

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st January, 2011

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor J. Rodgers (Deputy Chairman) (in the Chair); the High Sheriff (Councillor Adamson); and Councillors Attwood, Austin, W. Browne, M. Campbell, Garrett, Hartley, Hendron, N. Kelly, Lavery, McCarthy, McVeigh, O'Reilly, G. Robinson, Rodway and Stoker.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor Crozier) and Councillor Newton.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 5th January, subject to:

- (i) the omission of the minute under the heading "Land at McClure Street" which, at the request of Councillor Hartley, had been taken back to the Committee for further consideration; and
- (ii) the membership of the Working Group to be established in relation to the Celebration of a Decade of Centenaries being extended to include a representative of the Progressive Unionist Party.

Land at McClure Street

The Committee considered a further report in relation to the disposal of land at McClure Street, a copy of which is set out hereunder:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, at their meeting on 10 December 2010 granted approval to land at McClure Street being marketed, free of restrictions as to future use and on the basis that any disposal was time bound. However at full Council on 5 January 2011 the matter was referred back to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.**
- 1.2 A copy of the previous Strategic Policy & Resources Committee report, which outlines the relevant background, a summary of all the previous Committee decisions, key decisions and details of potential options has been circulated.**
- 1.3 It should be emphasised that the key issue affecting the future use of this land is its planning designation. Furthermore the key issue to be considered in deciding how the Council deals with any disposal of the land relates to the Council’s legislative requirement to obtain best price as set out in the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.**
- 1.4 The previous report highlighted that in order to comply with the LGA (NI) 1972 best price obligation there should be no restriction given as to the future use for social housing. If the use was restricted to any one particular use this would not allow for any other potential uses and could therefore restrict value and hence potentially not accord with the best price statutory requirement.**
- 1.5 It is important to note that there have been various audit reports in respect of land disposal issues at other Councils. These have highlighted the legislative requirement to obtain best price, best rent or otherwise best terms in the disposal of land, where the consent of the DOE is not sought. In order to demonstrate that best price is being established the view is that the land should normally be subject to marketing, subject to certain exceptions. Open competition is normally seen as the most effective way to demonstrate that best price is being established.**
- 1.6 In the current case with McClure Street, the recommended option for the Council to take in order to comply with its legislative requirements and to demonstrate that best price is being obtained is to advertise the land for sale on the open market free of restrictions as to future use. Otherwise the consent of the DOE will be required. Any interested parties are free to make a bid accordingly. To do otherwise could leave the Council open to challenge.**
- 1.7 The previous Committee reports sets out the planning issues which essentially indicate that any proposed development would have to bring substantial community benefit to outweigh the loss of open space.**

2 Key Issues

2.1

- Legislative requirement under the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 to obtain best price, best rent or otherwise best terms in the disposal of land, where the consent of the DOE is not sought.
- Restrictions on the future use of the land when marketing could restrict the value and potentially not comply with the best price legislative requirements.
- In order to demonstrate that best price is being obtained and to not leave the Council open to challenge, the land should be openly marketed and any interested parties can bid accordingly.
- Planning restrictions would indicate that any proposed development would have to bring substantial community benefit to outweigh the loss of open space.

3 Resource Implications

3.1 As set out in the previous report.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

4.1 None at this time.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are recommended to approve that the land at McClure Street is marketed, free of restrictions as to future use and on the basis that any disposal is time bound. A report will be brought back to advise on the marketing price and to advise of any DSD requirements in release of the restrictive covenant.

6 Decision Tracking

Director of Property & Projects to bring a report back to Committee within 2 months to advise re marketing.

7 Key to Abbreviations

dBMAP: Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan”

After discussion, it was

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

That the Committee agrees to affirm its decision of 10th December to advertise the site for sale on the open market, free of restrictions as to future use.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McVeigh,
Seconded by Councillor Hartley,

That the Committee agrees to retain the land in Council ownership and that consultation with the local communities be undertaken to ascertain proposals for its future use.

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

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor McCarthy and seconded by Councillor N. Kelly was thereupon put the meeting when eleven Members voted for and five against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Finance

Financial Estimates and District Rate 2011/12

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th January, it had agreed the cash limits for each of the Committees as follows:

<u>Committee</u>	<u>£</u>
Strategic Policy and Resources	31,567,500
Health and Environmental Services	40,627,499
Parks and Leisure	22,940,266
Development	19,783,734

The Director of Finance and Resources reported that, since that meeting, each of the Committees had considered and agreed its Revenue Estimates in line with the aforementioned cash limits. Based on the Estimated Penny Product of £4,893,170, which had been provided by Land and Property Services, that meant that the District Rate increase would be 2.5% for 2011/12 and would result in a Domestic Rate of 0.3002 pence and a Non-Domestic Rate of 26.2248 pence. The summary of the key elements of the Council's finances for the next financial year, as agreed by the Committee, would be as follows:

	<u>2011/12 Increase/ Decrease</u>	<u>% Rate Increase</u>
Department Estimates	1,478,413	1.14
Current Capital Programme	528,895	0.40
Additional Capital Schemes	3,200,000	2.48
City Investment Strategy	0	0.00
Waste Plan	1,300,000	0.99
City Priorities	1,000,000	0.77
General Exchequer Grant	(214,000)	0.16
Movement in Reserves	-4,500,000	-3.46
District Rate Increase		2.50
Average Impact on Rate Payer		£8.39

Accordingly, it was

Resolved – That the Council be recommended to approve the expenditure contained within the Departmental Estimates and, further to this, that the following District Rate be fixed to meet the estimated expenditure of the several Committees of the Council for the financial year commencing 1st April, 2011:

Non-Domestic Rate - 26.2248 pence

Domestic Rate - 0.3002 pence

The Committee approved also the key messages associated with the rates increase, subject to a number of amendments which had been suggested by the Members.

Northern Ireland Executive Budget

The Chief Executive reported that he had received recently copies of the draft budgets for the Departments of the Northern Ireland Executive and indicated that he would be submitting a report to the Committee in this regard at its meeting scheduled to be held on 4th February. The report would include also high level details of the impact on the Council, its services and match-funding projects.

The Chief Executive explained that, now that the Committee had agreed the Rates for the next financial year, it was time to work through the Council's corporate priorities, identify and agree the Capital Projects which it would wish to support and work towards a resource plan which would establish how the Council could work together with other Bodies to resource key infrastructure projects within the City.

Noted.

Minutes of Budget and Transformation Panel

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 13th January.

Approval to Seek Tenders – Property Maintenance

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 tender received in respect of the following:

<u>Contract</u>	<u>Estimated Value Per Year £</u>	<u>Period of Contract</u>	<u>Anticipated Advert Date</u>	<u>Cost-control Mechanism</u>
General Building Works	50,000	1 year, with the option to extend for a further 2 years	February, 2011	Schedule of Rates (PSA)
Drain Cleaning and Camera Surveys	75,000	1 year, with the option to extend for a further 2 years	February, 2011	Schedule of Rates (Bespoke)
Repair, Maintenance and Minor Works for Air Conditioning	75,000	1 year, with the option to extend for a further 2 years	February, 2011	Schedule of Rates (Bespoke)
Repair, Maintenance and Minor Works of Building Energy Management System	40,000	1 year, with the option to extend for a further 2 years	February, 2011	Schedule of Rates (Bespoke)

Voluntary Redundancy Exercise

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

"Relevant Background Information

As part of their planning and budgeting process for 2011/12 departments indicated there may be areas of their workforce which could be downsized as a result of structural improvements, downturn in workload and/or ongoing revenue losses.

Consequently, the SP&R Committee gave approval on 22 October 2010 to secure a proportion of the 2010/11 under spend to fund potential voluntary redundancies (VR) this financial year.

