

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd January, 2016

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Boyle (Chairperson);
the High Sheriff (Alderman Rodgers);
Aldermen Convery, Kingston, and Stalford;
Councillors Clarke, S. Corr, Graham, Haire, Hargey,
Hutchinson, Jones, Kennedy, McAllister, McCabe,
McVeigh, Ó Donnghaile and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillor R. Browne.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mrs. J. Minne, Director of Organisational Development;
Mr. D. Durkan, Interim Director of Development;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Browne and Councillor Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th 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 the amendment of the minute under the heading "Notice of Motion re: Energy Transition – Update" to provide that the remit of the proposed feasibility study for the development and delivery of the City Energy Strategy would be submitted to the Committee for its consideration prior to it being finalised.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the following four reports is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Leisure Estate Programme - Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the development and implementation of the £105 million leisure assets capital programme and which outlined the key highlights since the previous update which had been submitted to the Committee in October. The report highlighted the progress on procurement and delivery, community engagement and the progress in relation to the Robinson Centre and Clonduff Community Centre, the Andersonstown Leisure Centre and Templemore Swimming Centre and Brooke Activity Centre.

After discussion, the Committee:

Programme Level

- (1) noted that AECOM had now been appointed as a consultancy programme and project management lead; and
- (2) noted that the Stage 1 consultation and engagement in relation to the Brook Activity Centre and the Robinson Centre have been undertaken and had included twenty-three open consultation sessions, together with a series of focus sessions and that an analysis of the findings, which was currently underway and an update, would be submitted to the Committee and the Area Working Groups in due course.

Specific Projects

- (1) Robinson Centre and Clonduff Community Centre – noted that it appeared that there was some confusion and misinformation about the current status of that project and plans for the Robinson Centre and agreed that an information leaflet update, to be placed in the community centre, would be produced;
- (2) Andersonstown Leisure Centre – noted that consultants had been engaged to provide a cost report in connection with examining options around the future location of the bank and the outcome of that report was awaited before the next steps were to be agreed; and
- (3) Templemore Swim Centre – agreed a consultation and engagement and procurement exercise would be undertaken to support the round 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Update Belfast Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall Limited

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the progress on the work streams to enable the mobilisation of the new Belfast Waterfront and

Ulster Hall Limited company by 1st April, 2016. The report provided an update in relation to the registration of the new company; the “reserved matters” decisions about the company which would be reserved to the Council; the establishment of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Limited Shareholders’ Committee; the recruitment of the Board of Directors; the Human Resource issues and Trade Union engagement and the relocation of the Ulster Orchestra.

The Committee:

- (1) noted the progress that had been made across a number of work-streams, including the registration of the new company and organisational development, notably the implementation of the new structure;
- (2) authorised the Town Solicitor to negotiate the best terms for the Council in the contractual suite of documents to be finalised between the Council and the Company to enable the contract to “go live” on 1st April, 2016;
- (3) noted the establishment of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Limited shareholders’ committee and the process for appointing the additional Positions of Responsibility;
- (4) noted the actions in relation to the recruitment of the Chairperson and non-Executive Directors on behalf of the future Shareholders’ Committee, in consultation with the Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the City Growth and Regeneration Committee;
- (5) authorised officers to develop service level agreements within the principles outlined in the report in order to offer services to the new company, whilst protecting the Council’s interests;
- (6) noted the early achievement of the conference/delegates target for 2016/17; and
- (7) agreed that a meeting of the new Shareholders’ Committee be convened in February.

Rates Setting 2016/17

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report in relation to the setting of the estimates and the district rate for 2016/17.

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 18th December, 2015, it had considered the proposed 2016/17 revenue budgets and cash limits for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the People and Communities Committee, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Planning Committee and had

agreed that the revenue budgets and cash limits for each of the Committees be referred to them for consideration during January, 2016.

The report outlined the costs of running the Council in 2016/17, the cash limits for each of the Committees, details in relation to the Belfast Investment Fund, the Capital Financing Budget, the De-rating Grant, the Regional Rate increase, the impact on the ratepayer and the medium-term and other financial risks and the Efficiency Programme.

After a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Hargey,
Seconded by Councillor O'Donnghaile,

That the Committee agrees:

- (1) a cash limit of £38,911,608 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2016/17 which included voluntary redundancy savings of £650,000;
- (2) a cash limit of £75,681,091 for the People and Communities Committee for 2016/17;
- (3) a cash limit of £15,886,293 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2016/17;
- (4) a cash limit of £1,673,308 for the Planning Committee for 2016/17;
- (5) the rates contribution to the Belfast Investment Fund for 2016/17 to be increased by £500,000 with a revised total of £3,270,000. The resultant available expenditure of £5,000,000 to be shared equally across the areas transferred from Lisburn and Castlereagh as part of Local Government Reform;
- (6) the capital financing budget of £18,091,901 for 2016/17;
- (7) that the increase in the district rate for 2016/17 should be 1.48%, based on an estimated penny product of 5,734,080 meaning a non-domestic rate of 25.8601 pence and a domestic rate of 0.3140 pence and that the amount to be raised through the district rate in 2016/17 would be £148,284,075;
- (8) to note the Director of Finance and Resources' statement on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and robustness of the revenue estimates as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011;

- (9) to note the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as required by the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (NI) 2011; and
- (10) that a detailed report on the Efficiency Programme would be submitted to a future meeting.

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

**Proposed DSD adoption of Belfast City Centre
Regeneration and Investment Strategy**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the potential adoption of the Council's City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy by the Department for Social Development as part of a wider approach to aligning the respective policies and priorities of both organisations for the regeneration of the City centre.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to request that the Department for Social Development formally adopts the Council's City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

Matters Referred back from the Council/Notices of Motion

**Invitation to Pope Francis –
Response from the Vatican**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 2nd November, 2015, had passed the following resolution:

“This Council notes that Dublin will host the ninth World Meeting of Families and recognises the opportunity for the Republic of Ireland to host a Papal visit. The Council further recognises the opportunity to coincide this with the Papal visit to Northern Ireland and therefore the Council extends a formal invitation to Pope Francis to visit Belfast.”

The Committee was advised that a response from the Vatican had been received which had passed on its thanks for the renewed invitation and indicated that the invitation had been duly noted.

The Committee noted receipt of the correspondence.

**Nursery Provision in Belfast - Feedback on
Meeting with Education Minister**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide feedback on a recent meeting with the Minister for Education in the Northern Ireland Assembly, John O’Dowd MLA, to discuss a notice of motion on nursery provision in Belfast
- Agree a series of follow-up actions from the meeting.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Note the feedback from the meeting with Minister O’Dowd
- Agree to a follow-up meeting between the Chief Executive or her nominees and officials from the Education Authority to explore opportunities for greater coordination on planning on education issues in the Belfast area, in the context of the Belfast Agenda.

3.0 Main report

3.1 At the council meeting in October 2015, Cllr Mullan presented the following notice of motion:

‘This Council acknowledges the strategic aim of Belfast to become a first-rate ‘Learning City’ and supports initiatives which would create a culture that promotes all forms of lifelong learning. This Council calls on the Minister of Education to ensure the provision of free, pre-school, curriculum based nursery education places for all children in the year immediately before primary one; to ensure that they have a strong foundation for future learning and skills development, to reach their maximum potential, on a lifelong basis’.

3.2 The notice of motion was unanimously supported and it was agreed that an all-party group would seek a meeting with Minister John O’Dowd MLA to discuss the issue. A meeting took place on 9 December 2015. The following elected members were in attendance:

- Cllr Ciaran Beattie
- Cllr Paula Bradshaw
- Cllr Aileen Graham

- Cllr Julie-Ann Corr Johnston
- Cllr Kate Mullan
- Ald Jim Rodgers.

3.3 Members raised a number of issues related to the matter with the Minister and his officials. These included:

- Clarification on planning process around the allocation of nursery school places in the Belfast area
- Opportunities for improvements including starting the application process earlier in the year
- Addressing the barriers to potential community-based nursery providers (principally legislative issues that mean significant cost implications for providers)
- Clarification around the nursery curriculum
- Potential opportunities for looking at specific activities within targeted areas, e.g. linked to regeneration and local employability activities, including potential to build on good practice
- Opportunities for integrated pre-school provision.

3.4 Minister O'Dowd confirmed that the Education Authority was responsible for the administration of nursery provision and wider education provision up to secondary school level. Officials acknowledged that there was no specific planning undertaken on a Belfast city level and indicated that they would be open to looking at how that could be done, in order to address some of the key educational as well as social and economic challenges in the city.

3.5 Members will recall that one of the strands of the Belfast Agenda focuses on 'Working and Learning'. Under this theme, a number of key priorities are identified, including:

- Addressing education inequalities
- Attracting and retaining skilled people
- Improving skills and employability.

3.6 While the council has no statutory responsibility for the delivery of education and skills activities, the issue has been repeatedly referenced as a key priority for inclusive city growth, as part of the development activity on the Belfast Agenda. Successive studies underline the importance of good quality education in improving educational and wider societal outcomes.

3.7 The growing interest in creating a family-friendly city means that consideration will need to be given to education provision as part of any future plans to encourage population

growth in the city centre, and in the context of the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP). In addition, the council's engagement with the Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) to promote a 'learning city' means that it recognises the value of all learning – both formal and informal – and supports a range of activities to provide access to learning opportunities for its residents.

3.8 It is clear that there are opportunities to improve the planning process at an area level around education and skills development activities. This issue has been clearly articulated through the draft employability and skills plan, particularly for further and higher education. However it is considered that there is also significant scope to work with partners responsible for nursery, primary and secondary school education to consider how a more coordinated approach to planning activity might support greater educational outcomes. Given the emerging narrative of Belfast as a 'city of talent', it is critical that the essential foundation stones are in place from early years education right through to primary, secondary, further and higher education if that narrative is to be supported.

3.9 In order to progress this issue, it is proposed that a further meeting is organised between the Chief Executive or her nominees and key officials from the Education Authority.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

No specific financial or resource implications at this point.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no specific equality or good relations implications."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Agenda

Harnessing a "Smart City" Framework to
address the Belfast Agenda Priorities

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This paper recommends that the Council lead on the development of a 'smart city' framework to support the

delivery of priorities within the Belfast Agenda. Smart Cities is a collaborative partner approach between business, academia and public bodies to make use of new technologies and big data to better understand and tackle traditional urban and neighbourhood challenges. Many local authorities (including Glasgow, Dublin, and Manchester) have already established such frameworks in order to find new ways to address such issues as waste, energy, traffic and water management.

Members are asked to approve a programme of work which, with support and co-investment from the Government's Future Cities Catapult and other partners such as local SMEs, Invest NI, Queen's University and the Ulster University, would seek to build Belfast's smart city capacity while at the same time demonstrate a financial return on this initial investment through the delivery of a number of projects. This investment seeks to build on the city's successful infrastructure investment in Superconnected Broadband and City WiFi.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to consider and agree the following:

1. To work with our public and private sector partners to develop a smart city framework for the city.
2. To co-invest in a programme of work with the Government's Future Cities Catapult to support the development of this framework whilst at the same time delivering four demonstrator projects that will deliver a financial return on the investment.
3. To reassign existing resource to set in place an innovation team to design and deliver the programme over the next two years.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

A 'smart city' uses new technologies (such as apps, sensors, cloud computing), and big data to find innovative ways to tackle traditional urban challenges and support the city's strategic objectives. Places such as Glasgow, Dublin, Bristol, and Manchester have established smart city frameworks to attract funding and investment in order to create smart, sustainable ways of addressing urban challenges such as waste, energy, traffic and water management.

