2011/2012 revenue estimates for the costs which would be incurred with the purchase of such a system.

Recommendation

The Committee is requested to consider if it wishes to proceed with the live streaming of Council meetings on the internet.

If so, the Committee is recommended to choose Option 2 as set out in the report as the most effective option available, approve the invitation of tenders and under the scheme of delegation, to delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive/Town Solicitor to approve the successful tender. Tenders will be evaluated in line with both cost and quality criteria and awarded to the most economically advantageous tenderer.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor N. Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Robinson,

That the Committee agrees to proceed with the proposal to live stream meetings of the Council and to adopt Option 2 as set out in the report.

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

Accordingly, the Committee approved the invitation of tenders and, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, delegated authority to the Town Solicitor to accept the most economically advantageous tender received.

Election Update

The Committee was reminded that elections to both the Local Councils and to the Northern Ireland Assembly were scheduled to be held in 2011. In addition, a national referendum would also be held regarding the introduction of changes to the method of voting at General Elections.

The Democratic Services Manager stressed the importance of these events being co-ordinated as much as possible. The current position was that the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly would be held on the first Thursday in May, that is, 5th May, 2011. The Northern Ireland Office had indicated that the setting of the date for the Local Council Elections would be included in a General Amendment Order which would be led before Parliament in the Autumn. It was anticipated that that date would also be set for 5th May, 2011. The date of the national referendum would appear in the Bill to be introduced to Parliament and, again, it was anticipated that the referendum would also be held on the same date. That would mean that Thursday, 5th May, 2011 would see elections to both the Local Councils and the Northern Ireland Assembly, together with the holding of the national referendum.

He pointed out that, until the dates of the election and referendum had been confirmed, it was difficult to predict what might happen at the close of poll. However, assuming that all three events were held on 5th May, then it was anticipated that all papers from the two elections and the referendum would be held in a secure location overnight. On the morning of 6th May all ballot boxes would be opened for the verification process to take place. When that had been completed the ballot boxes for the two elections and the referendum would be separated and, potentially, taken to different count venues.

The timing of the referendum count would have to be the same throughout the United Kingdom and was still being considered by the Chief Counting Officer. Any decision reached might impact on the timing of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Local Council counts. Setting the referendum count aside, it was anticipated that the Assembly count would commence on the afternoon of Friday, 6th May and be completed by the evening of Saturday, 7th May. The Local Council counts would commence on the morning of Monday, 9th May, and in Belfast, conclude on Tuesday, 10th May. As indicated earlier, the decision of the Chief Counting Officer with regard to the timetable for the counting of the referendum might impact upon the other timings.

The Democratic Services Officer pointed out that a General Amendment Order was expected to be laid before Parliament in November to establish the date of the Local Council Elections. It was anticipated that the Order would also make some changes to the law governing Local Elections. At the moment, the extent of those changes was unknown. A further report would be presented to the Committee once details had become available. In addition, the Northern Ireland Assembly had recently considered a Private Members Bill proposing that once a Member was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly, they would not be permitted to continue to serve as a Councillor. Clearly if that legislation were to be passed it would impact upon the membership of the new Council.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that discussions commence immediately to ensure that the Count for the Local Government Elections were held in the City Hall.

**National Association of Councillors –
Annual General Meeting and Conference**

The Committee was advised that the National Association of Councillors was holding its Annual General Meeting and Conference in Leeds from Friday, 26th until Sunday, 28th November. The theme of this year's conference was "Working with the New Coalition Government." The conference would consider how local government could best work in partnership with the new administration at Westminster in order to maximise benefits for its citizens. The conference would also include a "Question Time" session which would consist of a panel of members of parliament from all the major Parties and a leading journalist. The cost per delegate of attending was approximately £615.

The Committee authorised the attendance at the Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors, Northern Ireland Region, the Democratic Services Manager (or their nominees) and a representative of the Party Groupings on the Council not represented by the aforementioned Members.

Asset Management

Land at Slievegallion Drive

The Committee considered the undernoted report in relation to land at Slievegallion Drive:

"Purpose

To consider the decision of the Parks & Leisure Committee of 14 October 2010 in relation to land at Slievegallion Drive.

Relevant Background Information

A report was taken to the Parks & Leisure Services Committee on 14 October 2010 regarding the site of the former Social Security Offices at Slievegallion Drive which adjoins Council owned land at Slievegallion Drive.

That report set out the various issues in relation to an initial expression of interest previously made by the Council to LPS in respect of this site, with a view to potentially developing this site together with the Council's existing land, for the purpose of a 3rd generation Gaelic hybrid pitch, changing facilities and car parking. This was on the basis that further detailed consideration would be required in terms of working up costs, ascertaining its strategic fit with the emerging Pitches Strategy and affordability and prioritisation within the Council's Capital Programme.

However, the NIHE via their nominated Housing Association is also interested in acquiring the site for social housing purposes and North & West Housing Association has been nominated to develop the site in the event that they can acquire the lands. DSD have indicated that funding would be available for site acquisition in this financial year although North & West Housing Association have indicated that as their acquisition would be subject to planning and appointment of design team etc it is essential that they commence this process within the next couple weeks

Given the site's suitability for housing, LPS have confirmed that the value of the site will be based on housing value and not open space/recreational values. The indicative site valuation provided by LPS is £1M/£1.25M. It should also be noted that there are considerable differences in level between the Council's land & the subject site, which would result in significant increased development costs & a requirement for retaining structures as well as ball stop & additional perimeter fencing.

Detailed costings to acquire & develop this site can only be prepared when there is more clarity on nature & specification of any facilities to be provided and an agreed valuation for the site. However, indicative figures at this stage would indicate a cost of circa £3.5/£3.7M which reflects that the land value will be based on housing land values; development of a 3rd generation hybrid pitch (with additional costs due to level differentials between the two sites), retaining structures, changing facilities, and demolition of the existing offices. In addition, empty rates would be payable in respect of the social security offices pending demolition.

LPS have advised that a Ministerial Briefing was held recently in respect of this site and following this it was agreed that, in light of the two competing interests, a timetable must be put in place to ensure that the decision making process of assessing which interested party has the greatest need is completed as soon as possible. LPS have advised that the Council are required to prepare a business case for the proposed use by 10 November and confirm that funding is available for the transfer this financial year. Both parties are to submit their business case and the Minister will have to agree which need has the greater priority. If no business case is available from the Council by 10 November its interest will be withdrawn and a transfer to the nominated Housing Association will be progressed accordingly.

Due to the tight timeframes no decisions have been made as to the suitability or prioritisation of this site as a potential Gaelic pitch and there is currently no identified funding for development of these lands.

The recommendation made to the Parks & Leisure Services Committee was on the basis that, given the current proposed site acquisition costs, the Committee inform the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that this does not represent a value for money proposition for pitch provision and that the expression of interest should, therefore, be withdrawn. In this scenario site acquisition and development of this land would not therefore be included as part of the Council's Programme.

However, at this meeting of the Parks & Leisure Services Committee on 14 October 2010, Members recommended that the Council's expression of interest should not be withdrawn.

Key Issues

- Site of former Social Security Offices at Slievegallion Drive, declared surplus by DFP, trawled to all public sector bodies by LPS. Adjoins Council owned land currently used as informal open space.
- Initial expression of interest made to LPS, with a view to potentially developing this site together with the Councils existing land, for the purpose of a 3rd generation Gaelic hybrid pitch, changing facilities and car parking.
- NIHE via their nominated Housing Association also wish to acquire land for purposes of social housing.
- Business Case to be submitted to LPS by 10 November, together with confirmation that funding will be in place this financial year.

- Indicative site acquisition and development costs are likely to be in the region of £3.5M /£3.7M.
- The subject site has not been prioritised as a Gaelic pitch in terms of the emerging Pitches Strategy and there is currently no identified funding in the Capital Programme for site acquisition or development of these lands. The acquisition and development of these lands would have to be considered as part of the Council's Capital Programme, but a decision on this needs to be made prior 10 November when the Council are required to submit their business case and confirm that funding is in place.
- The report taken to the Parks & Leisure Services Committee advised that if the land value for the site was based on open space (recreational use) this would be a reasonable acquisition for future pitch provision, but given the site's suitability for housing and the LPS indicative valuation of £1M/£1.25M it does not appear to be value for money for pitch provision given the limited funds available for capital works. It should be noted that the valuation has not been agreed yet and will be subject to negotiations between LPS and the purchaser.
- The Parks & Leisure Services Committee, at their meeting on 14 October 2010, recommended, however, that the Council's expression of interest should not be withdrawn.

Resource Implications

Financial

Detailed costings to acquire & develop this site can only be prepared when there is more clarity on the nature & specification of any facilities to be provided and an agreed valuation for the site. However, indicative figures at this stage would indicate a cost of circa £3.5/£3.7M, with future ongoing maintenance and renewal cost implications. There is currently no identified funding in the Capital Programme for this proposal.

Human Resources

Staff Resource to progress any proposals.

Asset and Other Implications

The development of the subject land together with the Council's adjoining lands would result in an improved recreational facility for this area.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the decision of the Parks & Leisure Services Committee of 14 October 2010; and to indicate if they wish to have site acquisition & development of this site included as part of the Capital Programme on the basis that LPS are seeking confirmation that funding for the acquisition is available this financial year, with a business case to be submitted by 10 November 2010.

If Members decide that they wish to acquire the site and develop as a third generation pitch, this will have a £3.5m/£3.7m financial consequence which will require provision in the Rate to fund.”

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Department of Finance and Personnel indicating that the Council would not, at this stage, be submitting a business plan in relation to the site but would wish to be considered again following the outcome of consultation with local residents in relation to the future use of the site.

Lease of Land at Ormeau Park to Northern Ireland Water

The Committee was advised that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 14th October, had approved the grant of a 99 year lease to Northern Ireland Water to allow them to install two cabinets, a large access cover and a ventilation shaft adjacent to the main gates in Ormeau Park. The total area of the land to be leased, including a short access path, which was to be installed by Northern Ireland Water, was approximately 42 square metres and the company had agreed to pay the Council a sum of £500 for the grant of the lease.

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee approved the grant of the 99 year lease to Northern Ireland Water and granted the right-of-way access.

Licence Agreement and at Ormeau Park

In accordance with Standing Order 60, the Committee was advised that the Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 14th October, had agreed to approve the grant of a short-term temporary Licence Agreement to Ms. M. Hunter for the use of part of the Ormeau Park Bowling Pavilion, subject to the Agreement operating no later than March, 2011. The use was required for a childcare playgroup on three mornings per week at a Licence fee of £110 per week.

The Committee approved the terms outlined.