It was agreed that specific proposals in relation to potential voluntary redundancies in targeted areas such as Finance & Resources, Parks & Leisure Services and Facilities Management would be developed with a view to bringing these back to standing committees / Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

It was also agreed that that any such proposals would meet the previously agreed principles and criteria in relation to releasing members of staff on a VR basis, namely: the decision to release anyone on VR is dependent on the needs of the council and we retain the right to decide whether or not to accept an employee's application for VR in accordance with the following BCC principles:

- Prioritisation of VR requests will be based on available finance and the level of savings which may be delivered
- The VR will avoid the need for compulsory redundancy
- The need to ensure that essential skills and expertise are maintained
- All other relevant options have been considered.
- Any changes to structures will be conducted and implemented in accordance with HR policies and procedures and the Council's Trade Unions will be fully consulted and agreement sought in relation to all releases

Key Issues

Departments have now identified those posts which can be deleted through voluntary redundancy with no detrimental impact on the management of the service. The proposed voluntary redundancies are as follows:

Finance and Resources – Two Secretarial Assistant posts, following reorganisation of existing posts within the department.

Facilities Management – Two posts (one Working Trades Foreman and one Painter) as a result of an ongoing downturn in work which is likely to continue for the foreseeable future

Parks and Leisure Services – Six posts of Team Leader in Parks as a result of restructuring previously agreed by committee in October 2010. Three posts in Leisure (one Leisure Centre Manager and two Assistant Leisure Centre Managers) as a result of ongoing restructuring (agreed at Parks and Leisure Committee in January 2011).

Each of the 13 applications for VR meet the agreed best practice individual payback period (3.25 years) with the overall Council payback period being 2.11 years. Any changes to structures as a result of the voluntary redundancies will be implemented in accordance with BCC HR policies and procedures and consultation with Trade Unions.

Appendix One, which has been circulated for the information of the Members, sets out details of costs and savings, but in summary the one off cost to the Council of releasing the aforementioned staff is £707,192. It is estimated that this initial cost will lead to net staff savings of £335,944 each and every year after making the structural changes needed to facilitate their release.

Members will recall that the October 2010 Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to set aside some £1.2m to fund the one off costs of voluntary redundancy in 2010/11, with the expectation that some £600k of ongoing savings would be achieved from 2011/12 onwards.

However, given the lower than expected take up of voluntary redundancy, the one off costs in 2010/11 are actually some £500k lower than anticipated. This £500k will therefore be available for consideration, along with the remaining 2010/11 forecast financial position as part of the 'Financial Report – Quarter 3 2010/11' in February 2011. In turn, the actual savings from VR are some £264k lower than originally anticipated. However this gap has been addressed by departments as part of the rates setting exercise for 2011/12, so that the planned total efficiency savings of £2.9m will still be achieved and these have been factored into the Departmental committee cash limits.

Resource Implications

Financial: The one off cost to the Council of the proposed VRs is £707,192 resulting in savings of £335,944 each year.

Human Resources: Any changes to structures as a result of the voluntary redundancies will be implemented in accordance with BCC HR policies and procedures and consultation with Trade Unions.

Recommendations

Members are asked to agree to the voluntary redundancy release of the 7 members of staff (the 6 Team leaders in Parks have already been agreed) with the financial implications set out above.

Decision Tracking

Responsible officer – Director of Finance & Resources

Key to Abbreviations

VR – Voluntary Redundancy”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the voluntary redundancy release of the two members of staff in the Finance and Resources Department and the three staff in the Parks and Leisure Services Department and deferred consideration of the two posts in the Facilities Management Section to enable a report on the review of that Section to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

Modernisation and Improvement

Reform of Planning Service – Consultation

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

1.1 As Members are aware, on the 30th November 2010 the Environment Minister outlined his proposals in respect to the reform of the Planning Service within Northern Ireland. The key proposals included:

1. On the 1st April 2011, Planning Service functions and staff will have been absorbed into the core of DOE and the Planning Service’s status as an Agency will end

- 2. These functions will be taken forward by two divisions i.e.**
 - Local Planning Operations Division which will have responsibility for the Development Plan and Development Management functions which will in time transfer to local government**
 - Strategic Planning Operations Division which will take forward the responsibilities which will remain with the Department.**
 - 3. The existing six Divisional Planning Offices and two subdivisinal offices will be streamlined to five Area Planning Offices based around amalgamations of the proposed 11 council cluster model. Members will note that under these proposals, the new Belfast Area Planning Office will comprise 3 of the proposed 11 new council areas including the proposed local government districts of Belfast, Lisburn & Castlereagh, and North Down & Ards. The current Belfast Divisional Planning Office covers the areas of Belfast, Castlereagh and Newtownabbey. Newtownabbey will form part of the South Antrim Area Planning Office.**
 - 4. The introduction of a scheme of delegation (still to be published) whereby certain planning decisions would be delegated from the Minister to the Department.**
 - 5. Proposals in regards to reforming the Planning Service's fees regime.**
 - 6. Announcing the intention to progress with a small number of pilot initiatives from April 2011 to test the working arrangements for the delivery of planning functions by the new councils before they are rolled out across the new council areas.**
- 1.2 As part of his announcement, the Environment Minister stated that a detailed Planning Bill would be introduced to the Assembly within the next few weeks for consideration.**

2.0 Key Issues

- 2.1** Subsequently, on 6th December 2010 the Planning Bill was introduced to the Assembly for consideration. In introducing the Bill, the Environment Minister stated that 'The proposals in this Bill will transform our planning system. They pave the way for the transfer of planning functions to local government within a timescale and in circumstances to be determined by the Executive. They will make the planning system more effective and speed up decision making'.
- 2.2** The Planning Bill is very lengthy and consists of 248 clauses (200+ pages long) and is the largest Bill to come before the Assembly. A copy of the Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum are available at http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/legislation/primary/2010/nia7_10.htm. A high-level summary of the areas covered by the Planning Bill has been circulated for the information of the Members.
- 2.3** The reform proposals as set out within the Planning Bill are comprehensive, and will impact upon every aspect of the planning system, including how development plans are drawn up, how development proposals and applications are managed and the way in which these functions are delivered. The key reform changes relate to the complete overhaul and redesign of the development plan and development management systems which aim to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Significant changes are also proposed in relation to planning appeals and enforcement.
- 2.4** This Bill provides the legislative basis for these reforms and also gives effect to the Review of Public Administration (RPA) which will transfer the majority of functions and decision making responsibilities relating to local development planning, development management plus planning enforcement to district councils. This will make planning more locally accountable, giving local politicians the opportunity to shape the areas within which they are elected. Decision-making processes will be improved by bringing an enhanced understanding of the needs and aspirations of local communities.
- 2.5** The Bill therefore establishes a new framework for a reformed and transferred planning system which is likely to have a significant impact upon the future operation and service delivery by the Council.

Consultation on Planning Bill

- 2.6 The Committee for the Environment has commenced Committee Stage consideration of the Planning Bill and has invited the Council to submit its views by 21st January 2011. A copy of the proposed draft Council response to the consultation has been circulated for Members consideration and is available on the Website.
- 2.7 The Committee will be aware that the Council had made a detailed response, in 2009, to the original Departmental consultation 'Reform of the Planning System in Northern Ireland: Your chance to influence change' which set out proposals for planning reform. In cross-referencing the Council's original response with the provisions as set out within the Planning Bill, it would appear that a number of concerns expressed by the Council have not been fully addressed.
- 2.8 The comments, as set out within this response, therefore reinforce previous views expressed by the Council. They are intended to be constructive and seek to ensure that the reform proposals contained within the Planning Bill are maximised in the interests of enhancing the customer experience, improving social outcomes for the citizen and achieving an efficient and effective service.