- 3.2 For example, with a smart city framework in place, Glasgow City Council was able to attract £24 million from central Government to deliver a number of major projects including a sophisticated traffic management system for the city, visitor apps, smart street lights and neighbourhood air quality monitors.
- 3.3 The leadership role of the local authority has proven crucial in the development of these frameworks. All successful 'smart cities' need a partnership between the public and private sectors to ensure that the right infrastructure, systems and shared objectives are in place to encourage business, academia and public bodies to work together to create innovative solutions and services.
- 3.4 Belfast is well-placed to take a similar approach. Both of our local universities have strong reputations in this field and the city has a growing digital SME sector that is eager to work with us (including the Centre for Secure Information Technologies¹). We have a good physical infrastructure with recent investments in Superconnected Broadband and City WiFi. At a Government level, DFP, DETI and Invest NI have all acknowledged the importance of a shared smart city approach in fostering SME innovation and attracting investment.
- 3.5 Building a smarter Belfast framework

What Belfast currently doesn't have is a joint framework that brings partners together to determine what our 'smart city' priorities should be and how best we can work together in order to deliver them. Government agencies and the private sector want to see evidence of such city frameworks in place before they invest.

In discussions with partners and experts (and looking at best practice elsewhere²) officers have identified four critical elements that Belfast needs to have in place:

- i A collaborative environment: Public and commercial city partners working together to develop a shared framework to confirm smart city priorities, enablers, investment opportunities, and joint working arrangements.
- ii City data and intelligence: Finding better ways to work with our partners on the collection, management and

¹ <http://www.csit.qub.ac.uk>

² <http://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/smart-cities>

interpretation of shared city data to support understanding, analysis, decision-making and joint accountability on our challenges.

- iii Funding and procurement: Establishing a long term 'roadmap' for funding and investment. Developing new procurement models (such as SBRI³) that encourage the best of our local SMEs to create innovative solutions that can address Belfast's challenges (while at the same time offering these companies opportunities to develop products which they sell abroad).
- iv Capacity and infrastructure: Supporting infrastructure developments including City WiFi, smart building management, smart transport sensors, Internet of Things technology, etc. We also need to foster an organisational culture where managers and leaders have the necessary skills and training to better understand and exploit the potential of data analytics and technologies.

- 3.6 Belfast City Council's leadership role will be critical in ensuring that these elements are in place. No other organisation in the city has the necessary remit to support the development of the framework. Officers have had exploratory discussions with Invest NI and Queen's University both of which are eager to work with the Council to develop one or more of these elements. For example, researchers at Queen's University are investing in a new city data platform and analytics team and are keen to work with the Council in using this resource to understand and tackle issues in the city. Invest NI also see the potential of such a framework in supporting R&D with local digital SMEs and have up to £250,000 available to co-invest in a smart city collaborative network.

3.7 Future Cities Catapult

The Council has also been approached by the Future Cities Catapult - a body set up by Government to support cities in the development and exploitation of smart city approaches. The Catapult have made a proposal to co-invest with the Council in the development of a Belfast smart city framework. As part of the proposal they are recommending that Belfast should seek to drive the development of its smarter cities framework by delivering a number of practical demonstrator projects. These projects outlined below, would provide practical support for growing the rate base and increasing rate collection, the delivery of the City Centre

³ <https://sbri.innovateuk.org>

Investment Framework and the delivery of a performance infrastructure to support the community plan.

1. **A Rates Identification tool:** A tool to greatly increase accuracy in identifying occupied properties in Belfast (with the potential to recover an estimated £1.5 million in lost Rates for Council each year.)
2. **A Rate Forecasting model:** A data model that will support Council decision-making by predicting future levels of income and identifying the wider economic impact of changes to the Rate.
3. **Belfast Growth-mapper:** A tool to support planning and investment decision-making by sharing data on city utility infrastructure (gas, sewage, broadband, electricity, etc.) This would provide a resource to the Council and partners, developers and future city centre investors. A similar tool is already used by Manchester City Council.⁴
4. **Support for the development of a community planning dashboard** to share performance and impact data amongst our community planning partners.

- 3.8 These demonstrators would provide a financial return on the initial investment while at the same time providing a number of solutions to support our new roles as the spatial planning and community planning authority.

The Catapult is recommending that these demonstrator projects would (where possible) be commissioned from Belfast's digital SMEs which would circulate R&D investment back in the local economy while strengthening the partnership between the Council and private sector partners.

3.9 Next steps

Members will be aware that a small team of officers have begun exploratory work on the potential of a Belfast smart cities framework. However, in order to develop the framework in a timely manner that can align with the emerging Belfast Agenda, officers are recommending the following next steps:

1. **Begin a programme of work to develop a smart city framework and a supporting collaborative city partnership with public and private sector partners (Feb 2016 to July 2016).**
2. **Finalise a co-investment package between the Future Cities Catapult and the Council to deliver the four**

⁴ <http://www.mappinggm.org.uk/gmodin>

demonstrator projects. (Feb 2016 to Oct 2017 – with the demonstrators on phased delivery during this 18 month period.)

3. Engage with Invest NI and DETI to develop collaborative smart city investments. (Invest NI have potentially up to £250,000 to invest in a collaborative network if a smart city framework is in place). (Spring 2016)
4. Engage with the local universities (and with DFP) to seek agreement on co-investment in data management and analytics. In principle, Queen's University are willing to work with Council on a city data analytics platform to address issues such as traffic and parking management. (Spring/Summer 2016).
5. Draw on existing officer support and resources to oversee the design of the Smart City Framework to support the Belfast Agenda, set in place the necessary partnerships and deliver the demonstrator projects over a two year period from February 2016.

3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

Future Cities Catapult has estimated the development costs of these four demonstrators would require a joint investment of £593,000 of which they are willing to invest £118,000. Revenue and Capital resources for this programme of work have already been identified within the existing Superconnected Broadband budget.

Members should note that the Rate Identification tool alone is expected to demonstrate an annual financial return on this investment of approximately £1.5 million for the Council beginning from Year Two.

Council aim to use this co-investment package to attract other smart city investment from partners – including, in the first instance, Invest NI (potentially up to £250,000) and from Queen's University.

An element of the framework would be a detailed investment roadmap for the city that would identify and pursue other investment opportunities – particularly from Horizon 2020 and Innovate UK.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications

Equality and good relations implications, in relation to this policy, are still under consideration. Further updates will be sent to the Equality and Diversity Officer in due course.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the Belfast Agenda update and Draft Corporate Plan for 2016/17 and agreed to hold a Strategic Planning workshop on or around 12th February, to which all Members of the Council would be invited, to discuss the on-going work on the Belfast Agenda and the Corporate Plan 2016/17 for the Council. The workshop would also consider the leadership role of Members in taking forward and promoting the Belfast Agenda and key Council strategies, including the Corporate Plan and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

Urban Living Partnership Bid

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Queen's University are applying to Innovate UK's Urban Living Partnership competition which is providing up to £400,000 to five cities to help them understand and better address complex urban and neighbourhood challenges. The competition aims to break down barriers between universities, local authorities and other partners in order to use innovative research to clearly understand the root causes of urban challenges that are difficult to address and co-produce sustainable change in urban living to benefit cities and their communities.**
- 1.2 Partners have identified the issue of marginalised inner city neighbourhoods and the challenge of connecting communities into future growth opportunities through employability, skills and entrepreneurship as the theme of the Belfast bid.**
- 1.3 The deadline for city applications was 21 January. Queen's University have requested support for their bid from Belfast City Council. In the event of a successful application, they have asked the Council to work with them in designing and delivering a Belfast programme (which would begin in May**

2016). In advance of the deadline a letter of support has been sent from the Chief Executive providing support for the Queen's application.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the purpose of the Urban Living Partnership competition and the aims of the proposed Belfast bid; and
- In the event of a successful bid, to agree to the Council's participation in the design and delivery of a Belfast programme.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Innovate UK and the UK Research Councils want to work with up to five cities to support them in understanding and addressing key urban challenges. The aim is to break down barriers between universities and local government in order to use research, data, and national expertise, to clearly define the root causes of major challenges. As such the competition links well with the Council's ambition to develop a 'smart city' approach in addressing the Belfast Agenda's priorities.

- 3.2 Each partnership must be led by a local university and bring together a consortium of the local authority, service providers and other stakeholders. Full details of the competition can be found at the link below⁵. Up to £400,000 is available to each city for an eighteen-month 'diagnostic' phase to investigate a complex, inter-connected challenge(s) and then to set out delivery options. This first phase would include funding for a Council officer to work with the programme and bring together local authorities with the foremost experts in urban research and innovation to diagnose an integrated challenge(s) facing their city and work with local communities and stakeholders to develop pathways to future solutions

- 3.3 Following on from this first (diagnostic) phase a second stage would then support a city delivery partnership and test practical solutions to the challenges. Government funding for this stage has yet to be confirmed but there are

⁵ <http://urbanliving.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/>

indications that substantial funding will be available to assist cities in tackling the challenges identified in the diagnostic phase.

3.4 The Belfast application

The Belfast bid is being led by Greg Keeffe, Professor of Architecture and Urbanism at Queen's University, who has a substantial record of success in similar competitions. In early December Professor Keeffe hosted a bid workshop (facilitated by Neil McInroy of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies) which involved researchers from a range of disciplines; officers from Council; and representatives from a number of other organisations including NI Housing Executive and the Strategic Investment Board's Urban Villages team. The School of the Built Environment at the Ulster University have also agreed to be part of a joint Belfast programme.

- 3.5** The workshop identified likely priorities within the Belfast Agenda around which the project could help 'diagnose' and then develop specific practical programmes of work. Specifically, participants identified the issue of marginalised neighbourhoods and the challenge of connecting such communities into future city growth opportunities with a focus on skills, employability and entrepreneurship. There was agreement that the city needs to better understand the barriers (spatial, perceptual, social) associated with achieving better connectivity with these neighbourhoods. As such, the work has the potential to contribute to the social aims of the Belfast Agenda and the City Centre Regeneration framework.
- 3.6** In the diagnostic phase, researchers would seek to identify the relationship between a wide range of factors that contribute to the disconnection of such neighbourhoods – and their impact on such things as employability, skills, and entrepreneurship. The work would look at the range of physical, social and perceptual barriers and draw on substantial government data and analytics currently not available to city policy makers.
- 3.7** Innovate UK have stressed that successful bids must demonstrate practical out-workings that will have a concrete impact on the lives of residents. The Belfast programme, if successful will seek to use this diagnostic phase to align with any relevant emerging investments already planned for the city (e.g.) projects related to the city centre regeneration framework.

Successful cities will be expected to engage and co-design with communities, policy makers and other stakeholders to understand the challenges.

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

A successful bid would include 100% funding for a Council officer to work on the eighteen-month diagnostic phases. In addition, other relevant council officer time would be required to participate in workshops, evidence gathering, supporting consultation and engagement with residents, members and partners etc.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications

Equality and good relations implications, in relation to this policy, are still under consideration. Further updates will be sent to the Equality and Diversity Officer in due course.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Capital Programme - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The Council’s Capital Programme is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. The rolling programme was approved by the Shadow SP&R Committee in January 2015. This report outlines –

- highlights of current status of projects under the Programme
- projects recommended to be moved/added on the capital programme – Anglers Cabin at the Waterworks to Stage 3 – Committed; Cathedral Gardens – Redevelopment and upgrade and IT Programme – Asset Management System from Stage 1 – Emerging to Stage 2 – Uncommitted and the Belfast Model Flying Club – Tommy Patton Park to be added as an Emerging Project
- specific project updates – Innovation Centre, Fleet Replacement Programme 16/17 and City Cemetery – HLF project

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 **Members are asked to –**

General

- note the update in relation to the Capital Programme as outlined in 3.1 and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange site visits for Members/ Party Groups to any capital project. Photos of projects are attached at Appendix 1.