Future Use and Management of the City Hall

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The City Hall is the most prestigious building in the city of Belfast and is one of the most instantly recognisable symbols of the city. It has a unique, iconic status and is very much seen as the 'heart of the city'. Constructed at the turn of the 20th century, it was opened officially in 1906 and celebrated its centenary in 2006. It was closed temporarily in October 2007 for a period of 2 years for an £11m refurbishment programme and was reopened in October 2009. It is a Grade A listed building.
- 1.2 The City Hall is a working building which is in daily use as the civic headquarters of the Council. One of its key uses is to facilitate the 51 Elected Members of the Council in their role as civic leaders for the city. It also provides an office base for approximately 200 staff as well as offering a number of services to the public including a new exhibition area, visitor information point and coffee-shop. It also houses the Birth, Deaths and Marriages suite.
- 1.3 The building has three prestigious function rooms, namely the Great Hall, the Banqueting Hall and the Reception Hall, all of which are heavily booked for both civic and non-civic functions. These rooms typically generate around 600 functions per annum, attracting over 30,000 guests each year. There are also exhibitions occasionally held in the City Hall. The grounds of the City Hall are frequently used for high profile public events including the Christmas and Spring Continental markets. The City Hall is open to the public Monday to Saturday and offers public tours with tour numbers and participants increasingly significantly over the past number of years

2.0 Key Issues

- 2.1 The City Hall is the Council's most high profile and impressive asset; however, due to historic reasons and with the passing of time the lines of accountability and responsibility for the use and management of the building and its grounds have become blurred. There are no explicit, transparent policy frameworks in place for a number of key areas in relation to the management of the City Hall including –

- the booking of functions rooms which has led to a degree of confusion over who is responsible for what – for both internal and external events.
- the charging for room hire
- the catering of events
- the use of the grounds

This lack of clarity re accountability and responsibility is a high risk for the Council.

2.2 Many of the functions held in the City Hall are non-civic and booked by external organisations. In such circumstances, approval is based on compliance with a number of fairly general and somewhat dated criteria. Members will note that complaints have recently been received from the commercial sector, asserting that providing free access to the City Hall is unfairly and unnecessarily depriving local businesses of commercial opportunities.

2.3 At present there is no income generated from any of these events and, in fact, up until June 2010 the Council offered an uncapped level of civic hospitality for particular events in the form of drinks receptions and dinners. The level of hospitality provided in such circumstances has now been capped to £500 by Committee in June 2010.

2.4 Within this context, a review of the overall management and use of the City Hall and its grounds had been initiated a few months back. An initial draft options paper is being finalised which considers the following areas:

- General issues in respect of the management & governance arrangements for the City Hall
- Use of City Hall facilities (including grounds) and the associated process for booking
- Tours
- Scope to introduce a potential scale of charging for functions in the City Hall
- Catering for events

This options paper has taken into consideration best practice in civic buildings elsewhere in the UK and Ireland.

2.5 Members are asked to note some of the emerging issues from the initial review including:

- The fragmented nature of the management and governance for the booking of City Hall functions and the inconsistency in approach to dealing with internal and external functions
- The lack of a single point of accountability in relation to the management and use of the City Hall
- The criteria for use of the City Hall is somewhat dated
- Establishing a clear role for the SP&R Committee in approving usage
- The need to test the appetite for the option to potentially introduce some form of commercial charge (in particular circumstances) for the use of City Hall function rooms and/or City Hall tours
- Detailed financial modelling needs to be undertaken to explore the emerging options and any associated scale of charges
- Future accommodation requirements and the future role of City Hall will have to be clarified.

2.6 Members will appreciate that this is a complex piece of work. Essentially it raises the issue of 'what is/should be' the role of the City Hall? E.g. do we continue to expand its accessibility to, and usage by, the general public? Should it remain an open free building for all, should we ensure that costs are covered, or should it operate on a more commercial basis? This is linked to ongoing discussions in respect to the future accommodation needs of the Council.

2.7 While a detailed Phase I report is currently being finalised and will be submitted for the future consideration of the Committee, Members are asked to consider the appropriateness of scheduling a series of Party Group briefings to enable Members to inform the options paper being developed. Alternatively, the proposal to establish a Members' Accommodation Working Group could be utilised to progress this issue.

3.0 Resource Implications

There are no Human Resources or financial implications contained within this report

4.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- i) **note the contents of this report and, in particular, that a further detailed options paper will be submitted for the consideration of Committee in November 2010**
- ii) **consider the appropriateness of scheduling Party Group briefings to enable Members to be briefed on and input into the emerging options paper or alternatively consider whether this issue could be progressed by the Members' Accommodation Working Group"**

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a detailed options paper be submitted for consideration to a future meeting.

Connswater Community Greenway Update

The Committee was reminded that the Council, as part of the City Investment Strategy, had agreed to co-ordinate the acquisition of lands to enable the Connswater Community Greenway programme to proceed. The Council would secure rights over the land needed for the Greenway and would be responsible for the management and maintenance of that land and any assets on it. The Greenway would have to be accessible for forty years to comply with the Big Lottery Fund letter of offer, although the intention was to secure rights for longer if possible. Subsequently, the Big Lottery Fund had agreed to the Council becoming the employer and authority had been granted by the Committee, at its meeting on 24th September, for the Chief Executive to sign the transfer agreement on the Council's behalf. The contract for the construction of the Greenway had been awarded to SIAC/Galliford Try and it was intended that the Council would become the employer and take ownership of the contract by November, 2010.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that the first phase of construction would be from Cregagh Glen to Montgomery Road, with work programmed to commence on 1st December, 2010. Under the terms of the contract, the Project Manager needed to be in a position to hand over the land within the extent of works for that section to the contractor on that date.

It was reported that there were two areas of land which had been identified as being required to help complete the Greenway route and associated landscaping:

- (i) the first was an area of 2.54 acres of land at Cregagh Glen and Council officers had agreed to purchase the land from a Mrs. Rea at a cost of £14,115. At this stage, Mrs. Rea's solicitor had not been able to provide Legal Services with title to a portion of the lands and they would need to do further title checks prior to accepting a statutory declaration to the effect that Mrs. Rea and her predecessor in title had occupied the said lands to the exclusion of all others since 1920.

Since there might not now be enough time before 1st December, 2010 to complete the conveyancing and put in place the statutory declaration, officers had proposed that the Council take a Licence to allow the contractor to access the land with effect from 1st December, 2010. The Licence would terminate on formal completion of the acquisition of the land from Mrs. Rea; and

- (ii) an area of 0.534 acres of land at Glen Side, off the Upper Knockbreda Road. Council officers had agreed to purchase that area of land from Castlereagh Borough Council for £8,010. On checking the title it had become apparent that the developer of adjoining land had wrongly registered part of Castlereagh Borough Council's land within the adjoining folio. Both Parties had recognised the error and were taking steps to have the matter rectified, following which the land would be transferred to the Council for the Greenway.

As the rectification of title at Land Register could take some time, it was proposed that the Council take a Licence from Castlereagh Borough Council to allow the contractor to take possession of the site on or after 1st December, 2010 in order to commence work on the Greenway. The Licence would terminate on form of completion of the acquisition of the land from Castlereagh Borough Council.

The Director of Property and projects explained that the Project Manager intended to hand the remainder of the land required for the Greenway to the contractor in accordance with the following Programme of Works:

Phase 2 – Montgomery Road to Beersbridge Road – on 1st June, 2011;

Phase 3 and 4 – Glen Road to Dixon Park and Beersbridge Road to Sydenham Bypass - on 1st April, 2012; and

Phase 5 – Victoria Park – on 1st February, 2013.

He explained that the land assembly for Phases 2 to 5 was progressing well and it was intended that all acquisitions of land would be placed before the commencement of Phase 2.

After discussion, the Committee granted approval for:

- (i) the purchase of 2.54 acres of land from Mrs. Rea for £14,115 and to the taking out of a Licence for the land; and
- (ii) the purchase of 0.534 acres of land from Castlereagh Borough Council at a cost of £8,010 and to the taking out of a Licence for the aforementioned land.

Peace III Priority 2.1 Capital Bids for Shared Space

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the reopening of the Peace III Priority 2.1 '*Creating Shared Public Spaces*' call for capital projects.

Relevant Background Information

Last month's Strategic P&R Committee was informed that SEUPB intended to reopen the call for bids under Priority 2.1 '*Creating Shared Public Spaces*' of the Peace III programme. Members are asked to note that SEUPB formally reopened this call on 1st October with a closing date for applications on MONDAY, 17th JANUARY 2011.

Under this priority SEUPB is seeking strategic physical project submissions that can be easily recognised as a Peace III project after the programme completes in 2015. The central issue that projects need to demonstrate is their ability to deliver peace and reconciliation outcomes and to be iconic, transformational projects that would provide a lasting legacy to the PEACE III programme. All monies under this call have to be committed by December 2013 and spent by 2015 so the timescales are extremely tight for capital projects.

Members agreed last month that it was important that the learning from the previous rounds of Peace III applications is taken on board if any new projects are submitted under this reopened call. The application process is an onerous one and the Council weakens its chances of success with the submission of multiple bids. It was therefore agreed that the Council should only submit 1 or 2 very well defined projects under this call in order to maximise its chances of a getting a successful application under this call.

Members were also reminded that previous Council led submissions have failed on their capacity to be iconic, transformational and have had an insufficient focus on peace and reconciliation. Therefore it is vital that any projects which are submitted under this call need to –

- clearly demonstrate their peace and reconciliation outcomes
- be iconic and transformational

- provide a lasting legacy to the Peace programme in Northern Ireland,
- clearly identify the need for the project and be fully worked up and costed

Members also agreed to the establishment of a short term Member Group to develop an influencing strategy and make use of the existing Member experience with SEUPB.

Members will recall that the Council submitted 4 applications under the last call for this Priority in November 2009. Of these 3 were rejected by SEUPB – the Sports Village at the North Foreshore, the North Belfast Cultural Corridor and the Gasworks Bridge while the Girdwood Community Hub application was deferred pending further information. Members are asked to note that work on the Girdwood Hub submission is continuing.

Key Issues – Reopening of the call

Update on Projects

Following the SP&R Committee meetings in August and September and the Party Group briefings on the new Corporate Plan in early September, Members have identified a number of projects that could potentially be submitted under this call. These are detailed below along with some points for Members to note and recommendations in relation to each project.

1. *Sports Village at the North Foreshore* – the development of a cross community facility aimed at promoting good relations via sport, recreational training and education on the North Foreshore site. The Council would lead and develop this bid with the support of Crusaders/ Newington Football Clubs. As Members are aware the original Sports Village bid got through to second phase but was rejected on grounds of limited peace inputs and gaps in the business plan. These areas would have to be reworked in any new submission

Recommendation – That officers work up this proposal in greater detail and continue to progress discussions with Crusaders/Newington Football Clubs

2. *'Belfast Story' at Belfast Central Library* – Members will recall that the Strategic P&R Committee at its meeting in June 2010 considered the decisions made by the Libraries NI Board in terms of library closures and agreed that the Council should continue discussions with Libraries NI in relation to potential future collaboration opportunities. Members were informed at

the SP&R Committee meeting in September that initial discussions had been held with Libraries NI staff re the opportunity of a potential space to host the 'Belfast Story' in the Belfast Central Library. Members are also aware that Library is being considered as a potential option for the future location of the Welcome Centre. An Outline Business Case for the Central Library is currently being prepared by Libraries NI and this is due to be finalised by the end of December. Members are asked to note that there could potentially be a number of issues with the proposal in that the delivery of the Belfast Story within the Library will be contingent on Libraries NI receiving funding go-ahead for the overall project and that this might be deemed as a high risk by SEUPB. Members are asked to consider that the central premise of Priority 2.1 is to deliver major, iconic, transformational capital projects and that this project may not be deemed to fit with the aspirations of this programme.

