

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 8th June, 2016

MEETING OF City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Members present: Councillor Graham (Chairperson);
Aldermen Haire, McGimpsey, Patterson and Spence; and
Councillors Boyle, Carson, Craig, Dudgeon,
Hargey, Howard, Kyle, Magee, McAteer,
McDonough-Brown, Mullan, O'Hara and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. D. Durkan, Director of Development;
Mr. N. Grimshaw, Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. N. Gallagher, Director of City Centre Development; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

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

Minutes

The Committee was advised that the minutes of the meeting of 11th May were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to an amendment under the heading "MIPIIM Update", to provide that the Council notes that a final decision has not yet been made in relation to the lowering of the rate of Corporation Tax.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Welcome

The Chairperson welcomed the new Director of City Centre Development, Ms. Nuala Gallagher, to the meeting and wished her well in her new role. Following a robust recruitment and selection process which had attracted a field of thirty-six applicants, Councillors Boyle, Craig and Hargey, along with the Chief Executive and the Director of Organisational Development, had interviewed the final four applicants on 15th February, 2016, and appointed Ms. Gallagher to the role of Director of City Centre Development on a fixed term contract basis.

The Chairperson also welcomed six new Members onto the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Special Meeting re: Exploratory Drilling in Woodburn Forest

After discussion, during which the Chief Executive outlined that the Minister for Infrastructure had recently announced his plans to change the legislation in relation to exploratory drilling, the Committee reaffirmed its previous decision and agreed that a special meeting should take place, on Monday, 27th June, with the relevant persons invited to attend, in relation to the issues at Woodburn Forest.

Presentations

Transport NI

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Mr. K. Monaghan, Eastern Divisional Manager, Mr. T. McClay, Belfast North Section Engineer, and Mr. G. Doherty, Belfast South Section Engineer from Transport NI were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Monaghan explained to the Members that, as they were aware, there was a very limited budget for routine maintenance and, as a result, less grass cutting had taken place along the carriageways than in previous years. He stated, however, that the Department for Infrastructure was hopeful to attain additional resources as a result of the June Monitoring Round.

He provided the Committee with updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the city, namely, the York Street Interchange, the A2 Sydenham Bypass and the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme. He outlined to the Members that, while full funding had not been confirmed for all the schemes, they were high priority projects for the Department and he was hopeful that they would proceed sooner rather than later.

In relation to the recently implemented two-way cycle lane in Alfred Street/Upper Arthur Street, he explained that this was the first of a number of major cycling schemes for the city centre aimed at improving cycling provision across the city and stated that an east/west cycle route was in progress.

During discussion, a Member mentioned the Shaftsbury Link project and asked that the Transport NI representatives engaged with local inner city residents updated in relation to the design for the inner city ring road.

A number of Members asked the representatives whether alternative, more creative ideas could be used to enable some residents parking schemes to progress throughout the city. In response, the Eastern Divisional Manager advised that, while he was sympathetic to the issues of commuter parking in these areas, the Department was governed by the statutory procedures in addition to its limited resources.

During further discussion, a number of Members also raised the following issues with the representatives from Transport NI:

- how the Transport Hub would link with the west of the city;
- the enforcement powers regarding vehicles parked on double yellow lines and clearways, especially during rush hour;
- to consider resurfacing works on Summerhill Drive and Creighton Road;
- to consider increasing the size of the yellow box at the junction of Great Victoria Street and the Grosvenor Road; and
- the cutting down of mature trees to facilitate road works and whether they would be replaced.

Mr. Monaghan advised that, where relevant, action would be taken on these issues by TransportNI if it was deemed necessary after inspection.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

Regeneration

Restricted Items

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

Cultural and Creative Hub

The Chief Executive reminded the Members that a new major visitor attraction had been highlighted in the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan and the Integrated Tourism Strategy for Belfast 2015-2020, and that, at its meeting on 13th January, 2016, the Committee had granted approval for feasibility work to be undertaken on a major city centre cultural and visitor attraction.

She provided the Committee with an overview of the project which, in general terms, would include a mixture of art, music and digital elements to tell the story of Belfast. She provided the Members with update on the engagement with stakeholders and of the initial feasibility work which had been undertaken to date.

The Committee was advised that International Cultural consultants 'Burns Owens Partnership' had developed the concept for the visitor attraction, with Oxford Economics having assessed the potential economic impact that it would have on the city.

During discussion, a number of Members emphasised the importance of involving and informing local residents from an early stage and the Chief Executive confirmed that this was fundamental to the long-term success of the project. She advised that, in addition to being a visitor attraction, the project would create jobs and would include community and exhibition space for those living in neighbouring areas of the city.

The Chief Executive explained that the aim for the project would be to attract 1million visitors per year. She advised the Committee that, as a result of having two major attractions in the city, this would also increase the likelihood of tourists spending an additional night in the City.

During discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting including more detail on the economic impact that the Hub would have on the city. A number of Members also stated that they would like to see a list of suggestions for the name of the proposed Hub and it was agreed that this would also be included within the report.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Western Quarter

(Ms. A. McGlone, Urban Development Officer, attended in connection with this Item)

The Urban Development Officer reminded the Committee that the inner west of the city had been identified as a Special Action Area (SAA) within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), and that the Western Quarter

comprised a large part of the SAA, and sat immediately to the north west of Belfast City Hall with a significant portion being within the City Centre Conservation Area.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 11th November, 2016, it had considered draft Public Realm Analysis and Vision documents for the Western Quarter and it was agreed that more detailed economic intervention was required for the Western Quarter. The Urban Development Officer provided the Members with an update on the progress which had been made to date and identified some of the issues which had been recognised so far, namely, dilapidated frontages, vacancy/dereliction and anti-social behaviour.