Proposed movements on the Capital Programme

- agree that the Anglers Cabin at the Waterworks is moved to Stage 3- Committed and agree that the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of £30,000 be allocated (see paragraph 3.2)
- agree that the *Cathedral Gardens – Redevelopment and Upgrade* and the *IT Programme – Asset Management System* are moved up a stage on the programme from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and that OBCs are now worked up for these projects which will be brought back to Committee before any final investment decisions are taken (see Paragraphs 3.7 and 3.9)
- Cathedral Gardens – In addition Members are also asked to endorse their commitment to the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens as part of Phase 3 of the Streets Ahead project (BSA3) and agree in principle to ringfencing an allocation (up to a maximum of £5m) as part of this subject to final confirmation of the costs, a satisfactory tender return and confirmation by the Director of Finance & Resources that the project is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are asked to note that the Council's contribution as part of BSA3 will be ringfenced for use only within Cathedral Gardens and that the Gardens will continue to remain as asset of the Council (see Paragraphs 3.4-3.8)

- Agree that the Belfast Model Flying Club in Tommy Patton Park is added as a Stage 1 – Emerging Project on the Capital Programme to allow an SOC and the costs to be worked up (see 3.10)

Capital Programme Project Updates

- Forthriver Innovation Centre – note that a competitive dialogue is currently underway for the operator of the building. As part of this it will be necessary for the Council to enter into a sub-lease with the appointed operator in order to allow them to enter into lease or licence agreements with the centre tenants. Members are asked to note that this and note that although a sub-lease is required the Council will continue to be the asset holder (see paragraphs 3.11 and 3.12)
- Fleet Programme 16/17 - note the agreed Programme for 2016/2017 and agree that the necessary procurement processes are initiated with the delegation of subsequent evaluation and award processes to the Director of Property & Projects (see paragraph 3.13)
- City Cemetery HLF project – agree that a site visit to Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin is undertaken in February order to inform the development of the project and the next phases– it is recommended that this includes the Chair/Deputy Chair of the SP&R and People and Communities Committees and the Falls Park Masterplan Steering Group or their nominees. The costs for this trip will be covered by the development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (see paragraph 3.14)

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1** The Council's rolling Capital Programme is a significant programme with over £150m of projects recently completed or currently underway. Members are asked to note that there has been substantial progress under the Capital Programme since the last update report in October. Significantly two of the major EU funded projects have been recently been completed or are practically completed – the Girdwood Community Hub and the Waterfront
- The new £11.7million Girdwood Hub was officially opened on Friday 15th January following a week long programme of events. The building has already won a

number of awards and officers are investigating other potential suitable awards –

- Community Benefit Project of the Year – Property Industry Excellence Awards
- Best Public Participation - Brownfield Business Awards (Highly Commended)
- the £29.5million extension to the Waterfront to provide dedicated conference and exhibition facilities is due to be handed over to the Council w/c 25th January. Work on the parallel project is well underway and is due for completion at the end of April in time for the opening and the first major conference in May.

It is recommended that all Members undertake a site visit to both major projects – officers will be happy to facilitate this as requested.

Other key Capital Programme highlights include -

Projects recently completed/in final stages of completion

- *Pitches projects* - A range of pitch projects have recently been completed including the new £1.7m 3G pitch at Cliftonville as part of the overall £4million Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin development and the new 3G pitch at Woodlands under our £15m Pitches Strategy. In addition the new £1.1million 3G pitch at Sally Gardens is due for completion at the end of the month – a separate report on the management arrangements for this will be taken to a future meeting of the People and Communities Committee. Following the completion of the new pavilions in Dixon and Waterworks last year this represents a significant investment in the city's pitch infrastructure and Members are asked to consider how these events should be marked
- Phase 2 of the £500,000 upgrade of Drumglass Park which upgraded the lighting and the wall and the installation of new art. This project has been complemented by a refurbishment of the playground within the Park
- Phase 1a of the Belfast Bike Share Scheme which comprises 3 new stations, 48 extra docking points and 30 additional bikes at Queens University and Titanic Belfast
- playground refurbishments at Drumglass and Roddens Crescent

Projects currently on the ground

- the £9.1m Innovation Centre at Forthriver which is due for completion in Quarter1 next year – a competitive dialogue process is currently underway in terms of the appointment of the operator
- the infrastructure at the North Foreshore
- Phase 2 of the £40million Connswater Community Greenway
- the new £21.7m leisure facility at Olympia which is due for completion in early 2017
- work commenced early January on the new MUGA at Springfield Avenue
- playground refurbishments at Mount Eagles and Skipper Street with Nubia Street and Belmont due to commence in the coming weeks
- work has commenced on the £3.7million upgrade of the Tropical Ravine – it is anticipated that works will be completed early in 2017
- new Council accommodation in Adelaide Street which will be complete in early 2017
- new pitches at Ormeau (due for completion February), Musgrave and new pavilions at Victoria and Ballysillan (due for completion in June)
- Phase 1 of the Whiterock Community Corridor (due to go on ground February)

Projects at tender preparation stage

- Preparatory work is continuing on a wide range of projects including the remaining sites under the pitches strategy (Cherryvale and Falls), the statue of the boxer John Caldwell in Dunville Park which will be unveiled in May and the boxer sculpture in Woodvale Park which will be unveiled in the Autumn time

Proposed movements on/additions to the Capital Programme

- 3.2 Members have previously agreed that all capital projects must go through a 3 Stage process where decisions on which projects progress are taken by SP&R. Members are asked to agree to the following movements as summarised below on the Capital Programme.

Project	Overview	Stage
Anglers Cabin – Waterworks	Provision of electrical supply and upgrade Maximum of £30,000 to be allocated	Move to Stage 3- Committed
Cathedral Gardens	Redevelopment – linked to Phase 3 of the Belfast Streets Ahead project	Move to Stage 2
Asset Management System	Part of the IT programme – development of a fit for purpose corporate asset management system	Move to Stage 2
Belfast Model Flying Club	To examine the potential for provision of an electrical and water supply to existing cabin Recommended following a site visit by the People and Communities Committee	Add as an Emerging Project

Projects proposed to move to Stage 3- Committed

- 3.3 Anglers Cabin – Waterworks – Members will recall that they agreed in June 2015 that the proposed upgrades to the Anglers Cabin at the Waterworks was added to the Capital Programme. The project proposed the provision of an electrical supply together with examining the requirement for toilet facilities. Members are asked to note that Council officers have now investigated this proposal and looked at costings. Given the small scale of the project it is recommended that it is now moved to Stage 3 – Committed and progressed. The Director of Finance & Resources has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of £30,000 to be allocated. It is further recommended that the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.**

Projects proposed to move to ‘Stage 2 – Uncommitted’

- 3.4 Cathedral Gardens (Buoy’s Park) - Members will be aware that Cathedral Gardens is a strategic location within the city centre and represents one of the few open spaces within the city centre apart from the City Hall. It has long been an aspiration of Members to upgrade Cathedral Gardens however plans for this were held for many years as this asset was linked to both the regeneration of the University of Ulster and the ongoing development of Phase 3 of DSD’s Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA3) project. The upgrade of**

Cathedral Gardens and the surrounding area is identified as a key opportunity in the Council's 'City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy' which outlines (Belfast city) '*centre is lacking in green space, in treelined streets, in the softness that can provide relief in the most densely developed part of a great city. There is a great opportunity to provide a sizeable new open space in the north end by considering option for the parking area around St. Anne's Cathedral for green space and linking it to Buoy's Park and Writer's Square and the Streets Ahead Phase 3 proposals*'.

- 3.5 DSD have been progressing work on the plans for BSA3 over the past number of years and they have now completed the design work for this phase which they have paid for– the Council have been involved in the process and sit on the BSA3 Project Board. An integral part of the Phase 3 is the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens and the plans include environmental upgrades to maximise the open space and its attractiveness including greening of the area, the installation of benches, open space for performances etc. and the development of a pavilion facility which can be used for a range of purposes including community usage, events etc. The overall estimated budget for Phase 3 is £35m with the high level estimates for the works at Cathedral Gardens being approx. £5million.
- 3.6 DSD are in the process of submitting a business case for the BSA3 and due to the levels of expenditure the business case has to be signed off by the DSD and DFP economists together with the DSD and DFP Ministers. DSD have requested that to help facilitate the business case approval process that the Council endorse their commitment to the redevelopment of the Cathedral Gardens as part of the Streets Ahead project and commit to a financial contribution towards the project (up to £5m). Members are asked to note that it has been emphasised that this is an in-principle commitment at this stage. The final costs for the redevelopment will be worked up over the coming months and costs will be brought back to Committee before a final investment decision is taken. Members are asked to note that although Cathedral Gardens will be an integral part of the Streets Ahead Phase 3 project the Gardens will continue to be the Council's asset and any contribution by the Council will ringfenced only for upgrades within Cathedral Gardens. The Council has also emphasised that the financial contribution by the Council will also be dependent on the scheme using high quality materials.

- 3.7** Members are recommended to agree that this project is now progressed which will allow the costs to be further assessed. Members are also asked to endorse their commitment to the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens as part BSA3 and agree in principle to ringfencing a financial allocation (up to £5m) as part of this subject to final confirmation of the costs, a satisfactory tender return and confirmation by the Director of Finance & Resources that the project is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are asked to note that if the costs of the redevelopment are less than £5m then this will be what is allocated to the project
- 3.8** Members will be aware that a statue of Rinty Monaghan was installed in Cathedral Gardens in the Autumn as part of the Council's boxer statues programme. This statue will remain in any upgraded project however the installation has been designed with the refurbishment and upgrade of the Gardens in mind if it is necessary for it be moved.
- 3.9** IT Programme – Asset Management System – Members will be aware that prior to local government reorganisation last year the Council already owned and managed a substantial estate. This was significantly enhanced under LGR with the addition of over 70 assets which transferred from Lisburn and Castlereagh. Due to the growing estate there is now a requirement for the Council to have a fit for purpose corporate asset management system to support the strategic objectives of better financial management, information management, planning and performance and asset management. Members are recommended to agree that this project is now progressed to Stage 2 – Uncommitted which will allow the costs to be further assessed.

Projects recommended to be added as 'Stage 1- Emerging'

- 3.10** Members are asked to agree that the following project is added to the Capital Programme as a Stage 1- Emerging Project – Belfast Model Flying Club in Tommy Patton Park following a site visit undertaken by the People and Communities Committee. This will allow an SOC to be worked up and the costs examined for the installation of a water and electrical supply to the existing cabin.

Project Updates

Forthriver Innovation Centre

- 3.11** As outlined in 3.1 above the procurement process for the appointment of an operator for the Forthriver Innovation

Centre is currently being completed using the European procurement route of Competitive Dialogue with a forecast contact award date of late April/early May 2016. As per the EU procurement rules the award date is subject to a mandatory 10 day alcatel standstill period. The SP&R Committee in September 2014 agreed that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Development to approve the most economically advantageous tender for the contract, subject to a form of contract being drawn up by Legal Services.

