

## **SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP**

**Monday 7th April, 2025**

### **MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY AND IN THE CONOR ROOM**

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Vice-Chairperson) and Councillor Abernethy.

External Members: Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;  
Mr. M. Briggs, Community and Voluntary Sector;  
Mr. L. Gunn, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;  
Father M. Magill, Faith Representative;  
Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority;  
Mr. W. Naeem, Interfaith Forum; and  
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross

In attendance: Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager;  
Ms. H. Donaldson, PEACE Programme Lead Officer;  
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;  
MS. L. Dolan, Good Relations Officer; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

#### **Apologies**

An apology was reported on behalf of the Chairperson (Councillor Duffy), Mr. Walker and Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 10th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st February, subject to the addition of Ms. T. Mimna within the list of apologies received and a declaration of interest from Ms. B. Arthurs under the 'PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan - Update' item.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

In respect of the item 'PEACEPLUS - BCC Local Action Plan Update', declarations of interest were reported by the Councillor I. McLaughlin, as well as Independent Members Ms. B. Arthurs, Mr. M. Briggs and Mr. W. Naeem. It was noted that they were associated with organisations which were in receipt of support under the terms of the Plan and they retired from the meeting whilst the matter was under discussion.

#### **Forth Meadow Greenway – Members' Walking Tour**

The Vice-Chairperson, on behalf of the Partnership, expressed his thanks to the Members and staff who had partaken in the walking tour of the Forth Meadow Greenway on 27th March. He

thanked also Father M. Magill for the hospitality which had been provided at the St. John's Parish Hall at the end of the tour.

### **Refresh of the Good Relations Strategy and Development of a 3-year Action Plan**

The Vice-Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. Osborne, who was representing Rubicon Consulting, to the meeting. Mr. Osborne delivered a presentation on the review which was being undertaken on the Council's Good Relations Audit, Strategy and Action Plan for 2025/28.

Mr. Osborne outlined the current challenges which faced the Council in delivering Good Relations, particularly within the context of race equality, environment, socio-economic need, the Belfast Agenda, PEACEPLUS and others. He referred to the underlying issues that needed to be addressed relating to language, cultural comfort and prevailing inequalities and how innovative thinking would be necessary in re-evaluating how any revised strategy would be delivered. He suggested, given the evolving nature of Good Relations, that the delivery of any revised strategy should be outcomes-based and all-inclusive, whilst seeking also to address underlying historical issues and the challenges posed by an ever-changing demographic across society.

Mr. Osborne reminded the Members how the work of the Shared City Partnership had helped to make Belfast a more welcoming and inclusive city, which had created a sense of belonging for all people regardless of geography, beliefs, cultural identity or social background. The aim of the review, he added, would be to enhance Belfast's reputation as an inclusive city where people from all backgrounds felt a sense of belonging. He added that the review would seek to build on the achievements to date to identify more innovative methods to deliver a strategy that would affect real and meaningful change across the city.

In response to Members' questions, Mr. Osborne clarified the timeline that had been established for the review to take place and the work that would be undertaken with various communities, including the faith sectors. Other Members welcomed the objective of delivering Good Relations in a more targeted and outcomes-based manner and the acknowledgement that any strategy should be an evolving one that could be refocussed to address issues and problems as they arose.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and welcomed the scope of the review as presented, particularly the level of resilience that would be included within the revised plan. It was noted also that a further update would be presented to the Partnership at its meeting in June.

### **Asylum Dispersal Funding and Refugee Integration Funding**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Issues**

**1.1 To provide members with an update on the Asylum Dispersal Fund and for members to note the contents of the report.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and recommend that SP & R note the contents of the report.**

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 In November 2024, TEO wrote to the Council, asking for funding proposals under the Full Dispersal Funding up to the value of £302,759. This quantum, allocated for Belfast, has been worked out through a baseline funding amount of £15k plus £287,759 based on the percentage of people seeking asylum in the council area.
- 3.2 As reported and approved at the December meeting of the Shared City Partnership, subsequently by S P&R and Council, the proposals listed in table 1 were submitted and accepted by TEO.

**Table 1: Overview of project proposals and costs**

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Procurement method</b>	<b>Costs</b>
<b>Proposal 1: Organisational Development and Capacity Support Programme</b>	<b>Proposal was procured in February through an open tender process and has been awarded to the Law Centre, with delivery occurring between May 25- March 26</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
<b>Proposal 2: Provision of Asylum Link Advisor</b>	<b>This proposal is still undergoing assessment following an open tender in March.</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
<b>Proposal 3: Integration and inclusion outreach</b>	<b>Open Call to support community integration projects to be opened in February.</b>	<b>£95,000</b>
<b>Administration support</b>		<b>£7,759</b>
		<b>£302,759</b>

### **3.4 Summary of proposals and current status**

#### **Proposal 1**

**‘Organisational Development and Capacity Support Programme’**

#### **Background**

**As asylum seekers are now accommodated in new geographical areas of Belfast, that have not had a history of accommodating people**

seeking asylum, an increased number of community and voluntary organisations are finding a change in the communities now accessing their services. Many of these community support organisations have reported that they do not have the specialised knowledge to provide advice and case work support for asylum seekers but wish to provide services for all living in the locality.

