

Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

11 December, 2024

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose copies of the report for the following items to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 13th December, 2024.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

6. Finance, Procurement and Performance

- (b) Procurement Act 2023 (Pages 1 - 6)
- (c) Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel 031224 (Pages 7 - 30)

7. Equality and Good Relations

- (b) Minutes of Meeting of the Shared City Partnership Meeting 9 December (Pages 31 - 84)

8. Operational Issues

- (e) Minutes of the Meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre 061224 (Pages 85 - 88)

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Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Procurement Act 2023
Date:	13 December 2024
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

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Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

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1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to update members on the requirements of new Procurement Act 2023 (for Supplies, Services and Works contracts) relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Category Management ○ Procurement process updates including Pre-Market Engagement (PME) and Conflicts of Interest (Col) ○ Contract Management
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the Legislative updates contained within the report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>The new Procurement Act 2023 is planned to go live 24 February 2025. Commercial and Procurement Services' (CPS) preparation of all upcoming changes required to above UK threshold procurements has commenced and is on schedule for go-live.</p>
3.2	<p>Any Contract Notice published, or contract awarded prior to go live will be managed under the current Public Contracts Regulations 2015.</p>
3.3	<p>Many of the changes that will come into effect impact the buyer side and will be managed centrally by CPS. These include additional notice requirements, changes to the standstill period and evaluation reporting / award letters. These changes will be managed through our existing governance which includes processes, procedures, template forms, and training. Council Officers involved in procurement activity will be kept up to date of changes made. Information on changes that impact bidders / suppliers is available and maintained on the Council's website.</p>
3.4	<p>The main change that bidders / suppliers will face is use of the Governments extended Find a Tender Service, named Central Digital Platform. The platform is currently being tested by Cabinet Office, with further guidance to be issued. New registration will be required for any bidder who wants to participate in an above threshold procurement exercise.</p>
	<p>Background</p>
3.5	<p>The procurement process is one part of the Commercial Life Cycle. The National Audit Office defines the 'commercial lifecycle' as the entire process starting with the identification of a requirement that may be delivered by a supplier to government through to the selection and appointment process, contract management activity, and ending with contract termination or transition to alternative arrangements.</p>

3.6	<p>The new Legislation will introduce a number of requirements that will more widely impact staff involved in the end-to-end commercial lifecycle and the time taken to procure Supplies and Services.</p> <p>Category Management</p>
3.7	<p>The new legislation requires Contracting Authorities to aggregate requirements that can reasonably be aggregated unless there are good reasons for not doing so. This is part of Category Management.</p>
3.8	<p>Category Management is a structured approach to grouping and improving the procurement of similar goods and services across the Council. CPS will continue to work with departments to support the implementation of a Category Management approach.</p>
3.9	<p>The introduction of new processes in the Council's finance system (implemented May 2024) is already helping us identify expenditure across the Council that can be aggregated. This will result in more cross-departmental contracts being identified, which will require a shift to more co-operative ownership and management of contracts across the Council.</p>
3.10	<p>CMT have agreed to ensure resources are in place to effectively implement Category Management. CPS will support Chief Officers resourcing consideration, which could include, for example, the appointment of a Contract Manager for a specific category of spend.</p> <p>Pre-Market Engagement</p>
3.11	<p>Currently, formal pre-market engagement (PME) activity is facilitated by CPS to seek views from the market as required- for example, to support specification or pricing schedule development.</p>
3.12	<p>The new Procurement Act places a greater emphasis on the transparency of PME undertaken by considering the purpose and subject of the engagement and not the type of communication or engagement. Informal PME could include any communication with a supplier if the purpose is related to an upcoming procurement exercise. We will be required to publish all PME, informal as well as formal.</p>
3.13	<p>CPS will share updated guidance on PME with BCC officers and members as required.</p>

	Conflicts of Interest
3.14	Another aspect of the Legislation with greater transparency requirements is the declaration of any conflicts. We currently have a Conflict of Interest process that is aimed at officers involved in specification development and evaluation.
3.15	<p>New requirements now:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broaden the assessment of potential conflicts to include “any interested parties that can influence a decision made by or on behalf of a Contracting Authority”. • broaden the consideration and management of conflicts across the entire contract lifecycle which includes taking up contract extensions and management of the contract. • require published confirmation a conflicts assessment has been conducted at various stages of the procurement and contract lifecycle.
3.16	To facilitate this CPS will update the Conflicts process and update members of any changes to their conflict process relating to the monthly Contracts Report.
	Contract Management
3.17	Contract Management activity within BCC is devolved to each Department and is defined as the management of activity post contract award. It is an important phase of the procurement cycle in which a supplier delivers the required goods, services, or works as described in the specification and terms and conditions of contract.
3.18	BCC Officers follow existing guidance on contract management in the delivery of their contracts. This activity will remain relatively unchanged. Contract Owners will continue to oversee contract management across their department or service and Contract Managers will continue to work with their suppliers to deliver contract outcomes including Social Value. The main change is related to the reporting on contract management activity.
3.19	The new legislation aims to embed further transparency requirements throughout the contract lifecycle so that the spending of ratepayers’ money can be properly scrutinised. This includes specific reporting requirements during the contract management phase.
3.20	<p>For contracts with a value exceeding £5million contracting authorities will be required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set and publish a minimum of three KPIs for such contracts • actively report on the management and achievement of any KPIs set and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> publish details of poor performance that has not been rectified by a supplier
3.21	The Governments new Central Digital Platform will be used for the publication of these requirements.
3.22	To facilitate this legislative requirement, CPS will introduce Contract Tiering. Contract Tiering involves classifying contracts based on value and importance, in line with Government guidelines.
3.23	<p>CPS will update the existing contract management guidelines on a phased approach to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> set out the additional mandatory Legislative requirements of Tier 1 contracts recommend the appropriate level of contract management activity required for each Tier.
3.24	In conjunction with these changes CPS have commenced the process of customising a new Contract Management module which is linked to the new finance system. It is planned for implementation during 2025 which will support effective contract management including spend management etc.
3.25	CMT have agreed to ensure resources are appropriately skilled to deliver the mandatory and recommended contract management activity.
3.26	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p> <p>Potential financial and resource implications as detailed within report.</p>
3.27	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p> <p>Not relevant for this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of Meeting of 3 December 2024
Date:	13 December 2024
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services

Restricted Reports

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Yes

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Sometime in the future

Never

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Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

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1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit & Risk Panel at its December 2024 meeting and present the minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That Strategic Policy and Resources Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - notes the key issues arising at the Audit and Risk Panel meeting - notes that the Annual Audit Letter from the NIAO, providing a positive unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements for 2022/23, has been received and will be published on the Councils website in line with the regulations and; - approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 3 December 2024 at appendix A.
3.0	Main Report
	Key Issues <u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u> <p>3.1 On 16 September 2024, Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved the Statement of Accounts for the year-end 31 March 2024. The NIAO have now completed their audit of the accounts and the Panel considered the final Report to Those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) and the Annual Audit Letter, which provided an unqualified audit opinion on the accounts. These accounts are a fundamental part of the councils overall corporate governance framework and provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.</p> <p>3.2 The RTTCWG contains seven recommendations for management action, with one recommendation relating to an EU penalty being classed as priority one, with the Panel emphasising the need to ensure full compliance with the terms and conditions of funding. Management have agreed the recommendations, which are all due to be implemented by March 2025. The Annual Audit Letter summarises the key aspects of the RTTCWG and in line with the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (NI) 2015 will be published on the Councils website as soon as reasonably possible.</p> <u>Key reports</u> <p>3.3 The Panel noted the progress being made against the annual internal audit plan noting that 49% of planned activity is either underway or completed. Ten audits were finalised in the period September - November 2024, which all had an assurance opinion of "some improvement required" except for the internal audit of the Belfast Region City Deal Programme Management Office, which received an opinion of "substantial" assurance. The Panel also noted the range of advisory work undertaken. The Panel agreed the request by management to defer the internal audits of Recruitment and Selection and Travel and Subsistence which are linked to the ongoing work to implement the new HR System.</p> <p>3.4 The Panel considered an update on the gap analysis completed by AGRS between the arrangements currently in place and the Good Practice Checklist for Local Councils included in the NIAO guide 'A Strategic Approach to the Use of Public Sector Assets – A Good Practice Guide for Local Government in Northern Ireland'. Regarding this piece of work the Panel asked for the Director of Property and Projects to report to their next meeting on 4th March 2025 on the approach that will be taken to improve asset management in BCC.</p>

3.5	The Panel considered the corporate risk dashboard which provided an analysis and update on the progress being made to manage the 23 risks that are considered to present the greatest threat to the delivery corporate priorities and / or compliance with key statutory requirements.
3.6	The Panel noted the quarterly assurances provided by Directors regarding compliance with risk management and internal control processes.
3.7	The Panel noted the work that was underway to exercise, review, and update business continuity management (BCM) plans for the critical services by the year-end, to confirm the business continuity champions and to prepare for potential planned emergency power cuts.
3.8	The Panel received quarter 2 reports on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement .
3.9	Regarding health and safety, the Panel focussed on the six outstanding high priority fire safety actions , and for their next meeting the Panel asked for more detail on the reasons why these actions have not been implemented by their expected date, to enable the Panel to understand the root cause for the delay.
3.10	Regarding absence management, although absence levels are below target and the Panel endorses the need for attendance management to be a priority item on DMT agendas , the Panel noted the reduction compared to the same period last year. In addition, the Panel learned how 43% of people were referred to their GP to investigate health concerns following an appointment at the Keeping Well Van initiative and commended this health initiative.
3.11	Regarding performance improvement arrangements the Panel noted the mid-year progress update on the actions and measures of success contributing to the achievement of the performance improvement objectives contained within the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. The Panel highlighted the importance of performance management in relation to household waste collection. In addition, following a query raised by a member of the Panel, the Director will provide the Panel member with an explanation of the Cleanliness Index Score and the reason why the target has reduced to 65%.
3.12	The Panel received an update on the key messages contained in the Local Government Auditors Report 2024 , which sets out their observations on financial performance, governance issues and key challenges facing councils in NI, including the need to ensure value for money in the use of agency workers, based on audits relating to 2022/23.
	<u>National Fraud Initiative (NFI)</u>
3.13	A key element of the Council's counter-fraud arrangements is our participation in the National Fraud Initiative . The NFI is essentially a data matching exercise that involves comparing sets of data against other records held by the same or another body, allowing potentially fraudulent or erroneous payments to be identified, reviewed and, where necessary, investigated. The Panel received an update on the preparatory work that is underway for the 2024 exercise and received an update from the NIAO on the overall outcome of the previous 2022 – 24 National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise in Northern Ireland. <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None known at this time.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix A - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 3 December 2024

Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

HELD IN THE BOARDROOM AND REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor R. McLaughlin (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers,
Councillors Groogan and Hanvey; and
Mr. D. Wilson (External Member).