- 3.12 A draft contract has been drawn up which is predicated on the basis that the operator will occupy the Centre under a Sub-lease (to be granted to the operator by the Council) for the purpose of allowing the operator to provide the services required under the contract. This sub lease will enable the operator to enter into lease or licence agreements with the centre tenants. The Council (via the Council's building contractor) presently occupies the site at Forthriver under an Agreement for Sale and Purchase entered into between the Council and Invest NI for the purpose of allowing the Council (and it's contractor) access to the site to complete construction of the innovation centre. Upon practical completion of the works Invest NI will grant the Council a lease of the site. The Council will then be in a position to enter into a sub lease with the operator. Members are therefore asked to note that the sub-lease process will be completed following grant of the Council's lease from Invest NI, approval of the most economically advantageous tender by the Director of Development, practical completion of the building and signature of the contract with the operator. Members are also asked to note that
- 3.13 Fleet Programme 2016/17 – Members will know that the Council needs to run and maintain a substantial fleet in order to deliver its services. In March 2013 SP&R agreed to allocate £2.1m towards the Fleet Programme for 2016-2017. Members are asked to note that the Fleet Programme has been developed in conjunction with Council departments and reflects the service needs of the organisation. The Fleet Programme for 2016-2017 is attached at Appendix 2. Members are asked to note the agreed Fleet Programme and agree that the necessary procurement processes are initiated with the delegation of subsequent evaluation and award processes to the Director of Property & Projects
- 3.14 City Cemetery – HLF project – Members will recall that they were updated in October that the Council had been awarded a development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to work

up a Stage 2 application for the proposed restoration and redevelopment of the City Cemetery within the overall context of the Falls Park Masterplan. In order to inform the development of the next phase Members are asked to agree that a site visit to Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin is undertaken in February. It is recommended that this includes the Chair/Deputy Chair of the SP&R and People and Communities committees and the Falls Park Masterplan Steering Group or their nominees. The costs for this trip will be covered by the development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

3.15 Financial & Resource Implications

Financial – Anglers Cabin – Up to £30,000 maximum allocation

Cathedral Gardens and IT Programme – Asset Management System – Costs to be tested and challenged as part of the OBC stage

Members are asked to note that progressing the above projects does not constitute a final decision to invest in a project and final investment decisions remain subject to confirmation by the Director of Finance & Resources that projects are within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resources – Resources from Property & Projects and appropriate departments in working up proposals in conjunction with groups. Members are asked to note that the council is currently in the process of delivering a major physical programme not only under the capital programme but also under the Local Investment Fund (1 &2), Belfast Investment Fund and other projects including LGR transferring areas and ongoing maintenance projects. In addition the council is going to be acting as delivery agent for a range of projects under externally funded initiatives including SIF, Urban Villages and BSC – therefore Members are asked to appreciate that resources are stretched to capacity.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process “

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Area Working Groups - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To update Members on a number of area related issues for Members consideration.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to –**

Area Working Group Planning Sessions

- note that the West and East AWG planning sessions are scheduled for the 28th and 29th of January respectively. A full report on the outcome of the workshops will be brought to a future SP&R meeting following completion

Local Investment Fund proposals

- note that 4 projects which had previously been agreed for in principle funding (St. Paul's GAC -WLIF2-11 and St. Paul's ABC-WLIF2-12 – West AWG and Ballynaveigh Community Development Association – SLIF2-09 and Surestart Belvoir - SLIF2-11– South AWG) have now been scored by officers and all have successfully met the minimum threshold. It is recommended that these projects proceed to the Due Diligence stage of the LIF process

Request for Council to act as Delivery Agent for other projects in local areas

- *Building Successful Communities* – agree in principle that the Council acts as the delivery agent for the delivery of a playground project (Kids Together Outdoor Play Area) subject to due diligence being undertaken on the project including verification of costs, access issues and confirmation that there are no ongoing management or maintenance implications for the Council
- Note that a number of letters of offer/contracts for funding have now been received for projects due to be funded under these initiatives and it is likely that more will follow in the coming weeks. Members are asked

to agree that the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for projects being delivered under these streams with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver

3.0 Main report

KEY ISSUES

AREA WORKSHOPS

- 3.1** The AWGs have recognised the need to think through the issues and context of their areas and agreed the need for a number of planning workshop sessions per area as a first step towards the development of local area plans and to allow Members to start to consider wider issues in their areas linking with the ongoing work on the Belfast Agenda, the outcomes framework and the forward Committee plans for People and Communities and City Growth.
- 3.2** Members are asked to note that the South and north AWGs have already held their workshops and both AWGs agreed that that they were very productive and that they should be the first in a series of such planning sessions. The West and East AWGs are scheduled for the 28th and 29th of January respectively. A full report on the outcome of the workshops will be brought to a future SP&R meeting following completion

LIF Updates

Projects recommended to be advanced to due-diligence

- 3.3** Members are asked to note that a number of projects which have previously received 'in-principle' commitment for funding have now been scored by officers (St. Paul's GAC - WLIF2-11 and St. Paul's ABC-WLIF2-12 – West AWG and Ballynafeigh Community Development Association – SLIF2-09 and Surestart Belvoir - SLIF2-11– South AWG) and all have successfully met the minimum threshold. It is recommended that these projects proceed to the Due Diligence stage of the LIF process.

**REQUEST FOR COUNCIL TO ACT AS DELIVERY AGENT FOR
OTHER PROJECTS**

- 3.4 Members will recall that they were previously updated that the Council has been requested to act as the delivery agent for a range of projects funded under a number of external initiatives including Urban Villages, the Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Building Successful Communities (BSC) These requests recognise both the successful track record of the Council as a delivery agent for capital projects and also the uniquely placed role of the Council as a civic leader in the city. This is a sign of confidence in the Council and recognition of the Council's increasing role in terms of regeneration and emerging community planning role

The Council has received a further request to act as delivery agent for a project under the *Building Successful Communities* initiative for the delivery of a playground project (Kids Together Outdoor Play Area) in the Glencolin/Lenadoon BSC area. Members are asked to agree in principle that the Council acts as the delivery agent this project subject to due diligence being undertaken on the project including verification of costs, access issues and confirmation that there are no ongoing management or maintenance implications for the Council

- 3.5 Members are asked to note that a number of letters of offer/contracts for funding have now been received including

Delivery of alleygates (Lenadoon and Glencolin and Lower Falls) – BSC funded
Bike Share Scheme – Lower Shankill –BSC funded

It is anticipated that further letters of offer/contracts for funding will be received in the coming weeks. Members are therefore asked to agree that the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for projects being delivered under these external funding streams with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver

3.6 **FINANCIAL & RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- Financial – No direct financial implications
- Resource - Officers time to deliver projects.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

LIF has been equality screened.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Asset Management/Estates - Update

**Port Health Unit, Corry Place –
Lease Renewal**

The Committee agreed to the recommendation of the People and Communities Committee of 12th January, 2016 to the renewal of the lease for the Port Health Unit premises at Corry Place within the Harbour Estate from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners for a further 10 years from 1st November, 2015 at a reduced rent of £23,000 per annum.

**Proposed Grant of Easement to
Victoria College, Belfast**

The Committee agreed to the recommendation of the People and Communities Committee of 12th January to approve the grant of an easement to Victoria College to provide access over Council-owned land at Drumglass Park for a proposed drainage pipe and manhole for future repairs and maintenance, for which the college would be wholly liable.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Review of Business Rates - Consultation Response

The Committee considered the undernoted report and associated consultation response:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report provides a draft Council response to the Department of Finance and Personnel’s consultation paper on the ‘*Review of Northern Ireland’s Non-Domestic Rating System.*’ The consultation period ends on the 25 January 2016.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **Agree the draft Council response provided at Appendix 2.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Review of the Business Rates System

In November 2013 the then Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton, announced to the Assembly his intention to undertake a full review of the non-domestic taxation system. It was intended that this would commence once the non-domestic revaluation had bedded in and would consider whether the current system is fit for purpose and whether there are alternative ways of raising revenue from those who do business in Northern Ireland.

3.2 In May 2015 Minister Foster announced to the Assembly her intention to proceed and in June 2015 the review was initiated with an Innovation Lab (or policy symposium) attended by a broad range of interest groups, business organisations, the voluntary sector, local government, academia and professional bodies.

3.3 In October 2015 the Department of Finance and Personnel published a consultation paper on the review which focuses on the current system of non-domestic taxation i.e. business rates, but also considers and welcomes views on any alternative system which could be used to replace or supplement part of the revenue currently from the business sector through the rating system.

3.4 Overview of the Consultation Paper

3.5 Key Principles of the Review: The consultation paper set out key principles under which the suitability of alternatives or potential changes to the existing system will be considered. These key principles are that the system should be:

- Revenue Neutral
- Efficient and Cost Effective
- Certain and Simple
- Flexible
- Equitable and Fair

3.6 The consultation asks a number of questions in relation to the review. These cover areas such as:

- the key principles of the review
- the frequency of Non Domestic Revaluations
- whether criteria / priorities should be applied to existing and future rate relief / exemption

- the review of current rate reliefs exemptions
- whether the rating system should be used to pursue economic development objectives
- whether district councils should take on powers for granting reliefs
- whether district councils should be able to strike separate domestic and non domestic rates
- whether the system should tax the owner rather than the occupier of non domestic properties
- whether there should be a derelict land tax
- whether public sector organisations should pay rates
- whether other forms of local tax should be pursued

3.7 A key area of the Council's response is the use of the non-domestic rating system as an economic regeneration tool. The response recommends that this should ideally involve a combined central and local government package of measures to support regeneration, especially in city centre areas. With relief subject to a proven business case, sectors to target could include hotel developments, Grade A office space development or retail developments and the redevelopment of vacant properties or derelict land.

3.8 In response to the frequency of re-evaluations it is the Council's proposal that increasing the frequency of re-evaluations (3 yearly) would help ensure rateable values are better aligned to passing rents and the local economy and potentially reduce the number of appeals. More frequent revaluations would generally result in a more acceptable change to rate poundage levels; thereby giving rateable occupiers a greater degree of certainty.

3.9 We also agree with the principle of a derelict land tax as an incentive for owners of such sites to bring them back into use. As well as encouraging investment and better use of assets this approach, when combined with the introduction of corporation tax, should help mitigate the risk of land-banking.

3.10 A full copy of the Council's response is attached at Appendix 2.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

District rate income represents 75% of the Council's total income.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

**Belfast City Council Response to the Review of the
Business Rating System**

Question 1 - Key Principles: Are there any additional criteria that should be used to judge the suitability of the system for raising revenue locally?

In addition to those considered in the consultation document it is essential that the tax base fully reflects the rate liability of all properties and liable persons to ensure equity and fairness. The tax base should therefore contain all properties liable for the tax whether they be domestic or non domestic. It logically follows that all properties in the valuation list must have a debit prescribed to it irrespective of whether it results in a liability. Also, the system should encourage investment and productive use of assets.

Question 2 - Revaluation of Non Domestic Properties: Do you think that more frequent revaluations would lead to a more equitable rating system and improve the current rating system?

We contend that shorter periods between revaluations would be preferred by the majority of ratepayers as this would help to even out some of the changes in levels of value which can occur within the revaluation cycle.

It may assist ratepayers to move towards a three-yearly revaluation cycle; possibly as a stepping stone to annual or two-yearly revaluations. We accept however that these changes would probably only be achieved if all leases are supplied as a matter of course to Land and Property Services (LPS). Such a move to more frequent revaluation would generally reduce the number of appeals and keep rateable values more aligned to passing rents and the local economy. Frequent revaluations would also negate any need for transitional relief schemes.

More frequent revaluations would generally result in a more acceptable change to rate poundage levels; thereby giving rateable occupiers a greater degree of certainty.

Question 2a: If yes, how often should revaluations occur?

Revaluations should move towards a three-yearly revaluation cycle.

Question 2b: Should the date and/or frequency of revaluations be written into legislation?

Yes that would create certainty for ratepayers and create stability in the system.

Question 3 - Defined Criteria for Reliefs: Do you think that all current and/or future rate supports should adhere to clearly defined criteria?

We believe all forms of rate support should be examined to judge whether they are fit for purpose in the modern context. The following questions (question 4 through to question 11) have been answered in the context of each of them being subject to an individual review. We also believe that future rate support criteria should include economic regeneration which supports job creation and enhancement of the rate base itself.

Question 3a: What should these criteria be and what do you consider to be the most important?

We believe they are all equally important and provide a firm foundation to review all reliefs and exemptions.

Question 4 - Industrial De-Rating: Should industrial de-rating be retained in its current form?

Industrial de-rating should be kept in its present form. We believe it is critical to maintaining the economic health of manufacturing in Northern Ireland and together with the proposed changes in corporation tax provide a stable foundation to attract and maintain economic activity in this important sector.

Question 4a: If you disagree, what would you recommend instead and why?

N/A

Question 5 - Sports and Recreation Relief: Do you consider that rate relief for Sport & Recreation should be awarded as at present and maintained at the current level of 80%?

We believe that the current level of relief should not be reduced as it is important in maintaining the social fabric of our communities.

Question 5a: If you disagree, what would you recommend instead and why?

N/A

Question 5b: Should the criteria to disregard social facility apportionment be removed or reduced from the current level of 20%?

We can see no reason for making any change. It should remain at the current level.

