

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th March, 2016

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

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

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Howard.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 3rd and 10th February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Request to present to Special Committee – Living with Water, Streets Ahead and QUB, Sustrans and DRD Cycling Unit

It was reported that a number of requests had been received from external agencies to present to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Committee agreed to hold a Special Committee meeting, the date of which would be agreed in consultation with the Chairperson, to receive presentations in relation to:

- Living with Water (DRD);
- Streets Ahead Phase 3 (DSD);
- Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation at the Elms Village (QUB); and
- Cycling (Sustrans and the DRD Cycling Unit)

Presentation

Visit Belfast

The Committee was advised that Mr. G. Lennon, Chief Executive of Visit Belfast, and Mr. H. Hastings OBE, newly appointed Chair of Visit Belfast, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Hastings thanked the Members for the opportunity to present an overview of its proposed Business Plan and outputs for the period 2016-17. Mr. Lennon provided an overview of the role of Visit Belfast and advised the Members that, over the past ten years, it had significantly increased the commercial element of its funding model and, as a result, the amount of funding from the public sector had decreased from 90% to 60%.

He advised the Committee that the Council's Community Plan was central to the work of Visit Belfast and that their Business Plan for 2016/17 had acknowledged a number of significant investments within the city over the next few years, most notably the opening of the new Belfast Waterfront and the impact that it would have upon growing business tourism within the city. The Chair of Visit Belfast also advised that their Business Plan was aligned to the timeframe of the Belfast Tourism Strategy and sought to deliver on the Strategy's ambition of doubling the value of tourism in the city by 2020.

The Members were advised that, in 2015, Belfast had hosted 115,000 cruise passengers, with a further 145,000 passengers due to arrive into the city during the summer months of 2016. The Committee was also informed of a number of statistics which had shown a steady increase from 2011 in the number of hotel bed nights sold, out-of-state money spent and overall room occupancy throughout the city whereupon Mr. Hastings stressed the need for additional hotel rooms.

Mr. Lennon outlined that the recently announced flight routes between Belfast and Berlin and Milan were positive for the city's tourism and the Chief Executive added that Belfast would host the "Routes Europe" Conference in 2017, which was the annual gathering for airline professionals wishing to conduct business within the European region. She explained that hosting this Conference would provide Belfast with a unique opportunity to seek to increase the number of flight routes which operated to and from the city.

During discussion, a Member asked Mr. Lennon how Belfast was performing in comparison to other similar sized cities in Europe, specifically with regards to the average spend per day from visitors, and Mr. Lennon agreed to circulate relevant research to the Member.

After discussion the representatives from Visit Belfast thanked the Committee for the opportunity to update them on their work and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee agreed to accede to a request from Visit Belfast for a financial contribution of £1,827,465 for the 2016/17 financial year and noted that this amount had been set aside within the Development Department's budget for the year 2016/17.

(The Chairperson retired from the meeting at this point and, in the absence of the Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Ó Donnghaile took the Chair)

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.

Belfast Agenda

North Foreshore

The Director of Property and Projects provided the Members with an update on the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee's decision of 19th February in relation to the proposed Film Studio at the North Foreshore and on the development of the Environmental Resource Park.

He reminded the Committee that the 340 acre North Foreshore Giants Park was the biggest regeneration site in Belfast and that the vision was to transform the former city landfill site into a positive and sustainable asset that would deliver physical, social and economic benefits for the city. The Members were advised that the Council was progressing the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) infrastructure works for the proposed Environmental Resource Park within that area.

After discussion, the Committee:

(i) noted the undernoted decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, as ratified by the Council on 1st March 2016:

- the updated position in relation to the proposed film studio at the North Foreshore and the opportunity that existed for the simultaneous development of both the film studio and the Environmental Resource Park, both of which would bring significant economic and regeneration benefits to the City, as well as a direct financial return to the Council over a period of time;
- that approval had been granted for the Council to enter into a Development Agreement and land lease with Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) for the purposes of the development of a film studio on detailed terms to be agreed by the Council's Town Solicitor and Estates Manager.