In attendance: Mrs. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational
Strategy;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk
Services;
Ms. D. Murtagh, Divisional Solicitor,
Mr. L. Mulholland, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager;
Mr. M. Whitmore, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager;
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;
Ms. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager;
and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Also attended: Mr. P. Barr, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th September, 2024, were approved by the Panel.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

Absence Rates Q/E September 2024

The Director of Human Resources provided the Panel with an overview of the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform the Audit Panel of the Council’s performance in managing absence at the end of quarter two, April – September 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Audit Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key corporate indicators:

At the end of quarter two:

- The Council’s average sickness absence rate stands at 7.03 days, a decrease of 0.87 days compared to absence for the same period last year (7.9 days).
- A total of 15759.81 working days was lost due to sickness absence. This accounted for 6.25% of the total working days available.
- The table below provides a summary of how departments are performing against the target. Two departments did not meet the corporate quarterly target of 8.12 days for quarter two.

End of year target	16.23					
End of Q2 target	8.12					
Department	Number of employees (FTE)	Total days lost (FTE)	Actual absence per FTE	Variance	% of workforce	% of absence
City and Neighbourhood Services	1293.08	10571.21	8.18	0.06	57.70%	67.08%
City and Organisational Strategy	82.48	459.97	5.58	-2.54	3.68%	2.92%
Corporate Services	128.1	283.6	2.21	-5.90	5.72%	1.80%
External Affairs, Comms and Marketing	27.85	25.88	0.93	-7.19	1.24%	0.16%
Finance	49.45	134	2.71	-5.41	2.21%	0.85%
Human Resources	32.54	237.16	7.29	-0.83	1.45%	1.50%
Legal and Civic Services	155.52	1321.96	8.50	0.39	6.94%	8.39%
Place and Economy	352.04	1817.1	5.16	-2.95	15.71%	11.53%
Property and Projects	119.96	908.93	7.58	-0.54	5.35%	5.77%
Totals	2241.02	15759.81	7.03	-1.08		

3.2 Additional Absence information:

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

- There has been an increase in the number of staff with no recorded absence this period 61.66% compared to the same time last year (60.11 %).
- There has been a significant decrease of 1356.53 days in absence classified as long term (20+ days) this year (11008.81 days) compared to the same time last year (12365.34 days).
- The number of days lost per full time equivalent decreased by 0.13 in quarter two (3.46 days) when compared to quarter one (3.59 days). This decrease is illustrated in figure one.
- Stress, depression, anxiety (30.8% of total days lost) and musculo-skeletal (29.59% of total days lost) continue to be the top two reasons for absence. Refer to figure two for further information.
- From 1 July to 30 September 2024, 695 employees were off due to sickness absence (accounting for 7903.38 days). Of the cases where the use of discretion was recorded, it was applied to 98 employees (14.1%) and their absence accounted for 2164.54 days (approximately 27.4% of the total absence for quarter). Refer to figure three for further information.
- Issues were identified in how absences were being managed in 61 cases. These were discussed in detail with departments during quarter two. Refer to figure four for a breakdown by department.
- Approximately 30% of absence (4769.77 days) is recorded as disability related. Almost two thirds (63.74%) of disability related absence was managed as long term. Employees who reported absence with Depression / Anxiety / Mental Health (31.7%), Chronic back pain (14.25%) and Osteoarthritis (11.28%) accounted for 57% of all disability related absence days. Refer to figure five for further detail on disability related absence.
- The Council continued to be impacted by absence due to COVID 19 during quarter two. 96 employees were recorded as absent due to COVID19, and this accounted for 522.33 days or 3.3% of the total absence in quarter two.
- 14 employees met the trigger for a Stage four/final hearing in quarter two
 - Three employees were retired on the grounds of ill health prior to hearing being arranged.

- Discretion was applied to three of these cases not to progress to a hearing. This was due to one employee returning to work, one employee given additional time off due to surgery and recovery and redeployment was being sought for another employee.
- Three employees did not progress to a final hearing as further medical information was required.
- Five employees attended a stage four / final hearing.
 - Discretion was shown due to the nature of the employee's absence (industrial injury)
 - One decision was deferred pending additional medical information as requested by the panel
 - Three employees were dismissed.

In addition to the above cases, seven employees were also dismissed on the grounds of permanent ill health during quarter two.

Corporate HR monitors how departments are managing attendance. Matters regarding the management of cases at the final stages of the attendance policy are raised with departmental senior management when necessary.

3.3 Departmental improvement plans/absence reporting to DMT:

Corporate HR has reviewed all the departmental improvement plans for quarter two. All departments provided a progress report for the quarter. In general, meaningful information and updates were provided by the departments.

However, CNS has identified lack of resources as an issue in carrying out the analysis required for the improvement plan. To address this matter, approval was secured for additional resources on a temporary basis.

All departments returned their absence dashboards for July, August and September.

3.4 Health and Wellbeing Strategy and initiatives:

Corporate HR continue to roll out a full programme of H&WB events and initiatives. A total of 17 events in quarter two were delivered and attended by 275 staff.

Stress Awareness for Managers and Positive Mental Health are delivered regularly and were attended by 24 staff in quarter two. Training on management skills were also delivered on Understanding the Attendance Policy and Skills for Managing Performance.

Events on Financial Matters which are an important support for staff wellbeing were well attended including Pension Information attended by 53 staff, a session on Retirement Planning attended by 28 staff and Money Helper delivered by Money Advice Service was attended by 36 staff.

The Keeping Well Van visited one CNS site, Palmerston Road HRC with nine staff attending their 30-minute health check. The Keeping Well Van has now visited five sites including Duncrue, Park Road, Alexandra Park and Blackstaff with a total of 69 staff having a health check. Of these 43% were referred to their GP to investigate health concerns such as high blood pressure, high BMI and high blood glucose levels.. 15% of those seen were smokers and a Stop Smoking Campaign will commence in the new year to support those wishing to stop smoking.

September saw the start of a focus on support for musculoskeletal health issues which are a major cause of absence. We partnered with BITC on and their 'Healthier You' series of webinars. These included a session on how to assess your own health level, how movement is important in maintaining healthy strong bodies and muscles and a webinar on healthy eating and how nutrition is important for healthy bones and muscles. Another element of the focus on musculoskeletal health issues was the delivery of a webinar on 'Living with Arthritis'.

During the summer months we promoted the Active Challenge initiative with 58 staff participating and we ran successful roadshows with Sustrans on getting active at 9 Adelaide, CWB and Duncrue which engaged 130 staff.

4.0 Resource Implications

4.1 Directors are asked to ensure that:

- Attendance management continues to be a priority item on DMT agendas and related matters

discussed and appropriate actions taken forward.

- Resources are in place to ensure that adequate monitoring and review is in place at department level.

5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

5.1 Approximately 30% of absence (4769.77 days) is recorded as disability related.

The use of discretion and reasonable adjustments is considered in such cases

Figure one:

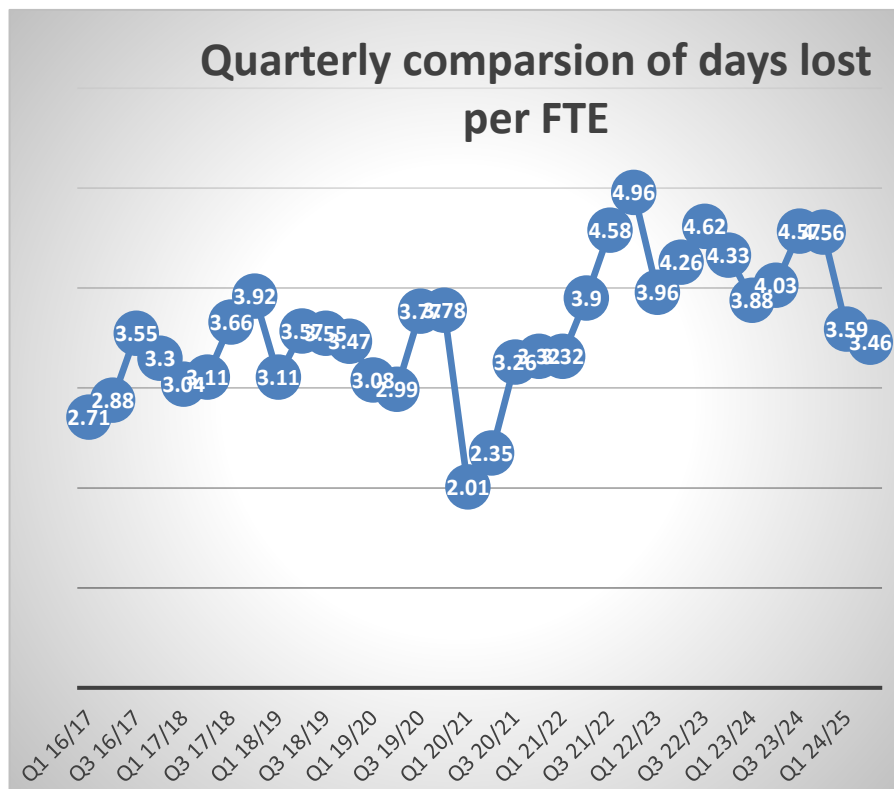


Figure two:

Reason for absence	Days lost (FTE)	% of absence
Stress, depression, anxiety	4854.37	30.80%
Musculo-Skeletal	4662.63	29.59%
Stomach, digestive, etc	1720.57	10.92%
Infections, inc colds & flu	847.61	5.38%
Neurological, inc headaches	553.56	3.51%

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

Chest and respiratory	523.78	3.32%
Infections, Covid19	522.33	3.31%
Other	519.2	3.29%
Heart, blood press, circ, etc	498.22	3.16%
Genito-urinary, inc menstrual	484.65	3.08%
Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental	310.24	1.97%
Pregnancy related	268.65	1.70%
Indust/Eye, ear, nose & mouth	3	0.02%
Total	15759.81	

Figure three:

Reason for discretion	Total days	% of total
Underlying medical condition / Disability	587.07	27.12%
Hospitalisation	339.37	15.68%
Bereavement	302.22	13.96%
Emergency domestic responsibilities	231.65	10.70%
Mental Health	186	8.59%
Planned surgery and recovery	157.81	7.29%
Work related stress	111.85	5.17%
Maternity	89.15	4.12%
Industrial Injury	85.07	3.93%
Unresolved employee relations issue	63	2.91%
Previous long service and clear record	7.03	0.32%
Menopause	4.32	0.20%
Total	2164.54	
Total days lost in quarter two (July to September 2024)	7903.38	
% of total days lost where discretion applied in quarter two	27.39%	
Average days off per occurrence of discretion in quarter two	22.1	

Figure four:

Department	Total
City and Neighbourhood Services	49
City and Organisational Strategy	0
Corporate Services	0

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

External Affairs Comms & Marketing	0
Human Resources	0
Finance	0
Legal and Civic Services	8
Place and Economy	0
Property and Projects	4
Totals	61

Figure five:

Actual disability	Total days	% of total disability related absence
Depression / Anxiety / Mental health conditions	1512.13	31.70%
Chronic back condition	679.77	14.25%
Osteoarthritis	538.05	11.28%
Cancer	274.83	5.76%
Hernia	225.12	4.72%
Chronic heart condition	177.81	3.73%
Chronic bowel condition	123.31	2.59%
Chronic neurological condition	123	2.58%
Pancreatic Necrosis	122.97	2.58%
Spinal Stenosis	87.03	1.82%
Diabetes	84.49	1.77%
Chronic pituitary condition	83	1.74%
Chronic hip condition	70	1.47%
Chronic respiratory condition	69.19	1.45%
Renal failure	67.97	1.43%
Ulcerative Colitis	60	1.26%
Arthritis	54.09	1.13%
Menopause	53.75	1.13%
Guillain-Barre Syndrome	52	1.09%
Other*	311.26	6.53%
Total absence end of quarter two	15759.81	
Disability related absence at the end of quarter two	4769.77	
% if absence lost due to disability	30.27%	
% of disability related absence managed as LTA	63.74%	

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

*Other includes a total of 17 conditions that each individually account for less than 1% of total disability related absence.”