Question 6 - Freight and Transport Relief: Should Freight & Transport relief be removed?

We believe it should remain as it is part of the framework that enhances the economy of Northern Ireland. Even though it is a relatively low amount impacting on a small number of ratepayers this should not diminish its importance.

Question 6a: What would be the potential consequences of such move?

We believe it could damage economic well-being of Northern Ireland and would send out the wrong signals to this important activity.

Question 7 - Residential Homes Relief: Is residential homes relief still necessary to encourage the provision of care homes by the private sector?

We believe this relief should be subjected to a rigorous review which should include an examination of where the relief actually goes. Is it a direct influence on the charges made by the provider to the person receiving the support or is it just rolled into the profits of the provider. We are not convinced that the award of the relief is necessary to encourage the provision of this accommodation in the private sector. However there is a case to consider specialist providers associated with national charities.

Question 7a: Should it be limited to organisations that can demonstrate charitable status?

Yes, there is an argument for limiting it to charitable organisations who are providers or to providers who have formal nomination arrangements with national charities.

Question 8 - Non Domestic Vacant Rating: Should empty property relief continue at 50%?

Given the improved economic outlook we believe that a reduction in the level of exemption would be appropriate, especially given the lower level of relief provided in other parts of the UK. Consideration should also be given to linking the scale of the relief to the length of time a property is vacant.

We believe that the review of this relief should be given priority.

Question 8a: Should any of the current NDVR exemptions (listed in Annex E) be removed?

We believe they should be considered as part of the overall review.

Question 8b: Should there be any additional exemptions within the policy?

We can see no case for increasing the number of exemptions.

Question 9 - Empty Shops Relief: Is there any evidence that the parameters (qualifying criteria or duration) of the empty shops rates concession should be changed?

We believe it is important that every possible form of support is given to regenerate high streets and city centres. The current relief goes some way to helping to address empty retail properties in the City Centre and the current criteria and duration should remain.

Question 9a: If yes, to what should they be changed to?

Any review of the scheme should be undertaken in partnership with the retail sector to devise schemes that give real value and encourage change.

Question 10 - Charitable Exemption: What changes (if any) should be made to the current level of 100% non-domestic exemption?

We believe all exemptions and reliefs should be reviewed in the modern context. As stated in the consultation document there are special conditions that have to be satisfied for properties occupied by charities. In examining all the reliefs and exemptions regard should be had to the overall level of relief. The award of 100% relief should be reviewed particularly as it is a loss on collection where the tax base bears the burden thus passing the cost to all ratepayers

Question 10a: Should a reduced exemption or cap apply to those organisations competing with commercial interests?

Yes

Question 10b: Should all charity shops pay some rates?

Charity shops located in the high street should pay some rates.

Question 10c: Should charities have their relief capped so that they do not take over expensive properties simply to help the owner avoid empty property rates?

Yes

Question 11 - RURAL ATM Exemption: What, if any, changes should be made to both the hardship relief and Rural ATM exemption?

We believe rural ATM exemption is a legitimate approach to utilising rating powers to support the community. We believe it should become a permanent feature of rating exemptions.

Question 12 - Pursuing Economic Development: Should the rating system be used to pursue economic development objectives or should its primary function be to simply raise revenue? If yes, what sectors should be targeted?

Yes, we believe that the rating system should be used to support economic regeneration and in particular where it leads to job creation and further enhancement of the rate base. This should not only be an issue for local government but rather a combined central and local government package of measures offered to support regeneration, especially in city centre areas. This type of relief would be subject to a proven business case, which prohibits relief where displacement of existing ratepayers occurs. Sectors to target could include hotel developments, Grade A office space development or retail developments and the redevelopment of vacant properties or derelict land.

Question 12a: What are the disadvantages of such approach and do you feel that using the rating regime in this way would make a material difference to Northern Ireland's economic performance?

We believe that provided the relief is subject to a robust business case process then there is no disadvantage in this approach. The key issue will be to ensure that state aid rules are complied with.

Question 13 - Powers of Relief for District Councils: Would it be advantageous for District Councils to take on powers for granting reliefs?

This is an area of rating which should be explored further. One of the key determinants would be the availability of rating information in order to model the impact of a relief on the level of overall rates collected.

Question 13a: In what areas are it considered that this would be beneficial?

We believe this could be a key factor in economic regeneration especially in the City Centre Regeneration.

Question 14 - Ability to Strike Separate Domestic and Non Domestic Rate: Should District Councils have the ability to strike separate domestic and non-domestic rates?

We believe that this should be kept under review; however, at a time when there is little growth in the rate base, the impact of any rebalancing would be marginal.

Question 14a: What would be the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach? Should District Councils continue to be compensated in full for the elements contained within the de-rating grant?

We further believe district councils should continue to be compensated in full for the elements contained in the de-rating grant.

Question 15 - Ability to pay: To what extent do you feel that a rate bill based on a property's NAV is a fair reflection of the occupying business's ability to pay?

We do not believe it reflects the ability to pay. Other forms of taxation, such as corporation tax and income tax are based on ability to pay.

Question 15a: Should local revenue be raised using an alternative method that would better reflect an 'ability to pay'?

There is no evidence (compelling or otherwise) in favour of a move away from property based business taxation. The yield from these taxes in Northern Ireland is adequate to meet current Treasury demands and without them, significant alternative sources of revenue would have to be found. In simple terms, the only remedy available to wholly replace the two recurring property taxes would be either an increase Income Tax or Value Added Tax.

Public finance experts regard taxes on immovable property as a suitable source of revenue for local governments. They also believe that they

contribute to a well-balanced revenue system. Revenue systems that include a mix of taxes and other sources of revenue make it easier to find a balance among competing policy objectives, weather economic difficulties, and compete effectively in the global economy.

Local government services often are provided to properties or their owners and occupants. The tax captures for local government some of the increases in the value of land that are partially created by public expenditures. A dedicated source of revenue promotes local autonomy. The visibility of property taxes focuses attention on the overall quality of governance and promotes accountability. Information on land, buildings, and market prices collected in the course of administering taxes on immovable property becomes part of a valuable fund of information that has numerous governmental and private uses. If up-to-date and publicly available, this information can facilitate orderly real property markets.

Furthermore, all surveyed European countries have at least one tax on property, and most have several. Of the forty-six countries surveyed, at least forty-four have at least one recurrent tax on immovable property (Malta and San Marino do not). *Source Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV)*

Question 15b: What method should be used and what are the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?

N/A.

Question 16 - Taxing Ownership Instead of Occupation: Should we consider taxing ownership instead of occupation for the Non-Domestic sector?

We believe there are numerous disadvantages in taxing the owner rather than the occupier even though at first sight it appears to be a more efficient option. The first hurdle to overcome would be the definition of owner. Any building or land is subject to numerous legal interests. These are layered with absolute ownership at the base. If the absolute owner were to be the liable person you would have to determine which interests in the property he / she was liable for. In the City of Belfast the number of plots in absolute ownership would be relatively small in relation to the current number of rateable hereditaments but the number of legal interests associated with those plots would be numerous. This situation would create an uncertain tax base riddled with inconsistency. To unravel these complexities would certainly involve litigation which would no doubt render the tax uncollectable. If you contrast this with the current approach of taxing the occupier on the legal interest they actually occupy is far more certain. Add to this the mountain of established case law on rateable occupation it hard to see any logic in considering any other approach to liability.

Question 17 - Capital Value or NAV: Should a switch to capital value be considered in more detail for Non-Domestic property?

No, we can see no point in pursuing this objective particularly as there is little evidence of capital values on which to base assessments.

Question 18 - Derelict land tax: Do you agree with the principle of a derelict land tax?

Yes, we believe it would encourage the owner of such sites to bring them into use and should play a key role in encouraging investment and the productive use of assets. Also, with the introduction of corporation tax and the potential for a rising market, derelict land tax would mitigate the risk of land-banking.

Question 18a: What should the scope of the tax be?

We believe all derelict land apart from that which is contaminated should be liable.

Question 18b: Should it apply to all unused and derelict sites or should it be restricted to land that is zoned for a particular development.

We believe it should apply to all derelict land apart from that which is contaminated

Question 19 - Public Sector Rates Liability: Should public sector organisations that are funded from central government continue to pay rates?

We believe it is critical to a fair property tax system that public sector organisations should pay property tax where they are located.

Question 19a: What are the potential consequences of moving away from such an approach?

We believe it would be grossly unfair to the local authority which hosts these public sector organisations. If they did not receive a direct contribution from such bodies they would have to seek compensation from the Assembly.

Question 20 - Land Value Tax: Notwithstanding some of the fundamental policy concerns expressed above, is their support for exploring the issue in more detail?

Given the complexity and practicalities of implementing a land value tax system, we believe this would require further exploration and assessment of the benefits, costs and practical issues with such a tax.

Question 21 - On Line Sales Tax: Would an online sales tax benefit businesses operating within Northern Ireland? How could this be practically implemented?

Over the last three years, Governments in many countries have become more concerned about the impact of the internet retailer on the bricks and mortar retailer.

Any internet retailer operating in Northern Ireland will have an administrative centre, which would consist of call centre facilities, administrative buildings and a distribution warehouse. Any of these facilities that satisfy the four ingredients of rateable occupation would attract non-domestic rate liability. Many of the major on-line providers use outsourced facilities and again these would attract non-domestic rate liability. However, the actual internet traffic determining the transaction itself would escape liability. There are situations where on-line retail activity is operated from a dwelling house, in these circumstances an effort would be made to place a value on the commercial part of the building and then the retailer could be charged rates in the normal way however the difficulty is in finding the location and then identifying a separate rating assessment.

Many have considered if the pulses on the internet could be measured and if some form of virtual rating assessment could be created but under the current legislation and case law in all parts of Great Britain and Northern Ireland this would be most unlikely. The problem is that this sort of traffic already attracts rate liability through the providers of telecommunications. In these circumstances major providers of cables are rated on a basis which attempts to place a value on the volume of activity. The later situation means that any attempt to create an assessment based on virtual traffic could amount to double taxation.

There are also difficulties with the majority of the bricks and mortar retailers, who run online services, alongside their normal retail activity. These retailers, range from major chains through to small high street retailers. If there is a desire to level the playing field between the bricks and mortar retailer, and the online retailer, this can only be achieved by a form of sales tax or a transaction tax. In Europe, it is often said that a sales tax would be in conflict with European Law because of the levy of value added tax. This only leaves the option of a transaction tax which would be relatively easy to administer and collect because it could be operated by the retailer themselves as part of the selling processes. These matters have attracted some interest in the media and the wider on line industry.

The approach of a sales tax or a transaction tax does exist in countries around the world. In the USA each individual municipality has the option to levy a sales tax in addition to conventional property taxes. This has been the practice for a number of years however in the last two years

there have been significant moves to raise a levy on internet retail transactions.

Question 22 - Other / Additional Tax Systems: Should DFP pursue an assessment of other/additional systems for raising revenue within Northern Ireland? If yes, what tax should be examined in more detail? What would the potential benefits of such an approach?

We have expressed our views on other tax systems in response to the preceding questions.

The Committee approved the draft response, subject to the following:

Article 42 (2A) of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 provides rates exemption for University Halls of Residence.

The legislation allows for full exemption where nomination agreements exist between the University and an accommodation provider provided certain conditions are met. This can result in full exemption on rates for the accommodation where the majority of accommodation is occupied by students.

The accommodation provider can therefore incur no rates liability for part of the accommodation which is not occupied by students or which is let to non-students during term holiday periods.

The Council therefore recommends that the full exemption currently provided by the legislation be reviewed to ensure that only part exemption applies where there is no non-student use.

The Committee also agreed to request a meeting with the Finance Minister to discuss the Council's consultation response.