It should be noted that in responding to the Planning Bill, the Council is conscious that much of the detail around the out workings of this legislation (such as the definition of regional development and the criteria for both departmental intervention and call in procedures) may be set out within the subsequent subordinate legislation (regulations) arising from the Bill. Therefore, in its response the Council commends that the Department should ensure that local councils are consulted in the drafting of the relevant detailed subordinate regulations.

- 2.9 Whilst a detailed draft response on the Planning Bill is set out at Appendix 3, for Members consideration, the following key points raised in the response should be noted:-
- (i) The Council would generally welcome the Bill, seeing it as progressive and instrumental in reforming the Planning System, and would support the proposed transfer of responsibility for planning functions to district councils.

- (ii) **Consultation timing:** concerned about the short timescale set for the provision of written evidence to the 248 clauses set out within the Bill (one of the largest to come before the Assembly), and the consequent ability of councils to undertake any detailed due diligence review of the proposals and the potential impact upon the future integration and administration of the functions. The timescale for the consideration of the Planning Bill has prevented the Council from fully considering the potential omissions including the issues of the award of costs and the acquisition of land for planning purposes.

- (iii) **Alignment and Integration of Legislation –**
The Council is aware of the separate, but associated consultation underway on Local Government Reform which sets out proposals which will inevitably impact upon the future administration of planning functions by Councils (e.g. proposals in relation to governance, ethical standards, decision-making processes, performance frameworks etc). It would appear that the reform of the Planning Service, as set out within the Planning Bill, has been considered almost in isolation from these other matters. Due consideration will need to be given to the important interconnection and sequencing of these two strands of legislation.

- (iv) **Planning Service Restructure** - The Council would seek further clarification from the Department in relation to how the new proposed new Planning Service Area Offices structure will operate and, in particular, the prioritisation of workload, allocation of resources and the resolution of potential disputes within the proposed new Belfast Area Office which covers 5 council areas.

- (v) **Oversight and Intervention** - It is suggested that the level of central scrutiny/oversight and potential intervention by the Department as set out within the Planning Bill (e.g. reserve powers, monitoring, call-in, performance assessment, reporting and direction), is overly bureaucratic, process driven and may, in fact, militate against local democracy and accountability and undermines the trust and potential relationship between central and local government.

- (vi) **Duplication of responsibilities** - There are a number of areas of responsibility outlined within the Panning Bill which duplicate functions between the Department and councils (e.g. listed buildings, conservation areas, drawing up planning agreements; the issuing of enforcement notices etc). The Council considers this as an unnecessary repetition of responsibility and resources and creates further uncertainty confusion within the planning process.
- (vii) **Consultee obligations** - The Council would seek further clarification on the intended obligations to be placed upon designated consultees to respond in a timely and appropriate manner and the role of the Department and council in ensuring compliance with such obligations. This is particularly important in respect to the ability of councils to meet the proposed new ambitious timescales for processing planning applications and developing local area plans.
- (viii) **Regional Significant Developments** - The Council would seek clarification on the process for the determination of planning applications of regional significance which are to be retained/dealt with by the Department. This is of particular relevance given the potential for disproportionate number of developments within Belfast being classed as regionally significant.
- (ix) **Resource Implications** - The Council would be concerned that inadequate consideration has been given to the resource and financial implications for councils of implementing the additional requirements outlined in the new regime and would seek further engagement with the Department in this regard. This also needs to be considered within the context of the recent proposals for significant downsizing of Planning Service staff resources.
- (x) **Local Development Plans** - Given the significant resource implications required in the preparation of the proposed local development plans, the Council would seek assurances within the Planning Bill that the local development plans will be the primary consideration for planning applications within a plan led system.

- (xi) **Capacity Building** - The Council recognises that there is a critical need to ensure that there is sufficient capacity within both central and local government to ensure that the reformed planning service is delivered in an effective and efficient way both pre and post transfer of specific functions to councils.

The Council believes that given the delay in the Local Government reform process and the recent proposals announced by the Environment Minister in his announcement to the Assembly on 30th November regarding potential planning pilots, there is a real opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the Planning Service and councils, enhancing the joint capacity of both and ensuring vital learning is gained in advance of the full transfer of the function as part of the RPA. This approach could facilitate the exploration of potential synergies with the existing Council functions and the additional responsibilities proposed for transfer as part of the wider RPA process.

- 2.10 Members will note that the detail around the outworkings of this legislation (such as the definition of regional significant developments and the criteria for both departmental intervention and call in procedures) will be set out within the subsequent subordinate legislation (regulations) arising from the Bill. Therefore, in its response the Council commends that the Department should ensure that local councils are consulted in the drafting of the relevant detailed subordinate regulations.

3.0 **Resource Implications**

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

4.0 **Recommendations**

Members are asked to:-

- (xii) note the contents of this report;
- (xiii) consider the Council's response to the Planning Reform Bill which has been circulated at Appendix 3 and is available on the Council's website;

(xiv) agree the submission of the Council's response, subject to any proposed amendments made by Members, to the Environment Committee."

After discussion, during which the Committee agreed that, given the importance of the issue, the Environment Minister be informed of the Committee's dissatisfaction at the short time-frame for responses to be formulated and submitted in respect of the consultation exercise, it was agreed that:

- (1) the draft response to the Planning Reform Bill be submitted to the Environment Committee on the basis that the Council was still considering the document and reserved the right to amend its comments when that process had been completed; and
- (2) a special meeting be held to allow the Members to give detailed consideration to the proposed response.

Democratic Services and Governance

Local Government Pension Scheme – Councillors' Pensions

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The Local Government Division of the Department of the Environment has issued a consultation paper on the introduction of pension rights for elected Members of local Councils. The deadline for the submission of comments is 28th January.

2 Key Issues

2.1 The consultation paper proposes to introduce legislation - the Local Government Pension Scheme (Councillors) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 – which will come into effect from the date of the Local Government Elections in May.

2.2 The effect of the Regulations will be to automatically enrol every Councillor elected in May into the Local Government Pension Scheme. A Member may opt out of the scheme by notifying the Council in writing. The scheme will be based upon a contribution being made by both the individual Member and the Council, similar to that in place for Local Government officers.

- 2.3 The main difference between the scheme for Councillors and that for officers is that the Councillors' pensions will be calculated on the basis of career average earnings rather than final salary. This is seen to be advantageous as the payments which are taken into account in calculating the pension payment are those made under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, namely basic allowance and the special responsibility allowance, and an individual Member may hold positions on the Council which attract higher payments at various times during their career. Therefore, the career average rather than a final salary calculation would more often than not provide a higher pension payment. It should be noted that the Regulations do not make any provision for payments made to Members by outside bodies, such as the District Policing Partnership, or payments for acting as Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor or High Sheriff to be taken into account. The pension will be calculated on the basis of 1/60 of the pay received by the Member for each year of service. Each year's pension will then be up-rated with inflation and then aggregated. This figure will then be divided by the number of years' service to provide the "average" pay which will then be used to calculate the pension based upon the number of years' service.
- 2.4 The pension is payable for life and is normally paid when a Member reaches the age of 65. The proposals also include provisions for:
- The pension to be increased each year in line with the Consumer Price Index;
 - Members to opt to take a tax-free lump sum on retirement by converting up to 25% of the capital value of the pension at a conversion rate of £1 pension for £12 lump sum;
 - The opportunity for the Member to increase his or her membership by paying additional voluntary contributions;
 - The right for a Member, after 3 months' membership, to retire voluntarily at age 60 and receive a pension, albeit at a reduced rate;
 - The possibility of a Member retiring from age 55 and receiving benefits immediately if the Council gives its assent;
 - Ill health retirement rights following 1 years membership of the scheme;