The Panel noted the contents of the report.

Corporate Health and Safety Performance

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided the Panel with an update on the corporate health and safety performance and activities for the quarter ending 30th September, 2024.

She updated the Panel on progress against key performance indicators, employee and non-employee accidents and health and safety statutory agency enquiries and correspondence.

She provided the Panel with a summary of Health and Safety Assurance Board activity during 2023/24 and highlighted the following key issues:

- The Board had met four times in 2023/24 and its meeting in April, 2023 was used to re-establish the Health and Safety Assurance Board following the pandemic;
- At its subsequent meetings, the Board had received a detailed quarterly health and safety performance report;
- At its meeting in June, 2023, the Board had considered an assurance on the key risks of asbestos, legionella and fire safety, the draft annual corporate health and safety plan, the six monthly claims report and, in addition, a report on the legal and best practice requirements for safety committees;
- The Board had reviewed the AGRS Work Related Violence risk review report and assurance on the key risks of control of contractors, risk assessment and work-related violence; and
- In February 2024, the Board had considered reports on assurance on the key risks of work-related transport, working at height, plant and machinery and the annual review of the Board's Terms of Reference.

In response to a question from a Member of the Panel with regard to six outstanding high priority fire safety actions, the Corporate Health and Safety Manager stated that she would provide a detailed report on the outstanding actions to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Panel noted the report.

**Northern Ireland Audit Office –
Report to Those Charged with Governance**

The Corporate Finance Manager presented the Panel with the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The Local Government Auditor has issued her Report to those charged with Governance for 2023/24. This report summarises any system/control issues arising during the Northern Ireland Audit Office’s (NIAO) 2023/24 audit and includes recommendations for management action.**

The purpose of this report is to appraise the Audit and Risk Panel of any issues raised in the Local Government Auditor’s Report for 2023/24 in relation to the Accounts of Belfast City Council.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Audit Panel is requested to note the Report to those charged with Governance Audit results for 2023/24 and agree the management responses.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Local Government Auditor has certified the 2023-24 statements for Belfast City Council with an unqualified opinion.**
- 3.2 The Local Government Auditor had identified in the Audit Strategy for 2023-24, the risk of financial resilience and management override of controls as having an impact on the audit approach.**

During audit fieldwork, no significant issues were identified in these areas.

- 3.3 The Local Government Auditor has identified seven areas where she has made prioritised recommendations. The NIAO definition of the priority levels are:**
- i. significant issues for the attention of senior management which may have the potential to result in material weaknesses in internal control,**

- ii. **important issues to be addressed by management in their areas of responsibility, and**
- iii. **issues of a more minor nature which represents best practice.**

In summarising the letter there are:

- **1 priority 1 areas,**
- **4 priority 2 areas, and**
- **2 priority 3 areas**

3.4 The 1 priority 1 area is:

- **EU fine – EU penalty applied on Black Mountain Shared Space project for non-compliance with funding conditions, recommendation to ensure adequate management and control systems are in place to ensure full compliance with all EU grant funding conditions to prevent any reoccurrence of losses from fines**

3.5 The 4 priority 2 areas are:

- **Discounting of legal claims – a review of appropriateness of assumptions used in calculation of claims management provision and maintenance of a spreadsheet record of movements on legal cases is recommended**
- **Landfill provision – a review of annual recurring costs is recommended**
- **Assets Held for Sale- recommendation that agreements with potential purchasers of land and buildings include a provision for the market price to be re-assessed where there is significant delay in completion**
- **Agency costs – recommendation to ensure, where possible, that vacancies are filled and reduce the use of agency staff**

3.6 The 2 priority 3 areas are:

- **Fixed Asset Register Reconciliation – reflection of the correct asset values for the two playground assets in the fixed asset records for 2024/25 onwards is recommended**

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

- **Payroll reconciliations – reconciliation of the minor differences arising between payroll system and accounting system is recommended**

3.7 A detailed response to the management letter is attached, identifying timescales.

In accordance with the process adopted in previous years, management will monitor the progress made in implementing recommendations and will report back to the Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel on the progress.

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

None

3.9 Equality or Good relations/Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Panel noted the Report to those charged with Governance Audit results for 2023/24 and agreed the management responses.

Northern Ireland Audit Office - Annual Audit Letter

Mr. P. Barr, NIAO, referred the Panel to the Belfast City Council Annual Audit Letter 2023-24 and summarised the following key areas for consideration;

- Financial Statements;
- Proper Arrangements;
- Annual Governance Arrangements;
- Annual Governance Statement;
- Absenteeism;
- Performance Improvement; and
- Outlook.

He explained that the Local Government Auditor sought to examine that the Council had managed its affairs, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and that public money was properly spent and accounted for.

In response to a question from a Member of the Panel with regard to the implementation of training in response to a priority one procurement issue, the Director of Finance explained that the particular issue was one that occurred after the implementation of Brexit which had been addressed and not likely to reoccur due to appropriate mitigations which had been put in place.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

The Panel noted the report and the Annual Audit Letter.

AGRS Progress Report November 2024

The Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) Manager provided the Panel with a summary of the Audit, Governance and Risk Services' activities for the period September to November, 2024.

He explained that the report summarised the following ten assignments which had finalised during the period from September to November, 2024

- Belfast Region City Deal – Programme Management Office;
- Smart Belfast Urban Innovation Framework;
- Corporate Risk Review of the BRCD Digital Strand;
- Intelligent Client Function for the Planning Portal;
- Markets;
- Management of contracts / funding agreements with Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall;
- Ltd, Innovation Factory and Visit Belfast;
- Asset Management Gap Analysis;
- Belfast Castle, Malone House and Zoo;
- Community Asset Management – Sports Related Assets; and
- Cultural Strategy – A City Imagining.

After considering the Asset Management Gap Analysis report, the Panel requested the Director to provide an update to the next meeting of the Panel.

The Panel:

- Noted the AGRS Progress Report for the period September 2024 to November 2024;
- Agreed to defer the internal audits of Recruitment and Selection and Travel and Subsistence, linked to the ongoing work to implement a new HR system; and
- Noted the update on the new standards that AGRS and the Council were required to comply with from April 2025, and that AGRS would complete a self-assessment against those standards.

Corporate Risk Management

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services submitted, for the Panel's consideration, a report on the corporate risk dashboard which summarised the key updates from the risk reviews by management for the quarter ending 30th September 2024. Key updates related to:

- the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the link to horizon scanning;
- the reassessment of the current risk level of the two corporate risks, regarding the Belfast Agenda and the Physical Investment Programme;
- the development of the risk action plan for the corporate risk on Asset Management;
- the change to the risk description for the BRCD Digital Pillar risk; and
- An overview of the 16 actions to manage the corporate risks that were implemented in the quarter.

She provided an update on compliance with the Risk Strategy, including the re-introduction of formal departmental risk management arrangements, based on the new updated assurance statements completed by senior management for the quarter.

She provided the Panel with an update on the completion of the templates by the critical services on preparedness for planned emergency power cuts and the nomination of the business continuity management champions for each critical service. She informed the Panel that the critical services had been reminded of the requirement to plan and schedule their BCM exercise and to review and update their BCM plan by the end of March 2025. The BCM plan for Property Maintenance continued to be delayed due to resource constraints in the unit.

The Panel:

- Noted the corporate risk management dashboard and the updates for quarter-end September 2024;
- Noted the assurances from senior management with regard to compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for quarter-end September 2024; and
- Noted the current position with regard to business continuity arrangements.

The National Fraud Initiative in NI 2024

The AGRS Manager referred the Panel to a report on the outcome of the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise in Northern Ireland that the Northern Ireland Audit Office had recently published and highlighted the key issues arising from it.

He pointed out that the report included reference to duplicate payments that had been made to vendors due to invoices having been inputted twice and reported that the full amounts had been recovered from the vendors.

He reported that AGRS had reviewed and updated the NFI self-appraisal checklist, related to the NFI exercise which had indicated that no further action had been required.

The Panel noted the NIAO report and the update on the 2024 NFI exercise.

Performance Improvement Quarter 2 Update

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy outlined the following report to the Panel:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Board with a mid-year (Q2 from April – September 2024) progress update on the actions and measures of success (performance indicators) contributing to the achievement of the performance improvement objectives contained within the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2024-25.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Board is asked to:

- i. note the update provided within this report.**
- ii. consider and approve the Q2 PIP 2024-25 Performance Dashboard Report as attached at Appendix 1.**
- iii. agree the Performance Dashboard Report is submitted for the consideration of the Audit Assurance Panel (AAP) on 3 December 2024.**

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act requires councils to agree improvement objectives on an annual basis and publish these in the form of a PIP, to be published by 30 June. The Act also requires that progress is regularly monitored against the improvement objectives and reported in an annual Self-Assessment of Performance, to be published annually by 30 September. The PIP 2024-25 does not include everything that the Council plans to do that year, but instead focused on a smaller set of performance improvement objectives and priorities.

Q2 2024-25 Performance Improvement Dashboard Report

- 3.2 In the [2024-25 Performance Improvement Plan](#), agreed by SP&R on 21 June 2024, we committed to presenting quarterly performance reports to the CMT, the Audit and Assurance Board and the Audit and Risk Panel, Committee, and the Full Council.
- 3.3 A year-to-date (Q2) progress update is attached at Appendix 1 for the Board's consideration. In total there are 44 actions and 50 measures of success (performance indicators) including 7 statutory and 43 self-imposed performance indicators. A high-level performance overview is provided on page 4 of Appendix 1, with a summary set out below.

i. On Track or Complete

- 75 measures are on track for completion as specified.
- 6 measures (2 actions and 4 performance indicators) have been achieved including investment in the Black Mountain Shared Space, the Shankill Shared Women's Centre, major improvements to Pitt Park, the implementation of Vacant to Vibrant programme and the implementation of the new Finance System.

ii. Data not available

In assessing progress at Q2, data was not yet available for 4 performance indicators:

- Maintaining Carbon Disclosure 'A' Status.
- Maintaining silver NI Environmental Benchmarking Survey rating.

