

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 14th October, 2015

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairperson);
the Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Spence;
Aldermen Kingston, McGimpsey,
Patterson and Stalford; and
Councillors Attwood, Beattie, Craig,
Dudgeon, Graham, Howard, Lyons,
Magee, McDonough-Brown,
Ó Donnghaile, O'Hara and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. D. Durkan, Interim Director of Development; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor Kyle and Councillor McAteer.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentations

Titanic Foundation - Request to present

The Committee was advised that a letter had been received from the Titanic Foundation requesting to present the findings of an independent Three Year Evaluation of Titanic Belfast to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to invite the Titanic Foundation to present to a future meeting.

Mega Trends

Mr. D. Durkan, Interim Director of Development, provided the Committee with an overview of Global Mega Trends and explained why it was important that the Council

understood the imminent changes and advances in certain sectors. He explained that these mega trends would impact upon the Council's core strategies, including the Belfast Agenda, Integrated Economic Strategy, Place Positioning, Local Development Plan, on infrastructural development, Tourism, Events and the development of Smart Cities.

He advised Members that, by 2020, almost 25% of retail sales would take place online and, by 2025, 81% of the population in the U.K. would be living in urban regions with many cities having expanded into Mega Regions and Mega Corridors. He provided Members with a forecast of GDP growth over the next decade and highlighted that Northern Ireland was projected to have one of the lowest rates of growth within the U.K. and that Belfast was currently underperforming in relation to similar-sized cities in the U.K. He highlighted that it was vital, therefore, that the Council and its strategic partners were aware of these sectoral shifts over the next number of years to ensure that strategies and action plans were being developed to take advantage of future growth.

He presented the top ten transformational shifts which were projected for 2020 and highlighted that Connected Living, Smart Cities and the Circular Economy were the most relevant for the future of the Council. He advised the Committee that, in order to effectively exploit emerging opportunities, the Council would need to use its strategic partnerships, locally, nationally and internationally to compete globally.

During discussion, the Committee discussed the ways in which the Council could practically use these mega trend predictions for the benefit of the city. A number of Members referred to the importance of attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the fact that the Republic of Ireland had a significantly lower level of corporation tax.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

1. to undertake a study visit to Dublin to investigate how, as a City, it attracts Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and what action it is taking in response to Megatrends and that the Chief Executive would explore which agencies the Committee would be best placed to meet with in Dublin on such a visit;
2. that information would be brought back, outlining the actions which other cities were taking in response to megatrends; and
3. that a report would be brought back detailing ways of attracting foreign investment, including evidence/analysis of the potential impacts of a lower rate of corporation tax on Belfast's economy.

Tourism, Events and International Relations

Tall Ships

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

The City Events Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the Tall Ships event which had taken place in Belfast from 2nd-5th July 2015. He outlined that the Tall Ships 2015 event had:

- attracted 520,000 visitors to Belfast Harbour over the four days and another 130,000 to the Tall Ships Parade;
- generated an estimated £16 million for the local economy, which equated to a £12.30 return for every £1 of the Council's investment;
- attracted in excess of £200,000 of private sector sponsorship and £500,000 of grant support from the Tourism NI and the Department for Social Development;
- recycled 95% of all waste from the event;
- provided 96 sail trainees with the opportunity to take part in the race from Belfast to Norway; and
- assisted in raising £10,000 for the five nominated event charities.

A Member raised an issue regarding the location of a number of the traders' stalls and the City Events Manager assured the Committee that they were aware of the issues and would take this into account for any future events. In response to a further question, the City Events Manager estimated that roughly £130,000 of Council staff resources and time had also contributed to the success of the Tall Ships event and that this was notable.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and paid tribute to the work of the City Events Team and the overall success of the event.

Boston Youth Transformation Project

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide Members with further information in respect to the proposed Sister City Youth Transformation Project.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Consider and agree Council support for the Youth Transformation Project, up to a value of £40,000.

