



## SOUTH BELFAST PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Investment Programme  
Belfast City Council  
FREEPOST BEL4010  
Belfast  
BT1 5BR

27 April 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Belfast City Council Draft Investment Programme 2012-2015**

I write to you on behalf of the South Belfast Partnership Board in response to the Council's draft Investment Programme 2012-2015. Overall, we welcome the Council's continued commitment to continued investment in our city, delivering high quality programme and services over the coming three years. We believe that the investment this represents has the potential greatly benefit Belfast for the benefit for all who live work and visit the City, making it a more inclusive and successful City.

#### **Supporting Principles**

We are fully supportive of the five underlying principles for the delivery of the investment strategy. In particular, we welcome the recognition that the full potential can only be realised through partnership working across all sectors, including the pooling of public sector resources, to add value to the respective programmes of individual departments. The report recognises that the Council must *"continue to develop productive relationships with the Northern Ireland Executive and other key partners from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to deliver the objectives under this Programme."*

The South Belfast Partnership Board, as one of the five Area Partnerships in the city, is the only organisation in South Belfast that brings together representatives from all four sectors – community, statutory, political via Elected Members from Belfast City Council and private – with a strategic focus on regeneration and renewal across the area. We therefore remain fully committed to joint working with the Council, local community groups, Government and the private sector to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved for the residents of Belfast.

#### **Physical Investment Programme**

As part of the proposed Physical Investment programme, we welcome the announcement of a Local Investment Fund to support the delivery of key regenerative projects in local neighbourhoods of Belfast. We welcome the recognition that this should complement and add value to other private and public sector funding streams, including the forthcoming

#### **South Belfast Partnership**

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Social Investment Fund and the Neighbourhood Renewal programme, and once again re-state our commitment to working with the Council, Government Departments and other key stakeholders to secure the effective delivery of investment for South Belfast.

We recognise that there is a significant level of investment identified for South Belfast, including the provision of new 3G pitches at Cherryvale and Ormeau Park, the upgrade of Mary Peter's track in advance of the 2013 World Fire and Police Games, the potential to develop the Council-owned land on the northern fringe of the Gasworks site, the restoration of the Lagan Canal corridor, the 'Tunnels' project in the Markets, the An Droichead Cultural Hub, Shaftesbury Square Masterplan and the Windsor Park upgrade. We are fully supportive of these proposals, many of which are contained in our Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for South Belfast, and look forward to working with the Council as these projects are brought forward.

In relation to the Shaftesbury Square Masterplan, we have been working with the Department for Social Development (DSD) over the past 12-18 months to agree the scope of the Concept Plan and develop the brief for consultants. In addition, we have recently published a document, in Partnership with the Forum for Alternative Belfast, entitled 'Streets Not Roads', which contains a concept Masterplan developed during our 2011 planning summer school for the inner-city South Belfast area that has been reserved as the proposed route of an inner-city ring road since the 1970s. This plan has broad support from the local communities affected, Roads Service, DSD and from the Council and should undoubtedly influence the outcomes of the Shaftesbury Square Concept Plan and any proposals brought forward for the land on the northern fringe of the Gasworks site. A copy of this is available from our website at [www.southbelfast.org](http://www.southbelfast.org).

We are also pleased to see that the redevelopment of Windsor Park is highlighted as one of five priority projects that will all be iconic and transformational for the surrounding areas, as well as the City and Region as a whole. Once again, we look forward to working closely with the Council and other key partners as this work moves forward, in particular helping to ensure that the regeneration brings about real benefits for the local communities most affected by the proposals. We have already been involved in some initial discussions with the Council's own consultants about the potential for a comprehensive regeneration of the area, bringing together the Council's Olympia Leisure Centre and Windsor Park to create a local sport and leisure hub, as well as the possibility of under-croft units being available for community uses.

Alongside this, our SRF and emerging Economic Strategy for South Belfast advocate the preparation of a Masterplan for the Boucher Road Estate as a whole, looking at both physical aspects and also social and economic aspects including demonstrating how employment opportunities at the estate can be used to address low levels of economic activity in surrounding communities. It strikes us that looking at the re-development of Windsor Park within this broader context, provides a valuable opportunity to bring together several aspects of the Council's proposed Investment Programme, including the physical, economic and neighbourhood/community regeneration, in a more co-ordinated and effective manner. We would be more than willing to discuss these ideas further with the Council in due course.

Alongside the projects listed within the draft Investment Programme, there are also a number of additional regeneration opportunities within South Belfast that we are actively exploring and believe would be good candidates for support through the Investment Programme.