- Supporting 75% of participants to move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy.
- Promoting jobs through business start-up activity, i.e., completing 325 business plans (statutory indicator).

iii. Closed

Recognising that tree planting does not fully reflect the ambitions in the Tree Strategy and the Climate Action Plan, the CMT agreed on the 30 October 2024, to move away from the following performance indicator which has been removed from the 2024-25 Performance Improvement Plan.

‘Planting trees as part of the One Million Trees Programme (target to be confirmed – subject to internal approval)’.

The City and Neighbourhood Services (CNS) Department and the Climate Team will develop a series of science-based performance targets to effectively measure progress in relation to the Tree Strategy, the Climate Action Plan and Tree Establishment Plan which will be used to inform the Corporate Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Improvement Plan.

iv. Performance against targets

Excluding the performance indicator that is now closed, those that have already been completed/ achieved, and those that don’t have available data to measure performance against target there are 41 remaining indicators. Of these 41 indicators, 36 (87.8%) are on track for achievement. A total of 39 out of 44 actions (88.6%) are also on track to be delivered.

At the end of Q2 (i.e., 30 September 2024) the following actions and performance indicators were reported as being behind target and requiring intervention or at risk of not achieving target and change required – commentary/ rationale for the delays is outlined in Appendix 2:

Status	Measure description	Measure type
	Achieving 80% customer contact service level (people answered within 120 secs).	Performance Indicator

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

Behind/ requires intervention	Resolving 75% of corporate complaints within timeframe.	Performance Indicator
	Introducing improvement actions for 90% of corporate complaints.	Performance Indicator
At risk/ change required	Develop the Belfast Physical Activity and Sport Development strategy and action plan to create a more active city.	Action
	Develop a funding commissioning framework to support the implementation of a Hardship Programme for 2024-25, to ensure that support is available for those most impacted by poverty and the cost-of-living crisis.	Action
	Publication of a council climate investment plan.	Action
	Achieving the 30-week target for average processing time for major planning applications (statutory indicator).	Performance Indicator
	Achieving the 15-week target for average processing time for local planning applications (statutory indicator).	Performance Indicator

3.4 The year-to-date position of the Corporate Delivery Plan as at the end of Q2 2024-25 was also presented to the CMT Oversight Board on 23 October 2024. CMT members are addressing areas that are already at risk or behind through their Departmental Management Teams and will agree on areas that need escalated and/ or require further detailed discussions at the CMT Oversight Board.

3.5 Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 Reporting Cycle

The Board are asked to remind themselves of the following 2024-25 Performance Improvement Plan reporting cycle (circulated at the CMT on 22 May 2024):

Quarter/ year	Report	AAB meeting
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**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

Q3 2024-25	Q3 Performance Report	February 2025
Q4 2024-25	Q4 Performance Report	May 2025
Q1 2025-26	Year-end Performance Assessment	August/ September 2025

Next steps

3.6

- i. The Board are asked to note that a mid-year progress report will be presented to the Audit Assurance Panel on the 3 December 2024 and noted via the AAP minutes presented to the SP&R Committee on the 13 December 2024.
- ii. The performance team will continue to work with Departments to obtain historical data and targets.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

4.1 There are no financial or human Resource implications arising directly from this report.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

5.1 There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Panel:

- noted the update provided within this report;
- approved the Quarter 2 PIP 2024-25 Performance Dashboard Report; and
- Agreed that the mid-year progress report would be noted via the minutes of this panel which would be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on the 13 December 2024.

Local Government Auditor's Report 2024

Mr. P. Barr provided an update to the Panel on the key messages contained in the Local Government Auditors Report 2024, which set out observations on financial performance, governance issues and challenges and opportunities facing Northern Ireland councils based on their 2022-23 audits.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024**

He summarised the observations made by the Local Government Auditor in the following areas:

- Financial performance;
- Governance issues; and
- Key challenges.

The Panel noted the report.

Schedule of Audit and Risk Panel meetings for 2025

The Panel approved the following schedule of meetings for 2025, with a commencement time of 12.30 p.m.:

- Tuesday, 4th March;
- Tuesday, 3rd June;
- Tuesday, 9th September; and
- Tuesday, 2nd December.

Date of next meeting

The Panel noted that its next meeting would be held at 12.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 4th March.

Chairperson



Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 9 th December 2024
Date:	13 th December 2024
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 9 th December 2024.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 9 th December 2024 including:
2.2	<u>Presentation from Belfast Stories</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the contents of the presentation detailed in the minutes.
2.3	<u>Good Relations Action Plan 25/26</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership is requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the S P & R Committee agree to the submission of the Good Relations Action Plan to The Executive Office, for delivery during 2025/26.
2.4	<u>TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership is asked to approve the proposals detailed in the report which have been forward in draft to TEO in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and recommend to the S P & R Committee to agree the content and recommendation detailed in this report.
2.5	<u>PEACE IV – Secretariat Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership notes the contents of the report and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.
2.6	<u>PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan – Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> <p>The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.</p>

3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the 9th December 2024 meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Papers of 11th November 2024 • Presentation from Belfast Stories • Good Relations Action Plan 25/26 • TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding • Peace IV Secretariat Update • PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 – Local Action Plan Update
3.3	<p>More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the following minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1 Minutes of the Shared City Partnership 9th December 2024; Appendix 2; a Presentation from Belfast Stories and in Appendix 3; Good Relations Action Plan 25/26.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets, and the Good Relations Action Plan is included in the current estimates process.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The recommendations of the Partnership are to promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts for the City of Belfast.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership 9th December 2024</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Presentation from Belfast Stories</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Good Relations Action Plan 25/26</p>

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 9th December, 2024

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

Members present: Councillor Duffy (Chairperson); and
Councillors Abernethy and I. McLaughlin.

External Members: Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. L. Euler, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mr. P. Anderson, Department for Communities;
Mr. M. Briggs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. L. Euler, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mr. L. Gunn, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority;
Father M. Magill, Faith Representative;
Ms. T. Mimna, The Executive Office; and
Mr. G. Walker, Department for Communities.

In attendance: Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager;
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apology

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Independent Member Ms. A. M. White.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th November 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 22nd November, subject to an amendment to reflect that the Chairperson had declared an interest in the item under the heading 'PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan – Update'. It was reported also that the Committee had amended the decision under the heading 'Community Recovery Fund', to reflect that additional data and information would be referred to that Committee in order to agree the geographical areas to be included in the development of the mini-area plans.

Declarations of Interest

In respect of item 7, viz., PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan, the Chairperson and Independent Members Mr. Donnelly and Ms. Arthurs all declared interests in the matter in they were associated with organisations which had applied for funding for community empowerment projects under the Council's PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Since the item did not become subject of debate or discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Presentation

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. E. Henry, Creative and Strategic Lead of the Belfast Stories project, together with Ms. J. Smith, representing the Council's external consultants in the project.

Ms. Henry provided the Partnership with an overview of the aims and objectives of the Belfast Stories project. She reported that it was anticipated that the development would showcase Belfast, its people and stories, together with encouraging visitors to explore the various communities of the city.

The Partnership was advised that it was envisaged that the following benefits would be realised through the project under the following headings:

1. Better together – creating a quality public space to enjoy and explore, where visitors would appreciate Belfast's heritage and the sense of community;
2. Welcoming to all - the new visitor attraction would help people orientate themselves and understand Belfast and to see and experience the city's reputation as a visitor destination; and
3. Inspiring creativity - a creative hub to meet, learn and collaborate enabling people of all ages and backgrounds to become involved in one of the fastest developing sectors of the local economy.

The Partnership was provided with an overview of the draft plans for the development, which would include public spaces, visitor experiences, a creative hub, food stories and administration areas. Ms. Henry advised that a second public consultation had been launched on 19th November. The purpose of that consultation would be to promote the project, raise awareness and oversee the completion of an equality impact assessment.

Both Ms. Henry and Ms. Smith answered questions in respect of the development and the Chairperson, on behalf of the Partnership, thanked the deputation for the information which they had provided.

Good Relations Action Plan 2025/2026

The Acting Senior Good Relations Officer reminded the Partnership that, each year, The Executive Office (TEO) invited councils to submit a Good Relations Action Plan for its consideration. He advised that each Action Plan was assessed, and, if and when approved, councils would be eligible to recoup 75% of the costs associated with its

delivery. He reported that each Action Plan was drafted in accordance with the findings of an audit, which had been developed for the three-year period which had commenced in 2023/24.

Accordingly, the Partnership considered the draft Action Plan for 2025/26, and officers outlined a range of details contained therein and gave an overview of the various programmes anticipated for 2025/26.

The Partnership noted the contents of the Action Plan and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 13th December, be requested to agree to its submission to TEO for delivery in 2025/26.

The Executive Office – Additional Funding

Arising from discussion, the Good Relations Manager reported that TEO had, on 2nd December, corresponded with the Good Relations Unit to advise that additional in-year funding had been identified within 2024/25 budgets. Accordingly, TEO had requested that expressions of interest be submitted by the afternoon of 3rd December.

The Partnership was advised that the Good Relations Manager had reviewed the Action Plan for 2024/25 and had submitted a bid for additional funding towards BCC2, that being, under the theme of Cultural Expressions. In addition, under BCC3, that being the provision of beacons, which was also under the theme of Cultural Expressions, it was reported a bid had been submitted to address an overspend incurred within that category. Further bids had been submitted for additional funding to support the development of a three-year strategy for the Good Relations Action Plan, as well funding to offset staff costs incurred in the 'East Meets West' events which had taken place as part of Good Relations Week.

The Partnership endorsed the course of action undertaken by the Good Relations Manager and it was noted that further detail in this regard would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 13th December.

The Executive Office - Dispersal Programme and Refugee Integration Programme

The Partnership considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Issues

- 11 To provide members with an update on the Asylum Dispersal Fund and to request that members approve the approach and recommend to SP&R**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the proposals detailed in the report which have been forward in draft to TEO in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and recommend to the S P&R committee to agree the content and recommendation detailed in this report.**

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 On 11 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. There was an eleven-day turnaround for submissions to be received by TEO.
- 3.2 Submissions must be focused on work supporting asylum seekers.
- 3.3 Table 1 below is a list of proposals that have been submitted to TEO for consideration

Table 1: Overview of project proposals and costs

Proposal	Procurement method	Costs
Proposal 1: Organisational Development and Capacity Support Programme	Proposal to be procured.	£100,000
Proposal 2: Place Based Community Asylum Support Link Advisers	Proposal to be procured	£100,000
Proposal 3: Integration and inclusion outreach	Open Call to support up to 8 community integration projects	£95,000
Administration support		£7,759
		Total: 302,759

3.4 Summary of proposals

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.

Proposal 2

'Community place-based asylum support link advisers'

Background

Over the past number of years, 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.

Currently, the demand for free, independent and specialised advice is far outstripping supply within the city. 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.

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

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.

The service

The project will be led by an organisation or consortium that has the capacity and knowledge of providing case work support to asylum seekers, they will be expected to partner with community organisations in areas where asylum seekers have not been traditionally accommodated.