She advised the Members that the draft Western Quarter Public Realm Vision and Analysis document had focused on suggested physical improvements in the area but that the BCCRIS had recognised that a more comprehensive retail management intervention would be required.

She reminded the Committee that the Development Department was compiling a map of physical development throughout the city, a key purpose of which was to identify developments which may act as catalysts to create employment for those most removed from the labour market. The Committee agreed that a paper would be submitted to a future meeting in the context of the requirement to explore a more comprehensive regeneration approach across all SAAs and their neighbouring communities, including Inner West.

During discussion, a Member referred to the success of the Temple Bar project in Dublin, where an artistic area was created within a central area of the city by carefully controlling the leases for each premises, and suggested that a similar approach could be taken towards the Western Quarter in Belfast.

At the request of a Member, it was agreed that a report on the Western Quarter be submitted to a future meeting of the West Area Working Group, which would include consideration of the controlled lease idea for the area.

After discussion, the Committee also:

- (i) noted the work which had been undertaken to assess the short/medium term options for potential regeneration options in the Western Quarter; and
- (ii) noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on how the Council could influence and deliver work(s) in relation to the adjoining inner city neighbourhoods.

Response to DSD Consultation on Masterplan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Department for Communities’ (DfC) Greater Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan and seek approval of the draft Council response to the consultation available on modern.gov.**

Background

- 1.2 The draft Greater Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan was originally commissioned by the Department for Social**

Development in 2008 but was put on hold in while the adjacent York Street Interchange proposals were developed. In 2015 the Masterplan work was re-initiated by DSD and subsequently a draft plan has been issued for consultation.

- 1.3 The Masterplan area can be viewed on modern.gov and the entire draft masterplan can be viewed here: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/greater-clarendon-sailortown-draft-masterplan-consultation>

Key Issues

- 1.4 Belfast City Council provided detailed comments at various times through the development of the masterplan via the project board, however, there are still some important comments included in the draft Council response. The main issues include:

- Encouraging the continued joint working arrangements and partnership approach between Belfast City Council and the Department on future regeneration initiatives across the city centre
- Ensuring alignment with the City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy and the importance of connecting with existing communities
- Ensuring the Masterplan has due regard for emerging development activity and the council owned sites in the area
- Providing clarity regarding the status of the Masterplan in the context of other statutory plans and policies used by Belfast City Council in making planning decisions.
- Encouraging engagement with the existing communities before finalising the Masterplan

- 1.5 Key points from the draft response are included in section 3 of this report.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the attached draft response on modern.gov and agree its submission to the Department for Communities

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 The Draft Masterplan has been created to provide an overarching framework for the future development of Sailortown. Although the work was originally initiated in 2008 it

was delayed to allow the York Street Interchange proposal to become fully developed.

3.2 The aims of the masterplan include:

- Provide an overarching framework for the development of the area;
- Incorporate the on-going transport engineering and environmental work that has been undertaken in relation to the York Street Interchange;
- Promote improved pedestrian and cycle links with the city centre and the Laganside area, by addressing poor physical connectivity;
- Facilitate social and economic connections through the design of the environment and the improvement of key routes;
- Encourage active ground floor uses to bring life and activity to key streets and spaces within the area;
- Promote a scale and form of development that protects and strengthens the heritage and urban form within the area, with potential for statement buildings at the intersections, creating sense of place and assisting orientation within the area;

3.3 The draft council response is available on modern.gov for Members' consideration, however, the key points include:

- The Department recently adopted, in part, the CCRIS as its policy framework for the future regeneration of Belfast City Centre and over recent months both the Department and Council have worked closely together. The Council is looking forward to continuing this positive working relationship in order to capture investment and make a real difference to the lives of those who live and work in Belfast and as a result are generally supportive of the Masterplan and what it is seeking to achieve.
- The draft masterplan and its key aims are broadly in line with the aspirations of the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, however, it would be beneficial to provide some more specific comments on the draft plan particularly since Council is responsible for a number of sites in this area
- The Masterplan area encompasses a number of important areas within the city including the emerging City Quays development, Ulster University Campus, York Street Interchange and the numerous planned developments around York Street and Dunbar link. It is important that the planned developments in these areas integrate not only with the city centre but also with adjacent communities
- The City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy identifies the Lagan Corridor as an important but underutilised part of the city and emphasises the need

enhance connectivity to the river – it is important that the Masterplan recognises this.

- The masterplan recommendations include a number of uses for sites throughout the study area. It should be made clear that these illustrations are indicative and development proposals must be in accordance with BMAP and other relevant statutory planning policies which are the primary tools for Belfast City Council in undertaking its role as the planning authority
- The Key projects identified in the Masterplan are broadly in line with the aspirations of the Council's City Centre Strategy including encouraging more people to live in the city centre, improving the Dunbar link, the potential impact of a rail halt in this area, encouraging activity under the motorway flyovers and creating attractive squares and spaces. It is important that residential developments aim to provide balanced neighbourhoods that are well connected to the city centre and have access to important amenities
- The Council will welcome continued engagement with the department and other city stakeholders including involvement in the preparation of any future development framework or action plan for this area including consideration of how to best maximise the benefit of the high levels of development activity planned in this area.
- The Council also encourages engagement with the local communities through the formal consultation exercise currently underway in order to shape the final document.”

The Committee considered the draft response and agreed to its submission to the Department for Communities.