Recommendation – That officers do further work on this proposal to assess its suitability and viability in relation to aims and objectives of the Priority 2.1 programme in light of the issues raised above and continue to progress discussions with Libraries NI re this project with an update to be taken to Members next month.

3. **Ulster Sports Museum** – As Members are aware the Ulster Sports Museum Association (USMA) has been working for a number of years towards establishing a permanent museum by 2012 to celebrate Ulster's greatest sports men and women building on the success of the temporary exhibition which was launched in the City Hall in Dec 2009. The Association had previously considered a building in College Square North however for a variety of reasons, including cost, the USMA, was unable to proceed with that proposal. Earlier this year the USMA advertised to identify potential partners interested in hosting the museum. They interviewed a number of applicants and have narrowed it down to three potential locations – Belfast (former Bank of Ireland building at the corner of North Street and Royal Avenue), Bangor and Newtownabbey. Consultants have been appointed to assess the feasibility of each location. Council officers have met recently with the USMA to discuss their proposals and the USMA have highlighted that there are strong arguments for locating the sports museum in Belfast City Centre. It has been stressed to the USMA that the Council could not, given the current economic situation, contribute directly to the financing of this project. The USMA is therefore looking at exploring other funding avenues. Further consideration would need to be given to the location of this project, potential links with the 'Belfast Story'/Central Library project etc. Members are asked to note that an update paper on this project was taken to the Parks & Leisure Committee on 14 October.

Recommendation – That officers do further work on this proposal to assess its suitability and viability in relation to the aims of the Priority 2.1 programme and progress discussions with the USMA

4. **North Belfast Cultural Corridor** – As Members are aware the Cultural Corridor was knocked out by SEUPB in the last call at the first stage – i.e. it did not meet the thresholds for progressing to economic appraisal. SEUPB had advised that they felt the Corridor project was much more of an environmental and tourism project and that it was weak in demonstrating peace and reconciliation outcomes and their feedback was that the Corridor project would be unlikely to meet the aims of the Priority 2.1 programme. However provision for parts of this project have now been made under the Council's recent submission to Peace III Priority 1.1 'Building Positive Relations at a Local Level' and will be taken forward through this and potentially renewing the routes options.

Recommendation – SEUPB have already advised that it is unlikely that this project will meet the aims of the Priority 2.1 programme and as provision for elements of this projects have been made under Priority 1.1 it is recommended that this project is not resubmitted under Priority 2.1

5. **Gasworks Bridge** – Members are aware that like the Cultural Corridor project above the Gasworks Bridge also did not meet the threshold scores for progressing to economic appraisal stage in the last round and was knocked out by SEUPB in the initial stage. Subsequent discussions with SEUPB indicated that this project fell down on its demonstration of peace and reconciliation outcomes and its ability to provide a lasting legacy to the peace programme. It was also considered weak in terms of its ability to act as a catalyst and be transformational. Concerns were also raised over the value for money and the need for the project. SEUPB drew comparisons with the Peace Bridge in Derry which had successfully received funding under an earlier call for this priority highlighting that this was seen as a project which had an impact on the whole city whereas it was considered that the impact of the Gasworks proposal would be much more localised and therefore less iconic and transformational. Members are asked to note that the Council has been contacted by Sustrans in relation to the Connect2 project which could be an alternative avenue of funding for the development of this project.

Recommendation – that this project is not resubmitted following the feedback from SEUPB. Members are asked however to agree that officers explore the potential for the development of this project under the Connect 2 project in conjunction with Sustrans

6. ***North Foreshore Bridge*** – As Members are aware the North Foreshore Bridge was submitted under one of the previous calls to Priority 2.1 in 2007 and was narrowly rejected at economic appraisal stage. Members are however asked to note SEUPB's feedback in relation to the Gasworks Bridge in relation to this proposal and the need for the project to demonstrate its impact at a city level.

Recommendation – that no further action is taken in relation to this project under Priority 2.1 in light of the feedback from SEUPB on the Gasworks Bridge project and that this project has previously been rejected

7. ***HMS Caroline*** – Members will be aware that there have been ongoing discussions re the future of the HMS Caroline over the past few years and that this project was previously rejected by the Strategic P&R Committee as potential project under the last round of funding. Members are asked to note that the SS Nomadic restoration project received £2.27million of funding under a previous call under this priority and feedback from previous discussions with SEUPB on other projects would indicate that they are reluctant to fund 2 or more projects of a similar nature.

Recommendation – no further action at present – it is unlikely that SEUPB will fund two similar applications under this funding programme

8. ***Black Mountain Shared Space Project*** – Officers from the Council met recently with representatives from the Black Mountain Shared Spaces project which is an innovative project being developed on a cross-community and cross-sectoral basis. The Black Mountain Shared Spaces Project has recently written to the Council asking that the Council be the lead statutory partner in this project. The Black Mountain has, over recent years, become the focus of anti-social behaviour mainly, but not exclusively, on the part of young people from both sides of the community. The Black Mountain Shared Spaces project proposes a number of elements including education, employment and youth provision, building good relations and development of a social economy project of benefit to the area, Belfast and beyond. Members are asked to note however that this project is still in the developmental stage and it is unlikely that it will meet the tight timeframe for submission under this call of funding. Officers from the Council will continue to work closely with reps from this Group on bringing this project forward and advising on other potential funding streams.

Recommendation – not recommended for submission under this call – the Black Mountain Shared Spaces project is still in the very early developmental stages and is therefore unlikely to be developed sufficiently in time to meet the tight timescales under this call. Following the recent request by the BSSP the Council will be the lead statutory partner in this project.

9. **Interface areas** – Officers from the Good Relations Unit have held some initial discussions with both the Belfast Interface Trust and the Belfast Interface Project who have produced some ideas for interface areas in Belfast. Work on this is continuing under Priority 1.1 and the Council is actively working with all partners/ relevant stakeholders on this area to progress this

Recommendation – not recommended for submission under this call as work is continuing, in conjunction with partners and other stakeholders, under Priority 1.1.

A summary of the projects and recommendations for these is contained below for the convenience of Members. Members are asked to consider these recommendations and are further asked if there are any other projects they wish to be considered at this stage. Members are asked however to bear in mind the tight timescales for the submission of projects and the fact that Members had previously agreed that the Council should only submit a maximum of 1 or 2 clearly defined bids under this call.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Sports Village at North Foreshore	Further detail to be worked up
Belfast Story at Central Library	Further detail to be explored to assess the suitability and viability of this project as well as ongoing discussions with Libraries NI with an update to be taken to Committee in November
Ulster Sports Museum	Further detail to be explored to assess the suitability and viability of this project as well as ongoing discussions with USMA with an update to be taken to Committee in November
North Belfast Cultural Corridor	No further action – SEUPB feedback was that this project did not fulfil the aims of Priority 2.1. Elements being progressed under Priority 1.1.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
Gasworks Bridge	No further action – SEUPB feedback was that this project did not fulfil the aims of Priority 2.1. Officers to explore the potential for progressing this project under the Connect2 programme
North Foreshore Bridge	No further action – this project has previously been rejected and it is therefore unlikely to be successful. Officers to explore the potential for progressing this project under the Connect2 programme
HMS Caroline	No further action – unlikely that SEUPB will fund two similar projects under this funding programme
Black Mountain Shared Spaces Project	No further action – this project is still in the early stages of development and so will not meet the tight timeframe for the submission of applications. The Council is now taking a lead in this project and officers from the Council will continue to work with representatives from the project on bringing this proposal forward and potentially securing other avenues of funding
Interface Areas	No further action – being progressed by the Council in conjunction with the Belfast Interface Trust and the Belfast Interface Project under Priority 1.1.

Resource Implications

Financial

None at present.

Human Resources

Additional officer time will be required to progress work on applications that the Council wishes to proceed with.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the information in this report and to –

1. note that SEUPB have formally reopened the Priority 2.1 call with the deadline for submission of applications being MONDAY 17 JANUARY 2011

2. consider the recommendations in relation to the projects listed above and agree that further investigation be undertaken in relation to the Sports Village, the Ulster Sports Museum and the Belfast Story at Central Library and that no further action is progressed in relation to the other projects.

Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Good Relations and Equality

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

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 15th October.

Consultation on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that this long-awaited document *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* (CSI) was launched by the First and Deputy First Ministers at the end of July 2010 for public consultation. The draft programme outlines the proposed framework for co-ordination across Government Departments for action against sectarianism and racism and aims to ‘build a shared and better future for all based on fairness, equality, rights, responsibilities and respect’.

The CSI document lists a series of goals for achieving this future, including, in summary:

- addressing physical divisions at interfaces
- ensuring the safety of vulnerable groups
- tackling visible manifestations of racism and sectarianism
- zero tolerance for hate crime attacks
- promoting equality and tackling disadvantage
- providing shared spaces
- celebrating cultural diversity
- better frameworks for dealing with parades and protests etc.

The intention is that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFM/DFM) will drive the agenda by co-ordinating input from all government departments and agencies (e.g. councils, community and voluntary sector) involved in its delivery. The importance attached to the programme by the Executive is signalled by the fact that its implementation will be overseen by a Ministerial Panel chaired by OFM/DFM Ministers and cross-departmental activities will be co-ordinated through a Senior Officials' Steering Group.

The paper lists a number of 'themes for action' which include:

- ensuring that good relations considerations are embedded in all government policy making
- reducing and eventually eliminating segregated services
- addressing interfaces and encouraging shared neighbourhoods.

Key Issues

This corporate response is in the format set out by the OFM/DFM and was compiled from comments received from a number of Departments, since the CSI document refers to a wide range of issues – people and places, young people, community safety, local communities etc.

A series of public meetings was held as part of the consultation process and the Belfast meeting attracted an audience of over 100, despite it being held on a wet Monday evening. This level of attendance reflects the widespread interest in the proposals and general support for greater dialogue, agreement and joint working in tackling these serious issues, which continue to erupt into open violence, as demonstrated in events in Belfast over the past summer.

Members will be aware from media comments that the CSI document has already been widely criticised as being very aspirational in nature, full of good intentions and impressive sound bites¹ but light on detail regarding detailed mechanisms of delivery and incorporating few references to timescales or resources. There are many references to survey results e.g. from the NI Life & Times, rather than hard data on the actual cost of division and dual provision.

¹ E.g. Mark Davenport 'motherhood and apple pie' and Prof. Colin Knox a 'woolly benign document'

The paper stresses the need to share space and services and concentrating on the potential economic benefits of greater sharing of public facilities in an era of increasingly scarce public resources could be more clearly highlighted. Last week, Owen Paterson, Secretary of State, said at a Conservative Party Conference fringe meeting that the NI Executive must address the cost of segregation if it is serious about saving money and providing better services; he said the 'British taxpayer should not continue to subsidise segregation'.

The CSI document is less progressive than the previous Shared Future policy which stated emphatically that 'separate but equal is not an option'. A report recently published by the Rowntree Trust says that the goal of reconciliation appears to have been replaced by one of 'mutual accommodation' and the CSI proposals may not go far enough to heal old divisions.

