



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Artist-led street furniture
Date:	17 February 2015
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	As Members will recall, in March 2014, Committee agreed £5,000 to research and develop a proposal for artist-led street furniture. This included looking at different models from across the UK, Ireland and Europe, such as “social sofas”, a social seating project started in the Netherlands.
1.2	PLACE built environment centre was awarded the contract in May 2014. PLACE subsequently carried out extensive research and over 50 stakeholders were invited to take part in five workshops in North, South, East and West Belfast and Shankill. Consultees included Councillors, partnership boards, the PSNI and representatives from the arts, business and community sectors.
1.3	A summary of the key research findings is presented below. The complete research report is available on request.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p><u>Consultation</u> The following findings were gathered at the stakeholder workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was a desire for communities to be involved in the planning, fabrication and installation of seating. - The seats should be site specific, reflecting Belfast heritage and stories and connecting with existing infrastructure, for example, walking tours, regeneration plans and bike hire scheme. - There was a desire to have one city-wide collective project, rather than five separate projects. This offers potential for trails and packaging to connect the sites and bring communities together, including through a “sitting together” theme. - Individual community groups are unlikely to have the capacity to deliver this project or see it as a priority. There is a need for this to be led by the Council or another agency. - Seating should be sited in busy public areas to mitigate against vandalism. - Seating could have multiple functions and could also be a place to eat, play, shelter, plant shrubs etc. - Different seats could be installed in different parts of Belfast, or one

	<p>prototype could be developed that could be moved, altered or decorated to reflect different sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The needs of different types of users such as older people should be considered.
2.2	<p><u>Sites</u></p> <p>A long list of 45 sites was considered and after stakeholder engagement the following 5 sites were visited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Olympia Leisure Centre, Boucher Road - Crumlin Road Gaol, Crumlin Road - Hollywood Road/Newtownards Road junction - St Comgall's, Divis Street - Shankill Methodist Church, Shankill Road <p>Further deliberation with local communities on specific locations would be required should this project develop further.</p>
2.3	<p><u>Design considerations</u></p> <p>The research suggested that the design of the seating should adhere to the follow criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality: the seats should be high quality, robust and hardwearing, easy to maintain, with a life cycle of at least 10 years. - Creativity: the design should be creative and contemporary with an innovative approach to materials, functionality and production. - Distinctly Belfast: the seating must resonate with the people of Belfast and showcase Belfast as a distinctive, dynamic city.
2.4	<p><u>Costs</u></p> <p>Based on PLACE's report, the cost of a citywide project installing five permanent seats across Belfast is estimated at £100,000. The cost of piloting one project in one area, resulting in one seat, is estimated at £20,000. The cost of developing one modular prototype that can be moved and adjusted to different locations is estimated at £7,000.</p>
2.5	<p><u>Funding</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council had included a nominal budget of £5,000 in its 2014-2015 budget to help progress this initiative. Due to central government cuts, it is unknown whether the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's public art funding will reopen for applications in 2015/16. Other potential sources of funding include private sponsorship; Big Lottery Awards for All; and Biffa Awards (funding for community and environment projects).</p>
2.6	<p><u>Research Recommendations</u></p> <p>Taking into consideration the findings of the research, PLACE suggested that the preferred approach was to design, fabricate and install one modular seat in a variety of locations across Belfast. This work would be overseen by a steering group including community representatives and coinciding with local events. The cost for this activity would be £7,000.</p>
2.7	<p>If successful, PLACE would adopt artist-led seating as part of their core programme of work and use the pilot to fundraise from other public and private sources. However, given that there is no guarantee of additional funding this approach may in the long term have a limited impact.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u> Up to £5000 is included in Tourism, Culture and Arts budget estimates for 2014/15. Depending on the preferred option, resources would have to be identified from other funding streams.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Human resources</u> The project would be led by PLACE. Further consultation with and representation from the Council would be required on the project steering group.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Assets</u> The assets would be owned by PLACE, which would be responsible for ongoing revenue costs including maintenance and insurance.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	The contractor would be required to consider equality and good relations implications.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note the contents of this report. - consider options for progressing this initiative taking account of the financial implications of each option as set out in 2.4 of this report.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report.	