



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Local Area Based Initiatives – Underspend Proposals
Date:	4 th February, 2011
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Purpose of the report

To seek approval for the local area based initiatives identified by Members for £100k of underspend from the 2010/11 budgets.

Background

As Members will recall, a report was considered and agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 19th November 2010 regarding the utilisation of £100,000 of the 2010/11 underspend for the delivery of area-based initiatives. It was agreed that the monies would be distributed equally on a North, South, East, West basis within the current year. No decisions were made with regard to the boundary design for the North/South/East/West areas. The approach to this was Member led with Officers in support.

It is anticipated that this pilot approach will be used to inform proposals to invest £1 million in new and innovative approaches to integrated service delivery at a neighbourhood level in 2011/12 which was approved at the January 2011 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as part of the revenue estimate setting process. It is recognised that this investment in 2011/12 is still under consideration due to the late change in estimated rates income notified by the Land and Property Services and the implications for the 2011/12 rates setting process (separate agenda item).

Key issues

In order to drive the process forward, the following guiding principles were approved by the Committee for this pilot approach for the North/South/East/West spend:-

- Alignment with the Council's current corporate priorities;
- Alignment to the priorities and requirements of local people;
- The process should be assured as fair and equitable;
- Initiatives should allow the budget to be spent by end of Mar 2011;
- Expenditure must be within the Council's legal powers and subject to any criteria and financial procedures as determined by SP&R;
- Regular reports on progress to the SP&R Committee;
- All learning from the pilot to inform future development of integrated service delivery at a local level.
- Projects would be approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

A series of meetings have since taken place in January with Members on a North, South, East, West basis in order identify a range of projects within those areas that could be delivered within the timeframe and that would provide the greatest impact at a neighbourhood level. For the purposes of the exercise, the Shankill was included within the north of the city and Members were invited to workshops on this basis.

Elected representatives from the Shankill area made it known to Officers that they were not happy with this approach and requested to have their own meetings and to submit their own projects for consideration. They have requested that funding should be apportioned from the North and West areas to accommodate these proposals. To this end, a number of proposals have also been tabled separately for the Shankill at the request of Members from that area which are in addition to those identified on a North/South/East/West basis

Proposals

A number of potential projects have been identified and agreed by Members within their area based groups. These projects are detailed in full in **Appendix 1** for the Committee's consideration and endorsement. As some of the projects may not entirely fall within the range of the Council's existing statutory functions, the Town Solicitor has suggested that an appropriate resolution be made by the Council under Section 115 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. The Town Solicitor has also suggested that appropriate forms of legal agreement be completed in those cases where the proposed items of expenditure involve making payments to outside groups.

Feedback from the process

As Members will recall, it was agreed that all learning from this process would be used to inform how the council's shapes its approach to integrated service delivery at a neighbourhood level. A further report on this learning and recommended next steps will be brought to the Committee in due course but some initial feedback from the process is highlighted below:

- The tight timescales and relatively small financial allocation made it difficult to make strategic decisions on funding allocations.
- There is a need to establish ground rules from the outset in terms of the role and function of the area working groups, deadlines for tabling proposals and a process for prioritising proposals.
- There is a need to gain consensus on the key principles and priorities for each area from the outset. This will help determine what types of proposals can be considered.
- Clarity around the use of funding and additionality is essential to ensure maximum impact is achieved.
- The geographical boundaries will need to be determined and agreed in advance of future work of this nature.
- Consideration needs to be given as to how the resources are allocated to those areas.
- Expectations need to be managed when working up proposals if external organisations are to be involved.

Resource implications

£100,000 approved from the 2010/11 underspend

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Note the contents of the report.2) Approve the projects contained within Appendix 1 on a North/South/East/West basis and the associated funding requests.3) Agree the preferred option for South Belfast.4) Consider the proposals tabled for the Shankill area and suggest how Officers should proceed.5) Adopt the foregoing recommendations of the Town Solicitor in relation to the completion of any requisite legal agreements.6) Adopt the recommendation of the Town Solicitor in relation to those elements of expenditure which require to be approved under Section 115 of the 1972 Act, the Council being satisfied that the expenditure is in the interests of the Council and the relevant districts of the Council, and will bring direct benefit thereto. |
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Decision tracking

Equality Implications

This project is essentially a pilot study to inform proposals for integrated service delivery in the future, Given the timescales it has not been possible to conduct an EQIA on the proposed expenditure. The proposals, however are wide ranging and cover all areas of the city. They have been politically agreed by Members at the local level and would not appear to impact on any Section 75 groups. Any future development of the Integrated Service delivery process will be subject to an EQIA.
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Key to abbreviations

N/S/E/W – North, South, East, West

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Area proposals
