



Belfast City Council

Report to: Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

Subject: **Update on Peace III Priority 2.1 Capital bids for Shared Space**

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the reopening of the Peace III Priority 2.1 '*Creating Shared Public Spaces*' call for capital projects.

Relevant Background Information

The overall aim of the Peace III Programme is: **to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation**. Under Priority 2.1, entitled '*Creating Shared Public Spaces*', the SEUPB is seeking strategic physical project submissions that can be easily recognised as a Peace III project after the programme completes in 2015. The central issue that projects need to demonstrate is their ability to deliver peace and reconciliation outcomes and to be iconic, transformational projects that would provide a lasting legacy to the PEACE III programme. All monies under this call have to be committed by December 2013 and spent by 2015 so the timescales are extremely tight for capital projects.

Members are asked to note that each Peace III Priority 2.1 application is scored against the following criteria –

- Capacity to be shared space and to build peace and reconciliation
- Capacity to transform local communities
- Capacity to be iconic and provide a lasting legacy to the Peace III programme
- Sustainable development and other cross-cutting themes including equality
- Capacity to implement and deliverability within SEUPB timescales, including planning permission

- Financial competence and long term sustainability.

For a project to be successful it has to score at least 65% or more in relation to the above criteria. Applications greater than £500,000 applications will also be subject to a standard 'Green Book' economic appraisal. Only those projects deemed to score above the quality threshold (65%) will be forwarded for economic appraisal.

Members will recall that the Council submitted 4 applications under the last call for this Priority in November 2009. Of these 3 were rejected by SEUPB – the Sports Village, the Cultural Corridor and the Gasworks Bridge while the Girdwood Community Hub application was deferred pending further information. Members are asked to note that work on the Girdwood Hub submission is continuing and an update paper on this will be brought to Committee in October.

Key Issues – Reopening of the call

The Council has now been informed that SEUPB intend to reopen the Priority 2.1 call in October. The first few weeks will be set aside for Expression of Interest and it is anticipated that completed applications will need to be submitted by the end of January 2011. Members are asked to note that these dates may still be subject to change.

There is €29million available under this call. At present only one application has been successful while two other applications, in addition to Girdwood, have been deferred. Discussions with SEUPB have indicated that they are confident that all the money under this Priority will be allocated and spent within the necessary timeframe.

It is important that the learning from the previous rounds of applications is taken on board if any new projects are submitted under the reopened call, including –

- a. it is recommended that if new projects are chosen for submission this should be limited to 1 or 2 very well defined projects
- b. in order to maximise the Council's chances of a getting a successful application under the next call it will be necessary that any new projects which are chosen can clearly demonstrate their peace and reconciliation outcomes, are iconic and transformational, will provide a lasting legacy to the Peace programme in Northern Ireland, clearly identify the need for the project and are fully costed. Members are asked to note that previous bids have failed on their capacity to be iconic, transformational and have had an insufficient focus on peace and reconciliation
- c. it may also be beneficial to establish a short term Member Group to develop an influencing strategy and make use of the existing Member experience with SEUPB.

Following the SP&R Committee meeting in August and the Party Group briefings on the new Corporate Plan in early September, a number of potential projects have already been identified that could be submitted under this call. These are detailed below along with some points for Members to note –

1. *North Belfast Cultural Corridor* – As highlighted above the Cultural Corridor was knocked out by SEUPB in the last round and was rejected by SEUPB at the first stage

– i.e. it did not meet the thresholds for progressing to economic appraisal. SEUPB had advised that they felt the Corridor project was much more of an environmental and tourism project and that it was weak in demonstrating peace and reconciliation outcomes and their feedback was that the Corridor project would be unlikely to meet the aims of the Priority 2.1 programme.

However Members are asked to note that provision for parts of this project have now been made under the Council's recent submission to Peace III Priority 1.1 '*Building Positive Relations at a Local Level*' and will be taken forward through this and potentially renewing the routes options.

2. *Sports Village at the North Foreshore* – Crusaders/Newington would like Belfast City Council to lead on a cross community facility aimed at promoting good relations via sport, recreational training and education. Crusaders/Newington are also working with a private investor and would be interested in a linked development on the North Foreshore involving a new stadium and other commercial developments. The original bid got through to second phase but was rejected on grounds of limited peace inputs and gaps in the business plan.
3. *Gasworks Bridge* - Like the Cultural Corridor project above the Gasworks Bridge also did not meet the threshold scores for progressing to economic appraisal stage and was knocked out by SEUPB in the initial round. Discussions with SEUPB indicated that this project fell down on its demonstration of peace and reconciliation outcomes and its ability to provide a lasting legacy to the peace programme. It was also considered weak in terms of its ability to act as a catalyst and be transformational. Concerns were also raised over the value for money and the need for the project. SEUPB drew comparisons with the Peace Bridge in Derry which had successfully received funding under an earlier call for this priority highlighting that this was seen as a project which had an impact on the whole city whereas it was considered that the impact of the Gasworks proposal would be much more localised and therefore less iconic and transformational. However this project could be reworked if Members wish to proceed with this.
4. *North Foreshore Bridge* – As Members are aware the North Foreshore Bridge was submitted under one of the previous calls to Priority 2.1 in 2007 and was narrowly rejected at economic appraisal stage. This project could be reworked and resubmitted if Members wish this to be pursued.
5. *Blackmountain Shared Space Project* – Officers from the Council meet recently with representatives from the Black Mountain Shared Spaces project. This project is being brought forward by the Upper Springfield Neighbourhood Renewal Forum. The Black Mountain has, over recent years, become the focus of anti-community behaviour mainly, but not exclusively, on the part of young people from both sides of the community. The Black Mountain Shared Spaces is an innovative project being developed on a cross-community and cross-sectoral basis. The project has a number of elements including education & employment, youth provision, building good relations and development of a social economy project of benefit to the area, Belfast and beyond. Members are asked to note however that this project is still in the developmental stage and it is unlikely that it will meet the tight timeframe for submission under this call of funding. Officers from the Council will continue to work closely with reps from this Group on bringing this project forward and advising on other potential funding streams.

6. Good Relations have noted that the Belfast Interface Trust has produced some ideas for interface areas in Belfast. Whether or not any of these could form the basis for a Peace III capital project is something that could be explored further.

Members are asked to consider the projects listed above and are asked if there are any other projects they wish to be considered at this stage. Members are asked to note however the tight timescales for the submission of projects. Chief Officers have been tasked with providing further inputs so that Committee can consider serious options in October.

Resource Implications

Financial

None at present.

Human Resources

Additional officer time will be required to progress work on applications that the Council wishes to proceed with.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the information in this report and to –

1. note that work is progressing on submitting the additional information that SEUPB have requested regarding the Girdwood bid and that updates on this will be brought back to Committee as necessary
2. note that provision for some of the North Belfast Cultural Corridor project has been made under Priority 1.1
3. in light of the fact that SEUPB are intending to reopen this call, consider the projects listed above and consider any additional projects which could be submitted.
4. Consider establishing a short term member Group to work on an influencing strategy.

Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special European Union Programmes Body

Documents Attached

None.