



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	North Foreshore Update
Date:	21 January 2011
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects

1	Purpose
1.1	To update Committee on the North Foreshore project, the first meeting of the political steering group and to seek approval for subsequent actions.

2	Background
2.1	The North Foreshore is a former landfill site owned and operated by Belfast City Council. Although the site closed as a landfill in 2007 it does and will remain a major environmental liability due to the nature of the material deposited as landfill.
2.2	There are consequently a number of ongoing actions such as the completion of site capping, management of methane gas and leachate, continual monitoring and assessment as the physical nature of the landfill changes over time.
2.3	The site also provides opportunities in that it is a large scale open space, well located for commercial purposes and with good transport links.
2.4	The Council has attempted to realise some beneficial development on the on a number of occasions including the Giants Park lottery bid and the energy to waste plant but such major development has been hampered by the high cost associated with installing the necessary infrastructure on such difficult made up ground as well as a lack of consensus on what should be developed.
2.5	The Council did install electrical supply infrastructure to the site and a number of smaller developments have taken place such as gas to electricity generation which is producing an income for Council; a waste transfer station and negotiations are ongoing on regard to both a mechanical biological treatment (MBT) plant and a composting facility. There is also a Peace 3 bid for a sports Village which is detailed in a separate paper on this agenda.
2.6	The committee has agreed to establish a North Foreshore political steering group to drive and direct the development of the overall site via an oversight board of COMT.

3	Key Issues
3.1	The political steering Group (SG) held its first meeting on 16 December 2010 to consider a number of issues.
3.2	The initial meeting consisted of the chairmen of the four relevant committees i.e. SP&R, P&L, H&ES and Development.
3.3	The SG agreed to expand membership to include one additional party group member from the two North Belfast electoral areas. Committee endorsement of this recommendation as with any SG recommendations is required.
3.4	The SG then received a summary of a cross departmental officer workshop which had considered various ideas for the site, their relevance to Belfast and most importantly although most difficult how could any such ideas be delivered.
3.5	<p>There are no immediate and obvious answers as to how the crippling infrastructure costs can be overcome but the SG agreed on the following points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council alone does not have the financial resources to fully develop the site • The Council alone does not have all the necessary expertise • Time is a major consideration as it will take decades to fully develop this site and phasing will be important • The benefits of any development need to be obvious to the city and local communities
3.6	On this basis it was agreed that we should seek out development opportunities that have resources both in terms of finance and expertise and that are compatible with the environmental limitations of the site and of course continue with the agreed waste issues.
3.7	Two specific opportunities were identified. The first was a proposal from Crusaders/Newington and a third party to develop a sports/leisure complex either in conjunction with or instead of the proposed sports village. The SG was keen that this proposal is explored further.
3.8	The second opportunity is in the broad area of the bio-economy which is a growing sector and the site has already attracted interest from sources such as INI and some energy companies for research and development projects and bio fuel possibilities.
3.9	To bring some realism to these latter ideas the SG proposed that a business plan be commissioned either by the Council or in partnership with interested parties to test the viability of going down this route. Such a business plan was also seen to be useful in attempting to exploit any green funding that may be available from Europe or elsewhere.
3.10	The SG was also satisfied that temporary uses such as events should be considered.
3.11	The SG was also updated on the East London Green Enterprise District and

	Sustainable Industry Park which had attracted significant European funding. A site/study visit is suggested to assist the SG understanding of the possibilities and practicalities of developing this site.
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4	Resources
4.1	There are costs associated with the development of a business plan and a potential site visit which can be accommodated within the agreed revenue budget although we do not as yet have detailed costs.

5	Recommendations
5.1	The expansion of the Steering Group to include the chairmen of the four relevant committees and one party group member from each group representing North Belfast.
5.2	The officers explore further the proposed Crusaders/Newington Sports complex proposals including seeking expressions of interest if required subject to legal advice.
5.3	The officers commission a business plan to test the viability of a bio economy model for a portion of the site.
5.4	The Steering Group undertake a site/study visit to the East London Green Enterprise District and Sustainable Industries Park.

6	Decision Tracking

7	Key to Abbreviations

8	Documents Attached