



<b>Subject:</b>	Support for community engagement in the planning process on major projects
<b>Date:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> December 2016
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Phil Williams, Director of Planning and Place
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Ed Baker, Development Engagement Manager

<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of report or summary of main issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on their request to the Director of Planning & Place to investigate the availability of support for community organisations and residents to effectively engage in major planning projects in Belfast.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Members are asked to note the report.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<u>Background</u> The Committee at its meeting of 18 <sup>th</sup> October requested that the Director of Planning & Place investigates the availability of support for community organisations and residents to effectively engage in major planning projects. The specific resolution was as follows:  <i>‘The Committee agreed also that the Director of Planning and Place should explore the potential for the provision of independent technical support and capacity for community organisations and residents, to enable them to effectively engage and input into major physical regeneration and key capital projects in the city.’</i>

3.2	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>It is important that the public have the opportunity to effectively engage in the planning process, particularly in relation to significant developments and proposals that affect wider communities. The planning process can be daunting for some and has its own complexities and unique subtleties. In other parts of the UK, communities are able to tap into expert, independent planning advice to support their participation in the planning process.</p> <p>Members are advised that Government or other agencies are based placed to provide or sponsor such support because of the need for councils (as local planning authorities) to remain impartial in the planning process and not favour one stakeholder above another. It is understood that such support was previously provided by DoE but withdrawn.</p> <p>The issues raised by the Committee are not unique to Belfast; investigation of appropriate and independent expert support for communities will be of relevance to all communities across Northern Ireland, with potential to benefit the constituents of all eleven councils. The Director of Planning &amp; Place has therefore written to the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) to raise these issues and ask for the matter to be explored further. A copy of this letter is provided at <b>Appendix 1</b>.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
4.1	<p>Appendix 1 – Copy of letter from Director of Planning &amp; Place to DFI</p>