

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 10th June, 2024

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillors Duffy (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors Abernethy, McLaughlin and Smyth.

External Members: Mr. P. Anderson, Department for Communities;
Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. T. Burns, Faith Sector;
Superintendent N. Henry, PSNI;
Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. L. Gunn, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority;
Ms. C. McMenamin, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Ms. T. Mimna, Good Relations, TEO;
Mr. W. Naeem, Interfaith Forum;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. G. Walker, Community and Voluntary Sector; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Mrs. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. H. Donaldson, Programme Lead PEACEPLUS; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

It was proposed by Councillor Abernethy, seconded by Ms. B. Arthurs and agreed that Councillor Duffy be elected as the Chairperson; and Councillor I. McLaughlin as the Deputy Chairperson to the Shared City Partnership until the date of the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Council.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th May, 2024, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

Ms. T. Mimna, TEO, declared an interest in PEACE PLUS Local Action Plan Update (item 5) as the TEO was involved in the assessment process for the BCC PEACEPLUS application under IA1.1 and she left the meeting at this stage in proceedings.

Update from Forward South Partnership re Roma Hub and Feasibility Study

Ms. B. Arthurs, Chief Executive, Forward South Partnership (FSP), provided the Partnership with a comprehensive update on the ongoing support that continued to be offered to the Roma community through the Roma Hub. She reminded the Members that the project had initially been supported through PEACE IV and this initial funding had enabled relationships to be developed with Roma communities living in the city. She explained that, through the Hub, support and opportunities were offered which provided an opportunity for personal development and integration for people from the Roma community living in Belfast. She explained that the overall aim of the project was “to support minority ethnic communities in the city, to provide diversity awareness, inclusion and integration opportunities with other communities in the city and this was the same ethos today”.

Ms. Arthurs provided an overview of the work undertaken via the Hub. This included weekly immigration and welfare clinics, a helpline for making referrals to other services such as food banks, liaison with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Education Authority and a drop-in service to support people with form filling or contacting their doctors. The Hub was also a point for the collection of donations of clothing, kitchen appliances and buggies.

She advised that the Hub also hosted weekly English classes in south and east Belfast and also facilitated a weekly women’s group. It also helped to get members of the community involved with wider community events, festivals and intercultural activities, including the annual Holylands Winter Festival and Open Botanic.

She advised that she was pleased to report that the valuable work and support was still possible through and ongoing due to funding that had been awarded from the Lottery Community Fund.

Ms. Arthurs referred to the Feasibility Study Intercultural Hub and Mr. Liam McGarry of McGarry Consulting took the Members through a presentation in relation to this.

The Chairperson thanked the Ms. Arthurs for the valuable work that the FSP was doing with the Roma community throughout the city.

Good Relations - Verbal Update

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Abernethy to his first meeting of the Shared City Partnership since joining the Council.

The Good Relations Manager advised that this would be the last meeting of the Shared City Partnership for Mr. T. Burns from the Faith Sector as this position was rotated annually and both he and the Chairperson thanked him for his contribution to the Partnership.

The PEACE Programme Manager introduced Ms. Helen Donaldson who had recently taken up the position of Lead Officer within the PEACEPLUS team. The Chairperson welcomed Ms. Donaldson to her first meeting of the Shared City Partnership.

The Good Relations Manager reported that both MEARS and the Home Office had declined the Partnership's request to attend a meeting to address queries.

Detailed discussion ensued around the non-attendance and it was agreed that the Good Relations Manager would investigate how to raise this at a more Strategic level.

Updated Shared City Partnership - Terms of Reference

The Working Group was presented with a report which detailed the updated Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Shared City Partnership.

The Members were asked to note that the ToR were last reviewed in August 2019. Since then, the Peace IV Programme had been delivered and would be fully closed off in 2024. In addition, the new PEACEPLUS Programme would be fully operational in the latter half of 2024. These changes in position had been reflected in point 5 of the updated ToR.

The Working Group was advised that officers were keen to ensure that the Partnership was kept informed on the work of other organisations/sectors regarding key issues which might impact Good Relations within Belfast City, and this had been reflected in point 6 of the updated ToR.

The Good Relations Manager drew the Members' attention to the updated ToR, below:

Appendix

Shared City Partnership

Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION

1. The Shared City Partnership (SCP) was developed from the former Good Relations Partnership, which was established by Belfast City Council to support Council to meet its obligations in the promotion of good relations. This relates to Section 75, part B, which states; 'a public authority is required, in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief; political opinion and different racial group.'
2. The SCP was formally established as a Working Group of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and as such, all recommendations of the SCP are subject to the agreement of that Committee and to ratification by the full Council.
3. Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agrees that this Terms of Reference shall govern the operation of the SCP.