(ii) noted that the lease rental terms had subsequently been agreed with Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) and that Land and Property

Services (LPS) had verified the terms as representing best value for the Council;

- (iii) noted the update in relation to the Environmental Resource Park in terms of both the physical infrastructure project and the marketing of sites to the Cleantech Sector; and
- (iv) given the potential of both the Environmental Resource Park and the film studio to deliver significant physical, social and economic benefits for the city, it was recommended that a programme of work now be put in place to ensure those benefits were maximised as fully as possible and that opportunities at North Foreshore be promoted as part of the wider investment proposition for Belfast. This would include the ongoing monitoring of the conditions of the ERDF Letter of Offer for the infrastructure project.

DSD Adoption of City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that a cross-party delegation had met with the outgoing Social Development Minister, Mervyn Storey MLA, on 16th December, 2015, to discuss the proposed adoption, by the DSD, of the Council's City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy (CCRIS) as the formal regeneration framework for Belfast City Centre. The Members were advised that, since that meeting, constructive discussions between the DSD and Council officials had taken place as part of a wider approach to align the respective policies and priorities of both organisations for the regeneration of Belfast city centre.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that correspondence had since been received from the new Minister for Social Development, Lord Morrow MLA, dated 24th February, 2016, confirming that the Department had agreed to adopt the CCRIS, with the exception of the five named Special Action Areas. She outlined that the Minister for Social Development was seeking to make a formal announcement regarding the adoption of the CCRIS, and that this was proposed to take place on Monday, 21st March, with both the Chairpersons of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth and Regeneration Committees invited to attend.

During discussion, a number of Members welcomed the adoption of the CCRIS but expressed their disappointment that the five Special Action Areas would not be included.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

1. that officers would continue to work with the DSD to develop detailed delivery and resource plans for key regeneration schemes within the city for the future consideration of Members; and
2. that the Chairs of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth and Regeneration Committees would attend a photocall

with the Minister for Social Development on Monday, 21st March, at 11.30am to announce the formal adoption of the CCRIS by the DSD.

City Centre Regeneration Investment Fund

The Chief Executive provided the Members with an overview of the Council's strategic investment in the former Belfast Telegraph building on Royal Avenue, through the City Centre Regeneration Fund.

In response to a Member's question, she highlighted the importance of ensuring that the progression of this project was aligned towards the regeneration and growth of the city, and that it integrated with Phase 3 of the Department of Social Development's "Belfast Streets Ahead" project and the new Cultural Hub.

The Committee noted:

(i) the undernoted decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, which were ratified by Council on 1st March 2016:

- that approval had been given for the Council to enter into an agreement with McAleer and Rushe through which the Council would take a maximum 49% stake in the acquisition of the Belfast Telegraph site and for that purpose to delegate authority to the Town Solicitor to draw up the necessary legal arrangements as required in line with the due diligence undertaken;
- that the Council would work in partnership with McAleer and Rushe to develop proposals which would promote a scheme on the subject site which would deliver around 250,000 sq ft of commercial floorspace;
- that, on the completion of this process, the Council might then decide to either exit the arrangement with its share of the acquisition costs repaid or, subject to due diligence, remain in a partnership arrangement and invest further in the development; and
- that finalisation of the purchase would not happen until September 2016 and, whilst a decision would be required at that time, further detailed work would happen in the intervening months.

(ii) the Committee also noted that the proposed investment was integral to the delivery of key aspects of the City Centre Investment Framework and that it provided an opportunity to further influence and shape the wider development in that part of the city and fully maximise the economic and regeneration benefit for the benefit of the City; and

- (iii) that, in line with the remit of the Committee, viz., having responsibility for “the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed towards regeneration and growth of the city” that a key role of the Committee going forward would be to ensure that progression of this strategic project was translated into tangible regenerative and economic outcomes for the city.

Events planned for September 2016

The Director of Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 10th February, it had endorsed the annual list of events to be delivered by the Council’s City Events Unit in the course of the 2016/17 financial year. It had also been reported at that meeting that Belfast had an opportunity to host an “MTV Crashes” event in September 2016.

He outlined that Belfast had previously hosted a number of successful global events, namely the MTV Europe Music Awards (EMAs), the Giro d’Italia, the World Police and Fire Games and the Tall Ships, and he highlighted that those events had generated significant economic return in addition to positive media coverage for the city.

