



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Place Shaping Conference
Date:	23 September 2011
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar – Director of Property & Projects, Ext: 6217
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1. Relevant background information

- 1.1 In 2010 the Committee agreed to participation in a conference 'Urban Promo' in Venice, Italy as part of promoting Belfast in Europe. The conference and associated seminars aims to promote innovation in public, private partnership and to boost investment in cities by exchanging knowledge experience.
- 1.2 An exhibition consisting of 30 large panels highlighting the story of physical development in Belfast since the early 1990s was produced for the event with some of the images since being used at Member workshops.
- 1.3 Besides the exhibition a number of presentations were made by Belfast City Council; Titanic Quarter; PLACE, University of Ulster, FAB and Ard Architects who had largely been responsible for pulling the exhibition together. The event was also supported by the British Council as an additional event linked to the Venice Biennale, a major art and architecture event held on a regular basis.
- 1.4 The Mayor of Venice hosted an evening for the board of event and the Italian press showcased the conference in several different articles.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The largely Italian audience was quite impressed at the amount of physical development that had taken place in Belfast in a 15 year period. The Neapolitan Campania region undertook a low key visit to Belfast earlier this year and paid for a number of the Belfast participants to speak in Naples in May 2011 particularly in regard to private sector engagement and alternative funding mechanisms.
- 2.2 The organisers of the Venice event have since awarded Belfast a prestigious Urbanistica International prize 2011 for 'Best Balance of Interests' ie private, public and community in regeneration. The award is to be presented on 9 November 2011 in Bologna during Urban Promo 2011 , Belfast representatives are invited to attend.
- 2.3 A special issue of the journal Urbanistica published by the Italian Urban Institute dedicated solely to Belfast will be published in December and circulated across Italy and further afield.

2.4 In addition SOLACE (Society for Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) would like to make a short film in relation to this work for their annual conference in Edinburgh in October as part of their 'thought leadership' features. These features are used to demonstrate areas of excellence in local government by those seeking to improve social and economic regeneration.

2.5 A lot has been made of this exhibition and regeneration story outside of Belfast but nothing in the City itself.

2.6 With the development of the proposed investment package before Christmas and the publication in Italy in December it is proposed to host the exhibition in City Hall in January.

2.7 There would also be an opportunity to host a conference on the place shaping agenda now being formulated by Council to engage the wider development and regeneration sector and to present the Council's ideas. It may also be useful to invite the Italian experts to give an independent view of how Belfast has and is developing.

Resources Implications

Financial:

The exhibition is already paid for there will only be a cost for small scale catering.

Should a decision be taken to attend the award ceremony there would be flight and accommodation costs.

Human Resources:

There are no additional HR implications in respect of this report.

Asset Implications:

There are no additional asset or other implications.

Equality & Good Relations Implications

None at this time.

Recommendations & Decisions

1. Members are requested to agree to host the exhibition as part of a conference on the broader place shaping agenda.
2. Members are asked if the Committee wishes to be represented at the prize award ceremony.

Decision Tracking

If agreed a date in January will be set subject to City Hall availability.

Key to Abbreviations

PLACE – Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Community, Environment
FAB – Forum for Alternative Belfast