PURPOSE

4. The role of the SCP is:
 - To assist the elected political leadership of the Council, staff, diverse civil society interests and partnering agencies to engage pro-actively on all Good Relations issues on behalf of citizens and be a collective voice, promoting a common vision for Good Relations in the City.
5. The purpose of the SCP is:
 - To oversee the closure of Belfast's PEACE IV Local Action Plan and oversee the development and delivery of Belfast's PEACEPLUS Peace and Reconciliation Local Action Plan while also continuing with the core Good Relations agenda for the City including the good relations outcomes linked to the Belfast Agenda and the new Local Development Plan.
 - To oversee the delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan and associated District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP).

- To provide a challenge function to the council and other represented organisations to ensure good relations is at the forefront of policy and programming development which impacts on the City.
- To promote good relations between people of different religious and political beliefs and different racial groups in every aspect of Council activities.
- To use the Council's influence as a democratically elected body, providing civic leadership to the City, to promote good relations throughout society.
- To promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities, taking into account the needs of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, of men and women generally, of persons with a disability and persons without and of persons with dependents and persons without.
- To promote respect and understanding throughout the City by providing support, including the equitable use of available budgets, for appropriate initiatives which celebrate the cultural diversity of Belfast.
- To act as a mechanism to ensure that major Belfast City Council initiatives both revenue and capital are cognisant of their duty in relation to Section 75, Part B.

6. The responsibilities of individual SCP members include:

- Compliance with the Terms of Reference.
- Ensuring they are the most appropriate person to represent their organisational group.
- Keeping the SCP informed of key issues from within their own organisations/sector, which impact on good relations in the city. There will be a standing item added to the agenda at each meeting following core business to include member updates and also a timetable of presentations will be formulated on an annual basis.
- Actively engaging in SCP business informing discussion and decision-making through expert opinion and organisational awareness.
- Acting as the conduit between their organisational group and SCP, canvassing views/opinion, disseminating information and representing the broader interests/views of their group.
- Taking personal responsibility for representing the views of their organisation.
- Following through on agreed action points within agreed timeframes.

MEMBERSHIP

7. The SCP is currently chaired by Councillor Duffy and vice-chair Councillor McLaughlin, nominated by the SCP members. The Chair and Vice-Chair are nominated on an annual basis, following the Annual Meeting of Council, both roles are delivered by Elected Members.
8. The SCP is comprised of the following representatives: Elected Members of Belfast City Council; Statutory Agencies; and a range of external partners.
9. The SCP is an appropriate size to be effective and efficient.
10. Established criteria for members will ensure the SCP achieves a cross-section of representation from the sectors identified with due care being taken to balance the selection in terms of gender, geography, sectoral groupings, size of organisation, and community background.
11. It is critical that members have appropriate skills, expertise and experience on good relations, peace building and reconciliation, and that community interests and needs are represented.
12. A member can resign at any time. If a resignation takes place, the relevant sector/grouping will be asked to nominate a replacement. The Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will be advised of the replacement following discussion with the SCP.
13. The Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will ensure continuity of the panel by seeking to retain up to 50% of existing members to get a balance between experienced and new members.
14. The Members of the SCP are also supported by advisors.
15. Non-Permanent Members or other relevant Council departments who have been invited to attend in an advisory capacity, with non-voting rights and may be invited by the Chair of the SCP to respond to specific agenda items and offer advice as required. Such advisors have the right to participate fully in the discussions of the SCP and to offer advice.
16. The names of the current SCP are included in Annex 1.

SECRETARIAT

17. The Secretariat to the SCP shall be drawn from the staff of Belfast City Council's Democratic Services Unit. The Secretariat is responsible for facilitating meetings of the SCP and for the co-ordination of documentation relating to monitoring reports, agendas and records of meetings.

COMMUNICATIONS

18. All communications relating to the business of the SCP shall be addressed to the Secretariat of the SCP.

MEETINGS

19. The SCP will meet once a month with the exception of July.
20. Extraordinary meetings may be arranged by agreement to take forward matters of interest.
21. An agenda will be agreed and issued (with relevant papers) to members at least one week before the SCP meeting.
22. Any Member may raise any item for inclusion in the agenda.
23. The Quorum for a meeting of the SCP is 6 Members, two of which must be Elected Members.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

24. Secretariat and Good Relations Manager will have briefed the Chair on issues, including apologies and delegates attending.
25. Meetings will follow the agenda. Any presentations will be delivered at an appropriate point as agreed with the Chair.
26. Contributions from all representatives are welcome. An informal environment should be created in order to encourage debate.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The Chair will act primarily as the facilitator for SCP business and, where possible, the SCP will operate on the basis of consensus; with only permanent members having the right to vote.