He advised the Committee that the Belfast Tourism Strategy 2015-2020 had highlighted the importance of major events in contributing towards the growth of tourism in the City and that it set out a framework for a range of national and international events which would contribute to the ambition of doubling the value of tourism in the City by 2020. The Members were reminded that such major events were in line with City Positioning and that they reinforced the positive profile of the City.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. noted the proposed programme of events to take place in the City in September 2016, including the potential for additional marketing activity to promote the City over that period;
2. noted a proposal from MTV and that the details of an agreement between the Council and MTV on the structures and finances for running an “MTV crashes Belfast” event would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
3. agreed to provide access to St George’s Market for the ICONS Festival on 20th-21st September, 2016, noting that these were not trading days, as part of the overall Council sponsorship package.

Business & Economy

Physical Projects Update

The Director of Property and Projects referred the Committee to the undernoted report and illustrated a number of physical projects throughout the city:

“1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware that in February 2012 the Council launched an ambitious Investment Programme in a response to the challenges presented by the economic downturn which was supported by all the political parties within the Council. However Members aspirations for the city did not stop at the Investment Programme.
- 1.2 During the implementation of the Programme the context around the Council changed with the advent of Local Government Reform (LGR) in 2015 which brought with it more powers including planning, community planning and economic development. The success of the achievements under the Investment Programme and the enhanced responsibilities of the new Council have further strengthened the ambitions of our Members and the unique role of the Council as the place-leaders in helping to make Belfast a city of choice for investment, events and living.
- 1.3 However a key challenge for the Council going forward is to ensure that the investment, both the investment by the Council under the IP and ongoing investment combined with investment by partners, translates into real and tangible outcomes for the city – i.e. that it is not just about building buildings but rather that the physical programme of delivery in the city becomes an enabler delivering a transformational impact and maximum economic and regeneration outcomes.
- 1.4 This report outlines for Members a number of key achievements from 2012 till now including targets laid out in the Investment Programme and an overview of the key projects. The report also outlines the key role that the City and Growth Committee will play going forward in the ongoing monitoring and management of the physical projects which have an economic impact.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note
- the key achievements outlined in 3.3 below and that a detailed presentation will be given to Committee on the 9th on the key successes, current projects and next steps
 - that there is massive physical investment either completed, already underway or planned across the city. This includes a range of Council projects which

were designed to enhance the city's economic infrastructure including the Waterfront, Innovation Factory and the North Foreshore

- that a key role of the City & Growth Committee going forward will be manage and monitor the economic outcomes of physical projects once these have been completed in line with the agreed remit of the Committee as being *'responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed towards regeneration and growth of the city'* and to build on the Council's investment by encouraging and supporting greater private sector investment e.g. the boost to the hotel and hospitality sectors as a result of the investment in the Waterfront

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1 The biggest Council investment in our city for a generation, the Programme was designed to benefit all parts of Belfast, making it a better place to live, work, visit and invest and included an ambition to invest over £150million in physical projects across the city including a wide range of projects designed to support and transform the city's economic infrastructure including an extension to the Waterfront, a new Innovation Factory, infrastructure at the North Foreshore to facilitate the development of a Cleantech Park and a 'Super-connected' city.
- 3.2 The Investment Programme was a game changer for the Council strengthening its role as the city's civic leader and cementing its reputation as a major delivery agent of both capital (major and smaller scale local) and revenue projects. Many of the targets set out in the Investment Programme (and initiatives agreed since this) have been achieved or exceeded and a number of key highlights of achievements to date are set out in below while work is still underway on a number of other projects including a number of the key physical projects. Members are asked to note that a detailed presentation will be given to the Committee on the 9th March.
- 3.4 As outlined above in 3.1 the Investment Programme outlined ambitions for a range of projects designed to enhance the city's economic infrastructure which were funded by EU funding. A brief update on the status of these is outlined below. Further detail on the projects will be presented as part of the presentation on the 9th March.