The project must provide community case work they must work with community organisations enabling the provision of advice and support to be delivered in community settings. The methodology of delivery could be by supporting Family Hubs or providing clinics in community group settings.

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.

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.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

These proposals have strong good relations outcomes and complement the work being delivered through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan and the Belfast Agenda."

The Good Relations Officer outlined the principal aspects of the report and the three proposals contained therein. She clarified that the programme applied specifically to asylum seekers who had not, as yet, been designated refugee status.

A Member suggested that further information would be welcome in respect of three proposals considered. He referred in particular to Proposal 3, that being, 'Integration and Inclusion Outreach' and pointed out that there could be a perception that the areas where the worst of the unrest had occurred during the summer would not benefit to the extent that would have been anticipated under the terms of the fund.

The Partnership approved the proposals within the report which, it was noted, had been submitted in draft format to The Executive Office for consideration under the Asylum Dispersal Fund. The Partnership agreed also that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 13th December, be requested to endorse the recommendation within the report.

Peace IV - Secretariat Update

The Partnership considered a report which provided an overview in the above-mentioned matter. The Programme Manager reported that Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) was progressing with the verification of the three outstanding claims, which were

valued at £1.4m. She added that officers continued to monitor outstanding claims and would update the Partnership accordingly.

The Partnership was advised further that SEUPB had selected the Council's PEACE IV Action Plan for an Article 27 Audit for the Third Semester of 2023/24. The Programme Manager added that the audit would be conducted by the Audit Authority (AA) and further detail on the extent of the audit, including the sample and process, would be provided in due course.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed that that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 13th December, be requested to note the report also.

PEACEPLUS - Council Local 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 note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Mobilisation

Mobilisation of the revenue projects within the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan is continuing with progress and key actions outlined below.

3.2 SEUPB Approval / Letter of Offer

The Chief Executive contacted SEUPB's Chief Executive to reaffirm the request for the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan Letter of Offer (LoO) in £Sterling. SEUPB has advised that the issue of a £Sterling LoO is only by exception, Officers are still trying to finalise a position in terms of this with SEUPB.

Members are requested to note if the LoO is issued in Euro, exchange rate fluctuations and the delays in claims reimbursement by SEUPB may result in significant financial risk to Council. Officers are currently liaising with Finance to consider potential mitigations to manage this risk.

3.2 Procurement and Pre Market Engagement

All pre-market engagement sessions for projects under the Thriving and Peaceful Communities and Celebrating Cultures and Diversity themes have now been completed.

Tender evaluations are progressing the Youth Empowerment, Community Empowerment and Language Up projects. It is envisaged that contract awards will be progressed over the coming weeks.

As reported in October 2024, public procurement calls are open, via e-Sourcing and OJEU, for several projects, and responses to clarifications are progressing.

Tender calls for the CCD4 Community Empowerment for Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners and CCD3 will be opened by early December 2024.

3.4 Mobilisation of Community Regeneration and Transformation

Planning for the mobilisation of projects within the Community Regeneration and Transformation (CRT) theme is underway

Critical to the mobilisation of the CRT infrastructure and works elements is the allocation by SEUPB of a representative from Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD), who will provide advice on the procurement for all capital works. Once the formal LoO is signed and returned, SEUPB will appoint the representative.

A further report on the mobilisation timeframe and animation strategy will be presented to members at a future meeting.

Members are requested to note that following the recent announcement by SEUPB on Investment Area 1.4 projects, the Annadale application by local community groups was not successful. Given the close alignment of the 1.4 project with the Council's CRT2 Annadale Open Space, further consideration of the scope of the project may be necessary. Internal discussions are currently progressing and with proposed options to be considered by the Programme Board.

3.5 Staff Recruitment

Two new PEACEPLUS staff have been appointed, Ciaran Duffy as Project Officer and Laura Magill as Project Support Assistant. The recruitment of the three Project Support Officers is progressing and once appointed, only one post remains to be recruited.

3.6 Financial & Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS LCAP will be eligible from this date and will be claimed retrospectively from SEUPB.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

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

In response to a Member's query regarding information reported in respect of the timeline for the consideration of tenders under the Action Plan, the Programme Manager undertook to examine how such information could be circulated to stakeholders through the PEACEPLUS contact database.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed that that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting 13th December, be requested to note the contents of the report also.

Chairperson

BELFAST STORIES

Public Consultation

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

The story so far...



A Public Space

A Visitor Attraction

A Creative Hub

Three things as one



WE BELIEVE

What's the idea behind Belfast Stories?

The story of Belfast is complex. As a city that has seen its fair share of challenges, some of our stories will be born out of conflict.

Difficult to tell for sure, but we want to do it in a way that openly acknowledges the fragmented nature of this place and explores its identities. Identities that as well as being sometimes contentious, are also intricately connected. And beyond that lies an ocean of memories, notions, thoughts and dreams that are all linked to the fabric and the feeling of Belfast.

Belfast Stories will be a building to show the world how much we value our city, our people and their Belfast stories. A place that helps orientate visitors, where city lines become story lines as we send people out to explore our communities.

This will be the story of the city in the richest possible detail told by those who know it best.

19
November
2024
— 23
February
2025

BELFAST
STORIES



GOOD FOR YOU

Why is Belfast Stories of benefit?

1. Better together

Quality **public space** to enjoy and explore, where they will recognise themselves, their heritage and their sense of community. **Belfast Stories will bring people together.**

2. Welcoming all

A new **visitor attraction** that helps people orientate themselves and better understand the city they have come to see and experience. **Belfast Stories will enhance the city's reputation as a visitor destination.**

3. Inspiring creativity

A **creative hub** in which to meet, learn and collaborate enabling people **of all ages and background to become involved** in one of the fastest developing sectors of the economy.



Benefits in numbers

£100m investment in worldclass attraction

Estimated £15m GVA (Gross Value Added)

700,000 visitors per year anticipated

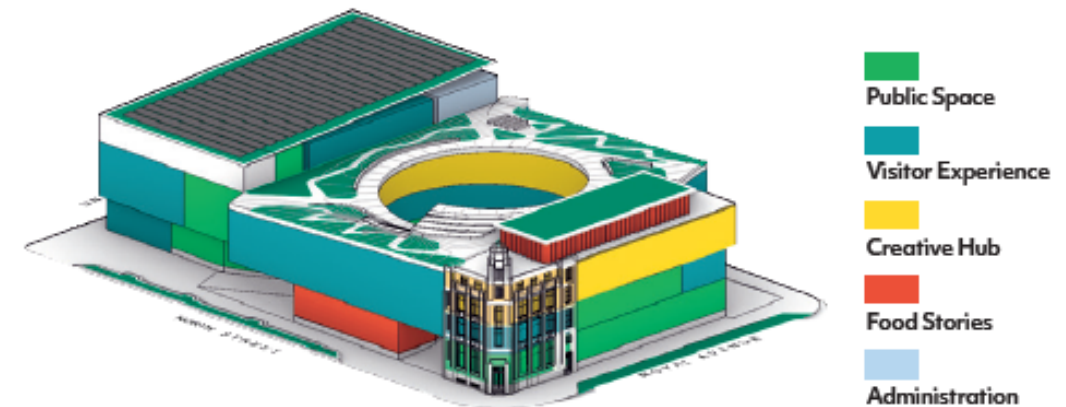
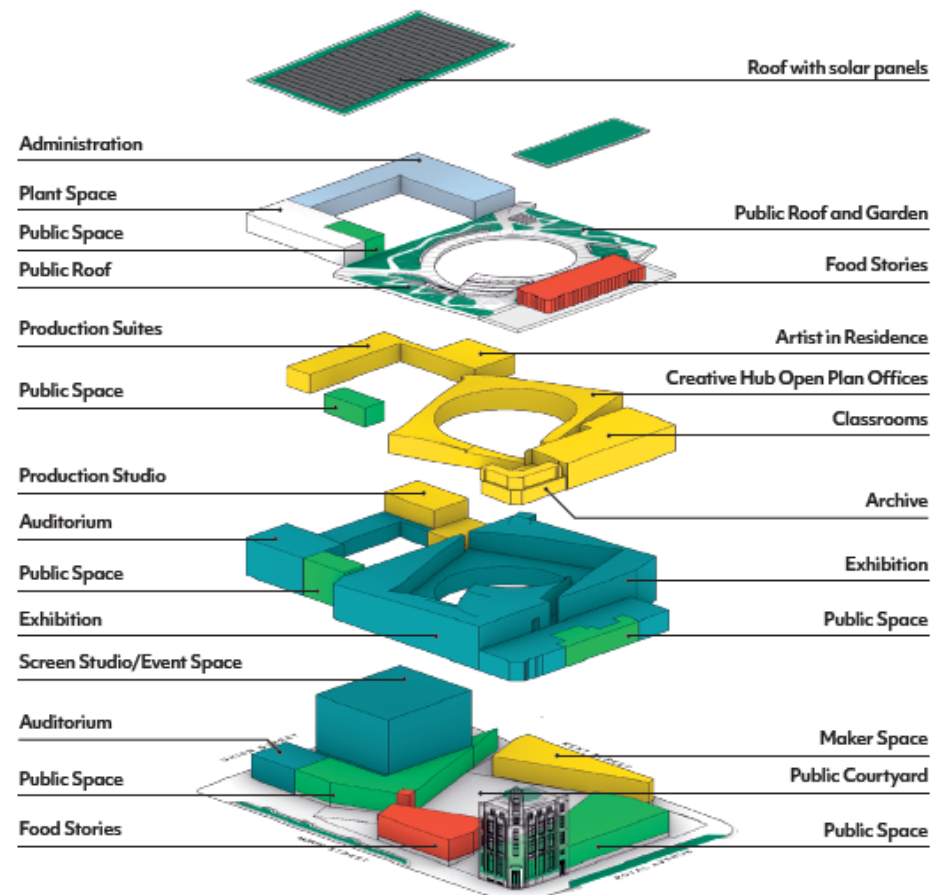
Potential to create **1200 jobs** including construction

Ambitions to become a **net zero exemplar** for the city

SEEING IS BELIEVING

What might be in Belfast Stories?

