

Budget and Transformation Panel

Wednesday 14 June 2011

Present:

Cllr D Hargey	SF (Chair)
Cllr T Attwood	SDLP
Ald D Browne	UU
Cllr M Hendron	ALL
Cllr J McVeigh	SF
Cllr R Newton	DUP

P McNaney	Chief Executive
R Cregan	Director of Finance and Resources
G Millar	Director of Property and Projects
J McGrillen	Director of Development
J Minne	Head of Human Resources
S McNicholl	Planning and Policy Manager

Apologies: Cllr H Smyth PUP

1. Investment Package

The Chief Executive reminded the Panel that at the “place-shaping” workshop held on 17 August and at the Development Committee workshop on 12 August, Members had asked that clear messages be developed on how the Council would help the city, its businesses, families and individuals deal with the impact of the economic downturn. Officers are working on this “investment package” and he informed Members of progress to date. Members were content with the direction that development of the package was taking and again reinforced the importance of setting out the Council’s investment in the city and its communities, what will be done to support businesses and tackle issues such as employability and skills, access to training, work experience, internships, long-term unemployment, support for the retail sector and supporting the local economy through Council’s own spend. **It was agreed that an update report would be brought to SP&R Committee on 23 September, with an initial illustration of how this information might be presented. Action: P McNaney**

As part of the update on the investment package J McGrillen circulated information to the Panel about funding opportunities which had arisen as part of the European Regional Development Fund for specific kinds of local economic development projects. The Minister for Enterprise Trade and Investment had written to the Council asking that applications for the first tranche of funding be made by 30th October 2011 for expenditure up to December 2013 and September 2012 for expenditure profile for 2014/15. If successful, the potential exists to draw down up to 75% of the project cost.

Owing to the imminent nature of the first deadline, officers had been in discussion with InvestNI about suitable projects for the initial applications – these projects needed to be at an advanced state of readiness for submission in terms of feasibility

and economic appraisal – the proposed projects had all been highlighted by members at the placeshaping workshop on 17 August. These being:

- Green economy business park, Northforeshore;
- Innovation Centre at Forth River Business Park on Springfield Road;
- Digital Hub.

J McGrillen also outlined an opportunity to draw down funding for an extension to the Waterfront Hall to provide conference and exhibition facilities, allowing the city to become truly competitive in the business tourism sector and considerably enhancing city competitiveness. Work was underway to explore the feasibility of this project and an update would be brought to the SP&R and Development Committees at their next meetings.

After discussion the panel approved the proposals for applications to the ERDF funds for submission to the SP&R and Development Committees.

Action: J McGrillen

2. Financial Position

R Cregan outlined the current financial position. He outlined proposals for use of unutilised funds on initiatives including, improving parks and leisure facilities, winter gritting, city projects development and crematorium lighting. The Panel noted the information and agreed the proposals for submission to the SP&R Committee on 23 September.

3. Property and Projects Management arrangements and review of procurement.

R Cregan outlined the recommendations of a review of the Council's procurement arrangements designed to ensure the most effective approach to procurement in the Council with a particular focus on realising further procurement efficiencies. One of the recommendations of the report was that a Head of Strategic Procurement post be created, to ensure that the efficiency targets set by Members are met. In addition the scale and complexity of the Council's physical projects was increasing with attendant risk management and delivery issues. Consequently it was being proposed that a new head of procurement and projects post be created on a self-financing basis, funded through the delivery of procurement savings and at no additional cost to the rate-payer. **The Panel agreed that this recommendation should be made to the SP&R Committee and also asked that a review of senior management in the Council at Head of Service Level and above to ensure that Council structures remain efficient and effective. Action: R Cregan to submit the report to the SP&R Committee and add a recommendation re. review of the level of senior management at Head of Service level and above.**

4. LPS Performance Report

The Panel agreed that John Wilkinson, Chief Executive of the LPS would attend the Panel's meeting in October to discuss progress on the development of performance

measures and issues related to the rates. The panel stressed the importance of continued dialogue with LPS on these issues.

Report on overtime and agency

R Cregan circulated a report on vacant posts and staff costs, including agency and overtime, at quarter 1 2011/12. The Panel noted the report. The Panel discussed the potential impact of managing agency and overtime on individuals but also the potential for the process to create vacancies which would provide employment opportunities.