3.5

Project	Value	Status and overall
Waterfront – dedicated conference and exhibition facilities	£29.5m ERDF - £14.5m Tourism NI - £4m Council - £11m	Officially handed over to the Council week commencing 25th January. Potential economic impact of £100 million for Belfast over the next five years. The new Belfast Waterfront aims to attract 55,000 delegates (35,000 outside NI) each year by 2020; twice the current rate. This will boost hotels, bars and restaurants, creating 1,500 jobs in the tourism and hospitality sector in the city
Innovation Factory	£9.1m ERDF and InvestNI - £6.15m Council - £2.95m	Due to be completed by April. Procurement of operator currently ongoing. The Innovation Centre building is a 55,284 sq ft building consisting of 32,240 sq ft lettable space ^[1] and 5,133 sq ft innovation space – the Innovation factory will provide grade A incubation \start up space, providing 382 workstations with the business growth and business innovation support offer extending to tenant and non tenant businesses. The centre will also include a cafe / event space and state of the art business lounge / conference and meeting room facilities.
North Foreshore	£9.5m ERDF - £4m InvestNI - £2m Council - £3.5m	Due to be completed in Spring. Designed to support the creation of an innovative business cluster - a ‘CleanTech Hub’ - aimed at companies working in renewable energy, solar power, recycling and other environmental technologies, who are keen to invest in Belfast. We are now installing the 1,734 metres of roads to improve access and set up key services at the hub Members will be aware that proposals for a Film Studio on the North Foreshore are now moving ahead – a separate report on this is on the agenda for discussion

3.6 Members are asked to note that there are a also a range of other projects which have an economic impact, for example

Connswater Community Greenway, in terms of visitor numbers and tourism impact and the sale of the Maysfield site to Allstate and Concentrix creating and retaining over 2000 jobs. Construction projects in general also have an economic and regenerative impact by supporting jobs in the construction field and in the wider supply chain which helps contribute to the local economy.

- 3.7 However Members' aspirations for the city did not stop at the Investment Programme. During the implementation of the Programme the context around the Council changed with the advent of Local Government Reform (LGR) in 2015 which brought with it more powers including planning, community planning and economic development and the prospect for new ambitions and new relationships. The success of the achievements under the Investment Programme and the enhanced roles and responsibilities of the new Council have further strengthened the ambitions of our Members for the city and the unique role of the Council as the place-leaders of the city in helping to make Belfast a city of choice for investment, events and living. Right now Belfast has huge potential and a unique set of circumstances that can be harnessed for long term success. This is evidenced by the further initiatives and projects which Members have agreed and which are currently underway in addition to the continued delivery of a range of projects including a city centre focus, the establishment of a dedicated city centre team and a £18.5 City Centre Fund and a £4m City Centre Social Outcomes Fund. The first major proposed investment being an equity share in the Belfast Telegraph building (see separate report on the agenda)
- 3.8 This ambition is being matched by changing perceptions of Belfast from a city marked by conflict to a city buoyed by opportunities and a changing economic landscape which is altering the face of the city with many development opportunities coming on board. It is estimated that there is the opportunity for up to £1billion of investment in the city on top of the work that is already underway or recently completed.

Role of the City & Growth Committee

- 3.9** All of the above highlights that there is a significant level of investment already completed, underway or planned within the city. However a key challenge for the Council going forward is to ensure that the investment translates into real and tangible economic, social and regenerative outcomes for the city – i.e. that it is not just about building buildings but rather that the physical programme of delivery in the city, both by the Council and by wider partners, becomes an enabler delivering a transformational impact and outcomes.
- 3.10** Many of the Council’s major physical projects are now either complete and handed over or are nearing completion – this includes the ERDF funded projects as outlined above. All of these projects are subject to a letter of offer which sets out conditions which need to be met for each project. *A sample of project performance indicators for the Innovation Factory and the North Foreshore are set out below.*

3.11

Project	LOOs
Innovation Factory	<p><i>Projects performance indicators (as per LOO – highlights)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support at least 145 jobs in the Innovation Factory by 31 December 2018 • To achieve 55% occupancy in the Innovation Factory by 31 December 2018 • To achieve 71% occupancy in the Innovation Factory by 31 December 2020
North Foreshore	<p><i>Projects performance indicators (as per LOO – highlights)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create at least 400 green collar jobs at the site by 31st December 2020 • To let 7.5 acres at the site by 31st March 2019