Page 50



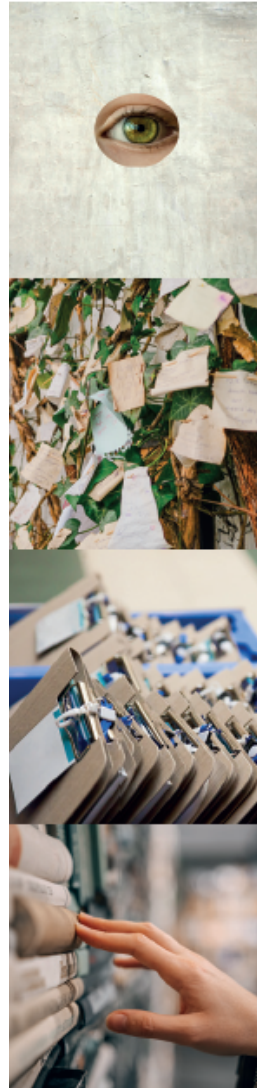
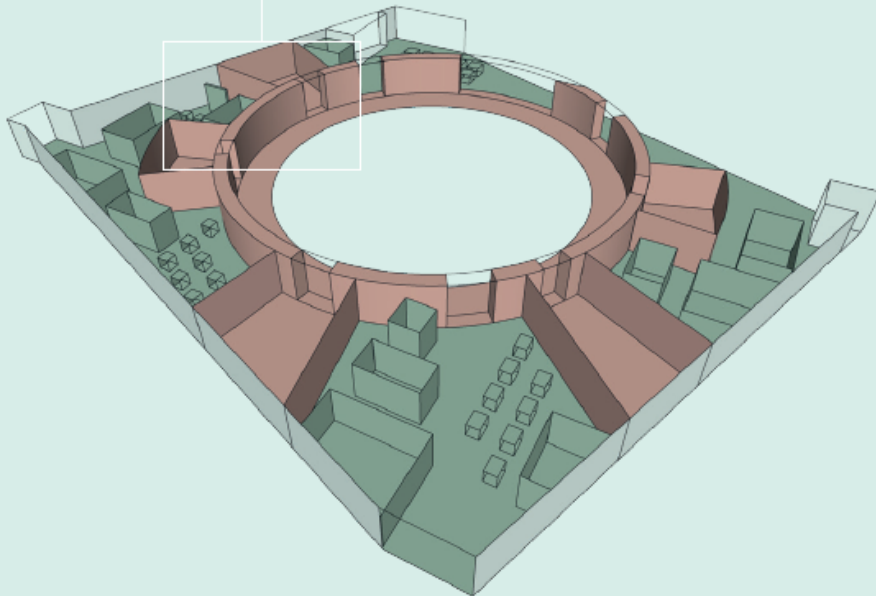
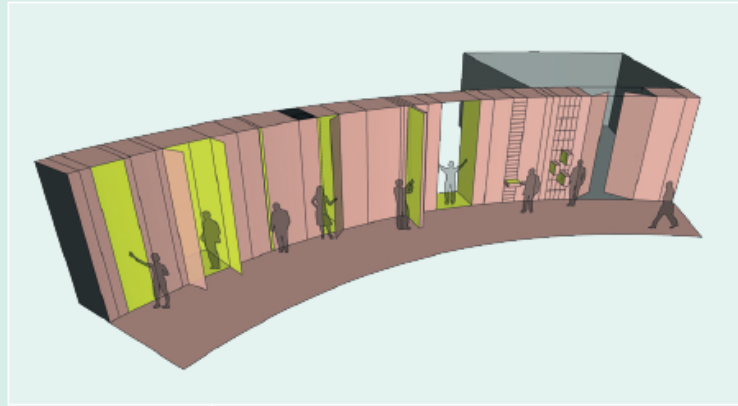
19
November
2024
— 23
February
2025
BELFAST
STORIES



SEEING IS BELIEVING

What would we do there?

Page 52



TIME
AND
SPACE

19
November
2024
— 23
February
2025
BELFAST
STORIES

SEEING IS BELIEVING

What would we do there?

19
November
2024
— 23
February
2025
**BELFAST
STORIES**

Page 53



**STORIES
ENGINE**



HELLO IT'S ME

How can we be sure Belfast Stories represents

everyone?

Inclusive growth

- **Needs assessment** - use the evidence to consult with the community
- Develop a data informed response to how will we ensure local people **can benefit** from the economic success at each project stage, **setting the direction** for the project.

Page 54

Equality

- Consultative forum
- Ongoing engagement

Sustainability

- Ambition to be a **net zero exemplar** for the city



BEING REAL

How can I let Belfast Stories know what I think?

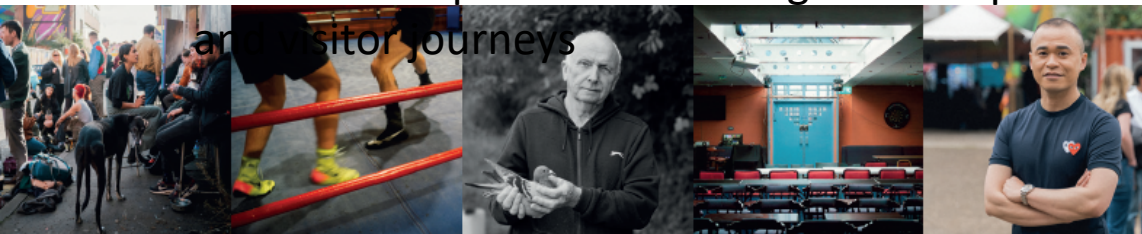
The purpose of this second public consultation is to:

- Continue to promote the project, raise awareness and gain buy-in
- Make sure that Belfast Stories is for everyone – including completion of an equality impact assessment and a rural needs impact assessment
- Gain feedback on current design thinking and plans, and for what we hear and learn to inform the next phase of the project

The primary focus will be:

- The overarching concept
- The facilities mix
- The visitor experience including the Interpretive (stories) Masterplan

and visitor journeys



In 2022 Belfast Stories recorded:

2,755 visits and **2,495** unique visitors to Belfast Stories online consultation hub

234 unique visitors viewed or downloaded the consultation documents and videos

149 responses to online survey and polls

65 consultation workshops

1,148 participants engaged through consultation workshops and events

BEING REAL

How can I let Belfast Stories know what I think?

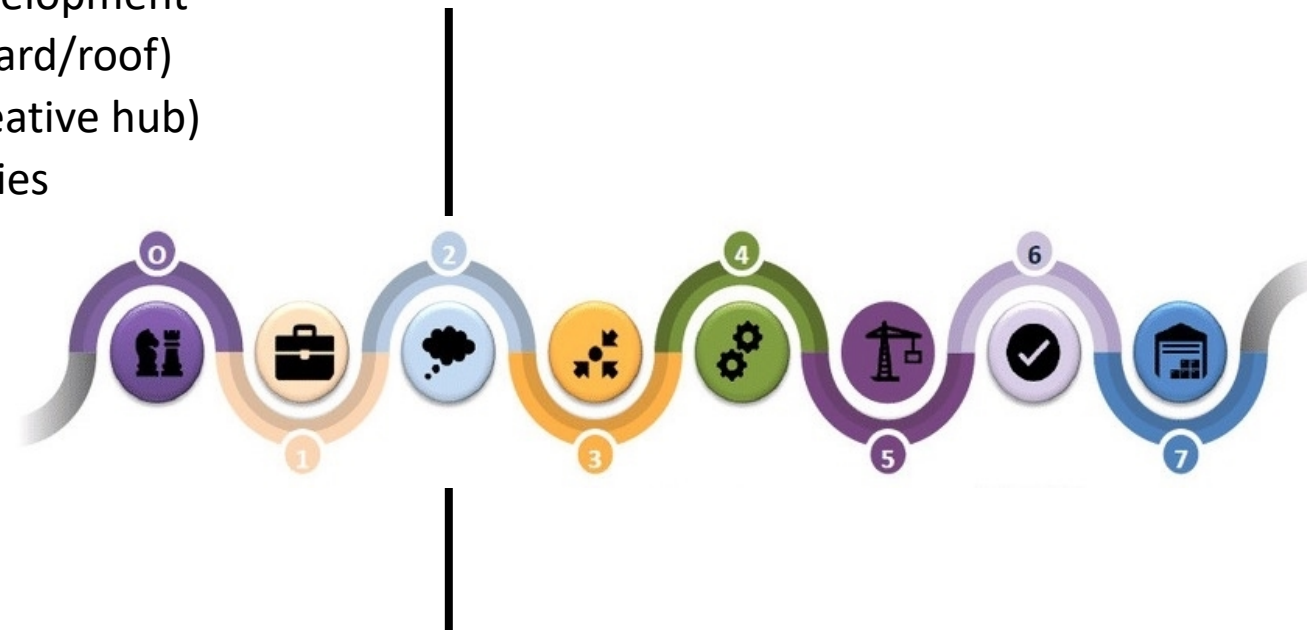
The consultation activity and materials will be developed around **5 key areas** or project ambitions.

- Page 56
- Be somewhere that Belfast people are proud of (something new)
 - Regenerate our city centre and support our city's development
 - Provide open outdoor space, accessible to all (courtyard/roof)
 - Provide facilities, activities, events, programming (creative hub)
 - Be a trusted storyteller - gathering & presenting stories

Alongside this there will be:

- Local engagement with **tourism providers**
e.g. food and drink, community tourism
- International **consumer testing** facilitated by Tourism NI as part of BRCD

19
November
2024
— 23
February
2025
**BELFAST
STORIES**



We are here

BEING REAL

How can I let Belfast Stories know what I think?

Materials



Additional Collateral

- Touring Exhibition
- Building models



BEING REAL

How can I let Belfast Stories know what I think?

Page 58

Deep dive events with local communities - vicinity

Creative projects including Belfast 2024, Our Stories Festival 21-24 November

Targeted events for priority groups and Section 75 - EQIA

Community stakeholder events with local partners

Partnership sessions with strategic partners e.g. CoC, NITA, RSUA

Pop up hubs in city centre and neighbourhoods e.g. 2RA & St George's

General Public events and activities

Your Say – Online consultation hub

Political Engagement

Northern Bridge Research Project focusing on young people 14-18 years



DISTRICT COUNCIL GOOD RELATIONS PROGRAMME

2025/26 ACTION PLAN

District Council: Belfast City Council

Chief Executive Officer: Mr. John Walsh

Please read the guidance notes provided before completing the action plan.