Car Parking Strategy

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 update Members on the Council's draft Car Parking Strategy and to seek endorsement from Members of the high level recommendations summarised in Para 3.9 and set out on modern.gov prior to any agreed public consultation process.
- 1.2 The City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy identified car parking as a major issue for Belfast City Centre and recommended that the Council works with the Department for Infrastructure to develop and implement a strategy for car parking for Belfast. The Council commissioned consultants in October 2015 to develop a Car Parking Strategy and a project steering group, consisting of

Council officers and representatives from DFI, was set up to assist with the development of the Strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

2.2

- Note the findings from the baseline review and consultation process and agree the proposed draft vision, objectives and Council priorities as outlined in Para 3.9 and in this report.
- Agree to progress to a public consultation exercise which will facilitate further opportunities to shape the Car parking strategy before it is finalised.

3.0 Main report

Key Findings

3.1 The development of the Car Parking Strategy followed a number of key stages from a baseline review and consultation process with key stakeholders through to the formulation of a draft strategy and action plan.

3.2 The draft Car Parking Strategy and action plan has been finalised and a copy is available on modern.gov.. There are a number of key findings from the baseline review and consultation process which are outlined below for Members to note:

- The baseline review has indicated that there is sufficient parking stock in Belfast and this should be maintained and closely monitored. There are 28,300 spaces publicly available (45% on street and 55% off Street) and demand indicates a requirement for 18,000 on average per day in Belfast. The Council has responsibility for 17 of the 59 off street car parks containing 1,476 parking spaces.
- The number of car parking spaces provided in Belfast is considered to be high compared to other cities of similar size.
- Whilst there is currently sufficient parking stock in terms of overall spaces the provision is fragmented and imbalanced across the city centre. The current location of car parking spaces, particularly surface car parking, is not necessarily aligned to either existing nodes of demand or to future redevelopment proposals, particularly in the context of the City Centre Regeneration Strategy. The provision and location of parking should reflect the changing shape of regeneration across the city.

- There is a lack of information for visitors as to where available parking is located resulting in circulating traffic looking for available spaces contributing to congestion in the city which could be more efficiently managed.
- Site audits have identified that some car parks are of low quality in terms of facilities and provision for users which leads to security and crime issues impacting on parking behaviour in the city.
- There is a high level of all day parking in specific areas of the core city centre area that is inappropriate. This reduces the amount of short stay opportunities for shoppers, business meetings and other visitors.
- Parking is not seen as a major decision factor by investors, particularly as other cities do not have significant city centre parking although it was noted that many other cities have a range of alternative sustainable transport options.
- Commuter parking in city centre residential areas is a known issue and individual Residents Parking Schemes have been developed by DFI, however to date none of these schemes have been implemented.
- There is a high level of private non-residential parking spaces (10,422) provided in the core and fringe city area which encourages the use of the private car as the mode of transport. This is generally free car parking provided to employees as part of public and private office developments.
- There are a number of low quality surface car parking sites in the city centre where consideration should be given to maximising their wider regeneration potential particularly in the context of the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and redevelopment proposals. Consolidation of existing parking or alternative provision could potentially be facilitated as part of any new development or consideration given to the provision of new multi storey/underground car parks. This would allow better use of valuable city centre land and bring wider economic and regeneration benefits, as well concentrating traffic movements to fewer parking sites.
- Potential solutions that could be implemented through the introduction of new technology include more efficient enforcement, development of a Belfast parking website and app, improving parking information as you approach the city (city wide Intelligent Transport System, innovative wayfinding and upgrading payment methods).
- The review has found that parking tariffs in Belfast are comparable with cities such as Newcastle and Nottingham, but generally cheaper than cities such as Manchester, Dublin and Cardiff. Council site tariffs

were found to be generally lower than those in adjacent private sites.

- Accessible parking in Belfast City Centre is limited in comparison to the number of standard spaces available. Blue badge holders can park for free on street if the blue badge is on clear display. A review of the existing provision of accessible parking has indicated that Blue Badge provision could also be considered within Belfast City Council off street car parks.
- Issues of parking in some district centres outside the city centre has been raised in particular the use of free car parks for all day commuter parking in areas such as East Belfast.

3.3 The progression and promotion of sustainable travel options should also be considered in parallel including further Park and Ride facilities on both radial and high frequency public transport corridors; enhancement of the quality and volume of cycle infrastructure and parking; improved taxi facilities and coach parking and the development of the Belfast Transport Hub and the Belfast Rapid Transit system.

3.4 Vision, Objectives and Priorities

The draft vision and the set of objectives are outlined below which the strategy should seek to address along with the suggested Council priorities for consideration:

3.5 Vision

‘Belfast is a city offering sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking which supports economic development and regeneration within the city by balancing the requirements of residents, businesses, commuters and visitors.

3.6 Objective 1

Ensuring appropriate provision and location of car parking to support and improve the economic vitality of the City Centre and district centres.

Council priorities

- Review current provision to ensure an appropriate provision in the right location to support economic vitality.
- Consider how optimal use can be made of surface car parks to best support city centre regeneration in terms of alignment of provision with re-development and maximising valuable city centre land to deliver on wider regeneration outcomes.

- Identify opportunities to consolidate existing parking or alternative provision as an integral part of new development and consider provision of new multi storey /underground car parks where appropriate.

3.7 Objective 2

Ensuring car parking provision does not encourage less sustainable commuter travel, especially for journeys into the City Centre and supports access by public transport, cycling and walking.