However, the actual publication of the document itself is to be welcomed and it seems that dialogue is beginning within the NI Executive about the sort of future we want to see for NI. We welcome the fact that difficult issues like sectarianism and racism are being discussed openly rather than ignored or avoided as in the past.

It appears that the paper is intended as an initial skeleton framework policy, with the details to be fleshed out at a later date. Officers from the OFM/DFM have emphasised that the feedback from the public consultation process is essential to provide these details so the Council's response at this stage is crucial.

Resource Implications

None at this stage.

Recommendations

This draft response was approved by the Good Relations Partnership at its meeting on 15 October; the Committee is requested to approve this response, giving comments where required, so that it may be submitted to the Department by the closing date of 29 October 2010.

Officer to contact for further information

Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager, ext 6020

Belfast City Council Corporate Response

Consultation on Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration

September, 2010

Introduction

The Council welcomes the publication of this draft Programme. We have noted that no action plan has been attached and we understand that this will be developed at a later date. We assume therefore that this offers an opportunity for dialogue and for the Council to have an opportunity to be involved in shaping the development of the Programme.

The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations have been key objectives of the Council over the past few years and our recent public survey demonstrates that Belfast residents also regard good relations as an area of continuing concern. The document recognises that the Government cannot tackle problems of prejudice and hate, sectarianism and racism alone and the Council is committed to playing its part at city level.

Unique Position of Belfast

The Council would advocate that the Programme acknowledges the unique situation of Belfast. There is clear evidence that Belfast was disproportionately affected by the years of conflict and many areas are still characterised by ongoing community tensions and entrenched divisions, manifested through murals, flags etc. Although the document does refer in general terms to the link between areas which suffered most from the legacy of the conflict and areas of high deprivation, this is most obvious in Belfast which has 9 of the 10 most deprived areas in terms of multiple deprivation. These areas are marked by low levels of educational achievement, poor health, high unemployment and low levels of mobility. These factors have contributed to the creation of a vicious circle of low self and community esteem and such areas are often located at interfaces or at flashpoints.

As a result of the conflict, Belfast has over 80 peace walls or interfaces, by far the greatest number anywhere in NI. Erected originally to improve security, they remain almost 40 years later and have contributed to the perpetuation of the cycle of division and segregation. Mayor Bloomberg, for example, referred to the continued presence of interfaces as clear evidence that things are still not quite normal in Belfast. He said it was 'in the interests of peace and prosperity' to remove the barriers 'and the sooner the physical barriers come down... the sooner the flood gates of private investment will open.'

Role of Local Government

Since a substantial part of the OFM/DFM's current good relations programme is already delivered by local government through the existing District Councils Good Relations Programme, it is disconcerting to note that our work does not even get a mention until page 52 of the document. The paper does acknowledge the 'unique placement' of Councils and their valuable role and states that Government is committed to supporting the current Programme. Belfast's good relations work has developed initiatives which have then been rolled out in other areas – e.g. work around bonfire management, re-imaging of murals, interfaces, migrants' forum etc. – and we would be happy to take on an enhanced role, subject to being resourced accordingly.

Apart from its specific Good Relations Unit's activities, Belfast City Council is already involved in active delivery of various other parts of the CSI agenda, by work in other areas e.g. community services, community safety, children and young people, events, leisure, parks and open spaces, capital developments and the creation of shared space etc. We would therefore like to see more explicit reference made to the key role of Councils at local level.

Shared Space

The Council welcomes the commitment to ensure that all spaces and facilities are 'shared and welcoming' (para. 3.35) and would point out that as most of the spaces mentioned are not within the remit of central government, all agencies, including the voluntary, community and private sectors, must work together in the delivery and maintenance of these shared spaces.

In Belfast there has been a general acceptance of dual provision of public services across the city, with the associated increased costs. With increased pressure on public expenditure, there is a real urgency now for all levels of government to look at ways of working together to deliver services and maximising the use of current, and future, assets and resources.

The Council would highlight, as a model which could be replicated, the successful example of partnership working at the Grove Wellbeing Centre, where health, leisure and library services are delivered under one roof. We would seek to ensure that a joined-up approach becomes the norm in future, to minimise the duplication of services and to provide the efficient, effective and value for money services that our citizens deserve. We would advocate that the delivery of shared services itself should become a central and explicit objective in the programme.

The ability to travel freely and access key facilities is vital in an open city. Many people live in areas that are highly territorial and their 'mental maps' can affect their daily choices of where to live, work, shop, socialise etc. We need to increase people's confidence in accessing services located in areas perceived as being outside their traditional comfort zones. Access and connectivity of proposed new developments should be analysed with regard to their potential to transform existing patterns of use since these will be important in facilitating mobility across a segregated city. The Council would therefore urge the Government to move forward with the implementation of the proposed Rapid Transport System in Belfast.

Implementation

Although the aspirations in the draft CSI Programme are commendable, there is very little detail on when, how or by whom these will be achieved. In particular, the Council has concerns round the absence of a proposed action plan, timescale, targets, outputs and outcomes and the mention of a specific resource to support delivery and implementation of the programme, especially at a time of unprecedented financial pressure within NI. We would seek a commitment from central government that resources will be ring-fenced and protected for delivering actions under this Programme given its strategic importance.

The Council would seek an assurance that the aims of this programme are being aligned and mainstreamed into the ongoing work of all central government departments, given the tangible and intangible links with housing, community development, neighbourhood renewal, children and young people.

We would like an assurance that the programme's aims will be embedded and reflected in any new policies/strategies that are developed and would seek clarification on how existing and future policies will be measured against the aims of this strategy.

RESPONSE TO OFMDFM CONSULTATION QUESTIONS:

Goals

Chapter 2 sets out the key goals of the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration as follows:

- To urgently address the physical and community division created by interfaces with the support of communities;
- To ensure and promote the safety of vulnerable groups;

- To tackle the visible manifestations of racism, sectarianism, intolerance and other forms of prejudice;
- To adopt a zero tolerance approach to all incidences of, and reasons for, attacks motivated by sectarian, religious, racist or hate prejudice, including those on symbolic premises, cultural premises and monuments;
- To promote equality of opportunity and tackle disadvantage;
- To provide and expand safe and shared spaces;
- To build a society where cultural diversity is embraced and celebrated and to promote pride in who we are and confidence in our different cultural identities;
- To create a new and improved framework for the management and regulation of public assemblies including parades and protests;
- To achieve the full participation of all sectors in all aspects of society;
- To support the local community to resolve local issues through local solutions; and
- To take action which will address sectarian behaviour at spectator sports events.

Do you agree/disagree with the key goals of the programme?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

We agree with the stated goals and welcome the opportunity to build greater alignment between our current programme of work and that proposed through this CSI strategy.

However, we have some concerns:

- Some goals would be more properly described as cross-cutting themes.
- They are ambitious, may be difficult to measure and may represent a lack of focus.
- The Programme is not set in context - there is little recognition of current work or that of groups over the past 25-30 years. There has been no attempt to evaluate previous programmes or to assimilate previous learning.

- **The programme needs to be realistic and long-term in nature; as a society we may not have moved as far ahead in the last decade as has often been supposed and serious fundamental issues have often been avoided rather than being directly addressed.**
- **The document appears to be concerned to treat the symptoms of the division- e.g. flags, interfaces, rather than examining their causes and the underlying problems of division.**
- **Some groups are entirely omitted from the document e.g. victims, ex-prisoners, women, churches etc.**
- **Where does this strategy fit in the hierarchy of other government strategies? If addressing issues of division and sectarianism are the primary goal of NI society does the CSI programme take precedence?**
- **Are the CSI goals integrated within the Programme for Government? Only by tackling these issues that NI can seriously deliver solid economic sustainability and a prosperous future.**
- **The paper states that the current good relations indicators will be used (2.5) but any new programme of intervention will require new PIs to facilitate measurement of outcomes**

What exactly does ‘to achieve the full participation of all sectors in all aspects of society’ mean? This is too broad and general a statement to be meaningful.

We feel that the strategy could benefit from an emphasis, particular in the current economic climate, on encouraging shared services as well as shared spaces. This is perhaps even more appropriate now in view of probable reductions in funding for major capital infrastructure work.

Tackling ‘the visible manifestations of racism and sectarianism’ are of course important but the invisible damage to victims of such forms of prejudice also needs to be addressed.

A ‘zero tolerance’ approach to hate crime is laudable but there is no mention of how this will be enforced, in view of reducing PSNI budget; no changes are proposed to the current legislation or court system.

In these challenging economic times, it is even more essential that all levels of government work together to deliver shared solutions to problems. We would advocate that this partnership approach is reflected more strongly in the document to ensure shared aims and objectives and where appropriate the alignment of priorities and resources. The Council has 2 key Partnerships - Belfast Community Safety Partnership and Good Relations Partnership – which have worked together in developing initiatives and adopting a coordinated approach.

Themes for Action

Chapter 2 states a number of themes for action as follows:

Short Term

- Developing 'Shared Space';
- Enhancing community capacity to play a full role in implementing the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration;
- 'Crisis Intervention' and the need for a mechanism to co-ordinate multi-agency rapid responses to tackle sectarianism and racial violence and all forms of hate crimes;
- Ensuring good relations considerations are embedded within all government policy making;
- Early and strategic intervention to tackle anti-social behaviour and tensions around interfaces; and
- Promoting Cohesion, Sharing and Integration through a process of community renewal.

Medium Term

- The relationship between young people and the community;
- Providing a new and improved framework for the resolution of public assembly disputes; and
- Ensuring the sharing of best practice projects aimed at improving cohesion, sharing and integration across all areas where appropriate and when required.

Long Term

- Interfaces;
- Encouraging shared neighbourhoods;
- Reducing and eventually eliminating segregated services;
- Tackling the multiple social issues effecting and entrenching community separation, exclusion and hate; and
- Cultural identity, including issues around flags and emblems, murals, bonfires, cultural expression, language and popular protest.

What are your views on the themes for action currently identified?

The Council is generally supportive of the themes and timescales outlined (2.6) but it is difficult to comment meaningfully without greater detail as they are fairly broad. The wide focus of the Programme needs to develop a clear framework aligned to that of other departments and strategies.

There is some inconsistency round interfaces; these are to be addressed 'urgently' (2.3) but are listed (2.6) as a long-term theme for action.

The Belfast Community Safety Partnership would commend as a model of good practice in a multi-agency rapid response approach (2.6) its establishment of a tension monitoring process, which allows for sharing of information in real time and the development of coordinated responses to address situations where tensions are identified either geographically, by issue or on a group basis.

Good Relations and the Racial Equality Strategy

The Programme for Cohesion Sharing and Integration is not intended to supersede or replace the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-10, which was endorsed by the motion made by the Assembly on 3 July 2007. Rather, it provides the framework for the delivery of aspects of that strategy relating to good race relations in a co-ordinated, joined up process (paragraph 1.10).

Do you agree/disagree the programme will complement the delivery of the Racial Equality Strategy?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

How could the relationship between the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration and the Racial Equality Strategy be strengthened?

The paper refers to existing policies like the Racial Equality Strategy but states that it is not intended to supersede or replace it. It appears to assume that this Strategy is still fully functional; however it only runs until 2010 and has in reality been shelved for the last number of years.