3.0 Main Report

Belfast – Boston Youth Transformation Project

- 3.1** Members will be aware that in May 2014, Belfast City Council signed a Sister City Agreement with the city of Boston in order to increase economic development, trade and investment, tourism, youth, cultural, faith-based exchange and educational linkages for both cities.
- 3.2** As part of this work, the theme of youth engagement emerged as a priority for potential collaboration between the cities.
- 3.3** In the course of a number of preliminary visits and engagements between the cities, the North Eastern University (NEU) and the Irish International Immigrants Centre in Boston have proposed to develop a two city Youth Transformation Project.
- 3.4** The overarching aim of the proposed project is to encourage and empower a small group of young, unemployed men and women from Belfast and Boston to be future leaders in their communities, and to work towards building an inclusive and participatory society in both cities.
- 3.5** Both cities experience disadvantage, intolerance and friction. This project seeks to facilitate integration and transformation: not only of the young participants and how they view themselves in society but also of how systems deal with young people in need.
- 3.6** The target group in mind are those who are unemployed from 15 – 25 years of age but who equally have the potential and commitment to become change leaders in their community.
- 3.7** The Council has established a local steering group in order to inform and deliver the intended project. It includes key stakeholders in this area, such as the 174 Trust, Springboard, Probation Board NI, PSNI, Stratagem, Youth Justice Agency and Belfast Metropolitan College. Members will be aware from the previous report that the main thrust of the project is to:
- 3.8 Stage 1**
- Recruit and prepare 12 young people from each city to develop their self confidence and community

leadership skills as well as undergoing a programme of study which will enhance skills transferable into the labour market (e.g. communication, presentation, report writing etc). The recruitment will be undertaken by experienced members of the project steering group who will also develop the criteria to ensure a balanced grouping.

- Each group of young people will work with their stakeholders agencies (listed above) in their respective cities on addressing barriers that young people face with regards to conflict, policing and justice.
- Enable young beneficiaries to develop analytical skills and produce recommendations in regard to conflict resolution, policing and transitional justice.

3.9 Stage 2

- Undertake an intensive 7 day programme in the Sister City which will enable them to appreciate the processes and systems applied in creating inclusive societies capable of assisting disenfranchised young people and identifying opportunities for change.
- Enable participants to visit key agencies in both cities such as the police, the judicial and justice systems, community leaders, and educational establishments.

3.10 Stage 3

- Document reflections, learning, and develop recommendations and pilot initiatives for consideration by both cities in respect to meeting the needs of young people who experience inequality.
- Each participant will be expected to present their learning to a group of their peers.

Ongoing developmental work at the local and transnational level has identified the following project outputs:

3.11 For the Individual Participants

- Develop personal and life skills to enhance employment opportunities.
- Increased awareness of what it means to be an active citizen, role in society and developing a more global perspective on citizenship.
- Greater awareness as to how they can make a difference in their local communities and in the world.

- Development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in relation to the economic, political and social issues that young people face.
- Demonstration of an understanding of social justice and human rights and application of the same to assert their rights.
- Develop participants' ability to promote valuable role of young people in society.
- Identification and assessment of measures to deal with division and intolerance in both the home and Sister City as demonstrated through a final presentation.
- Be inspired to pursue continuing and further higher education opportunities.
- Attainment of a recognised accreditation in community leadership.

3.12 As a Stand Alone Initiative

- Empowerment of 12 unemployed young people from across the cities of Belfast and Boston to be future leaders in their communities.
- Increased opportunities for youth participation in civic engagement.
- Development of policy recommendations as to how each city can create inclusive societies, which are considered at the local and regional level in each Sister City.
- Introduce participants to cultures of partner city through host family stay, site-visits and higher education institutions.
- Identify personal learning opportunities of each participant through mentoring opportunities.
- Enable participants to affect change and challenge the treatment of disengaged and disenfranchised youth.
- Create role models within local neighbourhoods that inspire other young people to become active and motivated citizens.
- Qualified and inspired beneficiaries with personalised future pathway plan.
- Identification of potential scholarship opportunities to enable further study, where appropriate.

3.13 This project was a key component of the Lord Mayor's recent visit to Boston and a number of key partners were briefed on the project's status including Mayor Walsh, Boston Police, the State Department, the Vice President of NorthEastern University, the Irish American Partnership and the Fish

Family Foundation - all of whom have an interest in the initiative and further exploration within NorthEastern University, the State Department and Fish Family Foundation may lever in financial assistance for the overall project.

3.14 In order to secure the partnership, financial intervention from Council is required as a means to ensure the project's momentum can continue. Officers will also seek to lever in financial support from local partners.

3.15 The project has, as its projected timeframe, to recruit the young people from both cities by the end of November, develop and deliver agreed programme content around the 3 thematic areas as well as developing essential skills, undertake both visits by end of Spring 2016 and compile project findings by early summer.

3.16 Financial and Resource Implications

It is estimated the Council participation may incur the maximum budgetary costs, which will be met within the existing budget:

Boston – Belfast Youth Transformation Project - £40,000.

This amount may not be required in full as Officers will continue to work with local stakeholders to lever potential funding that has been identified (e.g. the Youth Justice Agency and Assets Recovery subvention) as well as pursuing the transnational leads resulting from the recent Boston mission, notably through the US State Department, North Eastern University and the Fish Family Foundation. Council agreement is required for the stated amount to enable the project to progress in the interim, and should the other sources mentioned above contribute to the initiative then Council's budget will be reduced accordingly.

