

**Belfast City Council**

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Girdwood Community Hub – Update
Date:	20 th January 2012
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects
Contact Officer:	Caroline Wilson, Project Officer, Chief Executive's Sinead Grimes, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer, Chief Executive's

1.0	Relevant background information
1.1	Members were informed at the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee meeting in 18 th November that the SEUPB Priority 2.1 Steering Committee has recommended the Girdwood Community Hub project for funding and that it had been forwarded it to the two governments' accountable departments for approval. (A copy of the letter from SEUPB is attached at Appendix 1)
1.2	<p>Council Officers met with SEUPB to seek further information on the letter and potential conditions of offer. The Director of Property and Projects updated Committee on a number of other issues which had been highlighted by SEUPB including -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Until the formal letter of offer is issued, the Council and its partners incur any expenditure at risk; - The Priority 2.1 Steering Committee were very positive about catalytic potential of the Hub and commended the Council and its partners for the significant work which had been undertaken to address the issues highlighted in the original economic appraisal however there were still a number of considerable risks on the implementation of the Hub; - Offer of funding is subject to proven capacity to implement within the tight timeframe; - Project has been forwarded to DSD economists which can take 12 months and then still needs to go to DFP after this. They will identify conditions of offer, related to risks identified; - Under SEUPB guidelines, the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) normally act as advisers on the procurement, design and construction of capital projects; <p>SEUPB concluded by highlighting that the Priority 2.1 Steering Committee need further assurance by June 2012 on the risks identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) implementation plan for wider site b) ensuring consolidation of community and public buy-in c) securing planning permission d) securing SLA's with partners. <p>It was also highlighted that there are other projects pending if the Hub is deemed unrealistic by the June deadline. SEUPB also asked that no public announcements or press releases are about the project without the prior approval of SEUPB.</p>
1.3	At the Committee meeting on 18 th November, the Director of Property & Projects brought to Members attention that SEUPB guidelines require the use of the CPD. He highlighted that given the nature of the project and the need for community involvement, he did not believe that this would be the best course and the Council should act in this role given the unique nature of this project and the Council's proven track record of delivering major capital projects. The Committee endorsed this approach and it was agreed that the Director of Property meet with SEUPB and CPD to outline this. It was further agreed that an update report would be brought back to Committee in due course.

2.	Key issues to be addressed
2.1	<p>Use of Central Procurement Directorate (CPD)</p> <p>Following guidance from Members, Council officers met with SEUPB and CPD in mid December. During this meeting the adviser from CPD outlined their role in providing procurement advice to SEUPB. (See Appendix 2). The Director of Property and Projects outlined SP&R Committee's position on CPD. SEUPB recommended writing to them on this matter and they would seek the appropriate authority to deviate from their policy position.</p>
2.2	<p>Project Issues to be addressed by June 2012</p> <p>As Members are aware the timeframe for the delivery of the Hub project is extremely tight as all monies have to be committed and spent by 2015. In order to meet this timeframe it will be necessary for the Council to work at 'risk' over the coming months until, and if, a formal letter of offer is received. Subject to agreement by SP&R Committee and their authority to proceed at risk, the issues to be addressed by June 2012 in order to ensure that the Hub progresses include -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation plan for wider site This is a key consideration for the departmental economists who are keen to ensure that the Hub is developed in the context of a vibrant site and a recent meeting was held with the North Belfast Member for Parliament and Assembly Members to discuss this matter. It was agreed that the Director of Property and Projects would meet with DSD and OFMDFM representatives by the end of the month and provide a map showing latest thinking on use allocation for political consideration in February. - Ensuring consolidation of community and public buy-in At a meeting with the interim Hub Forum in December (community and statutory partners), the Director of Property and Projects outlined the issues above, including the risks involved. There is a commitment by the Forum to continue and increase public engagement, particularly in relation to the design of the building and its programmes. The Forum has agreed to meet over the next few weeks (18 Jan and 2 Feb) with an external facilitator to plan for the next stage of community engagement, widening community support for the project and involving local people in the design and programming of the Hub. - Securing planning permission DSD officials are carrying out an analysis of the infrastructure required for the Hub. This report will be completed shortly. Further discussions are ongoing in relation to the precise location for the Hub. To meet the tight funding deadlines, it is anticipated that the Council would submit a planning application for the Hub in July 2012. The timeline for a decision on this is dependent on the Planning Service and speedy engagement with statutory consultees, such as DRD Roads Service. Following the meeting with the North Belfast politicians it was agreed to address the infrastructure investment at the meeting with DSD officials. - Securing Service Level Agreements with partners Initial commitment to the Hub has been provided by Belfast Metropolitan College, the Prince's Trust and Police Service Northern Ireland. While they are all supportive of the Hub and believe that locating their programmes in the Hub would be beneficial to their objectives, there is a limit to how far we can proceed with legally-binding Service Level Agreements, prior to confirmation of the design of the building and the community engagement process. However, Council will work to develop Heads of Agreement documents with these 3 partners in advance of June 2012.

2.3	Critical Path – Next steps
	A critical path for the design, build and completion of the Hub is attached at Appendix 4 for the information of Members. The key steps over the coming months up to June 2012 include the procurement of a design consultant. This would however be at risk to the Council in advance of the letter of offer from SEUPB.

3.0	Decisions required
	Members are asked to note - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the key issues and risks which have been identified in relation to the Hub project and that the Council has been requested to provide further assurance on these to SEUPB by June 2012 – - agree that the Council proceeds at risk now in order to address the issues raised by SEUPB and to meet the tight timeframes involved - that there will be ongoing political and community engagement re the Hub project.

4.0	Resource Implications
	<p>Human</p> <p>Officers from the relevant Council departments will work with the Department for Social Development to implement a realistic project plan and with the Hub Forum on a community engagement process.</p> <p>Financial</p> <p>All expenditure for the project, as outlined in the application, must be claimed from SEUPB by mid-2015. The costs for the design consultant could be in the region of £250,000. It is anticipated that community engagement costs will be in the region of £15,000.</p> <p>Assets</p> <p>Property and Projects Department, in liaison with other departments, will oversee the land acquisition issues and construction programme and seek the appropriate approvals from Committee in due course.</p>

5.0	Equality Implications
	The Committee previously approved the Equality Strategy for the Girdwood Community Hub. It outlines how the Council will fulfil its equality obligations during the development of the Girdwood Community Hub and the Hub’s likely impact and outcomes in terms of equality and good relations.

6.0 Documents Attached	
Appendix 1	Correspondence from Special European Union Programmes Body (02 Nov 11)
Appendix 2	CPD diagram
Appendix 3	Critical path programme