Where does this leave the Racial Equality Strategy and the departmental action plans that were to stem from it? Will the goals of the Race Equality Strategy remain and will there be new departmental action plans? It would be useful if discussion around the current status of the Race Equality Strategy formed part of the consultation around CSI.

The Council would recommend that the Race Equality Strategy should be re-visited and evaluated to judge what progress has been made in the past 5 years. The Strategy would also need to be revised to take account of the opportunities and challenges brought about by recent inward migration.

(1.14) The Council notes with interest the comment regarding those who have 'no recourse to public funds' and welcomes the support that may be given here.

People and Places

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration aims to make a difference to both people and places across our society (Chapter 3). The key aims for people and places are:

- Public spaces, thoroughfares, community facilities and town centres should be safe, shared and welcoming to the whole community;
- All public authorities, including District Councils, should discharge functions and deliver services equally and inclusively recognising the diverse nature of the community they serve and the barriers which can be experienced by minority ethnic people in particular;
- Unnecessary duplication of services should be targeted through the enhanced delivery of shared services on the basis of objective need;
- Safe and secure shared community spaces should be developed in a culture of fairness, equality, rights, responsibilities and respect; and
- Displays of flags and emblems, graffiti or murals, parades or public assemblies or festivals should be held in an environment which respects individual and community rights.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims for people and places?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

Belfast City Council generally agrees with the proposed aims but would welcome greater clarity on how and when change will be affected.

Places

The Council is a substantial landowner in Belfast and has considerable physical and environmental assets at its disposal. We welcome the paper's emphasis on shared space and are proud of the fact that many of our own facilities, including the City Hall, Waterfront and Ulster Halls, the Zoo, parks, leisure centres, playing fields, playgrounds etc are regarded as shared, safe and accessible and are used by all communities.

Perceptions are also important; all Council facilities are open to all but some people have the perception that it is not safe for them to use particular facilities. Such perceptions must be addressed. Parallel service provision may in fact reinforce patterns of segregation and Belfast's current public transport system indirectly contributes towards continued separation. Mobility and connectivity must be improved if shared services are to become a reality.

We welcome the focus on creating shared space and would advocate that government play a leading role by encouraging the use of secure by design principles in new developments, which should be open and welcoming to all.

People

The paper notes that equality legislation has been instrumental in bringing about positive good relations outcomes in the workplace (3.8-3.9). No reference, however, is made here to the role played by Trade Unions, which has been considerable in challenging discrimination and promoting respect. The Council has found some tension between this duty, usually regarded as neutrality, and the need to create a 'good and harmonious environment' (3.36), where expressions of diversity are welcomed; we are already examining this area of debate.

The paper is confusing as occasional references to individual actions by Government Departments are inserted (presumably following inter-Departmental consultation, prior to publication); the reference here to DFP's procurement policy (3.11) is rather bizarre.

We agree that the promotion of good relations is not just the responsibility of the integrated schools sector and that all schools have a part to play (3.13-3.14). There has been substantial research which indicates that sectarian attitudes in NI are imprinted from a very early age in our society. The Programme may therefore need to consider emphasising the importance of work with younger children.

Opportunities for greater sharing and engagement should be supported in Belfast at this time when the rationalisation of the school estate is being seriously considered. Surveys indicate public support for this approach. Schools can help shape attitudes and promote positive views on difference and cultural attitudes and values and we believe all schools in NI should prepare pupils for a shared society.

The Council recognises that health and well-being is largely determined by the social, economic, physical and cultural environment and that links between health and deprivation are well documented. The development of a healthier city is one of our key priorities and we have developed an integrated plan to improve health and wellbeing.

Earlier this year we set up a special Belfast Health Development Unit, bringing together 3 sponsoring partner organisations – Council, Health & Social Care Trust and Public Health Agency - to ensure maximum impact. The Unit's initial priorities include developing effective action with disadvantaged neighbourhoods experiencing the sharpest inequalities in health; as stated in the paper, these are found particularly in the areas that suffered most during the conflict (3.19).

The Council has been heavily engaged in and supported local efforts to remove/reduce displays that could be perceived as being sectarian e.g. flags, murals, bonfires etc (3.32-3.34) and is happy to consider adopting a revised Flags Protocol.

One of the Council's current key delivery mechanisms is in supporting local initiatives at a community level through Good Relations small grants. Getting relevant programmes running at a local level involves providing resources to those groups that are delivering important work 'on the ground'. Working in this way involves working with local elected representatives, community workers, locally based community organisations and residents.

We are also supporting a range of local initiatives, some funded through our Peace III Programme, to promote local partnership work with the NI Housing Executive, develop community gardens and local festivals; all these contribute to the concept of shared space.

We would seek clarification on the timeframe for the DRD's revised Regional Development Strategy regarding guidance on city and town centres as shared spaces (para 3.40) and how this will be aligned with the DSD's city and town centre master-planning programme (para 3.37).

Graffiti should be removed from the final list on p.23 – this is usually simply an act of vandalism and should not be considered as equivalent to the other items.

Empowering the Next Generation

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration proposes a number of specific aims to empower the next generation (Chapter 4):

- Under the auspices of the Ministerial Panel for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (see Chapter 2 & 10), establishing a major initiative aimed at developing a longer term strategic approach to helping marginalised young people;
- Supporting young people to increase their civic responsibility including facilitating and empowering youth groups to work together on civic responsibility projects;
- Focusing on education and promoting greater understanding of shared values; and
- Establishing multi-agency partnerships between indigenous and minority ethnic and migrant worker communities to address the specific needs of the young people in those populations.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims for empowering the next generation?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

The Council agrees with the paper's emphasis on empowering the next generation. We are keenly aware of the exceptionally limited resource currently available to support the youth sector, particular in view of recent cuts in the education budgets, and welcome the opportunity to identify new opportunities to support work in this field. However, most of this chapter appears unduly negative, depicting young people as a problem to be dealt with, not as a bright resource for the future.

The Council seeks to promote citizenship and civic participation by linking young people to governance decision-making structures and processes at neighbourhood, city, national and international levels. The Council's Youth Forum acts as a mechanism that gives practical expression to the concepts of civic engagement and civic responsibility and may be of wider interest in regard to promoting cohesion, sharing and integration.

By using its political influence to shape policy and better integrate service provision in conjunction with other providers in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors across the city, the Council is keen to promote a long-term framework for children and young people under which a range of programmes and projects can be initiated that address directly issues of division.

The Council invests considerable funding through annual summer schemes for young people in community centres, leisure centres, parks, community safety and good relations. We particularly welcome the recognition (4.4) that 'we progress beyond a short-term year-on-year approach' in regard to diversionary/intervention programmes and have already begun work in this regard, aiming for better co-ordination and targeting of funding for 2011. We are actively involved in supporting various projects that divert young people from possible conflict and that educate them about the reality of violence. Two major projects proposed for Phase 2 of our Peace III Plan will specifically tackle youth engagement.

We welcome the statements about the important role of the Department of Education and its proposals regarding youth work (4.7 and 4.8) but would point out that it is difficult to foresee substantial change, given the recent major cuts in youth service funding.

We welcome the statement (4.10) regarding the Department of Education's commitment to promoting the wider use of school premises. The Council has already worked with some schools in this and would like to explore the potential for greater partnership in the future with schools, for example re. the use of school sporting facilities such as pitches. This would not only prove efficient in financial terms but would assist schools to integrate more fully with their local communities and could promote positive community relations.

The Council is extremely supportive of more effective collaborative working. However, most multi-agency approaches, though fine in principle, have a poor track record in actual delivery. Agencies involved will need to have clearly defined lines of accountability and targets to be truly effective.

Respecting Cultures

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration recognises the importance of respecting the cultural diversity within our community and sets out a number of aims in relation to this (Chapter 5):

- Building a peaceful climate of fairness, equality, rights, responsibilities and respect;
- Working with and supporting the local community to resolve contentious cultural issues;
- Promoting greater understanding of cultural diversity and expressions of cultural identity;
- Encouraging greater engagement with, and understanding of, cultural diversity and intercultural relations;
- Working to eliminate attacks on cultural, sporting and other symbolic property and monuments; and
- Promoting cultural exchanges, joint events and tourism initiatives.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims for respecting cultures?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

The Council recognises the positive contribution that cultural diversity brings to society. We are committed to the concept of celebrating diversity and undertake substantial work to support this aim.

All new recruits to the Council receive training in equality and good relations, which specifically addresses the requirements of delivering services to our increasingly diverse population. includes reference to our city's increasing diversity. The Council has also organised diversity awareness programmes for employees to encourage them to engage with and understand the needs of communities from differing cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The Council itself promotes a number of major civic events and supports others, either through community festival grants or by supplying a suitable venue to show case events – e.g. the Mela in Botanic Gardens or the Chinese New Year celebrations in St George's Market. We have also supported numerous smaller events for minority and ethnic groups in the City Hall through the Lord Mayor's programme in recent years e.g. the end of Ramadan, Hanukah and Polish Cultural Week. Through our Good Relations and Peace III funding, we have supported various projects that seek to develop meaningful engagement and interaction between communities to foster understanding and respect for different cultures.

With regard to the Orangefest example quoted (5.26), we would point out that it was funding through the Council's Peace III Programme that enabled Belfast City Centre Management to encourage shops to stay open on 12 July 2009 for the first time, not the DSD.

The Council agrees that cultural tourism can make a positive impact on the wider community and that the broader potential economic and social benefits from tourism have still not been fully capitalised. Central to this, however, is the image of NI and the need to ensure that it is seen as safe and welcoming for everyone. The Council welcomes the commitment (5.32) that action must be taken in this regard.

The needs of Irish Travellers and the Roma communities are mentioned only with regard to education; these groups require particular attention. The legal framework for much of this work is already in place but a serious commitment to enforcement appears to be lacking.

A Secure Community

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration recognises the need to create a secure community and sets out a number of aims in relation to this (Chapter 6):

- Encouraging community events which reflect cultural diversity and are open, welcoming and inclusive to all;
- Ensuring that all responsible agencies continue to provide a high level of community safety delivered within a rights based framework and an overarching ethos of mutual respect;
- Continuing to promote initiatives based on the principle of mutual respect, which reflect acceptance of cultural diversity and the ways in which it is expressed;
- Building community support networks across community, cultural and minority ethnic groups; and
- Building capacity of the local and minority ethnic communities to support people who have experienced hate crime.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims for a secure community?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

The Council is committed to working closely with the PSNI, local partnerships and others through its own Belfast Community Safety Partnership and other structures to build a safer community to tackle hate crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime.

The Council's Good Relations and Community Safety Units are already working well together on joint projects in areas of work such as interfaces, summer intervention and local engagement and we welcome the proposed introduction of a good relations duty to the new Crime Reduction Partnership arrangements (6.12).

The strategy could also seek to tackle hate related behaviour at all public events, not solely sports events (6.15).

The Council agrees that the removal of peace walls should be a key priority (6.16-6.18) for a city that has over 80 such barriers; we would like to ensure that the special needs of Belfast are highlighted through this cross cutting programme given the number of interfaces in the city.

We have already commissioned research round this and are supporting active engagement and early discussion about plans for their removal or reduction.