3.17 The £40,000 contribution would assist with the costs of:

- Recruitment
- Pre departure training
- Programme content refinement with the young people
- Travel
- Hosting
- Local stakeholder administration costs
- Publication of policy recommendations
- Essential skills training

3.18 Equality and Good Relations Implications

No specific equality or good relations implications.”

During discussion, a number of Members expressed concern that a Council contribution of £40,000 seemed significant for a project involving only 12 young people from Belfast. Other Members, however, stated that the project was worthy of funding as it provided opportunities to unemployed young people, aged 15-25, who had the potential to become leaders and could work towards building an inclusive society in both cities. A Member suggested that applicants for the programme be asked to provide evidence of their voluntary work within the community.

One Member requested that the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) Project should be included in the list of key stakeholders.

A further Member proposed that an outcomes-based evaluation of the project should be carried out. The Committee agreed that an evaluation should be brought before the Committee at a future date, provided that adequate time had passed following completion of the project to allow results to be measured.

The Committee agreed:

1. that the Council support the Boston Youth Transformation Project, with the inclusion of the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) along with the other groups listed in the report, up to a value of £40,000;
2. that applicants to the project would be asked to demonstrate evidence of their voluntary work within the community; and
3. that an outcomes-based evaluation of the project would be brought back to the committee at a future date.

Belfast Tourist Bus - Update

(Mr. J. Cunningham, Regulatory Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the findings of a recent review into issues associated with the operation of hop on hop off bus tours in the city and to consider any relevant actions that the Council and partners might undertake in order to address these issues.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the update on issues relating to tourist bus operators in the city
- Support the development of a code of conduct for operators and work with partners and the operators to explore how this can be managed

3.0 Main report

3.1 Tourism in Belfast was worth £460m in 2014. It is imperative as we seek to grow that figure in the coming years that we are very mindful of the visitor experience at all levels. Large numbers of visitors are currently using the hop on and hop off bus services and it is important that this experience complements the overall message of the city as a quality visitor destination.

3.2 Members may be aware that the Council has previously discussed a range of issues associated with the conduct of companies providing hop on hop off bus tours for tourists to the city. There had been some concern that the behaviour of staff could have a negative impact on the city as a welcoming tourism destination. The issue appeared to be particularly challenging during busy periods and on cruise ship days.

3.3 During the summer of 2015, some of these tensions arose. However, according to Visit Belfast, these were not on the scale on previous events. Despite this, there have been a range of complaints raised through organisations such as Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) and Visit Belfast themselves and the issue was discussed at the Board meetings of both organisations recently.

3.4 Currently, there are two operators licensed to operate tours in Belfast. They are:

- Belfast City Sightseeing Tours
- Belfast City Tours (Titanic Bus Tours).

3.5 In order to identify whether there was an opportunity for the Council and partners to take any specific action on the matter, some research was undertaken to understand the operating framework within which the organisations work; the current sales policy for those wishing to buy tickets for the tours and the view of tourists on the services provided.

- 3.6** With regard to the operating environment, bus tour operators are governed by the Transport Act (1967) and licences are issued by DVA within the context of this Act and must be renewed on an annual basis. This sets out the conditions under which licences are granted, as well as potential conditions for refusal. These can include the previous conduct of applicants and the financial standing of businesses applying for the licence. The Act does not provide sufficient cover to take action against instances that have prompted concern in the past.
- 3.7** A new Bus Act has been proposed by the Northern Ireland Executive and this could provide an opportunity to take action. However it is likely to be some time before this Act comes law. In the interim, it appears that there is a legislative gap which makes it almost impossible to take action against operators who are behaving aggressively towards tourists.
- 3.8** In the absence of the legislative framework, this issue is continually monitored through the appropriate agencies including Visit Belfast and BCCM. A new Code of Conduct is currently being developed with Visit Belfast leading on this element. It is proposed that companies are encouraged to sign up to this code of conduct (which cannot be enforced). Any breaches of the code could lead to the suspension of ticket sales by Visit Belfast for a defined period of time, subject to agreement by their Board.
- 3.9** With regard to ticket sales, these are currently being sold through a number of channels including:
- Visit Belfast Welcome Centre
 - Street trading pitch at Castle Place
 - City Centre hotels and shops
 - Online through company websites
 - On the buses.
- 3.10** Belfast City Council has issued licences to four street traders to sell tickets. However two of these sites (in Fountain Street and Fountain Lane) are not currently operating. There have recently been requests from two other street traders to sell tickets from street trading pitches in the Castle Place/High Street area of the city. Decisions on these applications will be subject to agreement by the Council's Licensing Committee. From the perspective of managing the operations, it would appear logical that the operators use these locations as a base for their ticket sales, given that they are located near the start point for both tours.