### **The service**

This proposal aims to invest in the organisational capacity of organisations to ensure that people seeking asylum can access, accurate and quality advice across Belfast.

The purpose of the programme is to build the capacity of Belfast-based voluntary & community sector organisations to support the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees within their communities.

The proposal aims to develop the capacity of organisations currently providing advice to asylum seekers or organisations that are new to this area of provision. It will do this through the provision of a training programme, supported by the development of a Knowledge and Learning Network to strengthen the capacity of organisations to provide quality advice to people in the asylum process.

The project will be delivered by the Law Centre NI and will Commence in May 2025 and complete in March 2026

### **Proposal 2**

‘Provision of Asylum Link adviser’

#### **Background**

This proposal, led by an organisation / consortium with specialised knowledge of providing asylum advice and case work support, will support the development of a minimum of 2 Community Outreach Advisors who will provide case work support and advice for asylum seekers in community settings

It is well documented that early specialised advice is crucial if asylum seekers are to navigate life in Belfast; understand their rights and entitlements, access essential services and feel integrated and included as well as developing their own autonomy and independence.

Belfast has witnessed an increase in the number of people that have sought asylum in the city. Many of these new communities find it hard to navigate services when they arrive in the city and are accommodated in local communities. In addition, the shifting backdrop of national policy and changes in immigration law have led to the need for more specialised advice and support responses.

The purpose of this proposal is to increase the spread of advisors that can provide advice and case work support to asylum seekers in their community settings.

### **Current Status**

The tender for this closed in March and it is hoped that a contract will be awarded in April, with the project commencing in May 2025 and completing in March 2026.

### **Proposal 3**

‘Supporting localised integration, inclusion and contact projects’

### **Background**

Given the increasing spread of people that have sought asylum across Belfast, this proposal provides organisations and community groups with the opportunity to develop small scale projects to support the localised integration and inclusion of people that have sought asylum and to link them with local communities.

### **The Service**

Through an open call, organisations will be invited to submit proposals up to £10,000, that support the integration and inclusion of people that have sought asylum. The proposal will support projects that: engage host communities and people who have sought asylum, projects that can support awareness raising in host communities of the reality of asylum related matters, projects that can foster contact and connections with host communities to improve the welcome that people who have sought asylum receive, projects that encourage and support groups to involve people who have sought asylum in the life of their communities through participation in local activities, networks and organisations, including voluntary work, projects that are delivered in areas where, to date, there has been limited infrastructure / funding for interventions supporting the inclusion of people seeking asylum.

### **Current Status**

This call is currently open

### **Proposal 4**

### **Administration Costs**

The final proposal covers a small cost, from Belfast City Council, relating to the administration of the proposal

## **Financial & Resource Implications**

**The proposals in this report are 100% funded through Full Dispersal Funding via the Executive Office, the main resource is a significant amount of Officer time around the management and governance of the funds as well as time spent procuring projects.**

Ms. Dolan, the Acting Senior Good Relations Officer, outlined the principal aspects of the report and answered several questions which had been posed by Members.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and agreed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be requested to note also the contents of the report. It was agreed that an invitation be extended to representatives from The Executive Office to present to the Partnership in respect of the programme.

Arising from discussion, officers undertook to provide further information to a Member in respect of the 'Black Mountain Pathway - Access to the Hills' programme.

## **PEACE IV Programme - Secretariat Update**

Ms. Donaldson reported that, subsequent to the issuing of the papers, confirmation had been received from the Audit Authority that the that Article 27 Audit of the Council's Programme had been completed successfully. This related to the Period 36 claim for Shared Spaces and Services, which was valued at approximately £1.2m.

Noted.

## **PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Action Plan Update**

The Partnership considered the following report:

### **"1.0 Purpose of Report**

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

### **2.0 Recommendations**

**Members are requested to note the contents of the report and agree that an extension request of 6 months to 30 June 2028 is submitted to SEUPB and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree the above recommendation.**

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **3.1 SEUPB Approval / Letter of Offer (LoO)**

**Officers are continuing to liaise with SEUPB on the formal contracting of the Action Plan on the JeMS system and finalising the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA).**

### **3.2 Contract Awards**

Members are requested to note that contract awards and initiation are continuing to progress, with further awards made to successful bidders as follows:

- TPC3 – Youth Empowerment –Lot 1 to Giga Training
- TPC3 – Youth Empowerment –Lot 2 to Active Communities Network
- TPC3 – Youth Empowerment –Lot 3 to Streetbeat Youth Project
- TPC6 - Arts Across the Genres to Maywe
- CCD1 – Interfaith and Belief to the Corrymeela Community, with community partners

Members should note that due to the delay in the Letter of Offer, and thereby contract awards, delivery partners have been requested to realign project implementation timeframes to condense delivery as necessary, to ensure achievement of targets by December 2027.

### **3.3 Delivery Partner Support**

A training workshop for delivery partners on Data Sharing, Monitoring and Evaluation, Communications and Finance took place on 13 March and was well received.