- 3.12** The City & Growth Committee will play a key role in the ongoing management, programming and monitoring of projects above to ensure that the Council is delivering the maximum economic, social and regenerative impacts for the city along with fulfilling the conditions agreed under the LOOs. The Committee will also play a key role in the ongoing monitoring of the economic elements of the Council’s other physical projects which have a economic and/or regenerative impact for example Connswater Community Greenway; Belfast Bike Scheme and Lanyon Tunnels.

3.13 Finance and Resource implication

- **Financial – No direct financial implications**
- **Resource – No direct officer implications**

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- **No equality implications.”**

A Member requested that the information be circulated, potentially through City Matters magazine, to illustrate the vast number of development projects which the Council was undertaking to both residential and commercial Belfast ratepayers.

In response to a further Member's question regarding what the next major visitor attraction in Belfast would be, the Chief Executive outlined that a group of key stakeholders had been established to examine the key concepts for the new Cultural Hub and also referenced the potential for a visitor attraction based around the Game of Thrones television series.

The Chief Executive and the Director of Development advised the Committee that this information had been presented to the *Confederation of British Industry* (CBI), Invest NI and also to potential investors from Boston. The Director of Development advised that those from Boston had been so impressed by the figures that they had since signed up to attend the Sister Cities Summit in Dublin on 21st and 22nd April, with the delegations from Boston and Nashville visiting Belfast on 19th and 20th April.

The Director of Development also advised the Committee that himself, the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive had met with the Chinese Consul, General Madam Wang, that morning, where they had discussed a proposed trade mission to China. He advised that Madam Wang had made a number of pertinent suggestions in relation to potential Chinese investors with whom the Council should seek to engage.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Finance, Procurement & Performance

Financial Reporting - Quarter 3 2015/16

The Chief Executive presented the Quarter 3 financial position for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to the Members, concluding that the Quarter 3 position for the Committee was an overspend of £172k (1.6%), where the forecast year end position would be an overspend of £98k (0.7%). She advised that this was due to three specific service areas overspending, namely, City Events and Venues, The Zoo and the Parks Estates. The Members were advised that these costs were then off set by underspends in Economic Initiatives and International Development and Off Street Car Parking.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Tourism, Events & International Relations

New York New Belfast, Homecoming - Request for funding

(Mrs. L. Leonard, European and International Relations Manager, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members’ approval to financially support the following conferences:

- New York New Belfast Conference, 01 – 02 June 2016, New York
- Homecoming Conference, 12 – 14 October 2016, Belfast.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested to commit a maximum of £12,400 towards 2 international conferences, broken down as follows:

- New York New Belfast: £5,000 sponsorship contribution plus travel and attendance at the conference to include the Chairperson of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, or their nominee, and one Officer (max. £2,400)
- Homecoming Conference: £5,000 sponsorship contribution.

3.0 Main report

3.1 New York New Belfast

The seventh annual New York New Belfast conference will take place at Fordham University on 1 and 2 June 2016. Belfast City Council has been approached to request a sponsorship contribution of £5,000 towards the event. In return for this contribution, the Council will be invited to speak at the event and there will be opportunities to provide editorial and advertorial input into the Conference promotional materials.

3.2 The Conference aims to provide a platform for collaboration between the business community, public, cultural and

education sectors in both cities and to develop mutual strategic alliances and business partnerships.