Contracts for Award

The Committee approved the public advertisement and delegated authority to the appropriate Director using pre-agreed criteria, to accept the most economically advantageous tenders for the following:

Title of tender	Senior Responsible Officer	Proposed contract duration
Social enterprise support programme	Donal Durkan	3 years with option to extend
Procurement advancement programme	Donal Durkan	3 years with option to extend
Drainage of pitches	Rose Crozier	1 year with option to extend for a further 2
Supply and delivery of	Rose Crozier	1 year with option to

printed materials		extend for a further 2
Cleaning of Belfast Castle and Malone House (also consider Stables and Lock-keepers)	Rose Crozier	1 year with option to extend for a further 2
Procurement of support for Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.	Phil Williams	3 years with option to extend
Procurement of support to inform the appropriate options for the Development Plan.	Phil Williams	1 year with option to extend

Anti-Poverty/Social Value - Work Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1** To provide recommendations to harness the Council’s role as city leader, employer, and deliver and commissioner of services, in order to better address the risk of poverty faced across the city.

The paper acknowledges the substantial existing work of the Council and its partners in addressing aspects of poverty and highlights the importance of taking a strategic and integrated approach, within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda, to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the current contribution that the Council makes in addressing aspects of poverty in its roles as civic leader, service deliverer, employer; deliverer of programmes and purchaser of goods and services.
- To agree that the Council, in the creation of Belfast’s first community plan, works with its partners to

- develop a joint approach to tackling poverty in the city that maximises the social impact of city growth and investment agenda.
- To agree that the Council develops options to maximise the social value potential as employer and purchaser of goods and services in addressing aspects of poverty.
- To agree that members conduct a workshop with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (as in initial step) to support the development of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda, to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Most governments, including the Northern Ireland Executive, agree that an individual or family is at risk of poverty if their household income is 60% less than that of the average household income. Under this definition more than 56,000 people in Belfast live in poverty. (In financial terms this works out at around £115 per week for a single adult with no dependent children or £195 per week for an adult with two dependent children.)

- 3.2 The 2013 'End Child Poverty' report noted that nearly 28% of Belfast's children are growing up in poverty (a figure that rises to more than 40% in our six most deprived wards). According to an Institute for Fiscal Studies report for OFMdFM, these numbers are expected to increase substantially by 2020.

- 3.3 Those most at risk include households headed by a lone parent with dependent children; pensioners wholly dependent on state benefits; ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; and people living around the interface areas. In addition, 'In-work poverty' is a growing problem in Belfast with nearly a quarter of the city's employees earning less than the Northern Ireland Living Wage (£7.65 per hour).

3.4 The current role of Belfast City Council

The Council, across all of its departments, has a substantial and proud track record of delivery aimed at addressing

elements of poverty. We have a number of roles through which we support this work - civic leader; deliverer of services; employer; and purchaser.

The following, while not exhaustive, illustrates the breadth of this work:

- Provision of annual core funding for advice provision in each quarter of the city.
- Provision of annual funding for a citywide Advice Tribunal Service – particularly aimed at addressing Welfare Reform changes
- Providing a central city location for Advice NI's debt advice service.
- Provision of financial support to the Belfast Food Network which, as part of the Sustainable Food Cities Network, tackles the issue of food poverty in Belfast.
- Working with DSD to deliver the Affordable Warmth Scheme to more than 1,000 households at risk of fuel poverty.
- Working with the Public Health Agency, Surestart and Age NI to procure and distribute over 3,000 Winter Warmth Packs to vulnerable families each year.
- Supporting inter-agency partnerships to address the issue of homelessness in the city.
- Delivery of the annual Community Support programme to ensure that the necessary community development infrastructure is in place to assist communities in addressing issues of deprivation and marginalisation.
- Tackling the impact of fuel poverty by supporting communities to establish local oil buying clubs; and administering the Belfast fuel oil stamps scheme which, to date, has sold £1.25 million worth of stamps.
- Supporting the Belfast Home Safety & Repair Service for Older People.
- Provision of community gardens across the city which provide access to locally grown, healthy food.
- Provision of concessionary rates for those on means tested benefits in our leisure facilities.
- Focused delivery of Active Communities programme aiming to get more people involved in sport and physical recreation, in areas of high deprivation.
- Delivery of a free events programme in our parks including educational activities and summer fun days.
- Delivery of coach development and training programme which provides qualifications and skills to volunteers that may increase employability.
- Adopting the Living Wage for Council employees

- Encouraging the use of social clauses through our procurement processes (to maximise the social value of our purchasing power).
- Developing the Belfast Employability and Skills strategy to support those who are furthest from the labour market.
- The delivery of a corporate employment initiatives, including provision of work placements, apprenticeships, job opportunities and pre-recruitment and training programmes for the long term unemployed from across the city.
- Member and officer representation on all of Belfast's Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships leading an annual £10 million programme specifically aimed at tackling deprivation in the Top 10% most deprived areas of the city.
- Membership and support to the Belfast Strategic Partnership which has a cross-cutting commitment to addressing poverty-related issues.
- Supporting the Youth Forum - which this year is raising young people's awareness of child poverty, homelessness and shared space
- Development of small-scale locality pilots to work with residents to agree local outcomes and priorities and work together on shared actions
- Participation in the Children and Young People' Strategic Partnership – which works with city partners to address childhood inequalities.
- Working with Queen's University of Belfast on a joint bid to the Urban Living Partnership to tackle the issue of neighbourhoods disconnected from city centre growth
- A recent application to the \$1 million Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities programme aimed at building resilient communities amongst those most at risk from social, economic and environmental impacts.

3.5 Harnessing the Council's new leadership role

The Council has a number of roles through which it can help address poverty issues in the city including:

- Civic leader for the Belfast Agenda – particularly in bringing our partners together to deliver on shared social and economic outcomes;
- The deliverer of a large number of neighbourhood services (including services directly aimed at mitigating the impact of poverty)
- As a large employer; and

- As a purchaser of local goods and services.

- 3.6 A future approach to tackling poverty needs to maximise the impact each of these roles. It is important to note that while national and regional Government remain the key actors in terms of addressing the underlying causes of poverty, local authorities do have a significant role to play. A recent Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) report notes that the approach of national government towards addressing poverty is changing: moving away from special initiatives to one where addressing poverty is an outcome of economic growth, welfare reform and public service reform. CLES suggest that if this approach is to actually benefit those at risk from poverty a city will need strong leadership to ensure there is an ongoing commitment to integrated anti-poverty commitments in all aspects of statutory service planning and delivery.
- 3.7 This was also a key finding of the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge and the Lord Mayor's Civic Forum on Poverty. And it is supported by evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) which has looked at the range of city policies across the UK⁶. The JRF report notes that there is no guarantee that urban economic growth in itself will reduce poverty. And, cities should not approach growth and poverty as two separate strands but as mutually re-enforcing agendas. They suggest that local authorities thus have a critical convening, lobbying and co-ordinating role that can make interventions much more impactful. But that councils need to think carefully about the nature of these roles.
- 3.8 The leadership role is one that Belfast City Council is well positioned to play as the city's 'place leader'. It is proposed that, in contributing to the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda, the Council should seek to work with partners to determine poverty outcomes, priorities, and to develop a shared Belfast approach and commitments to achieving them.
- 3.9 In terms of our role as a major employer and purchaser of goods and services, two related papers are being presented to Committee which measure the multiplying impact of our purchasing power and another which considers how we best maximise the outcomes of our contracts through a revised social clauses policy. In addition, further work is being planned on employability initiatives including plans to ring fence further job opportunities to the long term unemployed; to deliver relevant pre recruitment and training programmes;

⁶ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/cities-growth-and-poverty-evidence-review>

and to provide paid placement opportunities as part of SIF projects.

- 3.10 The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has led work across a number of UK cities looking at the connection between economic growth and reducing poverty and is in the process of developing an 'anti-poverty strategy. It is therefore proposed that the Council should engage JRF and others to support the development of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality(within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda) to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes. This work would also support and enhance Council initiatives and ensure that our services and programmes are designed and delivered in ways that align with the needs and characteristics of the Belfast context. As a first step, it is proposed that a members workshop take place on this issue and is supported by the JRF.

3.11 Financial & Resource Implications

The development of an approach to tackling poverty Belfast is included within current Council estimates. This includes a budget to engage the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to support the Council in maximising its role in dealing with poverty and creating better social outcomes.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications

Equality and good relations implications will be taken into consideration in relation to tackling elements of poverty; however it is anticipated that any collaborative efforts should have a positive effect on section 75 groups."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Social Clauses Policy Adoption and Outputs Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- Seek elected members' approval to adopt the draft revised Social Clause Policy, as one element of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda

- Advise members of the social clause outputs achieved to date and identify future opportunities for the inclusion of social clauses within upcoming contracts.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that members:

1. Adopt the revised draft Social Clauses Policy on an interim basis and agree with the proposal to review it within 18 months to take into consideration changes in the operating context across local and central government
2. Note the outputs of social clauses for council contracts to date
3. Note and agree the potential to vary the 12 month definitions of long term unemployed to 6 months, in the case of youth unemployed, or where there are specialist skills sets required on a case-by-case basis.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Following committee approval in October 2013, the Council has been using social clauses developed in conjunction with the Construction Industry Federation (CIFNI). These clauses set out a series of agreed opportunities for work placements, apprenticeships and Training for Success opportunities, based on the labour value of the respective contracts. The Council continues to actively seek to include social clauses in both Supplies and Services and Works Contracts and regularly monitors tenders to verify whether social clauses should be applied.

- 3.2 A report on the council's draft Social Clauses Policy was presented to SP&R committee on the 24th April 2015 and was subsequently referred back at the council meeting in May. On 22nd May 2015 the committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter. The Committee also agreed to seek a meeting with the DCAL Minister in order to understand how DCAL was developing and managing social clauses. This meeting has not yet taken place.
- 3.3 In the interim, officers have been working closely with representatives from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) who have just completed a review of the impact of social clauses within government contracts across all departments.

This review was undertaken in consultation with CPD, Government Departments, COPEs and business representatives. The findings of the review recommended a number of changes to how social clauses are managed. These included the need for improved monitoring (currently, social clauses within central government contracts are only measured at the end of the contract), need to explore additional opportunities for including social clauses as an evaluation criteria and the need for better integration of services to look at how social clauses can contribute to addressing key challenges such as economic inactivity.

- 3.4 At a meeting of the Procurement Board – chaired by the Finance Minister – on 5 November 2015, the findings of the review were presented and a new ‘Buying Social’ approach was endorsed. This will now be presented to the Northern Ireland Executive for ratification. SIB is keen to work with Belfast City Council to see how this work can be extended to involve local government as well as central government departments.
- 3.5 Officers have undertaken some analysis of the proposed approach and consider that it has a number of benefits:
- Greater transparency for contractors and suppliers – consistent approach across all government contracts
 - Ability to share experience across commissioning bodies regarding challenges and opportunities
 - Potential to support collaborative approach to ‘brokerage’ of clients to avail of social clause opportunities – presenting a single point of contact for contractors.
- 3.6 While it would not be possible to move to this approach immediately, it is proposed that further work is undertaken to identify the implications of this approach for the Council, with a view to moving towards a new way of working within 18 months, subject to political endorsement. A report setting out the revised policy and approach will be presented to a future meeting of this Committee. In the interim, and in order to ensure that there is a policy in place to support the Council’s work on social clauses, it is proposed that the current draft Social Clause Policy is accepted as the way forward.
- 3.7 Social clauses outputs in all council contracts are monitored through the Council’s contract management regime. Table 1 below details the position at the end of November 2015.

A more detailed analysis of activity has been circulated.