### **3.4 Procurement**

Assessment of re-tender submissions for Lot 4 Youth Empowerment is underway, and the re-tender for Lot 2 of CCD5 Multi-culturalism to Interculturalism remains open to 28 March 2025. Officers are continuing to seek feedback for Lot 1 of CCD5 Multi-culturalism to Interculturalism and the re-tender is expected to progress in April 2025.

### **3.5 Mobilisation of Community Regeneration and Transformation**

A meeting with SEUPB and CPD took place on 7 March 2025, during which CPD advised that given the individual project values (below £1.5m) their role will be to review procurement documents, sit on assessment panels, and review the interim payments to appointed contractors. As such members are requested to note that CPD advised they will not be part of client project boards. SEUPB is considering this approach and is to confirm with Council the requirements for CPD representation. As such, a further report on the Capital Governance Structure will be presented at a future meeting.

### **3.6 Members should note that sequencing of projects has been agreed, as below, and the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) documentation for all the capital projects has been submitted to CPD**

for review. Once approved procurement will commence and is estimated to begin in April 2025.

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. LGBTQIA+ Hub      | 4. Access to the Hills |
| 2. Annadale          | 5. Sanctuary Theatre   |
| 3. Distillery Street |                        |

During discussions, delivery of both infrastructure works and animation activity within the current Letter of Offer timeframe was highlighted as challenging, and SEUPB has indicated that an extension to the Letter of Offer would be considered favourably.

As reported in March 2025, the construction timeline is being considered in line with animation activity, and given that works are to continue until June 2027, it is highly likely that an extension to the Letter of Offer of at least 6 months will be required.

Further considerations on the Capital Programme and animation timeframe are also progressing with preliminary stakeholder meetings, and as such the aligned timeframe will be reported to members in May 2025.

### **3.7 Programme Extension**

As reported in March 2025, an extension to the Letter of Offer is required to enable full delivery of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan.

Members are reminded that the original bid submission outlined an end date of 31 March 2028. However, during the initiating period, SEUPB advised they would permit 42 months for activity with an extended 6-month period. As programme costs are claimed from 1 January 2024, the Letter of Offer end date of 31 December 2027 was provided. On this basis, an extension period was always required.

In considering the Programme closure requirements, Council's contractual obligations, and the delivery timeframe for the construction works, members are advised that an extension to 30 June 2028 would be prudent.

- 3.8** An important aspect of the extension request is adequate staff resources and budget to cover the extension period. The Action Plan submission outlined a staff budget of £2,727,850. The actual estimated staff costs for the extension period to June 2028 is £2,831,860. As such, there is a budget shortfall variance -£104,010. To address the shortfall, it is proposed that PEACE IV deferred income is reallocated to PEACEPLUS budgets.

Members should also note that some Office & Admin (O&A) costs associated with staffing, estimated at £424,779, may be redirected internally to cover staff costs, if necessary.



- 3.9 The PEACEPLUS Programme Board has considered the need for an extension, as well as the budget and staffing position. The Board recommends that the Shared City Partnership agree that an extension request to 30 June 2028 is submitted to SEUPB.

3.10 **Financial Controller**

Members are reminded that Council is obligated to appoint a Financial Controller from a framework established by SEUPB, and a Letter of Offer condition states that the controller budget should be re-allocated from Staff / Office and Administration to External Expertise.

A budget of £240,875 has been allocated for an internal financial controller, however SEUPB guidance indicates a cost of €39,520+VAT (£31,418 est). On this basis, there is sufficient budget to cover the controller costs, within the existing external expertise budget.

SEUPB has advised the framework is now in place and requested that Council approaches the 1st ranked contractor (KPMG) to ascertain a maximum contract value. Advice in relation to appointing a contractor from the Framework and the contractual approach is being progressed with advice from Legal and Procurement Services.

Members are requested to note that the PEACEPLUS Programme Board has considered the operational claims verification timeframe of between 83-115 days for the Action Plan and agreed that an approach to KPMG is progressed with contractual arrangements to follow. Members should also note that a one Council approach for Financial Control with the 1.4 Reconnected Belfast project is being progressed.

3.11 **Staff Recruitment**

The Claims / Data Support Assistant has been appointed and is due to commence at the end of April 2025.

3.12 **PEACEPLUS 1.4 Project - Waterworks / Alexandra Park**

A further Design Information Session took place on 27 March 2025, and procurement for the Integrated Design Team is progressing.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024. Once SEUPB complete the formal contracting on JeMS, claims submission will progress.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed that SEUPB be requested to authorise a six-month extension, until 30th June 2028, to enable the full delivery of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan. It was agreed also that the Strategic Policy and

Resources Committee be requested to note the contents of the report and endorse the request to extend the timescale for the delivery of the programme.

### **Any Other Business**

The Good Relations Manager reported that, subsequent to the issuing of the papers, he had received confirmation from The Executive Office that the level of funding to be allocated from within the Central Good Relations Fund to the Council would be sufficient to enable the delivery of the Action Plan in full in 2025/56.

The Partnership welcomed the confirmation that had been received from The Executive Office in respect of the funding allocation.

Chairperson