- Death in service benefits by way of a lump sum payment equivalent to 3 times the career average pay;
 - Widows', widowers', civil partners' or cohabiting partners' and childrens' pensions.
- 2.5 The amount of contribution to the pension fund to be made by a Member is based on an increasing 7-tier scale with contributions based upon how much the Member receives in a year. For most Members, the contribution rate will be 5.5% of their allowance, although those Members receiving special responsibility allowances may pay a slightly higher rate.
- 2.6 The proposals also allow for different periods of Council membership to be aggregated when considering the total years which a Member has served for the purposes of the calculation of the pension. For example, a Member serving two terms from 2011 and then leaving the Council in 2019 and returning to serve a further two terms later would be able to claim 16 years membership of the Pension scheme, so long as he or she has kept making the appropriate contributions.
- 2.7 It should be noted that these proposals are separate from those which were being considered as part of the Review of Public Administration, where the possibility of the introduction of severance payments for outgoing Members was being discussed. The latest information available is that the Minister does not intend to act on this outside of agreement being reached on the overall reorganisation programme for Local Government.
- 2.8 A copy of the consultation document has been circulated for the information of the Members.
- 3 **Resource Implications**
- 3.1 It is estimated that if 100% of Members decided to stay within the pension scheme, then the Council's contribution for a full financial year would be approximately £130k. Provision for this expenditure has not yet been included in the 2011/12 budgets but can be added if the legislation is passed and is applicable for 2011/12.
- 4 **Equality and Good Relations Implications**
- 4.1 The pension scheme will be open to all Members of Council and, accordingly, there are not considered to be any equality or good relations implications.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee welcome the introduction of the Local Government Pension Scheme for Councillors.

6 Decision Tracking

Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager

25th January, 2011”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation, subject to the response including comments on the need to introduce into the pension scheme an element of severance payment to recognise the need for Councillors to seek re-election every four years and which was commensurate with the systems in operation for other elected bodies; and, given that the Council was being requested to undertake additional responsibilities, such as Planning, consideration needed to be given to revising and increasing the basic allowances which were paid to Members.

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

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

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Northern Ireland Young Solicitors' Association	European Young Bar Association Spring Conference Reception 11th March, 2011 Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Association for Project Management	Branch Forum Reception 8th April, 2011 Approximately 100 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together'.	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
University of Ulster	International Conference on Engineering Education 2011 Reception 22nd August, 2011 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Tuberous Sclerosis Association	International Research Conference Reception 21st September, 2011 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	Delegates will be staying in accommodation in Belfast and the conference will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
British and Irish Ombudsman Association	Annual Meeting of the British and Irish Ombudsman Association Dinner 17th May, 2012 Approximately 130 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 annual meeting will take place within the city. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together', 'Better support for people and communities', 'Better services - listening and delivering' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
Integrated Services for Children and Young People	Celebrate Learning Awards Ceremony 15th March, 2011 Approximately 50 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits.	This event aims to recognise the achievements of the young people and women who have undertaken training and development activities in order to help and improve the quality of their lives and of others from within the local community. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together', 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £125

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Belfast Community Sports Development Network	Annual Sports Awards 31st March, 2011 Approximately 150 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception.	This event will recognise those individuals who have contributed to the provision of sport in Belfast. Furthermore, this event will contribute to the achievement of the Belfast Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme 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 red/white wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £500
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Awards Ceremony 12th May, 2011 Approximately 250 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception.	This event will raise awareness of the RICS' commitment to provide help to close the skills gap which exists within the construction industry and will recognise the achievements of property construction professionals in Northern Ireland. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks Approximate cost £500
Police Service of Northern Ireland	Policing with the Community Awards 2011 18th May, 2011 Approximately 350 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	This event aims to recognise and reward the outstanding work which has taken place between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and communities and partners to help make Northern Ireland safe, confident and peaceful. 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 red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Young Enterprise Northern Ireland	Young Enterprise Northern Ireland Innovation Awards 19th May, 2011 Approximately 400 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-event drinks reception.	This event aims to recognise the achievements of students who have successfully completed one of two programmes organised by Young Enterprise. The Programmes, which actively include students with learning and physical disabilities, seek to develop business skills as well as the personal development of those who take part. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership – strong, fair, together', 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better support for people and communities'	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of soft drinks. Approximate cost £500
City of Belfast School of Music	Annual Students' Recital and Presentation of Awards 10th June, 2011 Approximately 200 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits.	This event will recognise the outstanding achievements of individuals within the school who have demonstrated excellence in their chosen field. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £500
Cinemagic International Film and Television Festival	Awards and Celebration Ceremony 2nd December, 2011 Approximately 500 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a drinks reception	This event seeks to acknowledge those young people who have demonstrated the most promising and creative talent in the field of film and television. The event aims to provide an opportunity to interact with young people and their communities and to provide an international platform so as to engage in dialogue and to learn and share ideas. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City leadership – strong, fair, together', 'Better opportunities for success across the city' and 'Better support for people and communities'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/ Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
The Law Society of Northern Ireland	The Law Society of Northern Ireland Council Dinner 23rd September, 2011 Approximately 300 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of a pre-dinner drinks reception	This event seeks to provide an opportunity for representatives from the judiciary, business, voluntary and community sectors to come together to highlight best practice and to develop relations with key stakeholders This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'City leadership, strong, fair and together'.	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of red/white wine and soft drinks. Approximate cost £500

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Elected Member Representation
on the Belfast Strategic Partnership
for Health and Wellbeing**

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

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd January, 2009, it had agreed to set up new joint working arrangements with the Public Health Agency and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. The purpose of that was to create a mechanism to better tackle the health inequalities that existed across the City, which was one of the priorities that the Council had set within its Corporate Plan. Part of those joint working arrangements involved the establishment of a new unit, the Belfast Health Development Unit, which had been launched by the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety in March, 2010. That new unit incorporated staff from the Council, the Public Health Agency and the Belfast Trust. The Unit had developed a joined-up action plan across the three agencies to address the priority health problems facing the people of Belfast.

The Director of Health and Environmental Services explained that the next step in delivering joined-up planning and action was to set up a new Strategic Partnership for Health and Wellbeing in order to:

- Support a Citywide collaborative approach across sectors to better address the inequalities and health and wellbeing challenges faced within Belfast; and
- Set the strategic direction for health and wellbeing improvement in Belfast, through the development of agreed priorities for the City and the alignment of corporate plans and resources of the key service providers.

She reminded the Members that the Council had been successful in being awarded a contract by the BIG Lottery to deliver a community planning pilot. As a result of this the Committee had established a Cross-Party Reference Group on Community Planning, which had been meeting for the previous two months and included two Members from each of the Party Groupings on the Council. That Group had agreed that the pilot should focus on health as a theme and it would specifically test how to enable the voluntary and community sector to influence the plans and resources of key statutory agencies.

The new Belfast Strategic Partnership for health and wellbeing would be made up of representatives from the following sectors:

- Statutory sector, such as the Council, the Public Health Agency, the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Education sector;
- Private sector;
- Community and voluntary sector, including representation from the five Belfast Area Partnership Boards and community nominees put forward at a recent community sector workshop; and
- Local Elected Members.

That Partnership would set the health and wellbeing priorities for the City in the form of a Citywide plan and would be supported by the Belfast Health Development Unit. The first meeting was scheduled to be held at 11.00 a.m. on 8th February in the Group Space, Ulster Hall. It would meet approximately four times a year.