Table 1 Summary of Employability Outcomes as at November 2015

Project	Opportunities for unemployed	Apprentices employed	Students employed	Training for success
Connswater	6	19	15	2
Belfast Waterfront	9	10	9	11
Girdwood	5	24	4	4
Cliftonville	3	2	0	1
Olympia	3	1	2	N/A
Forthriver	4	9	11	0
Roselawn Extension	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Council Accommodation	1	0	1	1
Northforeshore	2	28	5	1
Kerbside Collection	3	N/A	1	N/A
WFH Cleaning	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Manned Guarding Security Services*	2	3	N/A	3
Total	40	96	48	23

*Requirement 30% year one and 5% each year until 45% is reached of new recruits from the long term unemployed

- 3.8 There are a number of challenges with the current social clause regime, from the point of view of both the commissioning organisation and contractor. Anecdotal feedback from contractors suggests that they are having some difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates to meet their social clause targets or in finding replacement candidates if a client is not suitable for a post. For government contracts, DEL advises contractors to engage with the Jobs and Benefits offices as well as their contracted organisations (such as Ingeus, who run the Steps2Success programme). However, given that DEL only monitors social clause implementation on project conclusion, this presents a risk that social clauses may not be met or that the experiences provided to the clients are not useful in helping them find sustainable employment. For council contracts, officers are working with training providers that we are supporting through ESF funding in

order to improve the linkages between training organisations and contractors, providing a single point of contact.

3.9 Currently, the definition for 'long term unemployed' is someone who has been out of work for at least 12 months. While this definition supports the delivery of the Real Jobs Now motion approved by the council, practical experience of social clause highlights the need to be more flexible. It is proposed that consideration be given to varying the definition on a case-by-case basis, in order to support access to opportunities for young people or to support contractors in accessing specialist skill sets.

3.10 While social clauses in contracts provide one mechanism for the council to maximise the impact of its expenditure, there are other, potentially more significant ways for this objective to be achieved. The move towards a 'social value' agenda – identified by SIB in their work – means that the council can look across all its activity – not just its procurement spend – to see how this can be used to address economic and social challenges in the city. The Belfast Agenda provides a framework within which the Social Clause policy can evolve further as outlined in the separate report on the development of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda, to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes.

3.11 Financial & Resource Implications

There is no evidence to suggest that the inclusion of social clauses increases the cost charged to the council. The monitoring and management of the policy to date has been absorbed within the existing resources across departments.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications

As detailed in the original report the draft policy was screened out during the equality screening process, however two respondents asked that a full equality impact assessment be performed. Advice was sought and it suggested that a full EQIA would not provide further clarity. However, because of this request, the council rescreened the policy using an independent expert and taking into account the feedback from the consultation. The policy, with some minor changes, was screened out. The version in Appendix 2 takes account of the comments from the independent expert."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Local Multiplier Model (LM3) –
Update on Outcomes of 2014/15 Review**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Update members on the re-baseline of the local multiplier model (LM3) used to measure the economic impact of the Council's expenditure
- Agree the recommendations of the study identifying approaches for increasing the council's economic impact, aligned to the Belfast Agenda.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Note the findings from the 2015 Economic Impact Study report
- Give approval for the 2015 LM3 figure to be the Council's baseline position for future comparison
- Agree to the development of a social value procurement framework
- Agree that this work should be looked at in the context of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda, to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes.

3.0 Key issues

3.1 In order to review and further enhance the volume of expenditure by the Council in the local area, the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) was commissioned in 2013 to undertake a study of the Council's spending. The purpose of this work was to measure the economic impact of the Council's investment and to identify ways to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefit derived from the spending.

3.2 The CLES study measured the economic impact of the Council's expenditure using an economic multiplier model called LM3. This involved analysing employee, supplier and

grant expenditure and also incorporated a survey amongst each of these groups to understand how they further impacted the local economy through their own spending decisions. Through this research, an expenditure baseline was created identifying where the Council's spend is going and how this expenditure is being spent within a number of geographical boundaries.

- 3.3 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting in April 2015, members agreed that the Council should use LM3 as its preferred methodology to measure the economic impact of expenditure. Since 2013, an annual LM3 calculation has been undertaken to track the economic impact of Council expenditure. In September 2015, CLES were commissioned to re-baseline the LM3, to take into account the changes to the Council arising from Local Government Reform (LGR), principally the boundary changes and staffing increases.
- 3.4 The initial CLES study in 2013 created a baseline to measure the Council's economic impact across four geographic levels: Belfast boundary, Post-LGR Belfast, Greater Belfast and Northern Ireland using the LM3 model. These initial results were presented in November 2013, using 12/13 financial data and identified that for every £1 of council expenditure:
- 76 pence was spent or re-spent in the Belfast economy
 - £1.02 was spent or re-spent in the Greater Belfast Area
 - £1.35 was spent or re-spent in the regional economy
- 3.5 The 2015 re-baseline of the LM3, using 14/15 financial data, has identified that for every £1 of council expenditure:
- 70 pence is spent or re-spent in the Belfast economy
 - 96 pence is spent or re-spent in the Greater Belfast economy
 - £1.34 is spent or re-spent in the regional economy.
- 3.6 The above analysis highlights a small reduction in local economic impact from the initial baseline. There are a number of reasons for this and they include:
- The proportion of spend with Belfast-based revenue and capital suppliers has decreased. The level of decrease is more significant amongst capital spend and this reflects market conditions where the majority

of construction companies are located outside of the council boundary;

- The re-spend of suppliers back into the Belfast economy has also decreased; however this in part is due to a lower level of engagement through the survey from Belfast suppliers
- When analysing employee spend, the number of resident employees has increased, however their overall re-spend within the city has decreased. One of reasons behind this could be the fact that a higher proportion of employees are home owners than was the case in 2013, and spend on mortgages is automatically identified as non-Belfast spend (given that many of the banks are national chains).

3.7 Whilst the above findings indicate a decrease in the impact of the Council's expenditure in the local and regional economy, comparisons with the original baseline are problematic as this was developed on a pre-LGR position (in terms of geography and staffing numbers). Therefore it is proposed that the 2015 study will be the Council's baseline position on which future annual reviews will be based. Comparisons with other council areas suggest that, whilst a decrease has occurred, spending with local suppliers by Belfast City Council exceeds the benchmarks of other councils for local purchasing within Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

3.8 Over the past two years, a range of activities has been undertaken to increase the local impact of expenditure. The 2015 study reviewed these activities and acknowledged the positive work undertaken to develop progressive approaches to procurement, increase the accessibility of procurement opportunities and build the capacity of local suppliers. However the study also identified a number of gaps in the following areas:

- Embedding social value into procurement and linking procurement to the Council's strategic priorities within the Belfast Agenda
- Need to build a better understanding of the potential offer by companies from the Belfast and Greater Belfast area in relation to goods and service provision, in order to reduce leakage from the market
- Influencing the activities of other anchor institutions aligned to the priorities of the Belfast Agenda e.g. boosting local employment, fostering business growth.

3.9 In order to improve the baseline in the coming year, it is proposed that the following activities are undertaken:

- Strengthening engagement with Belfast based organisations and market testing: particularly in areas where there is significant expenditure leaking outside of the Belfast and regional economy. Specific areas of focus include expenditure on ICT and facilities management.
- Influencing existing suppliers: this could be achieved on two levels, the first through the development of a Social Value Procurement Framework which will embed city priorities into the council's procurement decisions. Secondly it is recognised there are a number of key suppliers currently in contract with Council, where the potential exists to engage with these suppliers to look at how they can contribute towards the city's priorities
- Influencing anchor institutions: The Council is engaged with a range of anchor institutions on the Belfast Agenda and in other areas. There are opportunities to work with them to encourage them to understand the existing impact of spend, look at how it could be enhanced and contribute towards the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda.

3.10 A key area for development is the proposal to look at procurement as a tool for creating social value, rather than just a purchasing transaction. This could be done by developing a Social Value Procurement Framework, set in the context of the emerging outcomes within the Belfast Agenda. Through this approach, the priorities of the Agenda could be embedded into the Council's procurement decisions, thereby providing a much greater capacity to stimulate and influence the activities of the supply chain. The broader strategic context for this work is set out in a separate report on the development of a strategic and integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and inequality within the economic growth context of the Belfast Agenda, to maximise our combined contributions to social outcomes.

4.0 Resource Implications

4.1 This work will be led by teams from the Corporate Procurement Service and the Economic Development Unit. Any financial implications of programme activity have been set aside within the Economic Development Unit estimates for the coming year, subject to council approval.

5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

5.1 No specific equality or good relations implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Coca-Cola Zero Belfast Bike Scheme

The Director of Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report asks Members to consider:

- proposals to develop a strategic plan for the expansion of the Coca-Cola Zero Belfast Bikes scheme;
- proposals to develop an annual marketing and promotions plan;
- the process by which future requests for expansion should be managed until such time as a strategic plan is in place; and
- the current requests by DSD and Belfast Trust for additional docking stations outside of the core city centre area.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. Agree that a strategic plan for the spatial expansion of the Coca-Cola Zero Belfast Bikes Scheme, supported by an annual marketing and promotional plan, be developed and brought back to Committee before the summer (paragraph 3.5).
2. Note that the strategic review and proposed marketing plan will consider future running costs and proposals to increase income, membership, usage and benefits of the scheme.
3. Agree that, until such time as a strategic plan is agreed, future proposals by 3rd parties to fund expansion of the Scheme be assessed by officers against the noted criteria and brought back to Committee for consideration as required (paragraph 3.9 & 3.10).

4. Approve the proposals made by Belfast Trust and agree that officers can engage with Belfast Trust to initiate delivery.
5. Approve the proposals by DSD subject to final assessment by officers, approval of the relevant Building Successful Communities Fora and contracts for funding being agreed.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the capital costs of phase 1 of the Belfast Bikes scheme (300 bikes and 30 docking stations in the core city centre) were met by the DRD and that an additional 2 stations at Queen's University and 1 at Titanic Belfast were subsequently agreed by the SP&R committee in June 2015 and opened in November.
- 3.2 A six-year contract for operating and maintaining the current scheme was agreed with NSL in April 2015 and there is a related sponsorship agreement with Coca-Cola HBC for phase 1, initially for three years, which covers approximately 23% of the phase 1 operating costs.

Strategic Plan

- 3.3 Belfast Bikes has proved extremely popular and the Council has received numerous requests for expansion. There may also be opportunities to work in partnership and secure funding from other bodies if the scheme were to expand beyond its current boundaries. At the SP&R Committee meeting in June 2015 SP&R Members therefore requested that officers explore options for expansion.
- 3.4 In order for growth to be sustainable it is essential that any decision to expand is made within the strategic context of the scheme and is also closely aligned with our corporate ambitions for the city. As such it is suggested that a strategic plan should be developed; informed by an evaluation of the existing scheme, user demand and experience from other schemes.
- 3.5 This long-term strategy would consider a number of key areas:
 - a. Strategic aims and outcomes of spatial expansion
 - b. Demand and opportunities for expansion -

- i.e. partnership working, user demand, funding opportunities, alignment with other capital/revenue projects
- c. Existing cycle infrastructure and DRD Bicycle Strategy
- d. Benefits and risks
- e. Resource implications - i.e. financial sustainability, income generation, sponsorship
- f. Procurement approach
- g. Proposals for phased expansion - i.e. coverage & timescales

- 3.6 It is proposed that this work would be undertaken by Council officers, involving consultation with elected members, users, key stakeholders and other local authority scheme operators. A draft report with initial findings would be brought back to Committee in April 2016 with a view to the final strategy being agreed by the summer.

Marketing Plan

- 3.7 It is also suggested that the current scheme, and any future expansion, would benefit from proactive marketing and promotions and as such it is recommended that Council officers develop an annual marketing and promotions plan to grow membership, increase usage and promote the benefits of the scheme. The need to coordinate and develop procedures for managing the ongoing promotion, marketing and engagement activities in conjunction with the scheme partners (Department of Regional Development, the scheme sponsor Coca-cola HBC and the scheme operator NSL) would also be an important element of this approach.

Future Requests for expansion

- 3.8 Until such time as a strategic plan is agreed it is suggested that the Council should put in place a process by which proposals from third parties to fund expansion are considered. Committee is therefore asked to endorse the following criteria against which proposals would be assessed by officers before a recommendation is brought to Committee.
- 3.9 Essential criteria would include:
1. Supporting Network - Docking stations should be part of a supporting strategic network with each station between 300 to 500 metres apart.
 2. Sustainable growth - Docking stations should ideally be located in areas of high footfall that generate activity

during the day and evening to ensure that the areas will generate sufficient subscriptions/income and can be operationally managed within the context of the wider scheme.

