

**Minutes of Budget and Transformation Panel Meeting
11 April 2013**

1. Attendance

Members:

Cllr Deirdre Hargey (Chair)
Cllr Tim Attwood
Cllr Maire Hendron
Cllr Lee Reynolds

Apologies:

Ald. David Browne
Cllr John Kyle
Cllr Jim McVeigh

Officers:

Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources
Gerry Miller, Director of Property and Projects
John McGrillen, Director of Development
Mark McBride, Head of Finance and Performance

2. Efficiency Programme

The Director of Finance and Resources referred to the draft report on the Efficiency Programme 2014/15 - 2015/16 which would be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 19 April 2013.

The report highlighted that the £16m of savings made to date through the efficiency programme had been used to keep the rate increase at a low level and in the most recent year to keep the rate increase to zero. In 2014/15 – 2015/16 the council will face increased inflationary and uncontrollable cost increases while trying to keep the rate increase below inflation and generate additional capital financing to fund the review of the leisure estate.

Also given the level of cash savings already removed from the revenue estimates, the majority of future savings would have to be based on value for money reviews and transforming the way we provide services. As this would require difficult decisions and as some individual projects would have long lead in times, it was important that the programme became more project and programme management focused to ensure that the £20m target of efficiencies is generated by 2015/16.

The Director of Finance and Resources highlighted some of the financial pressures facing our fees and income based services such as the Waterfront Hall, the Zoo, Malone House and Belfast Castle. He explained that a key focus of future work in these areas would be to maximise potential income as well as challenge costs. The Director also referred to a number of “Value for Money” (VFM) reviews which are already in progress and which would require political decisions if the target of keeping the district rate increase low and investing in our assets is to be achieved. These reviews include Security, Accommodation and Energy. He added that the Energy report, which would be presented to Committee in June 2013, would not only consider energy from the point of view of the council as a consumer, but would also consider the councils wider role of leading and promoting energy efficiencies for the City.

He advised that an analysis of services based on gross expenditure and net expenditure was being undertaken to inform the next phase of value for money reviews.

Following discussion regarding the existing target for efficiencies for 2014/15, the Director of Finance and Resources commented that the proposals for financing the review of the leisure estate would be presented to committee in May 2013 and by June 2013 the council will have the 2012/13 rates finalisation confirmed. The efficiency target for 2014/15 will therefore be considered in June 2013 taken into account these factors.

3. Capital Programme / Local Investment Fund

The Director of Property and Projects advised that a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) had been completed for the following three projects which were included in the Stage 1 "Emerging Projects" list of the Capital Programme:-

- Drumglass Park
- Half Moon Lake
- Whiterock Corridor

The panel agreed that a request to move these three projects to the Stage 2 "Uncommitted Projects" list should be presented to Committee on the 19 April 2013.

The Panel noted that the proposed process and governance arrangements for the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) would be presented to Committee in May 2013 along with an update report on the capital programme.

4. Cost Analysis for Waterfront Hall Convention Centre Projects

The Director of Development summarised the main points arising from a draft report on the development of the proposals and estimated costs for the Waterfront Hall Convention Centre project. He also provided an update on progress with regard to the external funding for the project.

Members noted the complexities of the project and the ERDF funding framework and the reasons for the changes to the estimated cost of the project in line with the enhanced scheme.

It was agreed that a full report should be presented to Committee when finalised.

5. City Investment Conference

The Chief Executive advised the date for the City Conference has been set for 22 May 2013.

After receiving an overview of the proposed content of the event, the panel discussed the proposed venue. As the conference format included main plenary sessions and a number of smaller workshops, the number of suitable venues for the event was limited. A venue for the conference is currently being investigated including the Crumlin Road Gaol, the Mac, the Lyric and the Waterfront Hall.

6. Date of Next Meeting

10.00am, 16 May 2013.