Accordingly, it was recommended that each of the Party Groupings on the Council nominate a Member to sit on the Partnership and, in order to maintain coherence across activities, the nominee should also be a current representative on the Cross-Party Reference Group on Community Planning.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Human Resources

The Health Employment Partnership Employability Model

(Ms. J. Minne, Head of Human Resources, and Ms. C. Christy, Principal Human Resources Advisor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of report:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Health Employment Partnership and examine the possibility of developing a similar employment partnership scheme for the council.

Relevant background information:

At its meeting on 1 December 2010 the council acknowledged the work of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Health Employment Partnership. It noted the provision of pre-employment training and support to 300 long term unemployed and that 143 of these long term unemployed people secured employment in Belfast HSC Trust. It was agreed that this matter be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources to examine the possibility of developing a similar employment partnership scheme for the council.

The Health Employment Partnership.

The Health Employment Partnership (HEP) was developed as an output of the work of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces and is a unique partnership involving Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, UNISON and the community. HEP is a regeneration initiative that has sought to target the most disadvantaged areas in West Belfast and Greater Shankill, its aim being to demonstrate that the health and social services sector can make a substantial contribution towards regeneration by addressing worklessness and poor job progression. The project is focussed upon two core areas of work:

- Pre-employment support - targeted at the unemployed and economically inactive, by providing training relevant to jobs in the health sector as well as general job search support and personal skill development.
- Job progression - targeted at staff already in entry level positions in the health sector, providing training and development to assist with career progression.

An independent evaluation of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Health Employment Partnership concluded that the Partnership's employment programme has been very impressive and value-for-money, with a job conversion rate of 47% and a cost per job outcome that compares very favourably with other DEL employability initiatives and a boost to the local economy of around £1 million each year. Through the programme, 143 people got jobs with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. In addition, over 300 staff in the Trust received training to help them develop their careers, and 36 entry-grade staff have already obtained promotion.

The initial feasibility study was funded by DEL and the project was then funded by the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety, under the Renewing Communities Programme. While £1million was initially allocated to the HEP, the total project cost was £670 000 spent over the three years of the project which ran between 2007 and 2009.

Funding has now ceased for the HEP and future funding opportunities are currently being explored with DHSSPS, DEL and DSD.

Existing employability initiatives in Belfast City Council

Young Persons Employment Initiative

The council has recently worked in partnership with DEL and North City Training -Bryson Charitable Group's Training and Employment Unit on a pilot of the Young Person Employment Initiative (YPEI). The programme provided young people (aged 18-24), who had been unemployed for more than one year, temporary waged work experience over a 26 week period. The council facilitated 36 placement opportunities, five of which were graduate opportunities. The young people worked on a range of projects which are of value to the ratepayers of Belfast. They carried out a range of work in recycling and cleansing services and worked in various locations across the city such as Musgrave Park, Belfast Castle and Connswater Community Greenway.

The aim of the programme was to potentially provide a pathway into the labour market by offering paid work experience, employability training and personal development. To date, 16 (44%) of the young people have moved into employment.

An application has been made by North City Training, Bryson Charitable Group's Training and Employment Unit for European Social Fund (ESF) assistance to further develop the YPEI pilot. If successful, the council has committed to facilitating further placements for long term unemployed young people.

Public Employment Partnership (PEP)

For the past two years the council has engaged with the Citywide Employability Consortium (CEC) to develop a pre-employment training programme for the long term unemployed. North Belfast Partnership Board (NBPB) which works in partnership with the CEC project manages the programme. Other public sector partners working on the programme are the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The aim of the programme is to assist the long term unemployed gain the necessary skills and experience to support them in gaining employment. As part of the programme the council facilitates site visits, work experience placements and mock interview sessions. To date the council has facilitated 19 placements across various disciplines e.g. refuse collection, street sweeping, gardening, cleaning, community services and administration. Of the 19 placement participants, 7 (36.8%) have gained employment. Eleven site visits and 3 mock interview sessions have also taken place.

Provision of external funding for other employability projects.

The Development Committee has in recent years provided match funding for a number of employability projects. One of the most successful employability projects, the HARTE (Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment) has to date assisted almost 80 long term unemployed people to secure employment while an additional 30 have gone on to further training and education. An application has been made to develop and expand the HARTE programme under the new round of ESF. The proposed project will engage over 200 long term unemployed with a view to helping them find jobs in the tourism, hospitality and wider service industry. It is also being supported by Lisburn City Council and will run in the Belfast and Lisburn areas. A decision around future funding of the HARTE project is yet to be taken by the Development Committee.

Overall the council has set aside £100,000 to support employability initiatives in the current estimates under the Economic Development budget. However, no budgetary approval for individual projects has yet been granted. A report outlining match funding requests for a range of ESF projects will be discussed by the Development Committee in February 2011. The department may also consider a wider range of employability initiatives in conjunction with DEL and other statutory and community partners although the details of these have not yet been finalised. Any financial commitment would have to be found within the agreed Development budget for 2011/2012.

Key Issues:

The HEP model has proved very successful and clearly there is potential to bring the learning from the project into the council's employability initiatives. Since the inception of the HEP project however, circumstances which could impact on the success of such a project have changed both inside and outside the council. The following issues need to be considered when assessing the feasibility of the council delivering a scheme of similar nature and size:

- The HEP project has received funding over a period of 3 years of nearly £670 000. The future of the HEP will depend on securing funding.

- When the HEP project started the health sector was experiencing difficulty filling certain types of posts. Unemployment was generally low and the hospitals had a number of “hard to fill” vacancies. However, the volume of basic entry recruitment in the council has decreased steadily in recent years, (from 52 basic grade appointees in 2008 to 3 in 2010.) There are a number of reasons for this decrease, including the economic climate, the efficiency agenda, increased emphasis on the monitoring and control of employee costs and more stringent vacancy control procedures. Information on the workforce turnover figures for staff in basic entry posts which has also declined in recent years has been circulated to the Members.
- In addition to the current council employment initiatives detailed above we also provide training and development for existing basic entry staff to seek to help with job progression. Information on the number of basic entry staff who have availed of the council’s essential skills and development programmes since 2005 and outlines the number of people who have been promoted since participating in those programmes has been circulated to the Members.

Notwithstanding the above issues there are clearly elements of the HEP model that could be investigated further and incorporated into the council’s employability outreach activity.

Resource Implications:

As outlined above, part of the HEP project’s success has been attributable to a substantial budget which would need to be externally sourced.

Recommendations:

The research carried out to date on the HEP employability model would indicate that the council’s employability initiatives could benefit from the learning derived from the project, including the success of the equal partnership between employers, trade unions and the community. It is therefore recommended that:

- the council invites the Health Employment Partnership to disseminate the best practice of the HEP model at an event with Belfast City Council, trade unions and other relevant stakeholders.

- the council's Community Outreach team further examines the Health Employment Partnership model and integrates any feasible best practice elements of the programme into our existing and proposed employability initiatives
- HR establishes contact with the Job Assist Centres to discuss how the long term unemployed could be better facilitated in their preparation for applying for jobs within the council
- the council continues to be represented at a senior level on the Employers' Forum, to ensure the council's influence, civic leadership and contribution to employability initiatives along with other leading employers in the city.
- HR will work with the Development Department to explore any future funding opportunities that could assist the council's employability outreach activities.

HR will continue to update the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis on progress with the council's employability initiatives.

Decisions required:

Members are asked to agree the recommendations in this report.

Key to Abbreviations

HEP – Health Employment Partnership
PEP – Public Employment Partnership
CEC – Citywide Employability Consortium
NBPB – North Belfast Partnership Board
YPEI – Young Persons employment Initiative
ESF – European Social Fund
HARTE – Hospitality and Retail Training for Employment"

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Asset Management

**Update on 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

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the status of council led projects under Peace III Priority 2.1 ‘*Creating Shared Public Spaces*’ call for capital projects and to inform Members of a request from the Falls Community Council for the Council to act as the lead partner on its Peace III application to develop a shared space on the site of the former school at St Comgall’s.