- 3.3 It provides an opportunity to promote Belfast as a place to do business and to highlight the new investment potential of key city centre developments. It will also allow the Council to present the new narratives developed through the City Positioning work and to present a coherent rationale for investment in Belfast.
- 3.4 The annual Conference has an impressive business focus, featuring speakers and meeting opportunities with key sponsors and participants such as KPMG, United Airlines, HBO, Whitehat Security and Shopkeep. Many of the business participants have a base in Belfast or are considering establishing here. The event therefore offers an opportunity to engage with these companies to explore opportunities for re-investment or to promote the range of incentives and attractions of Belfast as an investment location – including the reduction of the corporation tax rate from 2018.
- 3.5 The Conference also brings together artists with a connection to Belfast and also gives artists and cultural organisations from Belfast a chance to build international connections. Some of the city’s flagship venues and events have taken part in previous years’ Conferences and have taken the opportunity to promote their work and to develop new opportunities for collaboration.
- 3.6 In the seven years since the inauguration of the event, there have been a number of key introductions and opportunities presented including:
- Opportunity to engage further with New York businesses that have already invested in Belfast and potential for collaboration with Invest NI to promote the Belfast proposition to secure further investment
 - Visits by key business and political delegations to Belfast, including New York State legislators
 - Supporting investment opportunities by New York State into local venture funds
 - Presenting opportunities for local start-ups to pitch to New York Angel investors
 - Facilitating cultural exchanges and showcasing opportunities such as Brendan Behan at the Chelsea in New York and The Flood from New York to Belfast.

Homecoming Business and Investment Conference

- 3.7** The third annual Belfast International Homecoming Business and Investment Conference will be held in Belfast from 12 – 14 October 2016. The conference aims to engage the Diaspora in Belfast’s growth and regeneration. The 2016 event will focus on attracting 25 Chief Executive-level business leaders to the city. This aligns well with the Council’s ambitions to attract additional investment to the city and to foster business growth in Belfast.
- 3.8** To date, a significant level of private sector partners have committed to the Homecoming. These include Ulster Bank, Deloitte, CPL Recruitment, Concentrix and Market Resource Partners as well as global partners such as Tyco, Bitnet Technologies, Google and Mötet Hennessey.
- 3.9** The Homecoming offers BCC an opportunity through the Lord Mayor to present the new Belfast propositions and elevate the city ‘Let’s Talk Belfast’ messaging to expats and Diaspora who wish to invest in the city.
- 3.10** Some of the outcomes of the previous two Homecoming events include:
- Early engagement around opportunities for collaboration in the field of sport, culminating in Friendship Four Tournament – the inaugural event of which took place in Belfast in November 2015.
 - Opportunity to attract UK Board of global brand Deloitte to Belfast to showcase investment opportunities and understand the potential presented by global connections.
 - Opportunity for high level legal symposium on international human rights law between local legal practitioners and their international counterparts, including an engagement with the Lord Chief Justice. This has presented additional opportunities for collaboration which are currently being pursued.
- 3.11** Members are asked to agree a sponsorship of £5,000 towards the event. In return for this sponsorship contribution, the Council will receive speaking roles for the Lord Mayor and Chief Executive along with Conference passes for five delegates and prominent use of council branding on conference material.

3.12 Finance and Resource Implications

It is anticipated that the cost to the Council for financially supporting the above two events will not exceed £12,400. These costs can be met within the agreed International Relations budget for 2016-2017.

3.13 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or good relations implications attached to this report.”

In response to a Member’s questions regarding the former Friends of Belfast group, the European and International Relations Manager advised that matters had progressed significantly over the past 20 years and that the Council had become more sophisticated as a result. She indicated that the Council now had a clear evidence base with which to approach international investors and that clear areas of work had emerged due to a number of successful international linkages, particularly with the United States. She pointed out to the Committee that many of those who were involved in the original Friends of Belfast network were still key contacts for those within the EU and International Unit.

The Director of Development clarified that a structured plan was in place with regards to International Relations for the city and confirmed that the International Relations Framework which finished in 2015 needed to be revisited and that it would ideally focus on generating economic return for investments.

The Chief Executive advised the Members that officers would demonstrate the new electronic development portal at a future City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Lord Mayor Visit to the White House

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to request Members’ approval to accept an invitation received to attend a St Patrick’s Day visit to the White House, Washington DC on 15 March 2016.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

approve that the Lord Mayor accepts from the US Consul General to attend a St Patrick’s Day visit to the White House,

Washington DC on 15 March 2016 and agrees to the cost of travel and expenses for the Lord Mayor and one Officer, to Washington from 14–16 March 2016.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

The US Consul General, Dan Lawton, has nominated the Lord Mayor as his guest at the White House St Patrick's Day event on 15 March 2016.