3. Resources - Sufficient levels of capital and revenue resources should be in place.

3.10 Other factors that would inform assessment would include:

- a. Income - Expansion of the network should lead to an increase in income in the form of subscriptions and usage charges. Members should note that actual income for the first 6 months of Year 1 is £95,000 (35% of the annual target) and the monthly income (along with usage) is expected to decline over the winter months. Subsequently, although the membership (subscription) rates are on target, the income from usage charges is low due to a majority of journeys being under 30 minutes and thus free of charge. When considering requests for expansion therefore it should be considered whether new stations are likely to encourage increased membership and associated income.
- b. Sponsorship - The current sponsorship payment from Coca-Cola HBC is £100,000 per annum over a 3 year contract which covers 23% of Phase 1 costs. The income from sponsorship for Phase 2 is not yet confirmed however and the current contract requires that this is subject to negotiation.
- c. Vandalism - Elected members should note that the monthly management fee covers vandalism costs up to £1,000 and the Council is liable to cover costs for any vandalism above £1,000 per month. Experience from the Belfast and other schemes indicates that issues of vandalism can arise in areas that do not have regular usage and surveillance.
- d. Current usage - A review of the current use of Belfast Bikes (rentals / returns) indicates that the east and south sectors of the city experience the highest demand (Odyssey 1,700 rentals per month, Botanic Avenue 1,300 rentals per month). The current level of rentals/returns for stations in the north and west is low in comparison. Smithfield is consistently the least used station in the system with around 150 rentals per month followed by College Square East, Dunbar Link and Carrick Hill and Millfield. Maps are attached in Appendix 2 which

illustrates average daily rentals for each station per month.

Current requests for expansion

- 3.11 Finally, in keeping with the above recommendations the Committee is asked to consider a number of existing requests for expansion.

1. Belfast Trust

- 3.12 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has offered a grant of up to £100,000 to cover the capital costs to design and build 3 docking stations at three hospital sites (City, Royal Victoria and Mater Hospitals) and the first year's operating costs. Work is ongoing to identify appropriate site locations, size of stations and costings with the Belfast Trust Estates Department.

- 3.13 Having considered the proposal it is noted that:

- The hospital sites are in areas of high footfall with large volumes of staff and students travelling between the sites on a regular basis. Therefore it is anticipated that the additional stations should attract a high number of users and additional subscriptions and generate better levels of income.
- Work is ongoing to identify appropriate site locations, size of stations and costings with the Belfast Trust Estates Department and further work is required to confirm whether proposed areas can be carried out as part of a supporting network or if additional stations may be required to link into the existing network.
- The Belfast Trust has committed £100,000 capital funding and one year's running costs which means there will be no impact upon 2016/17 financial estimates.

- 3.14 In light of the above findings it is recommended that the Committee approves this proposal and that highlighted running costs are incorporated in the medium term financial plans going forward. If agreed, officers will undertake to liaise with the Belfast Trust to confirm final sites and initiate delivery.

2. DSD Building Successful Communities programme

3.15 DSD is proposing to fund the capital costs and the first year's maintenance costs of 8 docking stations within three of the Building Successful Communities (BSC) pilot areas (Appendix 1:

- Lower Shankill & Brown Square – 2 docking stations (contract for funding received and currently being reviewed by officers)
- Lower Oldpark – 3 docking stations (subject to Forum approval)
- Lower Falls - 3 docking stations (subject to Forum approval)

Having considered the proposal it is noted that:

3.16 The Lower Shankill and Lower Falls areas are adjacent to the core city centre Belfast Bikes network and could support the proposed hospital locations. As noted in previous reports the Lower Shankill proposal has been approved by the BSC Forum. The Lower Falls proposal though requires the approval of the BSC Forum for the area.

The proposal to locate 3 docking stations at Lower Oldpark area does not fit with the criteria for phased expansion. Following discussions DSD however has indicated that the docking stations could be located outside the BSC boundary at Lower Oldpark and service the Girdwood development. However further assessment would need to be carried out to ascertain if stations in the adjoining areas would be viable and additionally this proposal would require BSC Forum approval.

It is not clear what the patterns of use of Belfast Bikes will be in the mainly residential BSC areas. It is anticipated that it may be more commuter based at morning and evening peak times and tidal i.e. will require redistribution of bikes at peak traffic times to ensure availability. This can be difficult to achieve and may affect the performance of the wider network.

DSD has committed to funding the capital costs and one year's running costs for the additional docking stations in Building Successful Communities pilot areas which means there will be no impact upon 2016/17 financial estimates .It is possible that the income generated from these additional docking stations will not cover running costs and as such it

will be necessary to assess the impact in terms of the medium term financial planning process.

All proposals would be subject to a satisfactory contract of funding for the delivery of the projects being obtained and agreed between the Council and DSD.

- 3.17 In light of the above findings it is recommended that the Committee approves this proposal and that highlighted running costs are incorporated in the medium term financial plans going forward. It should be noted however that final approval would be subject to further assessment of sites by officers, endorsement of BSC For a and a satisfactory contract of funding being agreed.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

- 4.1 Strategic Plan & Marketing Plan - None at present, this work would be undertaken by staff from the Development Department, Property & Projects Department and Corporate Communications. Any future resource implications associated with recommendations would be highlighted in subsequent reports.

- 4.2 Belfast Trust & DSD - There will be no impact upon 2016/17 estimates. While it is anticipated that income from the docking stations at the hospital sites should cover costs those funded by DSD will have to be considered as part of the medium term financial planning process.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 5.1 None."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Meeting of Good Relations Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership of 11th January.

Belfast Statement on Mental Health and Deafness

The Committee was advised that the 6th World Congress on Mental Health and Deafness, comprising 300 delegates from around the world, had met in Belfast from 16th till 19th September, 2014. The objective of the Congress was to address issues around equal rights for deaf people in mental health care, with the aim of agreeing a

Pathway to Rights. The outcome of the work was that a Belfast Statement had been produced. The Committee was advised that the President of the organisation had submitted a request to the Council seeking its endorsement of the Statement which would reinforce the Council's commitment to equality and the aims and objectives of the Council's Disability Strategy.

The Committee agreed to endorse and support the Belfast Statement on Mental Health and Deafness.

Operational Issues

Members' Portal - Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the development and roll-out of a Members' Portal, an online information and knowledge tool, and which provided an update also on the work underway to develop and launch a new version of the "My Belfast" App. It was agreed that the Members' Development Working Group, or their nominees, act as a forum for initial testing/piloting and feedback on the Portal.

Information Governance - Draft Policies and Procedures for Approval

The Committee was advised that, while the Council had had policies and procedures for the areas of data protection, freedom of information and records management since 2003, it was clear that those required to be updated in light of guidance which had been received from the Information Commissioners Office and on recommendations by the Council's Audit, Governance and Risk Service. Accordingly, new policy and procedures, copies of which were available on the Council's website, had been developed to meet legal requirements and revised standards.

The Committee was advised that the implementation of the policy would be through the ongoing staff programme and ad hoc assistance from the Information Governance Unit. The Unit would liaise with Digital Services on taking forward the development and roll-out of the Council's CRN system to manage the Council's information queries. In addition, further actions from audits on the development of related policies, for example, Freedom of Information, information security and retention and disposal were currently underway.

While the staff training programme and draft policy and procedures helped the Council mitigate the risk around information governance, it was suggested, in the medium term, that a refresh of the Council's 2008 Information Management Framework be carried out in the form of a corporate Information Governance Framework. That would provide an overall architecture for how the Council captured, created, accessed, secured, managed and shared its information both internally and externally. It would also help to better manage the information the Council held and facilitate compliance with both legislation and general principles of good information governance. In that context it was important to note that, following Local Government Reform and,

in particular, its role in relation to community planning, would result in the Council holding and sharing an even greater amount of sensitive information.

Any information management framework would be structured around five main areas of information governance:

1. Information governance management
2. Records management
3. Information compliance
4. Information security
5. Data quality and assurance

Appropriate policies and procedures would be developed to ensure its implementation throughout the organisation.

The Committee approved the policy and procedures and agreed the development of a corporate Information Governance Framework.

Minutes of the Budget and Transformation Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the special meeting of the Budget and Transformation Panel of 14th January.

Minutes of the Special Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the special meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel of 12th January.

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

The Committee approved the undernoted requests for the use of the City

Organisation/ Body	Event/Date - Number of Delegates/Guests	Request	Comments	Recommendation
Common Purpose	Meridian Course Final Day and Award Ceremony 4th August, 2016 Approximately 40 attending	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	'Meridian' is a leadership programme that brings together a diverse group of leaders from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. The participants learn how to improve their capacity to lead, effect change and expand their networks through the investigation of real- life challenges. This event will recognise the achievements of	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits. Approximate cost £100

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			<p>those individuals who have successfully completed the Meridian Programme.</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership - strong, fair, together' and 'Better opportunities for success across the city'.</p>	
Street Soccer NI	<p>Home Nations Homeless Cup Celebration</p> <p>8th September, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 130 attending</p>	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.	<p>This event will bring together teams from the home countries and will aim to highlight the problem of homelessness in Northern Ireland. It is hoped this event will raise awareness of the problems faced by homelessness and show how people can gain vital support. The event will celebrate the achievements of people who have been helped through the Street Soccer project</p> <p>This event would contribute to the Council's Key Themes of 'City Leadership - strong, fair, together' and 'Better Support for People and Communities'.</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits.</p> <p>Approximate cost £325</p>
Flax Trust	<p>Inter-Community School Choirs Awards (FISCA)</p> <p>15th December, 2016</p> <p>Approximately 550 attending</p>	The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits	<p>This event will provide schools across North Belfast the opportunity to showcase their intercommunity choirs and to promote music and song as a neutral means of communication, and its ability to change perceptions and eliminate community tensions and religious prejudices. This event</p>	<p>The use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea, coffee and biscuits</p> <p>Approximate cost £1,375</p>

			will culminate in the presentation of the award for best choir. This event would contribute to the Council's Key Theme of 'Better Support for People and Communities'.	
Electoral Office of Northern Ireland	Candidate Briefing Session 23rd March, 2016 Approx. 100 attendees	The Use of the City Hall	This event, organised by the Electoral office, will provide information on the upcoming Northern Ireland Assembly Elections for prospective candidates and election agents. This event would contribute substantially to the Council's Key Theme of 'City Leadership – Strong, Fair, Together'	The Use of the City Hall

Use of Council Chamber re:
"Spring into Easter" Festival

The Committee was advised that the Council's Spring into Easter Festival would take place in the City Hall from 26th until 29th March. Last year the Festival had attracted 23,000 visitors to the City Hall and its grounds.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that, this year, the Council's Events Team had requested, as part of the Festival, the use of the Council Chamber over the period of the Festival, both as part of the "Nearly True Tours" and also for three children's theatre shows.

The Committee granted use of the Council Chamber as requested.

**Commemoration of the Centenary
of the Battle of the Somme**

The Committee was reminded that the Council had for many years been represented at the Annual Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme events held in France. This year would be the centenary of that battle and the Somme Association had requested that Councils wishing to participate in the event in 2016 make reservations by 31st January, given the anticipated high demand for places. The Committee was advised that the Council normally reserved seven places on the annual visit, one for each Party represented on the Council and for the Chief Executive (or her nominee) and the same recommendation was being made for the 2016 visit, subject to availability.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Sister Cities Summit

The Committee was advised that the Sister Cities Summit would be taking place in Dublin in April and that a report would be submitted to the City Centre and Regeneration Committee in due course seeking authority for Members to attend.

The Chief Executive reported that Mr. Joe Biden was expected to attend the summit in Dublin and sought the Committee's authority to write to him to request him to visit Belfast on 23rd April.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

Chairperson