- 3.11 With regard to feedback from tourists, much of the feedback is generally positive with good reviews on social media including the Tripadvisor website. Both companies have recently applied to Tourism NI for the Quality Grading Scheme and have been ranked 4 stars (Belfast City Sightseeing) and 3 stars (Belfast City Tours). The scheme helps companies work towards continuous improvement. While this ranking is positive, there is room for improvement and the companies have the potential to make some progress in terms of customer service and language skills of the staff.
- 3.12 The main complaints tend to relate to the behaviour of staff on the street, particularly at the time of large cruise ship arrivals and on days of high visitor footfall. On these occasions, complaints numbers tend to increase significantly. Most complaints on social media tend to refer to the sales techniques of street staff. As previously mentioned, the current legislative regime makes it difficult to take any action against operators. However, given the potentially negative impact on tourists and on the tourist industry in the city, it is essential that the Council and its partners continue to work together to encourage improvements in standards until the necessary legislative cover is in place.
- 3.13 There is a working group in place which is Chaired by DVA and involves Belfast City Council, Belfast City Centre Management, the Federation of Passenger Transport and Visit Belfast; which meets throughout the year to discuss any ongoing issues and attempts to find resolutions. This includes engagement with the coach operators.

3.14 Financial & Resource Implications

There will be a cost implication to Belfast City Council in terms of Welcome Host training. Depending upon uptake from the operators it is not anticipated that this will cost in excess of £3000. This can be paid for through the existing Development Department budgets.

3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications

No specific equality or good relations implications.”

The Committee:

1. Noted the update on issues relating to tourist bus operators in the city;

2. Supported the development of a code of conduct for operators and work with partners and the operators to explore how this can be managed; and
3. Agreed that the issues in relation to better enforcement and legislative change be referred to the Licensing Committee and suggested that the DVA could be invited in to a future meeting of that Committee.

Conference Subvention

The Interim Director of Development reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 10th June 2015, the Committee had approved the tourism business plan and the conference subvention activity which had been contained within it. He sought the Committee's approval to allocate £105,000 from the existing Departmental budget to support conference subvention for 2015/16. The Committee was advised that Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) would match the Council's £105,000 contribution. He outlined to Members that this would be an interim arrangement, pending a review of conference subvention which was to be completed by December 2015.

The Committee:

1. Agreed to allocate £105,000 from the current year's budgets to support conference subvention activity for 2015/16 as an interim arrangement, pending the review of conference subvention to be completed by December 2015 (This would be 50% of the subvention budget for the year, with the remaining 50% to be provided by TNI); and
2. Noted that subvention funds had been budgeted for in previous years and were normal practice in this industry.

South by Southwest

The Interim Director of Development provided Members with an overview of a proposed business mission to the South by Southwest event (SXSW) which would take place between 14th and 18th March, 2016. He advised Members that, since 2008, the Council had been part of a delegation attending SXSW in Austin, Texas, to promote Belfast as a key investment location along with its music and digital industries.

He reminded Members that the Council had been playing a key role in supporting the development of the creative, digital and technology sectors in the City and that a fundamental element of this support had been assisting local companies to export to new markets, with the USA identified as a key market.

He outlined the details of the SXSW event which included a main conference and exhibition, along with a series of pre-arranged meetings, seminars, networking events and creative showcases and was attended by over 15,000 individuals. The conference had global recognition, attracted international speakers and in recent years it had developed an increasing emphasis on the digital/interactive elements of the Conference, which was aligned to Belfast's key creative and technology sectors.

In March, 2015 the Council had participated in a business mission to SXSW in partnership with Invest NI, Generator NI and UKTI. The delegation had included ten local companies and four musicians and, while many of the business opportunities were still being developed, the key business outcomes reported to date had included:

- Over 100 new business leads identified and 2 new company/app launches;
- £45,000 of sales secured, with potential for a further £75,000;
- \$500,000 of debt finance being negotiated;
- Distribution deals identified in the America and Australian markets

The Interim Director recommended to the Committee that, by participating in SXSW 2016, it would provide an opportunity to build upon the 2015 Trade Mission, once again in partnership with Invest NI, Generator NI and UK Trade and Investment (UKTI).