Council priorities

Work with stakeholders to consider how parking tariffs in the city centre core can be reviewed to ensure sufficient short-stay parking facilities to support commercial and leisure activities and deter long stay commuter parking.

- Work with stakeholders to develop and improve the sustainable transport modes for travel to and within the city, in particular for commuters.
- Consider options to control the amount of private non-residential parking (PNR) across the city.

3.8 Objective 3

Minimising the potentially negative impacts of parking on residential communities in the city particularly in inner city areas.

Council priorities

- Work with DfI and local communities to consider parking management for these areas, either through the implementation of on-street parking regimes or Residents Parking Schemes.
- Identify surface car park sites suitable for consolidation and redevelopment in order to improve the built environment for inner city areas.

3.9 Objective 4

Work with stakeholders to improve the quality of parking and information available, ideally through technology and in particular develop a new parking signage and information system that supports parking and wider applications.

Council priorities

- Bring forward technological solutions to make it easier to navigate into and around the city and effective signposting in the City Centre.

- Work with key stakeholders to ensure that key destinations have appropriate levels of disabled parking and family friendly provision.
- Encourage car park operators to invest in their facilities to the extent that they will achieve the Park Mark standard.
- Reduce supply of poor quality surface level space and replace with higher quality well-managed space.

Key Recommendations

The strategy has made a number of recommendations and proposals for consideration by elected members. The main strategy proposals are as follows:

- The current parking supply in the city should be maintained and that new car parks should only be provided within the city where they replace existing spaces or where they are an essential part of a new development.
- All on-street parking spaces within the core city centre area should be controlled either by the extension of on-street pay and display or by residents parking schemes. The strategy is also proposing that on-street tariffs are reviewed to reflect demand and deter long stay parking.
- City centre surface parking sites should be considered in the context of the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and redevelopment proposals that maximise the use of valuable city centre assets in order to deliver on regeneration outcomes. This may involve the redevelopment and intensification of use of these sites and alternative provision made either as an integral part of redevelopment or transferred into multi-storey sites along or outside the inner ring road. The provision of multi storey car parks on the inner ring could potentially be supplemented by a shuttle bus connecting the main shopping and employment areas. This approach could be applied to a number of the Council's off-street surface car parks. Consideration would however need to be given to the responsibility for development and funding of any such multi storey car parks although this could also be viewed in the context of the release of valuable city centre sites and the income producing potential of multi storey car parks. Further consideration would be needed internally on whether the operation and control of these car parks in the future should be retained by the Council.
- The issue of the large amount of private non-residential parking provided across the city has been raised and the need for tighter controls. The strategy is advocating that the Council and other government departments should lead by example by reducing the

amount of PNR this could be achieved in a number of ways eg consider offering alternatives sustainable travel options, charging for the spaces they provide for employees etc.

- There is a need to review the DFI's residents parking scheme proposals in city centre areas. Previously, the schemes have not received full community support mainly due to charging and access for visitors. The strategy recommends that there is a review of criteria for implementation, scheme design, operational times and community support in order to increase the potential for delivery.
- Long stay parking in some suburban areas should be charged in order to increase turnover and maintain space for local activities
- Actions should be taken to improve the quality of parking and information available such as new technology to improve ticketing and payment systems, more information for visitors via electronic media including a dedicated website and app and a potential integrated signage system for the city.
- The Council should provide disabled parking spaces for free in off-street car parks and review provision and this will have implications for the Council in terms of loss of revenue.

3.10 Department of Regional Development input

It should be noted that many of the draft strategy recommendations will require further agreement from key stakeholders and in particular DFI. DFI is represented on the project steering group and will be providing formal comment on the draft strategy.

3.11 Public consultation

Subject to the Draft Strategy and Action Plan being endorsed by Committee and ratified by Council, it is intended that we will undertake a public consultation exercise from mid July to September 2016 which will facilitate further opportunities to shape the strategy before it is finalised. It is on this basis that members are asked to endorse the draft recommendations as set out in this report and provided in more detail on modern.gov.

3.12 Equality and Good Relations Implications

Equality and good relations screening will be conducted in parallel with the proposed consultation processes.

3.13 Resource Implications

Additional resources may be required to assist with the public consultation on the draft strategy subject to agreement. If endorsed the recommendations will have future implications on Council revenue such as loss of parking revenue due to the redevelopment of city centre surface car parks, costs of improving car parks, introduction of charging in some free car parks in district centres and the introduction of free disabled car parking in Council owned off street car parks. These have not been quantified in the research and will be reported to a future Strategic Policy & Resources Committee once the strategy is finalised.”

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that the draft vision, objectives and priorities within the report were subject to approval from the Members and invited them to make comment.

During discussion, a Member thanked the Director for facilitating a recent meeting with inner-city residents who had long-standing problems with commuter parking. The Member reiterated that perhaps more creative solutions could be utilised, such as implementing restrictions for certain hours of the day in those areas in order to discourage all-day parking from commuters.

The Member also highlighted that the Council should be cautious when communicating the messages from the Strategy as, while there was a proven surplus of car parking spaces within the city, a large proportion of the unused spaces were as such because they were poorly located and that this should be taken into consideration.

A further Member stated that outer ring car parks would surely discourage people from coming into the city centre to shop and suggested that underground car parking, while expensive, would perhaps be the best and most aesthetically pleasing solution for the city.

Moved by Councillor Dudgeon.
Seconded by Councillor Craig and

Resolved - That the wording of Objective 2 (para 3.7) be amended to read:

“Ensuring car parking provision encourages sustainable commuter travel, especially for journeys into the City Centre and supports access by public transport, cycling and walking”

The Director thanked the Members for their comments and advised them that these would be taken into consideration by officers before the Car Parking Strategy was finalised.