We already support a number of innovative projects through our Peace III funding, including work led by Falls Community Council round interface regeneration (6.17).

Current projects seeking to remove some barriers continually encounter bureaucratic hurdles, such as ownership of the barrier, traffic calming measures following removal, resources to fund barrier transformation/removal. All these require cross Departmental commitment and the CSI Programme might be useful in producing greater collaboration between Departments on these issues.

The language used is confused and contradictory – e.g. ‘neutral shared space’ (6.21)

A Cohesive Community

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration recognises the need to progress towards a more cohesive community and sets out a number of aims in relation to this (Chapter 7):

- Zero tolerance for crimes motivated by prejudice and all forms of hate crime, whilst actively promoting rights and respect;
- Promoting intercultural work through the Minority Ethnic Development Fund;
- Building an inclusive community open to all, regardless of their background;
- Promoting greater understanding between established sections of the community and new arrivals;
- Working closely with the PSNI, the new Crime Reduction Partnerships and Probation Board in local areas to address racism and hate crime;
- Encouraging greater understanding of new cultures and new sections of the community; and
- Developing and supporting workplace initiatives to promote respect and understanding of cultural diversity.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims for a cohesive community?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

The Council supports the aims expressed and is already working closely in these areas through both its Good Relations Partnership and Community Safety Partnership to address sectarianism, racism and hate crime.

On the one hand, the role of criminal justice agencies is key to developing zero tolerance, along with the full use of powers to promote and encourage respect, and where necessary, to enforce appropriate behaviour. This has to be balanced along with working with communities to support positive activity and challenge negative behaviour. Our Good Relations Unit staff have designed and developed specific anti-hate crime and migrant awareness training which has been delivered both internally within the Council and externally to a range of voluntary groups. We recognise that community dynamics are complex and engage on this basis, while reinforcing the fact that violence and hatred should not be tolerated.

In addition, we are actively involved in promoting respect and understanding of cultural diversity and supporting integration initiatives between established communities and new arrivals to Belfast. We have developed a successful Migrants Forum where all agencies that are involved in providing services for migrants meet regularly to exchange information and develop joint initiatives and programmes.

The Belfast Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) has made dealing with hate crime a priority theme and in recent years has undertaken a range of activity to develop co-ordinated approaches to dealing with hate crime and promoting cohesion in the city. BCSP has supported research relating to vulnerable groups such as the Travelling Community and Transgender Community and is finalising a strategy to address hate crime and cohesion in Belfast.

The BCSP also supports initiatives such as a hate crime training programme, an annual Hate Crime Conference for Belfast (branded the Unite against Hate Conference in 2009) and the funding of dedicated staff to address the issue of hate motivated crime and cohesion in Belfast.

The Belfast Community Safety Partnership and Good Relations Partnership have jointly funded community safety advocates within the Chinese, Polish, and LGBT communities, with a range of other funders including NIHE and PSNI.

Supporting Local Communities

The Programme for Sharing and Integration recognises the need to support local communities in delivering good relations and sets out aims to ensure this (Chapter 8):

- Continue to support Councils' delivery of Good Relations programmes and funding;
- Ensure the local community is integral to the Good Relations decision making and implementation process; and
- Nurturing leadership at a local level and empowering the local community to identify solutions to local issues.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims for supporting local communities?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

As democratically elected civic leaders, local Councils play a key role in championing and facilitating discussion round issues of concern to local communities. The current Good Relations Partnership in Belfast is made up of elected Members on a cross-party basis, plus representatives from a number of external bodies i.e. statutory agencies, trade unions, private business, churches, voluntary and community and minority ethnic groups. We believe this to be a good model where the Partnership members engage fully with the local community in the design and delivery of a tailored local programme.

The Good Relations Partnership also supports the work of other Council-led structures such as the Community Safety Partnership, to co-ordinate projects and to ensure that resulting service delivery is complementary.

In Belfast, our Good Relations Unit works directly with the Community Relations Unit within the OFM/DFM (8.3) and has spent considerable time developing and continually improving our own funding criteria and associated programmes, based on evaluations and best practice and submitting annual action plans (8.4). We are happy that this direct relationship should continue.

Belfast City Council has invested significant resources in community development activity and manages 22 community centres in some of the most deprived areas in the city. We work with individuals and community organisations to enhance the quality of life in our neighbourhoods. We have developed or supported programmes and activities designed to build important local skills; to foster participation; and to encourage communities to address local issues. We regard community development principles as fundamental in underpinning any CSI strategy.

We note with concern that there is no mention of the Review of Public Administration and the key role that Councils will have in the future in relation to community planning. Although the RPA may be temporarily stalled, the Council's commitment to community planning and the principles behind it remain strong. Decision-making within local communities regarding good relations issues can not and should not be made in isolation from wider decisions on other service provision. A comprehensive and collaborative approach is required so that programmes at government and local service delivery level are connected. Recognising shared goals and interdependencies at local level will be crucial to long term viability and success.

Looking Outward

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration recognises that improving relationships within our society has to be viewed in the wider context of developing strong relationships on a North/South, East/West basis and proposes that an effective outward looking dimension is part of the programme with the following aims (Chapter 9):

- Identifying key exemplar projects which have proven track records of success in promoting good relations;
- Sharing of relevant research and experiences on a North/South, East/West, European and international basis; and

- Mutual promotion of cultural diversity and encouraging better social networks on North/South, East/West, European and international level.

Do you agree/disagree with the proposed aims for looking outward?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – is there anything that has not been included/should be omitted?

The image of NI abroad is crucial since it has a direct influence on potential investment. Our divisions and conflict have a direct impact on our social and economic aims and our future prosperity. It is difficult to promote tourism and cultural programmes in a city where summer rioting is endemic and violence is never far away. The NI Executive should take the lead in sending out the message that it really leads and supports this work and that it is integral to the Programme for Government.

Belfast City Council is keen to explore opportunities for continuous learning in a wider context both in the UK and at a European level.

The Good Relations Unit in Belfast has itself been involved in a number of European based initiatives examining integration and diversity, through the Eurocities network. We often host visits from international academic or local government based organisations, who are interested in the work being done at local level in a divided city. Over the past month alone, we have had visits from Norwegian local politicians and US academics. We also respond to requests for information worldwide.

Belfast is the only Council in NI with a full-time European Unit, which up-dates staff with current activity and policy at European level and co-ordinates related Council activity. One current programme of relevance is our Open Cities project, being undertaken jointly with the British Council, which is examining how cities attract and retain economic migrants.

Belfast Community Safety Partnership has developed relationships with regional centres of learning and good practice in order to build our knowledge base and support the development of partnerships and projects. Specifically these include: Institute for Community Cohesion; Beth Johnston Foundation; Centre for Intergenerational Practice; and European Forum for Urban Safety. We continue to explore opportunities for learning at all levels.

Mechanism to Oversee the Implementation of CSI

Chapter 10 sets out mechanisms for the co-ordination of the actions to implement the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration. The key features of implementation are;

- A Ministerial Panel chaired by OFMDFM Ministers, key statutory and community partners;
- A Senior Officials Steering Group which will be tasked with co-ordinating the cross-departmental alignment of activities and allocation of resources;
- An Advisory Panel of practitioners and experts to provide advice to Government.
- A Funders Group that will advise the Ministerial Panel on good relations funding issues and seek to improve the targeting and co-ordination of funding from many different sources.

Do you agree/disagree with the mechanism to oversee the implementation of the programme?

Strongly Agree	Agree	No Strong Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Comments – are there any improvements that could be made to the proposals for implementing the programme?

It is important that the role of local government forms a strong element within any final model. The paper recognises the unique place that local authorities can play in meeting the aims of the Programme and delivering good relations at the local level.

Given the special circumstances of Belfast as the capital city and regional economic driver of the economy within NI, we would advocate a strong role for Belfast City Council within this mechanism.

The Council would request that it be represented on both the proposed Ministerial Panel and the Senior Officials Steering Group to oversee the implementation of the policy. We would point out that in our view an organisation such as SOLACE (Society of local Authority Chief Executives) would be better placed to represent other local authorities. It is imperative that Chief Executives who have faced problems and devised practical local solutions are represented at this level as there will be a very clear need to turn the aspirations of CSI into operational practice, with political support.

We expect that both the Ministerial Panel and Senior Officials Group will be attempting to find ways to eradicate sectarianism and racism and their causes rather than simply 'manage' them. The Council notes that the NI Executive advocates tolerance, understanding and co-operation at community level and will expect therefore to see similar values displayed at various levels of government, both at NI and Council level.

The Council welcomes the idea of the Funders' Group, especially in a time when very substantial external funding for peace and reconciliation, from both the EU and USA, is coming to an end; this will improve co-ordination and collaboration, improve targeting and reduce duplication. We would propose that the funding role of Councils could be increased, requiring other local funders in an area to liaise with the local Council to ensure that all proposed funding activities were in line with the Council's Good Relations Plan for that area (as already required by the OFM/DFM). It will also be important to ensure the sustainability of current programmes where there is much evidence of good practice.

We note that those on the proposed Advisory Panel will be asked to serve on a voluntary basis (10.9) and would contrast this with those who sit on the Equality, Human Rights and Parades Commissions in paid positions; we would enquire why a distinction is being made and why issues relating to good relations are continually reduced to second class status.

The Council notes with concern that there is no mention of the Review of Public Administration and the proposed key role that local authorities will have in the future in relation to community planning.

Options for the Delivery of Funding and Policy Advice

Chapter 11 outlines options for the delivery of funding and advice to Government on good relations policy to support the implementation of the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration. The options are as follows:

Option 1: Advisory panel and direct or contracted funding

Option 2: Services provided by organisations (procure the delivery of advice and funding from one or more organisations)

Option 3(a): Statutory non-departmental public body with funding function

Option 3(b): Statutory non-departmental public body without funding function (funding delivered direct or contracted)

Please specify which of the above options (or any alternative you may wish to suggest) represents the best choice for the future of the delivery of funding and policy advice to Government. Please provide reasons for your choice and comment on any changes that could be made to your preferred option to improve delivery of funding/policy advice.

There is a need for greater clarity round the roles of the Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council - at present, public authorities are required to make annual reports on progress to the Equality Commission on both equality and good relations progress, but not to the Community Relations Council.

We believe strongly that an independent organisation, along the lines of the current Community Relations Council, is required to be able to provide expert unbiased advice and a strong challenge function to government, to offer a critique on the delivery of the programme and the contribution of government departments and to undertake relevant research. This independent body would be able to attract independent funding from non-governmental sources for certain activities.

We do not believe that the Community Relations Council should necessarily retain its funding role. There are already examples of agencies which provide advice and guidance to government that do not also have a funding role – e.g. the Equality Commission and Human Rights Commission.

In Belfast, our Good Relations Unit has a very good direct working relationship with the Good Relations Unit within the OFM/DFM and has spent considerable time developing and continually improving our own funding criteria and associated programmes, based on evaluations and best practice. We are pleased that our innovative work in good relations is recognised and publically acknowledged; we are willing to enlarge our role and take on additional responsibility. We have already delivered funding directly on behalf of the OFM/DFM – Summer Intervention Fund in the summer of 2010 – and are happy to assume an enhanced role in future funding for organisations based in Belfast.