3.2 Mr Lawton and his team have been working closely with Belfast City Council to support the delivery of the Council's International Relations Framework and in particular, the Boston and Nashville Sister City relationships.

3.3 Acceptance of the invitation would allow the Lord Mayor to represent the City at this prestigious event and promote the new City 'Let's Talk Belfast' messaging. It would also allow the Lord Mayor to attend other events over two days, including the NI Bureau networking event and the Irish Ambassadors reception, to which he has already been invited.

3.4 Other targeted meetings would also be built into a programme for the Lord Mayor to take advantage of the visit and promote the objectives of the International Relations Framework.

3.5 Finance and Resource Implications

The cost for the Lord Mayor and one Officer to travel to Washington for the US Consul General / Whitehouse event will not exceed £2,000.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or good relations implications attached to this report."

At the request of a Member, it was agreed that the itinerary of events that the Lord Mayor would be participating in would be circulated to the Committee.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Operational

External Market Application

The Director of Development reminded the Committee that, in December 2014, the former Development Committee had considered an application by Folktown CIC to hold a market in Bank Square. He reported that a licence had been approved and

Folktown Market became operational in April 2015, following the completion of an environmental improvement scheme in Bank Square.

The Members were advised that the Folktown licence had expired at the end of 2015 and an application had now been received for a new licence. The Director outlined to the Committee that Folktown Market operated on a Thursday from 8.00am to 3.00pm and that it regularly attracted up to 35 stalls. Members were advised that it had been operating on a reduced scale, with 5-8 traders, since Christmas under a licence which had been granted under delegated authority by the Director of Development but that the market organisers were planning to expand the market up to 35 traders from March 2016 onwards, and required Committee approval to do so.

The Committee:

1. noted the request for a market licence submitted by Folktown CIC with a view to holding a weekly market in Bank Square; and
2. approved the granting of the licence.

Transport Proposals

The Committee considered a number of transport proposals from TransportNI.

During discussion, a Member raised concerns that it was felt that additional consultation should be carried out by TransportNI with the residents and small business owners on the Falls Road, between Beechmount Avenue and Thames Street, to highlight the preparations which were underway for Belfast Rapid Transit in the west of the city.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to:

1. seek assurances from Transport NI that it would further consult with residents and small businesses regarding the introduction of waiting restrictions on the Falls Road between Beechmount Avenue and Thames Street;
2. note the proposals for Rosetta Primary School and Glenbryn Park and Drive;
3. note, and confirmed that it was content with, the proposals outlined in relation to Rugby Avenue, Sydenham Road Access Road and Glenmachan Place; and
4. that this information would be submitted as the Council's response to TransportNI, by the Director of Development.

SONI - Letter of Support

The Director of Development reminded the Committee that it had received a presentation from SONI Ltd. at a Special meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 3rd December, 2015. The Members were advised that SONI had since written to the Council requesting a letter of support in relation to the North/South Interconnector, in recognition of the future benefits which the infrastructure would bring.

The Committee agreed that a letter of support be sent to SONI Ltd. in relation to the North South Interconnector project.

Issues raised in advance by Members

Exploratory drilling in Woodburn Forest

(Councillor Corr Johnston attended in connection with this item)

The Chairperson advised the Members that Councillor Corr Johnston was in attendance in relation to this item and the Committee agreed that she be admitted to the table. Councillor Corr Johnston outlined a number of concerns to the Committee regarding a recent decision by the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council which had approved a waste management plan to allow exploratory drilling in Woodburn Forest. She outlined to the Members that Belfast City Council had not been consulted by DETI or NI Water but that she felt there might be a risk to some Belfast residents' water supply.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman McGimpsey
Seconded by Alderman Stalford and

Resolved – that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to NI Water, as one of the Council's strategic partners, seeking an assurance, either in person or in writing, that Belfast residents would not be put at any risk by the exploratory drilling operation at Woodburn Forest and asking for absolute clarity from NI Water as to what measures are in place to prevent any accidental seepage of chemicals into the reservoir, what plans they have in place should something go wrong, and, furthermore, that NI Water be requested to attend a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee specifically in relation to this issue.

Chairperson