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Noted the proposal to develop a programme of activity and support the business mission to Austin, Texas in partnership with Invest NI, Generator NI and UKTI in March 2016;
2. Approved the participation of the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor (or their nominees) and one officer to attend; and
3. Approved a total budget of £20,000 to support the business mission and noted that this was planned for in the existing budgets.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Markets Issues - Folkstown and Ballyhackamore

(Mrs. C. Cassin, Markets Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **Agree to grant the licence for the monthly market in Ballyhackamore**
- **Note the recent engagement with Folkstown CIC with a view to supporting the promotion of the market, as part of a wider commitment to promote all city markets**
- **Adhere to the original decision of the Development Committee from February 2015 which concluded that stallage fees should be payable at Folkstown market.**

3.0 Key Issues

3.1 Request to grant markets' licence to monthly market in Ballyhackamore

Members will be aware that anyone wishing to operate a market or car boot sale within Belfast must apply to Belfast City Council for permission to do so. An application has recently been received from Ballyhackamore Business Association (BBA) to operate a monthly market in the grounds of St Colmcille's Church off the Upper Newtownards Road.

3.2 The Association held their first market on Saturday 22 August 2015. Given that the market had less than 20 traders, the licence application was approved by the Director of Development, in line with the Markets Rights Policy which gives him delegated authority to approve all markets with less than 20 stalls. Following the success of the inaugural event and the follow-up market in September, BBA have advised that they wish to seek a licence for the market which will allow them to attract a greater number of traders – possibly up to 35. This will require approval by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

3.3 BBA has already paid the £50 application fee as well as the stallage fees due for each stall at the two previous markets (stallage fees are £6). The Association has already supplied the relevant documentation for this event including public liability insurance, method statement and risk assessments and has engaged with the relevant officers across the Council, including food safety.

3.4 Request by Folktown CIC to waive stallage fees at Folktown Market

At the 17 February 2015 meeting of the Development Committee, a report was presented to provide some clarification around the Markets Rights Policy. The policy, which has been in force since June 2012, sets in place a framework which allows the Council to utilise its historic rights to hold markets and to extend these rights to third party organisations to allow them to operate independent markets.

3.5 The policy sets out the various types of markets, the relevant conditions and the fees applicable to each. Currently, there are two elements to the market licence fee, namely a one-off

licence fee and a fee per stall for each market day. The policy had indicated that, in some instances, both the licence fee and the stallage fee would be waived for any market which was run 'for solely charitable purposes'.

- 3.6 With the policy in operation for over two years at that point, it had become clear that there was a level of ambiguity around the fees payable and instances in which fees might be waived. Working in conjunction with the Legal Services team, a number of clarifications were provided, and these were endorsed by the Development Committee and ratified at the Council meeting in March 2015.
- 3.7 The upshot of this was a decision that 'registered charities, non-commercial organisations including community-interested companies, social enterprises and organisations where the primary purpose is not for commercial return' should benefit from a discounted licence fee (50% of fee payable) but that full stallage fees should be paid. For information, the stallage fees are £5 or £6 per stall, depending on the number of stalls in the market. This is similar to the approach applied to Ballyhackamore Market.
- 3.8 The organisers of Folktown Market – Folktown CIC – made a presentation to the March 2015 Development Committee at which they set out their plans for the market. In the course of the presentation, they also asked that the Council would give consideration to waiving the licence fee and stallage fees for Folktown Market for a three year period, in order to help the market establish itself. After some consideration, the Members agreed to refer the request to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for its consideration.
- 3.9 A report on this issue was presented to the August 2015 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. It proposed that the original Committee decision from February 2015 should be upheld and that the *fees should not be waived*. In considering the report, Members noted that they were keen to see Folktown Market succeeding as part of the city centre regeneration investment. They asked that officers meet with the organisers of the market to see if there were ways in which the Council could support the market, outside of waiving fees due.
- 3.10 Folktown Market has been operating since mid-April 2015. The market runs each Thursday and generally attracts between 20 and 30 traders. The organisers were successful in attracting some funding from DSD to purchase equipment

and to carry out some marketing and promotional activities. Based on the original Committee approval, the organisers would be liable to pay the Council in the region of £100-£180 per week, depending on the number of stalls in place.

3.11 Following the August meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, officers from the Markets Unit met with the organisers of Folktown Market. They indicated that they could benefit from additional promotional support. As a result of that meeting, officers have promoted the market through the Council website and social media and have committed to continuing to do so. At present, a standalone web page is being developed to promote all markets across the city and details of Folktown Market will be included as part of that. Officers will also consider how the market can be promoted through all new materials that are being developed to promote the city centre investment activity of the Council.