We would make the point that ‘funding’ might be better described as ‘investment’ and give the examples of summer diversionary activity and the bonfire management programme, where by investing relatively small amounts, substantial sums of public money can be saved in return.

As stated above at Q11, we would propose that the funding role of Councils could be increased, requiring other local funders in an area to liaise with the local Council to ensure that all proposed funding activities were in line with the Council's Good Relations Plan for that area.

In view of the current economic climate we would not advocate Option 3 (a or b) as we are keen where possible to keep administrative costs to a minimum and see the establishment of a completely new structure as unnecessary. It is also essential that government is seen to be providing strategic leadership on this issue and relinquishing responsibility might result in a loss of cross-departmental commitment.

OFMDFM Funding for Good Relations work

Chapter 11 sets out options for structures and mechanisms for the delivery of advice to Government and funding delivery services whilst Chapter 12 describes how OFMDFM Good Relations funding will be allocated across three strands as follows:

- Local District Council Programme;
- Thematic; and
- Targeted and Emergency

What are your views on the three strand approach for funding?

The 3 strands of funding identified - local government, thematic, and emergency - are appropriate and we support the need for work to be both planned and reactive. We would stress the need for improved co-ordination between the 3 strands, as this will be essential to ensure their effectiveness and to eliminate duplication.

We acknowledge the need for the Council's Good Relations annual action plan to set out clear targets and expected outcomes in advance. We would point out however that District Councils must often also respond to emerging crises and their resource allocation should be sufficient and have enough flexibility to accommodate this.

Q. 14 FURTHER COMMENTS –

Please see Introduction making a special case for Belfast.

Equality of Opportunity Issues

We are seeking views on the equality implications of the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration and would be grateful for your comments on the following:

The proposals in this document should not impact adversely on any of the groups listed under Section 75 and in fact should have a positive impact on those groups.

There is a lack of consistency in the document – equality is often mentioned alongside fairness and human rights and is often linked with good relations. Clearer definitions would be useful.

The document also makes specific reference to a commitment to publish a strategy on sexual orientation but no similar commitment for other Section 75 groups. It would be interesting to see the rationale for this decision.”

The Committee approved the draft response.

Cross-Cutting Issues

(Mrs. S. Wylie, Director of Health and Environmental Services, attended in connection with these items.)

Draft Justice Bill (Northern Ireland)

The Committee was advised that the Department of Justice was currently in the process of developing a Justice Bill for Northern Ireland and had issued a consultation document on the Equality Impact Assessment for the proposed Bill.

The Committee agreed to the holding of a briefing session on the draft Justice Bill and that a Senior representative of the Department of Justice be invited to that meeting to provide an overview of the relevant aspects of the draft Bill.

Consultation on Sustainable Development Strategy Draft Implementation Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

On 27 May 2010, the Northern Ireland Executive published a second Sustainable Development Strategy entitled ‘Everyone’s Involved’. In doing so, the Executive determined that the Strategy should function as a high-level, enabling document to be used to inform the decisions and actions of those groups progressing the sustainable development agenda across Northern Ireland. Within Northern Ireland, responsibility for sustainable development rests with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM).

Within the Strategy document, the Executive identified a range of organisations that have a critical contribution to make towards sustainable development, including district councils. By way of amplification, the Strategy refers to the local authority statutory duty to promote sustainable as articulated via Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, which requires councils to exercise their functions in the manner best calculated to promote the achievement of sustainable development.

The Strategy contains also a range of priority areas for action as follows:-

1. Building a dynamic innovative economy that delivers the prosperity required to tackle disadvantage and lift communities out of poverty.
2. Strengthening society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits a positive progress in the quality of life for everyone.
3. Driving sustainable long-term investment in key infrastructure to support economic and social development.
4. Striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of our natural resources in support of better quality of life and a better quality environment.
5. Ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint.
6. Ensuring the existence of a policy environment that supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond government.

In order to ensure an appropriate commitment towards these priority action areas, OFMDFM has developed a supporting Implementation Plan, outlining specific actions to be taken by central government departments, local authorities and a range of other non-governmental organisations.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is advised that the draft Implementation Plan, which has been issued for consultation, is not a finished document but instead comprises a detailed list of individual actions presented in spreadsheet format. OFMDFM has indicated that this is an interim arrangement, designed to stimulate discussion around what the final Implementation Plan should contain. Accordingly, OFMDFM has requested that

consultees consider the suitability of actions to be undertaken by government departments, district councils and non-governmental bodies. In addition, consultees have been invited to propose metrics for measuring progress towards sustainable development.

OFMDFM has requested that consultee comments be forwarded using a standardised response template and has advised that they are to be received by 29 October 2010.

Key Issues

In order to ensure that the local government contribution is recognised appropriately within the Implementation Plan, Solace and NILGA requested that the Council's Sustainable Development Manager represent all 26 Councils on the Ministerial led Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan Steering Group.

The Steering Group is an informal and ad-hoc high-level forum, under the joint chairmanship of Junior Ministers from within OFMDFM, which is charged with facilitating the implementation of the sustainable development priorities identified in the Sustainable Development Strategy and Programme for Government. The Steering Group advises on the structure and prioritisation of sustainability targets and provides a channel of communication to stakeholders. The Steering Group is also tasked with assisting the concept of sustainable development to achieve a higher profile in the wider community.

In addition, a high-level summary of sustainable development initiatives was sought from each local authority for inclusion within the draft Implementation Plan. Although this approach has not generated significant additionality, the actions submitted constitute, nonetheless, the current district council contribution towards the Implementation Plan. A district council facilitated consultation event was provided by OFMDFM on 28 September in order to raise awareness of, and refine the draft Implementation Plan.

Due to the manner of its development, the draft Implementation Plan is quite complex in its presentation, containing around 33 indicative actions across the 6 priority action areas. Not all are of relevance to local government. Accordingly, this consultation response does not seek to consider all 33 actions but rather address those highlighted as deficient by Council Departments. The 33 indicative actions have been included in Appendix B for information.

The Council's proposed consultation response is detailed in Appendix A.

Resource Implications

Financial/Human Resources

There are no immediate financial implications associated with the district council obligations proposed within the Sustainable Development Implementation Plan.

Asset and Other Implications

The OFMDFM proposal to enable public authorities to take into account sustainable development legislative requirements in the exercising of their functions may result in the Council having eventually to 'sustainability proof' its policies and actions in order to demonstrate compliance with the statutory duty.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to endorse the attached response in respect of the draft Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan and to recommend that it be forwarded to the Sustainable Development Unit, Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister by the consultation closing date of 29 October 2010.

At the time of submission, the Sustainable Development Unit will be advised that the comments are subject to Council ratification at its meeting of 1 November 2010.

Key to Abbreviations

OFMDFM - Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
NILGA - Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Solace - Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

Documents Attached

Appendix A – Belfast City Council Consultation Response to the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan

Appendix B - Sustainable Development Implementation Plan Indicative Actions.

Appendix A

Belfast City Council Consultation Response to the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan

Priority Area for Action 2: Strengthening society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits positive progress in quality of life for everyone.

2.2 Increase the sustainability standards of social housing

Comments on Government Actions and metrics:

It is recommended that the Department of Social Development adopt the Housing Health and Safety Rating system as the standard for assessing the fitness/suitability for occupation for both their properties and also the rented sector (to include the private rented sector). It is considered that the current assessment standard is archaic and does not promote sustainability in dwellings. The Housing Health and Safety Rating system is a scientific risk based assessment, which requires landlords to address a range of issues in dwellings affecting occupants. More information about the Housing Health and Safety Rating System can be accessed via the following web links:-

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/3208/contents/made>
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/142631.pdf>

Priority Area for Action 4: Striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment.

4.6 Take action to halt biodiversity loss

Comments on Government Actions and metrics:

It is recommended that the biodiversity aspects of the Implementation Plan be aligned with both national and International targets for the protection of biodiversity. For example, earlier this year, the European Union agreed a new long-term vision and mid-term headline target for biodiversity in the EU for the period beyond 2010, when the current target expires. The new target is 'to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss'. There is no mention of ecosystem services within the Implementation Plan, however, these are considered to be a critical contributor towards achieving the EU target. In addition, there appears to be no reference to the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy.

It is considered that ecosystem services, such as the role of soil processes in the carbon cycle and linkages to international obligations on carbon should be included within sustainable land management aspects of the plan. An opportunity exists also to include the development of Biodiversity Implementation Plans as an action for district councils. Targets for priority habitats and species and favourable conservation status of designated sites should be included within the Department of Environment section.

Invasive species are the second biggest threat to biodiversity. Currently, there is no primary legislation in relation to invasive species in Northern Ireland. The current provisions within the Wildlife Order 1985 and the proposals within the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Northern Ireland) Bill 2010 are considered inadequate to prevent further incursion of invasive species and enforce control measures. It is considered that primary legislation is required to address the ingress of invasive species.

Finally, it is disappointing to note that the Department of Environment has proposed no actions in relation to education on biodiversity.

Priority Area for Action 5: Ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint

5.1 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Comments on Government Actions and metrics:

At present, it has been estimated that the Northern Ireland public sector spends around £150M annually on energy for its premises (Invest NI publication). In order to ensure that organisations make appropriate financial provisions to support the delivery of energy conservation measures, the Carbon Trust has recommended that at least 10% of an organisation's energy budget be set aside annually for energy conservation projects, which would result in typical Northern Ireland expenditure of around £15 million.

Since the mid 1980s, energy consumption by Northern Ireland public organisations has been monitored annually by the Department for Finance and Personnel (DFP) against an agreed set of targets. Over the years, these targets have evolved in line with changing environmental priorities and other policies. The current targets for the Public Sector estate were established as a result of the 1999 Climate Change Programme, which embodied the agreements contained in the Kyoto Protocol, and the 2003 Energy White Paper 'Our Energy Future – creating a Low Carbon Economy'. They are summarised as follows:-

- To increase the energy efficiency of the buildings on public sector estates measured in terms of kiloWatt-hours (kWh) of fuel and electricity used per square metre of building floor area by 15% by 2010/11, relative to a base year of 1999/2000;
- To reduce absolute carbon, from fuel and electricity used in buildings by 12.5% by 2010/11, relative to a base year of 1999/2000; and
- To reduce electricity consumption across the estate by 1% annually from 2007 to 2012 against the base year of 2006/07

The DFP Central Energy Efficiency Fund (CEEF) was established in 1993 to provide financial support through grants for energy (and latterly carbon dioxide) saving measures, which could not be financed from within Departmental budgets. The fund was extended later to the wider public sector estate in Northern Ireland. Applications to the CEEF are assessed by the Public Sector Energy Working Group (PSEWG). The PSEWG is independently chaired and comprised of representatives from a number of Departments, a member of the District Council Energy Managers' Forum and independent technical advisers.

During 2010/2011, the CEEF has made available £1M in funding to support energy conservation projects however, the fund has been heavily oversubscribed by public bodies. In addition, it should be noted that funding to Councils is offered on a 50% matched funding basis. Accordingly, DFP is encouraged to review the amount of funding available in the context of Carbon Trust recommended levels of expenditure. Due to the level of subscription, only a small number of councils choose to submit an application to the fund each year. Moreover, few are likely to be successful since grants are awarded based upon carbon savings and payback periods. Therefore, a large number of beneficial projects are not taken forward by councils because funding cannot be secured 'in house'. Furthermore, the details of the projects that are selected for grant funding are not made public, making it difficult for unsuccessful applicants to improve the quality of their submissions. It is recommended, therefore, that the assessment process should be made more transparent.