Relevant Background Information

- 2.1 Members will recall that the Strategic P&R committee at its meeting in October 2010 was informed that SEUPB had reopened the call for bids under Priority 2.1 ‘Creating Shared Public Spaces’ of the Peace III programme with a closing date for applications being 17th January 2011.

As Members are aware, 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 mid 2015 so the timescales are extremely tight for capital projects.

At the Committee meeting in October a long list of projects were presented for consideration of Members for submission under this priority. It was also 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.

At this meeting the following decisions were therefore agreed in relation to projects -

Project	Recommendation in October 2010
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
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
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.
Gasworks Bridge	No further action – SEUPB feedback was that this project did not fulfil the aims of Priority 2.1.
North Foreshore Bridge	No further action – this project has previously been rejected and it is therefore unlikely to be successful.
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.
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.

Members will also be aware that the Council's application for a Community Hub at Girdwood was previously deferred pending further information. An update on the current status of the projects is contained in the section below.

Key Issues – Update

- 3.1 Following the meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in October officers have been progressing work on the projects agreed above – Sports Village at North Foreshore, Belfast Story at Central Library and the Ulster Sports Museum to ascertain their suitability and viability under this call. As well as continuing discussions with the relevant stakeholders on these projects the Council also completed Expressions of Interest on the Sports Village and Belfast Story proposals and met with SEUPB officials to discuss these projects. Officers also held meetings with key Members to discuss the Council's proposed projects under this call in order to make use of existing Member experience with SEUPB.

Update on Council-led projects

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 has led on the development of this bid with the support of Crusaders/ Newington Football Clubs. As Members are aware the original Sports Village bid got through to economic appraisal phase in 2010 but was rejected on grounds of limited peace inputs and gaps in the business plan. These areas were substantially reworked in the new submission.

Status – Application for the development of a Community Sports Facility was submitted on 17th January. Members will be kept up to date with regards to the progress of this application

2. ***Belfast Story at Belfast Central Library – As Members are aware discussions have been ongoing with Libraries NI re potential future collaboration opportunities and that one opportunity which had been identified was the potential for space in the refurbished Belfast Central Library to host a ‘Belfast Story’. As directed by Committee in October, council officers progressed discussions with Libraries NI staff re this proposal. However a number of major issues were identified which severely impacted on the potential for this project to succeed. Libraries NI have prepared an Outline Business Case for the Central Library project however the project is contingent on Libraries NI receiving the go ahead for the overall refurbishment project from DCAL. Planning permission for the project would also need to be obtained and feedback from Libraries NI was that earliest completion dates for their project would have been August 2015. As Members are aware there are very tight timeframes in place for Priority 2.1 projects with all monies having to be committed by December 2013 and spent by mid 2015. This would not have been possible with the current timeframes being advised by Libraries NI for the Central Library project. Members are also asked to note that initial discussions with SEUPB also indicated that this project was unlikely to succeed under this call as it did not sufficiently fulfil the aims of the priority.***

Status – Application not proceeded due to the reasons outlined above. Council officers will continue to progress discussions with officials from Libraries NI re other potential collaboration opportunities.

3. ***Ulster Sports Museum*** – The Ulster Sports Museum Association have been working for a number of years towards establishing a permanent museum to celebrate Ulster's greatest sports men and women. Council officers have met with the USMA on a number of occasions 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 will not, given the current economic situation, be able to contribute directly to the financing of this project. Further to these discussions the Council investigated the potential for this project to be included as part of the sports facility proposal at the North Foreshore. However this proved to be unviable due to space and cost reasons as it would have prohibitively raised the costs for facility.

Status – Not proceeded with under this call due to the reasons outlined above. Council officers will continue to progress discussions with the USMA to identify other funding opportunities and identify alternative potential locations.

4. ***Girdwood Community Hub*** – As Members are aware SEUPB have previously deferred consideration of the Council's application for the development of a Community Hub at Girdwood pending receipt of further information including –

- an implementation timetable for the Hub and the wider site (including housing and infrastructure) within an agreed masterplan
- further evidence that there is full political and local community support, particularly in the Protestant/ Unionist community, for the project
- an Equality Impact Assessment incorporating further consultation
- further details on the programming of the facility by strategic partners and SLAs

SEUPB have advised that the Priority 2.1 Steering Committee felt that this project has the capacity to be transformational and iconic but that this was caveated by the risks involved in moving forward.

The SP&R Committee agreed in June 2010 that work was progressed on submitting the further information as requested above by SEUPB in relation to this application. As a result the Council has continued to progress work on this application including –

- developing an engagement matrix and continuing the process of engagement with the local political and community representatives re this proposal. These meetings have been very productive and highlighted a general support for the Hub proposal from all participants and a welcoming of the potential to secure a substantial investment in the area
- continuing to work closely with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Department for Social Development (DSD). Discussions with senior representatives from these Departments have highlighted that work is ongoing in relation to finalising the overall Masterplan for the site and that consideration has been given to the budgetary requirements for funding the infrastructure required to enable development on the site as part of the Budget 2010 process. These discussions are continuing.

As outlined council officers met with SEUPB in December and at this meeting it was highlighted that SEUPB are keen to confirm definitively if the Community Hub proposal is to proceed. It should be noted that the Community Hub proposal has not yet been formally signed off for an award but that it is considered to strongly meet the objectives of the Priority 2.1 programme. However SEUPB have highlighted that they will be unwilling to risk investment in this project without the overall masterplan being agreed.

Members are asked to note that there is a risk to both the Council and SEUPB in terms of the timeframe around this project in that funding needs committed by 2013 and spent by 2015. Working back from 2013 there are considerable pressures to obtain overall agreement, install infrastructure, do detailed design, get planning permission, procure a contract and so on.

Members are asked to consider this tight timeframe and note that the Council has agreed to get back to SEUPB within the coming month with a definitive position in relation to the Girdwood application. Clarification has been sought from DSD regarding the status of the masterplan and the resources necessary to deliver it.

Other projects

5. ***St Comgall's*** – Officers from the Council met recently with representatives from the Falls Community Council who have submitted an application under the Priority 2.1 call for the development of a shared space centre on the site of the former school at St. Comgall's on the Falls Road. The main objectives of the St. Comgall's projects are to –
- redevelop the St Comgall's School Site as a symbol of and catalyst for regeneration in an area which is suffering the effects of physical dereliction as a consequence of the conflict and anti-social behaviour;
 - promote cross-community engagement in depicting a shared and balanced view of the history of the conflict and its impact on local residents;
 - provide a facility within a recognised interface area in order to contribute towards an increase in inter-community mobility; and
 - provide an iconic, sustainable, mixed-use space for education, training, and exhibition in order to promote awareness and understanding of cross-community perspectives for local, regional and international audiences.

The Falls Community Council have requested that the Council act as the lead statutory partner in this project and the Committee is asked to consider if it wishes to act as the lead partner on this project. Within this context, Members are asked to note that this project would support the Council to deliver an improved quality of life for now and for future generations and that the development of the site at St. Comgall's has a good strategic fit with the Council's place-shaping agenda for the city, particularly regarding shared space. The site is strategically important in the regeneration of the area as it is a landmark building on a key arterial route linking the west of the city with the city centre.

Should the Committee agree to act as lead partner for this project, officers will proceed to formalise the partnership and draft the appropriate legal agreements with Falls Community Council.

Resource Implications

4.1 Financial

None at present.