After further discussion, the Committee:

- (i) noted the findings from the baseline review and consultation process;
- (ii) agreed the proposed draft vision, objectives (as amended) and Council priorities as outlined in Para 3.9 in the report; and
- (iii) agreed to progress to a public consultation exercise which would facilitate further opportunities to shape the Car Parking Strategy before it was finalised.

Finance

Year End Finance Report

The Director of Development presented the financial position of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to the Members. He advised them that the Quarter 4 (Q4) position for the Committee was an under spend of £3,000.

The Committee was advised that the current position was due to over spends in three specific service areas, namely, the Belfast Zoo, Development Directorate and City Events and Venues, which were offset by under spends in Economic Initiatives and International Development, Off Street Car Parking and the Parks Estates.

The Members were advised that the City Venues, within the City Events and Venues Service, had reported a Quarter 1 over spend of £93,000 and a forecast year end over spend of £260,000. The Director explained that the key reasons for this were the loss of income above that which was planned for, as a result of construction, and a failure to reduce expenditure impacted by the loss of income. He reminded the Members that an action plan had been approved by the Committee in September 2015 and was pleased to inform the Members that the results after implementation of the plan exceeded expectations, especially in terms of income generated by the Sales and Marketing Team, which gave the City Events and Venues Service an total overspend of £45,000.

The Parks Estates position at year end was an under spend of £30,000 as a result of curtailing expenditure to offset the income position.

The Members were advised that, at the end of Quarter 4, the Zoo was over spent by £228,000. He reminded the Committee that an improvement plan had been considered by the Committee in September 2015, and again in January 2016, towards addressing those over spends. The Committee noted that a separate report would detail the progress being made in relation to the Belfast Zoo.

The Committee noted the financial position and that this would be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 24th June, 2016.

International Relations

International Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on recent international work in relation to Sister Cities linkages as well as international business activity, and to set out some emerging priorities for action.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the international activity update for the year to date and agree to a future report, to be presented to the Committee in September, setting out how this activity should be progressed, in the context of a wider International Relations Framework.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that the Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and a number of Councillors and Chief Officers have been involved in a range of recent international business visits and have hosted international delegations in the City. These included:

- **Business visit to Boston, in February 2016**
- **Developing a range of potential education and business linkages with Nashville, in March 2016**
- **Progressing Sister City linkages, including the identification of opportunities for future collaboration between Belfast and Shenyang, in May 2016**
- **Promoting the city as a creative business location through a visit to the South X South West international creative business and music event in Austin, Texas, in March 2016**

- An enhanced presence at MIPIM in March 2016 (which was the subject of a report to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in May 2016)
- Enhancing our business partnership with Invest NI which has included the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Chief Executive hosting business delegations and inward visits in City Hall as well as Chief Officers becoming involved in a range of investment meetings alongside Invest NI colleagues.

3.2 In addition to the above, the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Chief Executive continue to host a significant number of international visitors to the city, and there is a significant volume of work under way with partners to facilitate their international connections and promote opportunities for education, business and cultural links. Likewise, the Council has committed to a programme of investment in the city centre and this is reliant on promoting the opportunities for private sector investment and growth, including commitments from international partners. Finally, we are working to promote Belfast as an international business and tourism destination and this requires building partnerships with organisations such as Invest NI to understand how we can provide the ‘city proposition’ and ‘gateway services’ alongside the wider range of incentives that they promote to encourage additional inward investment.

3.3 All of this work requires a coordinated and cohesive approach to maximise the return on investment. It also requires an understanding of where the Council can add value to the work of other partners and what the resourcing implications of this work might be. To that end, Committee has agreed to a new International Relations Framework that will take account of these commitments as well as considering future development opportunities and identifying the specific role and priorities for the Council moving forward.

3.4 In the interim, the recent visits and connections have presented a number of emerging opportunities which will be considered as part of the new International Relations Framework. These include:

Boston

3.5 The Boston visits – and subsequent follow-up actions – have identified a number of key areas of work which include:

- Secured and delivered the first Friendship Four Festival of Ice Hockey Tournament in November 2015 and secured agreement for the follow-up event in November 2016 (as approved by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee)

- Confirmed plans for an inward trade mission to Belfast in Autumn/Winter 2016, in partnership with the Boston Irish Business Association
- Secured increased co-operation for the J1 visa programme for students from Queen's and Ulster Universities
- Secured over \$20,000 for two Belfast schools for equipment and literacy programmes, under the Irish American Partnership.
- Explored and partially developed a Youth Transformation Project addressing barriers to employment for youth in both cities. Further exploratory work on this project required, to finalise details of feasibility
- Connected the Education Authority of Northern Ireland with its Boston counterparts to support exchange and learning
- Promoted investment opportunities in Belfast in collaboration with Invest NI colleagues.