These include:

- **Wilmont House** – the restoration of the Council-owned house located in Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park through a programme of work experience and training in craft skills and traditional construction methods. There is also potential to broaden this kind of work to address some of the major dereliction across the rest of South Belfast, much of which is within Conservation Areas, such as some buildings in the Crescent area, whilst developing employment opportunities and skills/training for some of those furthest from the labour market.
- **Gilpin's and the Ulster Brewery** – the redevelopment of these derelict buildings in Sandy Row to provide flexible business and business incubation units, cultural and community facilities.
- **Primary School for the South West** – The potential to develop a new, purpose-built primary school to enable the amalgamation of the three Primary Schools in the South West area.

These projects would all have the potential to make significant contributions to the regeneration of the City and could be brought forward as real partnership projects between the public sector, private sector and local communities. They are also all projects that could look at several strands of regeneration at the same time, addressing the physical environment, creating employment opportunities and improving skills within the labour force and providing valuable cultural and social facilities. In addition, we believe that these projects would need to be brought forward in collaboration with a range of public sector funding streams, including DSD's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, the Social Investment Fund (OFMDFM), and support from the Department of Education, the Belfast Education and Library Board, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Belfast City Council.

Again, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these projects, and any other regeneration opportunities within South Belfast, with the Council in the future.

### **Economy**

South Belfast is home to a number of major employers such as Queen's University, the Gasworks, the City Hospital and Boucher Road, has a strong independent retail base and a number of major tourism and cultural assets, including the Botanic Gardens and Ulster Museum, Kings Hall, Lyric Theatre and Crescent Arts Centre, to name a few. We therefore believe that the economic development of the South Belfast is vitally important in the economic regeneration of the City as a whole, which will in turn bring benefits to the most deprived and socially isolated communities in Belfast, and we therefore look forward to working in Partnership with the Council and other key stakeholders in bringing forward the economic renewal of South Belfast.

We continue to provide a range of economic development support to organisations across South Belfast and are currently developing a strategic Economic Strategy for South Belfast through on-going engagement with local communities and the South Belfast business community. We have established a broad Economic Forum for the area which brings together business leaders, community representatives and the statutory sector to tackle a range of economic development issues across the whole of South Belfast.

Some of the potential interventions outlined within our SRF and emerging Economic Strategy include:

- Addressing business accommodation shortfalls;
- Promoting and developing opportunities for improving business accommodation in South Belfast;
- Providing start-up business support;
- Encouraging and supporting enterprise within the creative industries, through greater collaboration between the university, public and private sectors;
- Exploring the availability of land, including QUB landholdings; and
- Consolidating and enhancing the function of Boucher Road and to maximize employment opportunities for surrounding communities.

As we have outlined above, we believe there are a number of good regeneration opportunities within South Belfast that help achieve these aims, through genuine public, private and community collaboration, whilst also addressing regeneration needs of the local communities and the physical environment. We therefore welcome the range of measures outlined within the Investment Programme to support the local economy, and once again look forward to working in partnership with the Council in delivering change on the ground.

### **People, Communities and Neighbourhoods**

We also welcome the range of initiatives outlined to help improve quality of life in Belfast, as a vital component of citizen well-being and the bedrock of economic growth. We are encouraged to see the physical, economic and social regeneration of Belfast being fully integrated in the Council's proposed Investment Programme and recognise the range of mechanisms that can be brought together to help improve quality of life and well-being.

In particular, we welcome the continuation of a significant grant aid programme to support local communities and, as noted above, the announcement of a £5 million Local Investment Fund to attract and complement other funding for regeneration, such as OFMDFM's Social Investment Fund; DSD's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Furthermore, we welcome the recognition that the social issues of most importance to local neighbourhoods and communities can be addressed alongside the investment targeted at physical dilapidation and dereliction as part of neighbourhood regeneration.

In relation to tackling disadvantage and addressing inequalities, we would refer your attention to the response we have made in response to the recent consultation on the draft Poverty and Social Inequalities Framework for Belfast. As a general comment, we note that there is very little reference to older people throughout the Investment Programme's proposals and, given that we have an aging population in the City and a high proportion of older people in South Belfast, we would urge the Council to consider more fully any investment opportunities to support older people in our society.

Finally, we welcome the announcement of the additional £1.5 million investment in delivering the Renewing the Routes programme. We have already held a number of discussions with Council officers regarding the support we can give to this project as it is rolled out on the Ormeau Road during the current financial year and on the lower Lisburn Road in 2014/15.

### **Conclusion**

We recognise the major benefits that Council Investment has helped deliver to date and look forward to seeing the regeneration and renewal brought about in the future as a result of

the initiatives outlined within the draft Investment Programme. I close by re-iterating our commitment to working with the Council and other key stakeholders in bringing about meaningful regeneration in South Belfast, and the City as a whole, for the benefit of all who live, work and visit the City.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne McAleese". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Anne McAleese  
CEO, South Belfast Partnership Board