4.2 Human Resources

Additional officer time will be required to progress applications.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to–

- 5.1 Note that the Council submitted an application for the development of the Community Sports Facility at the North Foreshore and the reasons why the Belfast Story and Ulster Sports Museum proposals were not pursued
- 5.2 Note the update that has been provided in relation to the Girdwood application
- 5.3 Agree to grant authority for the Council to act as the lead partner on the St. Comgall's project which has been submitted by the Falls Community Council, subject to appropriate legal agreements being prepared by the Town Solicitor

Abbreviations

DSD – Department for Social Development
SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body”

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt recommendations 5.1 and 5.2 and agreed further to grant authority, in principle, for the Council to act as the lead partner for the St. Comgall's project, subject to Appendix A, which had been omitted from the report in error, and the application for the project being circulated to the Members of the Committee before the Council meeting scheduled to be held on 1st February.

The Director of Property and Projects undertook to submit to a future meeting a briefing paper which would provide clarification on the definition of a "lead partner".

North Foreshore Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update Committee on the North Foreshore project, the first meeting of the political steering group and to seek approval for subsequent actions.**

2 Background

- 2.1 The North Foreshore is a former landfill site owned and operated by Belfast City Council. Although the site closed as a landfill in 2007 it does and will remain a major environmental liability due to the nature of the material deposited as landfill.**
- 2.2 There are consequently a number of ongoing actions such as the completion of site capping, management of methane gas and leachate, continual monitoring and assessment as the physical nature of the landfill changes over time.**
- 2.3 The site also provides opportunities in that it is a large scale open space, well located for commercial purposes and with good transport links.**
- 2.4 The Council has attempted to realise some beneficial development on the on a number of occasions including the Giants Park lottery bid and the energy to waste plant but such major development has been hampered by the high cost associated with installing the necessary infrastructure on such difficult made up ground as well as a lack of consensus on what should be developed.**

- 2.5 The Council did install electrical supply infrastructure to the site and a number of smaller developments have taken place such as gas to electricity generation which is producing an income for Council; a waste transfer station and negotiations are ongoing on regard to both a mechanical biological treatment (MBT) plant and a composting facility. There is also a Peace 3 bid for a sports Village which is detailed in a separate paper on this agenda.
- 2.6 The committee has agreed to establish a North Foreshore political steering group to drive and direct the development of the overall site via an oversight board of COMT.

3 **Key Issues**

- 3.1 The political steering Group (SG) held its first meeting on 16 December 2010 to consider a number of issues.
- 3.2 The initial meeting consisted of the chairmen of the four relevant committees i.e. SP&R, P&L, H&ES and Development.
- 3.3 The SG agreed to expand membership to include one additional party group member from the two North Belfast electoral areas. Committee endorsement of this recommendation as with any SG recommendations is required.
- 3.4 The SG then received a summary of a cross departmental officer workshop which had considered various ideas for the site, their relevance to Belfast and most importantly although most difficult how could any such ideas be delivered.
- 3.5 There are no immediate and obvious answers as to how the crippling infrastructure costs can be overcome but the SG agreed on the following points.
- The Council alone does not have the financial resources to fully develop the site
 - The Council alone does not have all the necessary expertise
 - Time is a major consideration as it will take decades to fully develop this site and phasing will be important
 - The benefits of any development need to be obvious to the city and local communities

- 3.6 On this basis it was agreed that we should seek out development opportunities that have resources both in terms of finance and expertise and that are compatible with the environmental limitations of the site and of course continue with the agreed waste issues.
- 3.7 Two specific opportunities were identified. The first was a proposal from Crusaders/Newington and a third party to develop a sports/leisure complex either in conjunction with or instead of the proposed sports village. The SG was keen that this proposal is explored further.
- 3.8 The second opportunity is in the broad area of the bio-economy which is a growing sector and the site has already attracted interest from sources such as INI and some energy companies for research and development projects and bio fuel possibilities.
- 3.9 To bring some realism to these latter ideas the SG proposed that a business plan be commissioned either by the Council or in partnership with interested parties to test the viability of going down this route. Such a business plan was also seen to be useful in attempting to exploit any green funding that may be available from Europe or elsewhere.
- 3.10 The SG was also satisfied that temporary uses such as events should be considered.
- 3.11 The SG was also updated on the East London Green Enterprise District and Sustainable Industry Park which had attracted significant European funding. A site/study visit is suggested to assist the SG understanding of the possibilities and practicalities of developing this site.

4 Resources

- 4.1 There are costs associated with the development of a business plan and a potential site visit which can be accommodated within the agreed revenue budget although we do not as yet have detailed costs.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The expansion of the Steering Group to include the chairmen of the four relevant committees and one party group member from each group representing North Belfast.
- 5.2 The officers explore further the proposed Crusaders/Newington Sports complex proposals including seeking expressions of interest if required subject to legal advice.

- 5.3 The officers commission a business plan to test the viability of a bio economy model for a portion of the site.**
- 5.4 The Steering Group undertake a site/study visit to the East London Green Enterprise District and Sustainable Industries Park.”**

During discussion, a Member made the point that the North Foreshore Steering Group included already two Members who represented the North Belfast area and there was a need for the group to be extended to be more representative of the Council and, indeed, the City.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and also endorsed temporary uses of the site, subject to the North Foreshore Steering Group being extended to include one further Member from each of the Party Groupings on the Council and, in order for the Group to be more representative of the City, the Party Group Leader be requested to give consideration to nominating Members from all areas of the City rather than from North Belfast only.

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 to proceed. It was reported that two areas of land had been identified as being required to help complete the Greenway route and associated landscapings. The first was an area of 0.137 acres of land at Elmgrove and Council officers had agreed, subject to the Committee's approval, to purchase the land from the Belfast Education and Library Board at a cost of £4,000. The second was an area of 6.38 acres of land at Orangefield and Grosvenor schools. Subject to the Committee's approval, Council officers had agreed to purchase the lands from the Belfast Education and Library Board for the sum of £245,000.

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

Former Civic Amenity Sites at Primrose Street and Seapark Drive

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th June, 2009, it granted approval to the disposal of the former Civic Amenity sites at Seapark Drive, for the sum of £70,500, and Primrose Street, together with an adjoining piece of land owned by Ligoniel Pigeon Society Social Club, for the sum of £115,000, of which the Council would receive a pro-rata apportionment of £85,000.

The Director of Property and Projects reported that both sales had subsequently fallen through and, despite continued marketing, there had been no further expressions of interest. Therefore, as an alternative to outright disposal, it might be possible, subject to demand, to lease both of the sites for storage/small business use in the short term. If there was interest in leasing the premises, then that could provide an income stream to the Council, pending an improvement in the residential market and availability of capital. In the case of Primrose Street, it would only be the Council-owned premises that would be offered to let.

The Committee agreed that the sites at Primrose Street and Seapark Drive be advertised to let on the open market, with a report being submitted in due course seeking approval on the terms of any proposed letting.

Disposal of Land at M2/Duncrue Place

The Committee was advised that the Council currently leased land at M2/Duncrue Place to a number of different tenants for a period of either 99 or 125 years. A further area of land consisting of 685.8 square metres had been retained by the Council. In March, 2002 that area had been sold erroneously for £10,000 by the Department for Regional Development by way of a 999 year lease. The Estates Management Unit had become aware of the Department's mistake in December, 2003 and despite claims by the Department for Regional Development that it was under its ownership, Council officers had proved successfully that the Council did have title to the land.

The Director of Property and Projects explained that the Department had suggested that it return the £10,000 consideration monies which it had received and that in return the Council would execute a Deed of Rectification in favour of the purchaser on the same terms that existed currently between the Department and the purchaser. However, under the terms of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, the Council could only dispose of land on the best terms available and Council officers had been firmly of the view that if the Department for Regional Development simply gave to the Council the money which had been received by it that would certainly not represent disposal on the best terms available.