Nashville

3.6 With respect to Nashville, this was the first visit made by Belfast City Council in a number of years. The visit (from 10-16 March 2016) was an exploratory one. The objective was to scope the scale of potential for additional exchanges and partnerships between organisations in both cities, and to establish the added value that Belfast City Council could play in developing these linkages. The visit was productive, and the following opportunities were identified:

- Learning around the development of new venues and visitor attractions, focusing on key themes such as music and culture
- Opportunities to link the Innovation Factory with the Nashville Entrepreneur Centre and to develop initiatives such as residencies for entrepreneurs and potential to promote Belfast as a European base for Nashville companies
- Opportunities to work with Invest NI to undertake additional FDI promotion work in the Nashville and Tennessee areas, with opportunities for new investments currently being pursued
- Opportunities to consolidate and build on Queen's University Belfast's long-standing links with Vanderbilt University and potential for new engagements between Ulster University and Belmont University (based on introductions made through Council contacts)
- Opportunities for student exchanges with two new exchanges already in place and Nashville students due to come to Belfast in January 2017

- Identification of key contacts within the television and music industry who are open to further engagement around TV production opportunities and joint bidding for conferences and music events.

International Sister Cities Summit in Dublin

- 3.7 Members will also be aware that Belfast hosted delegations from Boston and Nashville on 19-21 April, in advance of their participation in the International Sister Cities Summit in Dublin from 21-23 April 2016.
- 3.8 During the two day Belfast programme, delegates from Boston (led by Boston Belfast Chair John Donovan) and Nashville (led by Councillor Jim Schulman), engaged in an intensive round of visits and meetings. The programme included sessions in community development, peace and reconciliation, cyber security innovation, spatial planning, education, legal systems, culture and tourism. It allowed delegates the opportunity to understand the new Belfast Agenda, the Council and City's ambitions for inclusive economic growth, and the partnership approach with stakeholders to achieve these ambitions.

Shenyang

- 3.10 The Lord Mayor led a delegation of Councillors and officers – including the Chief Executive – to the city of Shenyang in China in May 2016. The visit – which was planned to coincide with business and education delegations from Queen's University and Invest NI – marked the first visit to Shenyang since the signing of a friendly cooperation agreement between the cities in 2013. A number of introductory meetings took place on issues such as tourism development, inward investment and cooperation on education and training. A further report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee to set out an agreed way forward in order to maximise the connections established.

SXSW

- 3.11 SXSW is the world's largest event focusing on the music, film and interactive sectors. It involves a range of presentations, workshops, promotional events and showcasing opportunities for international businesses involved in this area of work. The event has been running for thirty years and Belfast City Council has attended over the last eight years, in partnership with organisations such as Invest NI and Generator NI, as well as individual music and digital businesses who have been taking part in the event.

- 3.12 In March 2016, the Deputy Lord Mayor along with a Council Officer took part in the event. The Council hosted two key networking events over two days, with more than 450 international businesses in attendance. Key attendees included representatives from Virginia Tech, Sony Entertainment, Kobalt Music, Music Cities network, City of Toronto, City of Austin, Tech City, Stubhub, United Airlines (digital), Capitol Factory and Spotify.
- 3.13 The Northern Ireland delegation comprised 15 digital and music companies (supported by Invest NI) as well as 5 bands/musicians who had applied directly and been accepted to participate in the music element of the programme.
- 3.14 While it is still early to be specific about outcomes, participants have noted the following achievements:
- Increase in revenue of £100,000 among participants
 - £185,000 of potential sales identified and to be followed up
 - 1 company established relationship with new investor in relation to future seed round funding
 - 1 company used SXSW to identify a number of US collaborators who want to run clinical trials with their products - an essential precursor to being able to sell medical technology games in USA
 - 1 company generated significant feedback on new product offering and secured meetings with several high potential clients including Disney, Microsoft and Khan Academy. New leads have been developed and have secured follow up meetings and pitch opportunities with several potential clients.
- 3.15 All of these opportunities and leads will now be considered and as part of the work on the new International Relations Framework which will be presented to the Committee in September 2016. This Framework will consider how the City can benefit from its international connections, as well as looking at how Belfast presents itself internationally and will seek to establish a number of priority areas of work to be progressed by the Council and its partners.
- 3.16 It is proposed that the International Relations Framework will be outcomes-based and will take account of resources – both staff resources and financial resources – required to support implementation. It is likely that it will lead to focusing resources on a small number of priority actions that are aligned to ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda. The International Relations Framework will also be an important mechanism for implementation of the Place Positioning Strategy.
- 3.17 Financial and Resource Implications

No specific financial or resource allocations required at this point.

3.18 Equality or Good Relations Implications

The new International Relations Framework will be equality screened.”

A number of Members paid tribute to the work of all the officers who had been involved in arranging the various Sister Cities trips and recent international visits and delegations both to and from Belfast. The Committee made a number of comments recognising the successful outcomes and links made from each visit and delegation.

The Director of Development also highlighted to the Members that a number of tripartite agreements had been made between Belfast, Boston and Nashville as a result of the recent Sister Cities engagement and that this was a significant achievement.

In response to a Member’s question, the Director detailed the links which the Council had with Dublin, which included a Memorandum of Understanding, and pointed out that he had met with representatives from Dublin earlier that week and had discussed a variety of issues.

The Director advised the Committee that he had attended an event in Dublin the previous day, which was hosted by the World Tourism Cities Federation. He advised the Members that the Federation was the world’s first international tourism organisation with cities as the main body, which had been established in China. The Director outlined to the Members that he had subsequently received a letter from the Mayor of Beijing, inviting Belfast to become a member of the Federation, which included cities such as Rome, London, Helsinki and Amsterdam.