3.12 Officers have committed to meeting with the organisers of Folktown on a regular basis and the engagement has already helped Folktown identify new potential traders for their market.

3.13 Given the previous confusion around the Markets Rights Policy and the clarification agreed by the Development Committee in February 2015, as well as the growing numbers of markets across the city that are paying fees in line with the policy (including Ballyhackamore), it is recommended that Members adhere to this policy clarification and that, therefore, the request from Folktown CIC to waive the fees for a three year period is not endorsed.

3.14 Financial & Resource Implications

Ballyhackamore: Minimum income of £2000 per annum in application and stall fees.

Folktown: Minimum income of £6,000 per annum for stall fees (based on 20 stalls every Thursday)

3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no specific equality or good relations implications.”

During discussion, a Member requested that a report be brought back detailing any additional assistance which the Council could give to promote and assist the City's emerging markets. A further Member requested that the report would also include

details of the work which the Council was already doing to assist the City's established markets.

A number of Members stated that markets in the city centre were competing with local shops, which were paying high rates, and that to act in favour of local markets would be unfair to local shop-owners.

It was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Ó Donnghaile,

That the Committee agrees to waive stallage charges to Folktown Market for three years.

On a vote by show of hands, six Members voted for the proposal and nine against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. agreed to grant the licence for the monthly market in Ballyhackamore;
2. noted the recent engagement with Folktown CIC with a view to supporting the promotion of the market, as part of a wider commitment to promote all city markets;
3. agreed that a report be brought back detailing additional assistance which the Council could give to promote and assist the City's emerging markets, including details of the work which the Council was already doing for existing markets, to include attached budget lines/approximate costings to deliver such a programme of promotion; and
4. agreed to adhere to the original decision of the Development Committee from February 2015 which concluded that stallage fees should be payable at Folktown market.

Operational Issues

The Belfast Bike Scheme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To provide an update on Coca-Cola Zero Belfast Bikes, the Belfast public bike share scheme which was launched on the 27th April 2015.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the following key issues:

2.2

- The performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in the first five months of operation and a sample of the positive customer feedback received;
- The need to sustain membership and subscriptions in order to meet Year 1 targets through ongoing marketing and promotion of the scheme. Additional resources for ongoing marketing and promotion of the scheme are currently being considered;
- The progress of Phase 1a expansion, which should alleviate pressure in areas of current high demand; and
- That progress on Phase 2 expansion and proposals will be brought back to Committee for further consideration and approval.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

The development of a public bike share scheme was identified as a partnership project in Belfast City Council's Investment Programme 2012-2015. The Council secured £1.1 million funding from the DRD Active Travel fund, which covered the capital cost of Phase 1 of the scheme of 300 bikes and 30 docking stations located in the core city centre area. The Council has committed to covering the annual running costs of operating and maintaining the scheme over a six-year contract. It was agreed that future phases would be dependent on evaluating the success of the first phase, together with securing the additional capital and revenue monies necessary to support any extension.

3.2 Membership and Usage

The Belfast Bike scheme has proved extremely popular since its launch on the 27th April. In the first 5 months of operation there have been over 95,000 trips taken on the bikes with the milestone of 100,000 journeys expected to be reached by mid October. It has outperformed other UK schemes such as Glasgow Bike Hire which only reached 100,000 trips after 14 months of operation - a larger 400 plus bike scheme. There are over 9,700 customers registered through the Belfast Bikes website of which 4,764 are subscribers (2,991 annual

and 1,773 casual). In addition a number of large companies have approached the Council to explore the potential for corporate memberships covering a number of staff.

3.3 The majority of journeys on Belfast Bikes occur on weekdays (Monday to Friday) with a record day on Thursday the 2nd July of 1,197 trips. There is high demand in certain areas, causing pressure on the docking stations with redistribution of bikes required at peak times (mainly 8am to 9.30am) at Bradbury Place, Gasworks, and Central Station as the stations empty quickly. The busiest station is at the Odyssey with a high number of rentals and returns throughout the day. Extra capacity would also appear to be needed at the docking stations at Alfred Street and Linenhall Street office areas. Stations near commuter hubs (Central Station and Blackstaff Square) are utilised mostly at morning and evening peak times. Performance information has been published on modern.gov.

3.4 In relation to early demographics data for users, whilst the registration process does not record the age of users, the breakdown of gender shows 57% male and 43% female have subscribed to use the scheme.

3.6 Operational issues

There were a number of technical issues in the first month of operation, mainly with the full functionality of station terminals. This is to be expected with the introduction of a new system and updates to software and operating processes have resolved the majority of these minor issues. The App has received very positive feedback and can be used to rent bikes very efficiently and quickly.