27. Failure to reach consensus on an issue will be recorded in the minutes and presented to the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
28. All recommendations of the SCP are subject to the agreement of Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and to ratification by the full Council.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

29. SCP members are encouraged to attend all meetings. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible. In exceptional circumstances, where non-attendance is unavoidable, the member should advise the Secretariat.
30. If the Member is not available for a particular meeting, the Member may submit written comments on any of the items of business to be considered at a SCP meeting.
31. The SCP will review the membership of consecutive non-attendees - where the Member was not present and no written comments were received for 3 (out of a total of 11) meetings. It will make recommendations to the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to address the issue.

TASK GROUPS

32. The SCP will appoint Task Groups, as it deems appropriate, to consider in more detail specific areas of its responsibility. Task Groups will operate under the direction and authority of the SCP.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

33. A conflict of interest is a situation in which a person has a private or personal interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of his or her official duties as a SCP member.
34. As conflicts of interest can arise in many different situations, members must be vigilant so that any such conflicts can be identified promptly and appropriate action taken.

CODE OF CONDUCT

35. The code of conduct sets out the principles of conduct and ethics expected of the SCP Members which include: Public Duty, Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership, Equality, Promoting Good Relations, Respect and Good Working Relationships (as per NILGA, NI Local Government Code of Conduct).

The Partnership noted the updated Terms of Reference and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that these be adopted.

Peace Plus Belfast City Council Local Action Plan Update

(At this stage in proceedings Ms. Mimna, having declared an interest earlier, left the meeting).

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to provide Shared City Partnership Members with an update on the assessment of PEACEPLUS 1.1. Co-designed Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP)

2.0 Recommendations

Members note the contents of the report and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Application Assessment Status

Assessment of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan is ongoing. Members are reminded of the timeframe as previously reported in May 2024, of considered by TEO on 30th May 2024, and the SEUPB steering committee on 19th June 2024, with a formal Letter of Offer to follow.

A procurement plan and timeframe to mobilise the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is currently being developed in conjunction with Commercial and Procurement Services. Details of the operational plan will be outlined to Members in the next report.

3.2 Staff Recruitment

Both the Lead Officer and Programme Support Assistant are in post and assisting with mobilising the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. The Finance and Claims Officer and three Project Managers have been appointed, with officers due in post by mid-July. Recruitment for the Monitoring and Data Analyst and the re-advertisement of the Project Officer post is ongoing.

3.3 Capacity Building Programme

Delivery of the Prepare to Procure Capacity Building Programme has concluded with the Consortium Development session delivered on 28th May 2024.

3.4 Feedback from attendees at the sessions has been positive. Attendees have also highlighted the need for a further networking session based on the concept / project working group approach. The networking session is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 11th June at 10am in City Hall and has been promoted both to the stakeholders involved in the co-design process and the wider public.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

As the 13th May 2024 report advised, all expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS LCAP is eligible from the date of application submission, which is 14th December 2023.

Therefore all expenditure is within the existing budget which will be claimed retrospectively from SEUPB.

As the assessment process is ongoing, advice on the drawdown of the £30K advance from SEUPB will be progressed by the Programme Manager once the assessment process has been concluded.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Plan has been submitted for equality and good relations screening as well as rural needs assessment.”

Following a query, the PEACE Programme Manager confirmed that officers were conscious of the forthcoming holiday period and had taken this into consideration when setting the timelines for the respective tenders.

Following a query regarding the proposed timeline for commencement of delivery, the PEACE Programme Manager advised that due to resource pressures there would be a phased approach. Officers were anticipating that delivery of the larger projects would commence first and she provided an indicative timeline of 3 months which would allow for tender and evaluation.

The Good Relations Manager highlighted the huge volume of work and the dedication and commitment from officers that it had taken to get the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan to this stage and asked that his thanks be recorded to all the staff involved.

The Partnership agreed to recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Any Other Business

Holiday Period

Following a query from a Member, the Good Relations Manager advised the Members of the following key priorities that would collectively help to contribute to a peaceful holiday period, this included information in respect of the beacons programme, small grants initiatives, Day of Reflection and Race Relations week.

Noted.

Chairperson