Following further discussion, the Department of Finance and Personnel, in July, 2007, had agreed to pay the full market value of the land that had been sold erroneously by the Department for Regional Development and had subsequently appointed the Land and Property Services Agency to assess the market value.

In May, 2010, Land and Property Services had reported the following valuation to the Department of Finance and Personnel's solicitors:

- Estimated 2002 value - £50,000;
- Estimated 2007 value - £170,000
- Estimated 2010 value - £80,000

Following further protracted negotiations, the Estates Management Unit had obtained an agreement with the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Department for Regional Development to sell the land at the 2007 value, namely £170,000.

The Committee granted approval for the disposal of the lands at Duncrue Place to the Department for Regional Development in the sum of £170,000.

Application for the Use of City Hall Grounds:
Taste Northern Ireland Food Event

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 **Members will be aware that the Committee has delegated authority for routine requests for use of the City Hall grounds etc. to the Director of Property & Projects, on the basis of an agreed set of criteria. However it was recognized that there would still be occasions on which the nature, scale and/or scope of the request means that it is appropriate to place the matter directly before the Committee. The request detailed below falls into this category, and the direction of the Committee is therefore sought.**
- 1.2 **A formal request has been received from Tesco to organise a ‘Taste Northern Ireland’ consumer food event in the grounds of the City Hall in late August or early September 2011 (exact dates to be confirmed). Essentially this would involve Tesco inviting local food and beverage producers to participate in a 2 or 3-day event aimed at show-casing local produce to consumers.**
- 1.3 **The event would take place in a covered marquee which would be approx. 1,300m² in size. Exhibitors would populate stands with their products, literature and own branding, often adding cookery demonstrations and other similar activities to add interest. They may make sales direct to the public and can also issue vouchers which consumers can use in-store. A cookery kitchen inside the marquee would operate for the duration of the event, giving local restaurant chefs the opportunity to promote their businesses to potential customers in addition to providing educational cookery sessions etc. A ‘kidzone’ would be provided for visiting children, themed around food production. Similar events have been held at other venues in recent years (including one in partnership with Glasgow City Council) and have apparently attracted attendances of up to 12,500.**
- 1.4 **The various exhibitors would pay exhibitor fees to Tesco in order to participate in the event, however the Tesco application emphasizes that “in return for exhibitor fees we will provide logistical and other support, plus a marketing campaign which will drive high visitor numbers. The event is non profit-making and Tesco will be far and away the main funder”. It should, however, be noted that the entire event would carry fairly prominent Tesco branding.**

- 1.5 No fast-food or similar vendors are permitted to participate, so there would be little in the way of direct competition with city-centre based retailers. The organisers do not require any access to the main City Hall building, although they will require use of the electrical infrastructure to provide power to the various appliances etc.
- 1.6 In terms of marketing, the event would be promoted via 'billboards, a partnership with a local radio station, a PR campaign, leafleting at busy locations around Belfast and leafleting in all local Tesco stores'.
- 1.7 Tesco has indicated that there may be an opportunity, if desired, to develop a joint message with BCC in relation to the in-store leafleting and marketing campaign. Tesco has asserted that that it would be willing to offer 'the opportunity for BCC to promote some of its own projects and activities at Tesco stores, which have a very high reach into local communities particularly for families whether via literature or manned, i.e. we can explore opportunities for the partnership [to] work to enhance BCC's interests beyond the event itself'.
- 1.8 Discussions have therefore taken place with Corporate Communications in relation to these potential opportunities and - if the Committee is minded to avail of and maximise these opportunities – it has been suggested that this could best be achieved through the inclusion of the council's Advertising Manager in the team developing the PR and marketing campaign, in order to ensure that BCC's reputation and key messages are protected and promoted.

Key Issues

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Committee has previously been reluctant to permit events of a largely commercial nature to use the City Hall grounds. This event could certainly be regarded as commercial in nature given the overall Tesco branding, although Tesco do contend that the principal purpose is to allow local food producers who sell to Tesco to 'gather and celebrate the excellence of food produced in Northern Ireland'.
- 2.2 Tesco also suggest that the use of 'City Hall as a venue underscores the agri-food industry's importance to the local economy more than any other venue'. It emphasizes the Tesco contribution to the local economy in terms of employing over 9,200 staff, buying local goods to the value of £500m in 2010 and having more local suppliers than any other major retailer.

- 2.3 Members will also be conscious of the potential for creating a precedent in this case, as there are of course a number of other significant retailers (Sainsburys, Asda, Marks & Spencer etc) who have occasionally expressed an interest in using the grounds in the past and who may be encouraged to make formal applications should this event be permitted to proceed.
- 2.4 Finally, this would be a quite significant event in terms of its scale and scope but would generate no income for the council under the current arrangements (unlike, for example, the Continental Market which operates under specific contractual arrangements and does generate income).
- 2.5 Members will be aware that a special meeting of this Committee has already been agreed to consider a report on the future use of City Hall, including the issue of charging for the use of the main building and grounds etc, and may wish to defer taking a decision on the Tesco request until the wider strategic discussion has taken place, although Tesco has indicated that it will require a decision soon in order to proceed with event-planning and marketing etc.

Resource Implications

- 3.1 There will be no direct resource implications in respect of this application as the organisers will make the appropriate arrangements in terms of stewarding etc. No access to the main building is required, and the organisers would be required to comply with all standard terms and conditions including legal indemnities and lawn re-instatement etc if approval is given.

Decision(s) required

- 4.1 The direction of the Committee is therefore sought on whether or not to approve the request by Tesco for use of the City Hall grounds for the stated purpose and, if so, whether it wishes to impose any specific conditions.
- 4.2 In addition, if the Committee is minded to approve the application, it would be useful if the Committee could indicate the basis on which this approval is given, namely either (a) as a 'partner' in the event in terms of the marketing and promotional activities outlined above or (b) as a simple facilitator, providing the site for the event on the basis of the usual requirements and legal obligations etc. but without any connection or linkage to the event itself."

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Rodway,
Seconded by Councillor M. Campbell,

That the Committee agrees to approve the application, subject to a further approach being made to Tesco requesting it to provide funding for good causes throughout the City.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Attwood,
Seconded by Councillor Hendron,

That the Committee agrees to refuse the request by Tesco for the use of the City Hall grounds for the purpose outlined but that the Company be offered the use of an alternative Council facility to hold the event.

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

The amendment was thereupon put to the meeting as the substantive motion and was passed unanimously.

Good Relations and Equality

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

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 10th January.

Belfast Blitz

Arising out of discussion on the previous matter, a Member referred to the proposed Blitz Commemorations 2011 which had been approved. He pointed out that there was a Blitz plot within the City Cemetery and requested that the Parks Section be requested that it be cleaned and tidied and a surround provided. He made the point that the Lord Mayor, at that time, had unveiled a commemorative stone at the plot in 1953.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

Minutes of Meeting of Memorabilia Working Group

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Memorabilia Working Group of 17th January.

Community Relations Council

The Chief Executive referred to a conference in relation to a Decade of Centenaries which was being organised by the Community Relations Council on March 23rd. He indicated that the Council had been requested to host the event in the City Hall. He made the point that, whilst there was delegated authority to approve the hosting of events of this nature, he thought it was appropriate to seek the Committee's approval. He suggested also that, since the Committee the previous month had agreed to establish a All-Party Working Group to consider historic centenaries, the event would provide that Group with an excellent opportunity to discuss the principles which should be applied to events of that nature.

The Committee agreed that the Council host the aforementioned event in the City Hall and that the Members of the All-Party Working Group on Historic Centenaries be authorised to attend.

Chairman