3.7 There are ongoing operational issues linked to customers not returning bikes securely to the docking points which has resulted in a number of bikes going missing. As a measure to address this, the operator is working to inform users on the correct process via emails and on-site demonstrations.

3.8 There have also been incidents of vandalism to the infrastructure which are higher than anticipated and ongoing. These resulted in the temporary closure of the docking station at Stewart Street for several weeks at the end of August. Work is ongoing with the operator, local community representatives and PSNI to address this problem.

3.9 Phase 1a

An extension to Phase 1 was agreed at the SP&R Committee on the 19th June to service Queens's University and Titanic Belfast. The planning and design of the Phase 1a extension is currently underway and includes two new stations at Queens University (16 docking points outside the QUB Students' union, University Street and 14 docking points located at College Green outside Queens Library and the entrance to Botanic Gardens) and one new station in Titanic Quarter. Construction is planned for mid October and it is hoped the stations will be operational by the end of October. The costs for construction of these stations will be met by Titanic Quarter Limited and Queen's University Belfast. This extension should help address the high demand on the existing stations at Odyssey and Bradbury Place.

- 3.10 It is hoped this additional capacity will have a positive contribution on the overall running costs by increasing usage and attracting additional membership with the associated subscription and usage income. There is an associated revenue cost of extending the scheme (approx. £6k per annum per location) which was approved by SP&R committee on the 19th June.

3.11 Phase 2 expansion

SP&R Committee on the 19th June agreed that options for the Phase 2 expansion could be explored by Council officers. Work is currently progressing on options for extending the bike scheme and further details on locations and potential costs will be brought back to a future meeting for consideration. The Committee may wish to note that a number of organisations have expressed their willingness to contribute towards the capital costs of this expansion and officers are progressing discussions with the Belfast Trust to cover three hospital sites (The City Hospital, The Royal Hospital and The Mater Hospital) and the Department for Social Development to fund potential bike stations in Building Successful Communities' pilot areas adjacent to the city centre.

- 3.12 Officers are currently in discussions to clarify the potential contribution to address the full costs of expansion; however it should be noted that the offers of support have been for physical installation and there is a significant associated revenue cost of extending the scheme. As outlined at the previous Committee an annual revenue cost of approximately £6,000 per annum per station is incurred for

any expansion and any increase would be subject to Council consideration and approval.

3.13 Performance targets

Membership

The target for uptake of membership in the first year of operation is 3% of the city population which equates to approximately 10,000 subscribers. Whilst the number of subscriptions for annual membership has been high in the first months the trend has declined during August and September. At the end of September there were 3,000, paid subscribers and it is anticipated that the additional capacity at Queens and Titanic Belfast will attract additional membership / subscriptions. The separate casual category of subscriptions has been increasing at a steady rate over the five months since the launch but this upward trend may decline as visitor numbers reduce over the winter months.

- 3.14** In order to meet the target of 10,000 subscribers in year 1 of operation there is an ongoing requirement to carry out demand stimulation activities with the operator and sponsor. The ongoing marketing and promotion of the scheme is essential to maintain awareness of availability and merits of bike share, the focus will remain on the benefits of using the scheme to the individual and city as a whole and to drive up membership. This has been resourced for the first year of operation and Committee, through a future report, may be asked to consider support for the allocation of resources in 2016/17 towards the ongoing development, marketing and promotion of the scheme.

3.15 Income

The outline business case for the Bike Scheme estimated an income of £266,340 from subscriptions and usage in Year 1, with a projected deficit for the annual running cost of £56,440 to be covered by the Council. In the first 4 months of operation the income is approximately £87,000 from subscriptions and usage. Whilst this would be on target on a projected basis it should be noted that income is likely to be lower during the winter before increasing again in spring. The position will continue to be reviewed and to sustain membership subscriptions and usage of the scheme in line with targets. Resources are being allocated to ongoing marketing and promotion of the scheme.

3.16 Customer Feedback

Feedback from customers via social media, emails and feedback sessions held at PLACE on the 30th September and 1st October has been very positive and shown great support for the scheme. The main request from the feedback is to expand the scheme quickly. It is recognised multiple times in the media (social media and newspapers) that Belfast Bikes is having a reputational impact in the city and improving the image of the city for residents and tourists citing that Belfast now feels like a 'normal European city'. Feedback from social media also shows a wide age range using the scheme and in particular novice riders. Further details of customer feedback are available on modern.gov.

3.17 Financial & Resource Implications

None

Equality or Good Relations Implications

None"

The Committee noted the recommendations.

