



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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| Report to: | Strategic Policy & Resources Committee |
| Subject: | Major Projects Update – Member Input CCG/TSP/North Foreshore/Accommodation |
| Date: | 24 September 2010 |
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Relevant background information

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as the Investment Decision Maker (IDM) for the Council in regard to major projects following a report on governance agreed to receive regular updates on major projects. Major projects were defined as projects which significantly affect the Council's budget, reputation and/or operation.

In this context major projects can be both pure capital projects totally funded by Belfast City Council or City investment projects where Belfast City Council is one of a number of funders or indeed organisational change projects.

Besides the obvious financial risk to the Council in undertaking these projects, a further feature is the broader impact of these projects on various Council functions and the community and the need to ensure full co-ordination and co-operation of all those involved.

Given the potential complexity it is useful to have informal Councillor input via stakeholder or other working groups as well as the formal Committee input and this issue will be further explored in the paper.

Key Issues

1. Connswater Community Greenway/Flood Alleviation Scheme (CCG/FAS)

This project is joint funded by the Big Lottery, Department for Social Development, the Rivers Agency and Belfast City Council via the City Investment Fund. The project will create a 16km walkway along the Knock, Loop and Connswater rivers in East Belfast from the Castlereagh Hills to Belfast Lough. Planned works on flood alleviation will be carried out by Rivers Agency in a joint contract thus realising savings on individual contracts and preventing nugatory works. The scheme will pass through a number of the Council's parks and open spaces and will include a range of enhancements such as new sports and play facilities, public art and new public squares as well a number of

community based activities.

There is a Councillor stakeholder group that works well consisting of all elected representatives in East Belfast and which meets regularly for breakfast briefings and updates.

To date the project has been led by East Belfast Partnership Board who submitted the lottery bid with the Council playing a major role in assembling the necessary land, advising on design and procurement and undertaking to manage and maintain the scheme.

2. Titanic Signature Project (TSP)

The Titanic Signature Project is jointly funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment/Titanic Quarter Limited (Belfast Harbour Commissioners and Harcourt) and Belfast City Council and is a £90m visitor attraction due for completion in 2012 in time for the Titanic Centenary and will be the centrepiece of the 2012 celebrations. The Council's financial commitment is £10m from the City Investment Fund. As part of its commitment the Council also required Titanic Quarter Limited to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding that aims to enhance community benefit and involvement in the greater Titanic Quarter development particularly in regard to issues such as employability, access etc. A detailed report was submitted last month to Committee which advised that the Titanic Foundation Ltd (TFL), the charity established to lead on the project would like a political stakeholder group to be kept regularly informed and to act as a sounding board.

Given that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is providing the £10m investment and the Development Committee is most associated with the Memorandum of Understanding issues and also has the Council's tourism remit, it is suggested that a stakeholder group should consist of the chair and deputy of both committees together with party nominees of those parties not represented by those positions.

The current position is that the Titanic Signature Project is on target both in terms of construction programme and costs and that a change from a Flying Theatre to an Immersive Theatre is being considered by Titanic Foundation Limited following views from funders including Belfast City Council and confirmation of costs and visitor number impacts.

A Committee site visit is currently being arranged and Committee have agreed to receive a presentation from Titanic Foundation Limited.

Given the issues that have arisen regarding the MOU it may be more appropriate to have a special joint Strategic Policy and Resources/Development Committee meeting to get all outstanding matters addressed.

3. North Foreshore

The North Foreshore is at present more a series of concepts or ideas rather than one specific project. The site is approximately 300 plus acres of heavily polluted landfill which has planning approval for a mix of uses including waste management, industrial/economic development and open space/recreation. A number of attempts have been made to turn various ideas into firm projects e.g. Giants Park, Energy to Waste Plant, Crusaders/Newington Sports Complex etc which have not been realised for

various reasons but primarily a lack of resources. The projects that have materialised are the Waste Transfer Station, a capital investment by Belfast City Council and the gas to electricity generator, a joint venture between Belfast City Council and the private sector which is producing an income. There is also a statutory closure plan which is ongoing.

In order to give greater corporate focus to progressing the development of the North Foreshore, it was agreed that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (as the Investment Decision Maker) would take primary responsibility for co-ordinating activity across the Council. A Member Steering Group now needs to be established and it is suggested that it should be chaired by the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources, and its membership should incorporate the Chairs of Development and Health and Environmental Services, together with the North Belfast Councillors.

The Chief Officers Management Team will be responsible for implementation of the plan agreed by the Steering Group, appropriate Committees and Council.

4. Accommodation

The future accommodation needs of the Council does not exist as a project but is something that needs addressed. The current decanting exercise caused by the City Hall refurbishment, overcrowding issues and restructuring as part of the Review of Public Administration and Improvement agendas is now virtually complete.

Earlier this year the costs of decanting/accommodation were reported to Committee and it was agreed that the Accommodation Group should be re established to look at future commitments.

In essence the Council has two major City centre buildings which it leases ie Adelaide Exchange and Lanyon Place both of which have break clauses in their leases that need to be exercised around 2015, otherwise the leases will need to be extended.

If Committee is minded to take a different approach such as building a new City centre office, dispersing staff to non City centre offices or leasing different buildings, such decisions would need to be made and acted upon prior to the break clause dates.

Working back from 2015 various options need considered and agreed by around 2012 to allow sufficient time for planning, building acquisition etc as required. Of course any decision will be bound by available finance and the uncertain environment of local government.

The previous accommodation group was a cross party group from the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and it is suggested this group is re-established to get Members up to speed with the detail of what will be a key future issue.

Conclusion

Further reports will be forthcoming on other projects such as these in the capital programme or those with limited council input such as the MAC and Lyric theatres.

Resources Implications

Resources of particular projects are as reported within the key issue updates together with additional Member time as suggested.

Recommendations & Decisions

Committee is asked to:

1. Agree to create a Titanic Signature Project Member Stakeholder Group as suggested or considered appropriate by Committee and to agree a special joint Committee meeting.
2. Agree to create a North Foreshore Steering Group as suggested or as considered appropriate by Committee.
3. Agree to re-establish the full Accommodation Group or as considered appropriate by Committee.

Decision Tracking

Following decisions on membership the relevant groups can be activated from October 2010.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents attached

None.