The Committee was also advised that the National China Tourism Body had requested the use of the Big Screen in the grounds of the City Hall to promote the Sister Cities relationship between Belfast and Shenyang. The Committee agreed that use of the big screen be granted.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Operational

Support for Business Start up and Enterprise

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- **Update Members on the progress of transferring functions including Business Start and Enterprise Support from DETI/Invest NI**
- **Update Members on the ongoing work to develop a Regional Business Start programme**

- Update Members on proposed initiatives aimed at increasing Enterprise Awareness and supporting Student Entrepreneurship.
- Note that in addition to these programmes the Council will undertake a full review of how it can further improve the support for small business start up and growth over the coming months

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the achievements of Business Start support activity from April 2015 to date
- Note the work undertaken to date to develop a Regional Business Start programme and secure ERDF funding for this programme, including the indicative timeframe for a new programme
- Approve the principle of working with other lead Councils to support the management and implementation of a new Regional Start programme
- Approve the proposals presented for future Pre-Enterprise and Student Entrepreneurship support, including a total budget allocation of £55,000 for this work in the current financial year (£20,000 for Pre-Enterprise support and £35,000 for Student Enterprise support).

3.0 Main report

3.1 As Members will be aware, a number of economic development functions transferred from DETI/Invest NI to local authorities in April 2015. These include Enterprise Awareness (with a particular focus on under-represented groups, such as women's entrepreneurship, and targeting areas of disadvantage), Start a Business activity, Social Enterprise and Youth Enterprise.

3.2 It is important to recognise that the functions transferred rather than the specific programmes through which DETI/Invest NI chose to deliver services to entrepreneurs, principally the Go For It Programme (for generic Business Start support) and Social Entrepreneurship Programme (focused on new and early stage Social Enterprises). As a result of this transfer, local authorities are responsible for the associated job promotion targets identified by the Northern Ireland Executive, through the Programme for Government, and these must be reported annually. However the programme design and the level of support available is the responsibility of the individual Councils to decide, based on their respective budgets (and taking account of the budgets transferred from Invest NI for this activity).

3.3 These new functions are additional to the range of Enterprise and Business Growth services which Belfast City Council's Economic Initiatives Section has been delivering for many years. The LGR transferring functions complement a wider range of Council provision towards supporting new, micro and existing businesses as well as potential and current investors. Members will be aware that one of the key strands of the Belfast Agenda is 'Business and Economy' and this includes a number of commitments to grow the private sector and make Belfast an attractive and cost-effective location for their business. The Employability and Skills Framework – which will be presented to the June meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – also identifies Business Start as a central pillar of collaborative efforts to increase employability in the city. In this context, the prepared programmes of work can contribute to improvements in employment levels as well as business productivity and competitiveness and city attractiveness.

3.4 Interim and New Business Start Provision from October 2016 onwards

Whilst the NI Executive job promotion targets for Councils for the current financial year have not yet been set by central government, the assumption is that the targets and associated transferring budget will be the same as those for the 2015/2016 year. If this is the case, the job target for the Belfast City Council area will be 325 new jobs supported through the Business Start-up programmes. The budget available from central government for this work is £411,984.

3.5 In April 2015, Belfast City Council entered into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Invest NI to continue delivery of the Go for It Business Start programme until the end of the contract period, i.e. October 2016. In the period since April 2015, the Go for It Business Start programme has supported 440 new jobs in the Belfast City Council area. This is significantly ahead of the Programme for Government target.

3.6 The 11 Council areas have been working together for some time to develop a successor programme to the current Go for It initiative. They have undertaken an appraisal and business case to inform the new provision. This has recommended a Regional programme (i.e. available in all Council areas). It has also recommended that there should be more direct support offered to the Start-Up Business than is the case through the current programme. This will mainly involve additional workshops on topics such as marketing and financial management as well as dedicated 1-2-1 mentoring support, tailored to the business needs. The appraisal also recommended centralised management structures to govern the delivery of the Regional programme on behalf of the 11 Councils.

- 3.7 In November 2015, the 11 Councils submitted a funding application to Invest NI to secure European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding for the new programme. If successful, this will lever up to 80% of match funding towards eligible costs. The application is currently at Economic Appraisal stage with a decision expected by July 2016. Early indications suggest that, whilst delivery costs and third party marketing are expected to be eligible costs, other overheads such as staffing and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database system are expected to be ineligible. This will mean that the full costs for these activities will have to be met by the Councils themselves.
- 3.8 If the funding application is successful, a procurement exercise will need to be undertaken to appoint a delivery organisation for the new programme. The timescale for this means that a new Council-led Business Start programme is unlikely to be operational until April 2017 at the earliest.
- 3.9 In order to achieve the NI Executive targets and to avoid a gap in delivery, Councils are individually developing contingency arrangements for their areas. In Belfast, officers are developing an interim solution providing business planning support services to new business starts. This will mirror provision currently provided through Go for It and costs will be met from the transferred budget. Derry City and Strabane District Council will lead on a Regional promotional campaign on behalf of all Council areas to promote the programme and ensure that targets are met, and the Councils will make contributions towards this activity.
- 3.10 Members should note that the programme will represent the 'first tier' of Business Start-Up support. It will not be sector-specific; instead it will be available to anyone with a business idea that wishes to secure support to move forward from concept into an existing business. Taking account of the fact that Business Start-Up rates in the city are very low at present, it will be only one of a range initiatives that will be developed by the Council, in conjunction with its partners, to encourage an increase in Business Start-Up rates and to support existing businesses to grow and increase both their employment and productivity levels. These will include additional support for businesses that have high growth potential as well as new opportunities to package business accommodation and support services through initiatives such as the Innovation Factory and sector-specific activities in key growth areas, including the creative and digital sector. A report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee to outline the range of existing and proposed activity and to seek Committee approval for any new areas of work.