Belfast Zoo - Request

The Interim Director of Development advised the Committee that, in recent years, the Belfast Zoo had investigated the possibility of hosting a craft event in the grounds of the Zoo. He informed the Committee that the Zoo had received a request to host a trial number of NI Crafting Collective events during the Christmas period, on the following dates:

- Saturday 12th December
- Sunday 13th December
- Saturday 19th December
- Sunday 20th December
- Monday 21st December

The Director confirmed that the NI Crafting Collective had stated that approximately 15 to 20 exhibitors would be available on those dates, and would be selling a range of handmade products and artisan foods. He explained that it was therefore considered reasonable that £12 per stall would be charged to stall-holders for the December dates, equating to a cost to the NI Craft Collective of roughly £180 per day. He explained that an evaluation of the December trial would be submitted to a future committee meeting to determine whether the craft stalls could be considered as part of the zoo's annual events calendar in 2016.

The Committee acceded to a request for the Belfast Zoo to host the NI Crafting Collective on the above-mentioned dates, applying the charges outlined in the report and subject to compliance with all statutory and legal requirements.

Transport Issues - Consultation Response

The Committee considered the undernoted response to proposals which TransportNI were currently consulting on:

“Response to TransportNI on proposals

Coach Parking Bays – Donegall Quay, Duncrue Road & Falcon Road

The Council is aware that there has been an increase in demand for coach parking in the city centre in recent years and recognises that the coach sector is an important contributor to Belfast’s economy. The Council supports the provision of additional coach parking facilities as identified by the FPT as it should improve coach access to the city centre and lead to a potential increase in visitors. Given the proximity of the proposed Donegall Quay coach parking bay to the Belfast Bikes docking station there is potential that the bay may provide opportunities for more linkages and integrated travel across the city. While the Council supports the proposed locations, there is a need for a more strategic approach to address the current issues surrounding coach parking including limited daily parking, the absence of secure overnight coach parking and increasing vandalism.

Waiting Restrictions – Broadway, Broomhill Park, Florenceville Avenue & Genoa Street

The Council is supportive of the introduction of waiting restrictions at Broadway, Broomhill Park, Florenceville Avenue and Genoa Street. It is considered that the proposals will prevent congestion and improve the flow of traffic in these areas. In addition the restrictions should improve accessibility for pedestrians by preventing vehicles from parking on the footway.

Proposed Taxi-Bus Ranks – Bridge Street & North Street

The Council welcomes the provision of the proposed taxi-bus ranks at the above locations. This is subject to DRD engagement with the frontages along the proposed ranks.

Proposed Taxi Ranks – Bridge Street, Dublin Road, Botanic Avenue & High Street

The Council welcomes the proposed extension and additional provision of ranks for public taxi hire which could enhance provision for customers in Belfast. This support recognises the important role that taxi operators perform in supporting access and contributing to the successful management of the economy in Belfast. This is subject to DRD engagement with the frontages along the proposed ranks.”

The Committee endorsed the response and agreed that it be submitted to DRD.

Eurocities AGM Attendance

The Interim Director of Development presented plans to the Committee regarding attendance at the Eurocities annual conference (AGM). He explained to Members that Eurocities was a network comprising of local elected Members and officers from over 130 of Europe’s largest cities which monitored and influenced EU policy and legislation and provided a platform to share best practice and work together on social inclusion, economic development, knowledge society, environment and mobility.

The Director outlined that the Eurocities AGM was the main political networking event, with around 500 officers and elected Members, mostly Mayors, attending to debate key policy areas and challenges facing cities. The Committee was advised that this year’s conference would consider best practice examples of how other cities had addressed air quality problems, youth unemployment and city economic inactivity, how to compete in a global marketplace for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and attracting international populations as well as tackling urban mobility challenges, such as neighbourhood connectivity and sustainable travel. He highlighted that these topics aligned to key areas within the Belfast Agenda and within the Council’s strategies, including the Integrated Economic Strategy, the Skills and Employment Strategy and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

He recommended that the Committee considered the attendance of the Lord Mayor and the European and International Relations Manager in order that they could:

- network with other city colleagues and develop ideas for collaborative EU funded projects to deliver on elements of the City Centre and Future City plans;
- promote the ongoing development in Belfast focusing on the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and Belfast Agenda; and
- learn from best practice in other cities in the field of urban development in order to inform future development activity in Belfast.

The Committee agreed support, at a maximum cost of £1,250 each, for the attendance of the Lord Mayor and the European and International Relations Manager at the 2015 EUROCITIES AGM from 4th – 6th November, 2015 in Malmo and Copenhagen and that this would be covered from within the EU Unit's existing annual budget.

Chairperson