It is recommended also that the remit of the Public Sector Energy Campaign should be expanded to encourage closer working with Councils in order to disseminate knowledge on developing PSEC funding applications and information about other sources of funding and government incentives. This approach would help to raise awareness of the need for energy conservation amongst councils and assist them to develop suitable funding applications. It is considered that a more co-ordinated approach across the public sector could prevent money being spent on numerous energy efficiency and renewable energy feasibility studies.

The Department of Finance and Personnel has indicated that many Northern Ireland councils do not submit annual energy consumption reports. It is considered that clearer district council energy conservation targets, supported by appropriate sanctions, would ensure that all councils to address energy conservation and begin to make appropriate financial provisions.

At present, Belfast City Council is the only Northern Ireland council required to participate fully in the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRC EES), although a range of other large public sector bodies are involved. In order to encourage greater energy conservation, government has indicated that it intends to publish a performance league table of organisations participating in the CRC EES. It is considered that the Department for Finance and Personnel could adapt this approach to develop a Northern Ireland public sector energy conservation league table. By way of amplification, the recent Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Environment Council Questionnaire seeks to identify what energy efficiency actions councils have implemented in terms of renewable technologies, investment in energy conservation and carbon savings. It is considered that the outcome of this survey could be used to inform the 'reducing our carbon footprint' section of the draft Sustainable Development Implementation Plan.

Priority Area for Action 6: Ensuring the existence of a policy environment that supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond Government

6.4 Enable public authorities to take into account sustainable development legislative requirements in the exercising of their functions.

Comments on Government Actions and metrics:

Belfast City Council has recognised already the benefits of delivering its functions and services in a sustainable manner. By way of example, the Council's current Corporate Plan 2008-2011 commits us to act sustainably through the effective and efficient use of all our resources and promotion of the principle of sustainability in all our activities. Moreover, the overarching objective of our Corporate Value Creation Map is for the Council to 'take a leading role in improving quality of life now and for future generations for the people of Belfast by making the city a better place to live in, work in, invest in or visit'.

Although Belfast City Council incorporates sustainable development as a key component in its forward planning, it believes strongly that the Sustainable Development Implementation Plan needs to identify explicitly financial resources to assist with the implementation and delivery of the proposed plan actions. The Council considers that this would be the single most effective way to link high-level objectives to the delivery of district council plans.

It is noted that Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires a public authority, in exercising its functions, to act in the way it considers best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in Northern Ireland, except to the extent that it considers that any such action is not reasonably practicable in all the circumstances of the case. For the purposes of the legislation, a public authority is defined presently as a Northern Ireland department or a district council although the legislation provides for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to prescribe other persons as required.

To date, no formal guidance has been issued explaining how public authorities can comply with the duty. Accordingly, the Council invites the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to engage, as a matter of priority, with all local authorities regarding the statutory duty and the development of supporting guidance. The Council recommends further that should the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister introduce a requirement for sustainability screening in order to demonstrate compliance with the duty, only significant local authority policies or functions should need to be appraised. Finally, the Council recommends that any compliance reporting mechanism should be straightforward and proportionate.

In considering mechanisms for assessing progress towards sustainable development, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister may wish to refer to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 'Stretching the Web' toolkit which has been derived from the Better Regulation Executive Impact Assessment methodology.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/think/stretch/demo.htm>

A similar approach to sustainability proofing has been proposed by the European Union via its 'Reference Framework for European Sustainable Cities', which incorporates the provisions of the 'Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities' in order to improve policy-making on integrated urban development, with a particular focus on deprived neighbourhoods. Belfast City Council has submitted

recently an application to participate in the testing of this new Reference Framework for Sustainable European Cities with a view to integrating more fully the principles of sustainable development into our everyday working practices and activities. More information about the Reference Framework for Sustainable European Cities can be accessed via the following web link:-

[\(http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/\)](http://www.rfsustainablecities.eu/)

These comments apply also to actions proposed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister within section 6.2 - Operate within identified and agreed best practice guidelines for sustainable development.

Other Comments

General comments regarding the Sustainable Development Implementation Plan format

Whilst the inclusion of Departmental and Northern Ireland Government Association actions within the draft action plan is 'self-selecting', the rationale for the choice of non-governmental organisations is unclear. With the exception of the Rural Community Network, all other non-governmental groups (Northern Ireland Environment Link, Carbon Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, etc.) are ostensibly environmental in nature, resulting in an under representation of the social and economic aspects of sustainable development from this sector.

It is considered that the mechanism, by which the draft Implementation Plan has been developed, i.e. detailed lists of actions submitted by government departments, local authorities and non-governmental bodies has limited the potential for creating an integrated cross-sectoral approach to sustainable development.

Moreover, as the priority action areas have been defined largely from the perspective of central government departments' outward-facing responsibilities, it may prove difficult for non-departmental bodies to identify effective actions that relate directly to these priorities.

It is noted that within the Sustainable Development Strategy, the Executive has committed to the development of SMART (specific, measurable, aligned, realistic, and time-bound) targets in order to measure progress towards sustainable development and to facilitate inter-departmental discussion on issues of mutual interest. At present, however, the draft Implementation Plan contains only a limited number of measurable actions. Indeed,

many of the 'objectives' listed appear to be elaborations on the sub-priorities (e.g. 'to promote', 'to seek to ensure', 'to continue to maintain', etc.) without commitment to measurable outcomes. Consequently, Belfast City Council recommends, that in developing the final Implementation Plan, Departmental and other actions are presented in a format that enables performance management to be implemented.

In addition, it is considered that the approach of developing metrics after a full range of activities have been agreed may not be the most favourable method for advancing sustainable development. A more appropriate approach might have been to define a set of overarching, critical indicators for sustainable development and then determine what actions would be required across all government Departments and other sectors to contribute towards these indicators.

Although development of the draft Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan is being led by the Sustainable Development Strategy Implementation Plan Steering Group that draws its membership from a range of organisations from across the social, economic and environmental sectors, the permanence of this group is uncertain once the Implementation Plan has been finalised. In order to ensure that sustainable development continues to gain prominence across all sectors, it is recommended that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister includes a commitment to the formation of an OFMDFM led Sustainable Development Forum for Northern Ireland within Priority Area for Action 6 - Ensuring the existence of a policy environment which supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond Government.

General comments regarding district council contributions

The method of developing the draft Implementation Plan has caused district council contributions, in some cases, to be presented as a list of individual council actions, rather than a series of local authority shared objectives. In developing the format of the final Implementation Plan, there may be an opportunity to rationalise the extensive list of district council actions in order to form a smaller series of 'generic' sustainable development activities to which all councils can subscribe. This set could include, for example, the development and implementation of Environmental Management Systems such as ISO14001:2004, Community Planning, sustainable development action planning, the construction or refurbishment of Council premises to BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) standards and limiting the amount of waste that is disposed off to landfill, etc.

As with central governmental departments, there may be a need to distinguish between actions that are a general statement of existing council responsibility and specific actions for improvement.

In addition, it is considered important that appropriate resources are deployed by district councils in order to ensure progress towards sustainable development.

Appendix B

Sustainable Development Implementation Plan Indicative Actions

1. Building a dynamic, innovative economy that delivers the prosperity required to tackle disadvantage and lift communities out of poverty
 - 1.1 Increase the number of jobs in the low-carbon economy.
 - 1.2 Increase the energy efficiency and resource efficiency of businesses.
 - 1.3 Ensure that our provision of learning and skills responds to the needs of the low-carbon economy.
2. Strengthening society so that it is more tolerant, inclusive and stable and permits positive progress in quality of life for everyone⁰
 - 2.1 Reduce deprivation and the incidence of social exclusion and poverty, especially child poverty and increase opportunities for all children and young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, to reach their full potential.
 - 2.2 Increase the sustainability standards of social housing.
 - 2.3 Promote and improve the health and well-being of the whole population through the effective implementation of current and planned supporting strategies and partnership working.
 - 2.4 Extend the implementation of sustainable development within all schools and other educational establishments.
 - 2.5 Improve quality of life through experiencing, participating in and accessing cultural and sporting pursuits.
 - 2.6 Increase volunteering within communities.

- 2.7 Improve community cohesion, sharing and integration and increase the proportion of the population reporting a positive perception of the community in which they live.
- 3. Driving sustainable, long-term investment in key infrastructure to support economic and social development
- 3.1 Reduce deprivation and the incidence of social exclusion and poverty, especially child poverty and increase opportunities for all children and young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, to reach their full potential.
- 3.2 Ensure that all of our activity in physical regeneration and new infrastructure investment meets sustainable development objectives.
- 3.3 Ensure an integrated and accessible transport infrastructure that promotes economic growth and social inclusion across all areas while reducing emissions and adverse impacts.
- 3.4 Provide modern, sustainable accommodation for educational establishments.
- 3.5 Provide an infrastructure capable of facilitating the delivery of modern, sustainable, high-quality health and social care services and fire and rescue services.
- 3.6 Provide, maintain and regulate the infrastructure necessary to deliver high quality water and sewerage services and acceptable levels of compliance with EU and other relevant standards.
- 3.7 Increase the number of households and businesses with access to broadband, particularly among rural and disadvantaged groups.
- 4. Striking an appropriate balance between the responsible use and protection of natural resources in support of a better quality of life and a better quality environment.
- 4.1 Ensure an appropriate policy and legislative framework is in place supported by a regulatory regime, which will deliver statutory environmental standards in respect of air, water and other environmental pollution.
- 4.2 Promote sustainable land management
- 4.3 Promote sustainable marine management.

- 4.4 Ensure our built heritage is used in a sustainable way.
- 4.5 Improve the quality of life of our people by planning and managing development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.
- 4.6 Take action to halt biodiversity loss.
- 4.7 Reduce the total quantity of waste going to landfill.
- 5. Ensuring reliable, affordable and sustainable energy provision and reducing our carbon footprint.
 - 5.1 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - 5.2 Increase the proportion of energy derived from renewable sources.
 - 5.3 Implement energy efficiency measures, particularly for vulnerable groups.
 - 5.4 Increase energy security.
 - 5.5 Adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 6. Ensuring the existence of a policy environment that supports the overall advancement of sustainable development in and beyond Government
 - 6.1 Communicate Government policy on sustainable development.
 - 6.2 Operate within identified and agreed best practice guidelines for sustainable development.
 - 6.3 Exercise legislative functions, in and beyond Government, in support of sustainable development.
 - 6.4 Enable public authorities to take into account sustainable development legislative requirements in the exercising of their functions.”

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

**B
2260**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd October, 2010**

Letters of Condolence

A Member referred to the recent death of the father the former Head of Committee and Members' Services, Mr. L. Steele, and to the death the Leading Northern Ireland Press Photographer, Mr. John Harrison, MBE.

The Committee agreed that letters of condolence expressing its sympathies be forwarded to Mr. L. Steele and to the family of Mr. John Harrison.

Chairman