3.11 Pre-Enterprise, Student Enterprise and Social Enterprise support

Belfast City Council continues to provide a range of high quality Enterprise Awareness and Enterprise Support initiatives that have gained national and international recognition from bodies such as the European Training Foundation and now through the 2016 MJ Local Government Awards (Belfast Enterprise Academy is a finalist in the Awards to take place in June this year).

The support available covers:

- **Pre-Enterprise**: including outreach engagement, ideas generation activity, targeted work with specific groups. Since 2011, Belfast City Council has delivered an Enterprise initiative called *Start by Doing*. This initiative stimulates levels of entrepreneurial activity across the city with a focus on targeting underrepresented groups including youth, young people not in employment, education or training, migrants, people with a disability and females. When the programme ends in June 2016 it will have supported 200 entrepreneurs to take forward sustainable business ideas. Subject to evaluation, it is proposed that the pre-enterprise support activities are commissioned for a further three year period, engaging at least 200 individuals per annum. This work will be linked to wider Council activity to support regeneration and economic growth across the city and will also support the work on Employability and Skills. The indicative budget for this work is around £20,000 each year. The allocation for this year has been included within the Economic Development Unit budget, which was approved as part of the overall Departmental budget.
- **Student Entrepreneurship**: a recent Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report for Belfast identified the potential to work with universities and colleges to encourage more high-level business starts to address the city's productivity level challenges. Belfast Enterprise Academy is a successful partnership programme with Queen's University, Ulster University and Belfast Metropolitan College. Each of the institutions provides complementary support for students to help fast-track their business ideas. Over the last 7 years, the programme has supported 150 participants engaged and helped create more than 50 businesses. Subject to an evaluation of the programme in June 2016, it is proposed that the programme is expanded for another three years, to engage at least 70 individuals each year. The

indicative budget for this work is around £35,000 each year. The allocation for this year has been included within the Economic Development Unit budget, which was approved as part of the overall Departmental budget.

- **Social Enterprise and Co-operatives:** encouraging new enterprise models such as social enterprise and co-operatives which can not only support economic growth but also address social cohesion issues in the city. The Council is currently supporting a programme to increase the number of social enterprises across the city. It has a target of engaging a minimum of 50 participants per year through skills workshops and 1-2-1 mentoring. A separate Committee paper regarding opportunities to support the development of the Co-operatives sector will be presented to the Committee in August 2016.

3.12 **Financial Implications**

The cost for the business start-up activity will continue to be delivered from within existing Economic Development budgets, inclusive of the budget associated with transferring DETI/Invest NI functions (£411,984). The cost of the new programme will not be known until the conclusion of the procurement exercise. A report will be brought back to the Committee when this is concluded.

- 3.13 The proposed cost of continuation of the pre-enterprise programme is around £20,000 annually. The proposed cost of continuation of the student entrepreneurship programme is approximately £35,000 annually. These amounts have been set aside within Economic Development Unit budgets for the current year.

3.14 **Equality and good relations implications**

Programmes have been designed to help remove barriers to participation and promote equality of opportunity.”

A Member asked the Director to outline how the success of the new businesses was measured. In response, the Director outlined that ‘business plan outputs’ were used as a measurement, with a metric based on previous outputs. He explained to the Committee that, where ten business plans were created through the programme, at least six would lead to a new business start. The Members were advised that, of those businesses starting up, it was estimated that they would employ an average of 1.1 people by the end of their first year’s trading.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Zoo Improvement

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that a plan had been developed to address the key issues being faced by the Belfast Zoo,

which included five key areas, namely, working arrangements, income opportunities, Save to Invest Capital Programme, commercial infrastructure and operational efficiencies.

He outlined the progress which had been made to date:

- tendering for a new catering contract was underway;
- implementing income generation activities such as Animal Experiences, Birthday Parties, Zoo School and Keeper for the day
- implementation of mobile applications and update of the website;
- a business case had been developed to allow for online bookings;
- a review of existing arrangements with Visit Belfast, Hotels and Stenaline;
- reviews of shop purchases, sponsorship and Adoptions, the animal collection plan, the Zoo Vet contract and the operation of Stores (including the supply of animal feeds) were underway;
- a review of overtime costs, with recommendations being developed;
- an investigation of sources of Grants available; and
- an agreement through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, on 22nd April, to include the Zoo in the City Centre Strategy and submit a capital bid for regional funding.

The Director advised the Members that officers were looking at the operation of the Zoo, Belfast Castle and Malone House, with a view to how the Council could optimise its assets and maximise income generation.

The Committee was advised that the Belfast Zoo was the host for the EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquarium) conference, which would be held at the Belfast Waterfront in September, 2016. The Members were advised that this was a prestigious event and included a Zoo night for up to 500 delegates, which would give Belfast the opportunity to develop networks further and create opportunities for new sponsorship arrangements. The Committee was also advised that a Civic reception had been applied for, where the Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee would be invited to attend.

In response to a Member's question, regarding whether there were any plans to restore the Floral Hall within the Zoo site, the Director advised the Committee that, while he was aware of the considerable public interest in the restoration of the Floral Hall, there was a significant capital requirement to do so and, as a result, there were no plans at that time. However, he outlined that it would be considered within the overall review of the Department's assets and the ambition to maximise income.

During discussion, a number of Members expressed concern that the Zoo was still operating at a significant loss to the Council and that significant action needed to take place.

After further discussion of a number of options, the Committee:

1. noted the progress made on the short to medium term plan; and
2. agreed that a detailed report would be submitted to a future meeting on the long term options for the future of the Belfast Zoo.

D
358

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 8th June, 2016**

Chairperson