Section 1

1.1 Programme information

Number of programmes	8
Name/role/contact details of all staff responsible for programme management	<p>To be appointed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senior Good Relations Officer* - Project Development Officer <p>Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager mccartneygodfrey@belfastcity.gov.uk</p> <p>Leish Dolan, Good Relations Officer dolanl@belfastcity.gov.uk Mobile#: 07825 147712</p> <p>Danny Sweeney, Good Relations Officer sweeneyd@belfastcity.gov.uk Mobile#: 07825 147713</p> <p>David Robinson, Good Relations Officer robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk Mobile#: 07920 187264</p> <p>Mark McCloskey, Partnership Support Officer mccloskeym@belfastcity.gov.uk Telephone#: 02890 320202 x6031</p> <p>Louise Reilly, Monitoring Officer reillyl@belfastcity.gov.uk Telephone#: 02890 320202 x3430</p> <p>*Leish Dolan and David Robinson are covering the tasks of the Senior Good Relations Officer.</p>

1.2 Financial information

Name/contact details for staff responsible for financial management of programme	<p>Mark McCloskey, Partnership Support Officer goodrelations@belfastcity.gov.uk 028 90270663</p>
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	100%	75%
Total cost	£800,000	£600,000
Total programme costs	£448,862.20	£336,646.65
Total staff costs	£351,137.80	£263,353.35
Staff cost breakdown	<u>Good Relations Manager:</u> <u>£68,856.04</u> <u>Senior Good Relations Officer and Project Development Officer (vacant)</u> <u>Good Relations Officers x 3 – annual salaries</u> <u>£192,138.52:</u> David Robinson £65,824.80 Leish Dolan £65,824.80 Danny Sweeney £60,488.92 <u>Partnership Support Officer: Mark McCloskey</u> £48,412.68 <u>Monitoring & Evaluation Officer:</u> Louise Reilly £41,730.57 <u>Total 6 above roles:</u> £351,137.81	<u>Good Relations Manager</u> <u>2 x Good Relations Officers acting as Senior Good Relations Officer:</u> <u>Plus 1 additional Good Relations Officers</u> <u>Partnership Support Officer: Full Time</u> <u>Monitoring & Evaluation Officer:</u> Full Time 75% = £263,353.36

1.3 Claim deadlines

It is extremely important that all claims for expenditure are made promptly and that full expenditure is claimed for within six weeks of the end of the financial year. The claim deadlines for 24/25 are as follows:

- Quarter 1 to be with TEO no later than end of July 2025
- Quarter 2 to be with TEO no later than end of October 2025
- Quarter 3 to be with TEO no later than the end of January 2026
- Quarter 4 to be with TEO no later than 11th June 2026

Section 2

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
Good Relations Small Grants Programme		BCC1		
2.03 KEY WORDS		DIVERSE, URBAN, SHARED, YOUTH, ADULT		
2.04 Programme Summary		<p>Having a dedicated Good Relations Small Grants programme is an important part of our Action Plan and one that is of value to community and voluntary organisations throughout Belfast. This enables the Council to support local groups who develop local projects to deal with local issues as they see fit. The process is managed by the Council's Central Grants Unit who manage the online application process. The Good Relations Grants are trawled alongside 9 other small grants, via this link: https://grants.belfastcity.gov.uk</p> <p>An Open call for applications to the Good Relations Small grants programme was made on the 22nd October 2024. Applications closed on January 10th 2025. Following this an assessment process will be undertaken with successful projects being notified in April. This process and timeline is dependent upon a successful allocation of funding from TEO for the DCGRP.</p> <p>In 2024/25, 43 groups were awarded funding, totalling £158,851, ranging from amounts between £2,000 and £5,000, with the full allocation from BCC1 being awarded. As there is always a much greater demand (£248,000 in 2024) than outstrips the funding available, a slight increased amount of funding and a similar process is planned for 2025/26.</p>		
2.05 Contact details for programme staff		Leish Dolan: dolanl@belfastcity.gov.uk Danny Sweeney: sweeneyd@belfastcity.gov.uk David Robinson; robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk		
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)		£160,000.00		
2.07 Total target no. of participants		Direct	2,500	Indirect N/A
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme		£64		
2.09 Targeted participant background analysis		40% CRN, 40% PUL, 20% BME		

2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	4-10 Linenhall Street	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	Newtownards Road	Postcode	BT4 1AF
	Location	Ormeau Road	Postcode	BT7 2EW
	Location	Falls Road /Shankill Road	Postcode	BT12 6FD /BT13 3AA
	Location	Antrim Road	Postcode	BT14 6BP
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	All 4 T:BUC Priorities			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>Belfast City Council completed its tri-annual Good Relations Audit in 2022/23.</p> <p>In 22/23, the Council agreed to resume a dedicated and specific Good Relations small grants Programme, reversing the approach adopted during COVID restrictions. In 2024/25, 43 groups were awarded funding under this programme, following an open call for applications that were then assessed against the pre-agreed scoring criteria. The full compliment of allotted funding of £158,851 was allocated in April, giving groups a full year to deliver their projects.</p> <p>In our current audit, there is a strong recognition of the Council's small grant programme for Good Relations projects and as such, the Audit recommends that the Council maintain a Good Relations small grants programme, to ensure good relations outcomes across all 4 T:BUC Themes. Audit references are found in pp 3-5, 31-33, 35, 37 Appendix C, pp 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.14 Complementarity	<p>The Good Relations small grant scheme is part of a pool of 10 different grants that are administered by a multidisciplinary team of officers in a central grants team. The Good Relations Officers assess all Good Relations grants, but the benefit of this internal system is that the administration is undertaken centrally, which is a key factor in ensuring that there is no duplication of TEO funding with other small grant funding. Officers from relevant Units sit on the moderation panels for grants assessment for these other small grant programmes and this promotes information sharing and ensures complementarity between projects.</p>			

	<p>In addition, the Council's PEACEPLUS and Good Relations teams sit within the Good Relations Unit. Good Relations Staff have been involved in the provision of advice, support and guidance in the development of the Council's PEACEPLUS Plan, ensuring complementarity and cohesion within both Plans. The Good Relations and PEACEPLUS functions are both governed by the Shared City Partnership (a working group of Council).</p> <p>There are also strong links with the Council's Community Development team and the D/PCSPs ensuring that Good Relations staff are aware of the programmes currently being supported there. This ensures there is no duplication but more importantly, opportunities for collaboration on projects which realise mutually beneficial outcomes around issues such as interfaces and hate crime.</p>
2.15 Capacity Building	<p>As this is an open call to support local community groups, there will be capacity building elements to all projects, vis a vis planning projects, engagement with partners, financial and monitoring activity as well as improved knowledge of Good Relations issues at a local level.</p>

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
St. Patrick's Day Civic Events Programme		BCC2		
2.03 KEY WORDS	DIVERSE, SHARED, URBAN, YOUTH, ADULT, SENIOR			
2.04 Programme Summary	In 2025, the Council will allocate roughly £300,000 towards events around St. Patrick's Day. The purpose of this programme will be to support the Carnival Parade promoter to deliver an event that is diverse, inclusive and reflective of the make up of our City. This will involve specific outreach, engagement, workshops and work with youth groups and groups from our migrant and minority ethnic communities and from the broad Unionist Community			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	David Robinson: robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£20,000			
2.07 Total target no. of participants	Direct	500	Indirect	10,000
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£40			
2.09 Targeted participant background analysis	65% CNR, 25% PUL, 10% BME			
2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	City Centre BT1 5GS	Postcode	BT1 5GS
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	Cultural Expression			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>The Audit recognises that promoting positive Cultural expression is still important to people and that work is still required. It also notes that there is significant budget allocated to St Patrick's Day and that this could focus on supporting cultural inclusion and participation.</p> <p>As such, the key element of the Audit for this programme reflects that delivery of cultural expression programmes could be reimaged within the needs identified in the audit. As the Audit references, while many people feel their cultural identity is respected, there is still a need to support the building of capacity for communities to engage on cultural issues on a single identity basis while</p>			

	<p>providing pathways for cross-community engagement as a key part of this process. As such, the approach to this programme will be to enhance the Council led events by creating greater diversity from all cultural identities in the main flagship St. Patrick's Day Carnival Parade, ensuring that it is able to demonstrate a key role in promoting Good Relations.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pp 29, 31-33, 35, 37 Appendix C 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>
2.14 Complementarity	<p>This programme seeks to embed Good Relations outcomes into the Council's flagship event around the St. Patrick's Day period. Many local and regional events, led by the Council take place annually, which have a cultural and artistic foundation to their core. However, the most visible and most public event is the annual Carnival Parade. As such, this years' Action Plan seeks to support the participation and inclusion of those communities within the City who may ordinarily not participate in the Parade. This is important from the point of view of promoting positive cultural expression in a diverse City. This programme will therefore enhance the Council's civic complement for this period, ensuring that those events are focussed on achieving Good Relations outcomes and promoting positive cultural expression.</p>
2.15 Capacity Building	<p>This programme will continue to see the Council embedding Good Relations outcomes into its mainstream service delivery. This mainstreaming work will be key to ensuring that Good Relations is a key consideration in all aspects of the work of the Council.</p>

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
Positive Cultural Expression Programme		BCC3		
2.03 KEY WORDS	SIN-ID, URBAN, YOUTH, ADULT, SKILLS			
2.04 Programme Summary	To support the deployment of at least 15 Beacons for July events that are staged as an alternative to traditional 11 th July bonfires and to compliment this with funding for beacons events to host a cultural/community celebration event.			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Danny Sweeney: sweeneyd@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£40,000			
2.07 Total target no. of participants	Direct	2,000	Indirect	500
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£20			
2.09 Targeted participant background analysis	100% PUL			
2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	4-10 Linenhall Street	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	Newtownards Road - Charter N.I	Postcode	BT4 1HG
	Location	Donegall Road - GVRT	Postcode	BT12 6FQ
	Location	Shankill Road – Spectrum Centre	Postcode	BT13 3AA
	Location	Ballysillan Road – North Belfast Alternatives	Postcode	BT14 6SL
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	Our Cultural Expression			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>The Audit recognises that promoting positive Cultural expression is still important to people and that work is still required. The Audit recognises that while many people feel their cultural identity is respected, there is still a need to support the building of capacity for communities to engage on cultural issues on a single identity basis while providing pathways for cross-community engagement as a key part of this process.</p> <p>Therefore, the approach to this programme will be to support people from the broad Unionist community in</p>			

	<p>embedding a sense of confidence and pride and one's own cultural identity particularly around the most significant period of celebration within this community.</p> <p>The programme therefore will support communities in the positive expression of their cultural heritage and identity through the provision and deployment of up to 15 beacons that will replace a traditional bonfire.</p> <p>For those communities who use a beacon, an additional resource for a community celebration event, around the beacon, will also be provided.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pp 14, 24-25, 29, 32, 35, 37 Appendix C 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>
2.14 Complementarity	<p>This programme supports the work of the Council's Good Relations, cleansing, community safety and community development goals. It seeks to also support other agencies such as DfI Roads, the NIHE, PSNI and the NIFRS. Through supporting better approaches to traditional bonfire events, there are not only operational benefits to agencies from this programme, but there are also significant cost savings to be made through this approach.</p>
2.15 Capacity Building	<p>The whole essence of this programme is about building the capacity, confidence, capability and leadership skills of individuals and groups within the broad Unionist community. The goal of this is to support local groups to improve their skills in the development and delivery of projects that support positive cultural expression.</p>

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
Civic Engagement and Learning Programme		BCC4		
2.03 KEY WORDS	DIVERSE, ADULTS, SENIOR			
2.04 Programme Summary	Develop and deliver a programme of events and training on good relations/diversity.			
	This will involve a programme of initiatives to sensitively celebrate and share our city stories of diversity and to provide opportunities to open conversations around inclusion.			
	Events will include: Refugee Awareness, Living Library Events, Exploring aspects of the history and culture of faith, language and minority groups within the city as well as providing opportunities for residents to visit places and spaces across Belfast that they may not traditionally visit. This will enhance participants understanding of the diversity of our society, contributing to a greater appreciation of diversity and increased use of shared space.			
	This programme will also see the delivery of the now annual Day of Reflection, which aims to provide a space for citizens to reflect on the impact of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. It will also include events to mark Refugee Week, Black History Month, Eid, Good Relations Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, the 30 th anniversary of Remembering Srebrenica, as well as running workshops around addressing Anti-Muslim Sentiment, Anti-Semitism and training programmes to support communities to address racism. This programme will involve delivery partners such as UK Pivot, Tell Mama, Faith Matters, Cultural Solutions, Together CIC and ASCONI.			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Leish Dolan; dolanl@belfastcity.gov.uk David Robinson; robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£20,000			
2.07 Total target no. of participants	Direct	500	Indirect	N/A
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£40			
2.09 Targeted participant background analysis	40% CNR, 40% PUL, 20% BME			
2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP

2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	City wide	Postcode	All post codes
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	Shared Community			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>The current Audit identifies that the Council should maintain programmes on civic engagement and learning that works with staff, the public and elected members including on issues of cultural competence.</p> <p>The Audit strongly recommends that the inclusive approach around the Day of Reflection should be built on and developed further.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pp 4, 29, 36, 38, Appendix C, 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.14 Complementarity	<p>The proposals in this theme will support efforts within the City to build the knowledge of the diversity that exists within Belfast, with the additional aim of promoting the integration and inclusion of new Communities across Belfast.</p> <p>The proposals also compliment the results of the engagement that was undertaken on the development of the Council's PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan as well as ongoing work within the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnerships to address hate crime. This also relates very strongly to the work on the Inequalities research and the Council's Racial Equality Strategy.</p>			
2.15 Capacity Building	<p>This programme supports the development of knowledge and understanding of the diversity that exists within the City of Belfast. It also affords residents an opportunity to engage in an event to mark those events of the recent conflict through the annual Day of Reflection.</p>			

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme		BCC5		
2.03 KEY WORDS	DIVERSE, ADULT, SENIOR, YOUTH			
2.04 Programme Summary	Over the past number of years, the Council has been committed to promoting the integration and inclusion of Minority Ethnic Communities and has developed strong links with these communities.			
	This programme will build on this engagement and continue to support initiatives that seek to support the integration and inclusion of all Communities, through good relations related projects as well as supporting advice giving organisations.			
	The following outlines key activity to be included within this programme:			
	<div><div>1. Continued facilitation of the Belfast-wide Migrant Forum</div><div>2. Delivery of programmes to support the integration and orientation for refugees and asylum seekers</div><div>3. Support for local community groups to develop integration and inclusion activities and events</div></div>			
	Delivery partners such as Conway Education, Council Community centres, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Forward South, Law Centre, Red Cross, East Belfast Race Relations Forum, ACSONI, Acacia Path, Ashton Community Trust and others will be engaged in project development and delivery as well as other statutory agencies such as the EA, TEO and the NIHE.			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Leish Dolan; dolanl@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£70,000			
2.07 Total target no. of participants	Direct	1,000	Indirect	N/A
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£70			
2.09 Targeted participant background analysis	70% BAME, 15%CNR and 15%PUL			
2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP

2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	City wide	Postcode	All post codes
		South Belfast		BT7 1FY
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	Safe Community			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>The current Audit seeks to build on the work undertaken by the Council on supporting the participation and inclusion of minority ethnic residents over the last number of years. In making recommendations on how to progress this work further, the Audit highlights the following as being key components for this Action Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop initiatives to address anti-Muslim hate. 2. Develop a programme focusing on minority ethnic leadership 3. Examine and explore the response of Council's and communities in Britain, Ireland and further afield regarding managing diversity and tackling systemic racism. <p>Audit references are found in pp 4, 10, 11, 13, 16, 23, 27, 29, 31-33, 36 - 38 Appendix C, pp 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.14 Complementarity	<p>The proposals in this theme will support efforts within the City to promote the integration and inclusion of new Communities across Belfast. The proposals also support the programmes within the Council's PEACEPLUS Plan, the Council's draft Racial Equality Action Plan as well as ongoing work within the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnerships to address hate crime.</p> <p>The Migrant Forum provides a city-wide platform to encourage collaborative working between partners across the City. It has a membership of over 50 organisations and provides networking, information sharing and opportunities for joint projects across the city. It is also used as a means by which the Council can consult and co-design policies with those from Ethnic Minority Communities. This includes the work on the Inequalities research and the Council's Racial Equality Strategy.</p> <p>We are also working with the Council's Equality Officers to ensure the integration and inclusion of new communities supports the delivery of the Belfast Agenda and the Inclusive Growth Strategy.</p>			

	The proposals around the integration and inclusion of new communities fit with the overall themes of the Race Equality Strategy and will complement programmes funded under the Minority Ethnic Development Fund and other funds supporting this inclusion.
2.15 Capacity Building	This programme specifically seeks to increase the capacity of people from ethnic minority backgrounds to assume leadership roles within community and statutory organisations. Further, it will increase the capacity of organisations, such as the Council, to address issues of inequality and promote inclusion

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE		
Interface Engagement Programme		BCC6		
2.03 KEY WORDS	WALLS, URBAN, YOUTH, ADULT			
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>This programme will support relationship building across interface barriers with the aim of facilitating progress towards the softening, transformation and/or removal of interface barriers through Good Relations engagement.</p> <p>In this programme, the Council will adopt and promote a common needs model; concentrating more on what are the common issues i.e. what are the common concerns within communities rather than what divides them.</p> <p>It would be anticipated that programmes will be developed around issues such as Cost of Living, Health and Well Being, Employment, the Environment Education etc.</p> <p>The delivery mechanism will be one of seeking project concepts from those organisations working at interface areas, through an ‘open call’ mechanism, to ensure that projects are locally relevant and meaningful.</p> <p>This approach will result in Good Relations outcomes and improved quality of life.</p>			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	Danny Sweeney; sweeneyd@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£70,000			
2.07 Total target no. of participants	Direct	1,000	Indirect	5,000
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£70			
2.09 Targeted participant background analysis	45% CNR; 45% PUL; 10% BME			
2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	Crumlin/Woodvale Road	Postcode	BT14 7EA/BT13 3BU
	Location	White City/Whitewell	Postcode	BT36 7JX

	Location	Falls Road /Shankill Road	Postcode	BT12 6FD /BT13 3AA
	Location	Antrim Road	Postcode	BT14 6BP
	Location	Black Mountain	Postcode	BT13 3TS
	Location	Thistle/Madrid Street	Postcode	BT54EE
	Location	Duncairn Gardens	Postcode	BT152GQ
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	Safe Community			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>The Audit highlights that much of the work of the good relations team has been successful and should be continued. This includes those projects that are flexible and allow for the Council to be able to respond to local events in developing interventions at some of the most contested interfaces in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>It further highlights interface engagement working to transform or remove peace barriers.</p> <p>However, this can only be delivered with the participation, inclusion, agreement and consent of those who live closest to interface barriers, where issues such as poor health & well-being, educational attainment, poverty and employment prospects are significantly poorer for those residents as a result of ongoing segregation and division.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pp 3-5, 9-11, 22-23, 28-29, 31-33, 35-38 Appendix C 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.14 Complementarity	<p>The Council's approach to working on interface issues is built on developing a Good Relations approach which in essence centres on building relationships within and between communities living at interface areas.</p> <p>This approach complements other NI Executive and T:BUC initiatives on interfaces, which includes transformation, removal and security issues. BCC also sits on the Interface Programme Board overseen by the Department of Justice and reports significant initiatives into this Board.</p> <p>A GRO sits on 5 of the 6 x IFI PBP funded Project Review groups as well as the over-arching IFI PBP Programme Review Board as the Council representative for interface working.</p> <p>Officers work closely with statutory partners on this programme, including DoJ, NIHE and DfC and is</p>			

	continuing to develop relationships with community-based organisations.
2.15 Capacity Building	The significance of this programme will be in participants and wider residents, developing practical initiatives that will be generated from within communities.

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME	2.02 CODE
Shared Education Schools Programme	BCC7
2.03 KEY WORDS	YOUTH, URBAN, DIVERSE
2.04 Programme Summary	<p>This initiative will be delivered in partnership with Education Authority and will focus on developing the Pupil Voice in Shared Education Partnerships.</p> <p>4 Post-Primary Shared Education Partnerships (300 pupils) will be recruited onto the programme by the Shared Education Team at EA for this programme.</p> <p>The purpose of the programme is to engage pupils from different communities in a range of Pupil Voice initiatives that seek to explore sensitive and controversial issues through a variety of engagement sessions and events.</p> <p>Teachers will be supported to plan a series of learning experiences for pupils that will explore areas which are meaningful to them within their local communities. Opportunities to engage with local councillors and other leaders that help shape decisions within their communities will be provided. The programme will enable pupils to listen to, comment on and value the opinions of others who may be seen as different to them.</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide pupils with a voice that can help inform change within their local community. • Build positive relations between pupils from different religious and cultural backgrounds. • Explore sensitive and controversial issues on a shared basis • Build the capacity of teachers to facilitate pupil voice programmes through a Shared Education Partnership <p>The programme will also enable the participants to explore common needs that are relevant to them, for example, climate change and the environment, poverty, mental health or other common needs that traverse community boundaries.</p> <p>In 2024/25 the topics that the programme covered included issues concerning race hate and violence against women and girls.</p>
2.05 Contact details for programme staff	David Robinson: robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk

2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)	£20,000			
2.07 Total target no. of participants	Direct	300	Indirect	N/A
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme	£66.67			
2.09 Targeted participant background analysis	PUL – 45%, CNR – 45%, BME – 10%			
2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Council Offices	Postcode	BT2 1FP
2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	TBC, but envisaged that all areas of the city would be involved	Postcode	
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	Children and Young People			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>The current Audit highlighted the need to build on the positive relationship with EA following the success of the Stena Line Schools Programme and take the partnership to a new level. As such in 2024/25, this commenced through support for the EA's Pupil Voices Programme which with met the expressed need within the Audit of "The need to involve young people in Good Relations initiatives".</p> <p>The Audit also highlighted the significant learning involved for young people, teaching staff, the whole school & parents through programmes such as this.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pp 3, 11, 13, 21-22, 25, 28, 29, 31, 35, 37, 38 Appendix C, pp 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.14 Complementarity	<p>The project will be important in developing links between local schools and Council initiatives and services as part of the overall project, for example, on challenging issues.</p> <p>The Education Authority (EA) are our key delivery partner on this project. This link ensures that this project also supports the key T:BUC Headline action on Shared Education.</p>			
2.15 Capacity Building	Through activities such as these, they equip schools and staff for effective delivery of Shared Education projects.			

2.01 PROGRAMME NAME		2.02 CODE			
Strategic Connections & Support Programme		BCC8			
2.03 KEY WORDS		URBAN, YOUTH, WALLS.			
2.04 Programme Summary		<p>The aim of the Programme is to target resources through a Strategic Connections and Support Programme on a themed basis for localised programmes, events and activities across the City.</p> <p>This approach ensures that activity can be targeted and proactive and will support the delivery of Good Relations outcomes within wider strategic programmes both within the Council and across the City.</p> <p>As previously stated in the Action Plan, it is important for Council to consider how it develops a Good Relations focus when addressing a strategic need which is impacting residents in a specific area. As such, while the Council is delivering a range of programmes across the City, there is seldom a resource to support Good Relations activities within these initiatives.</p> <p>This programme seeks to develop support for sustainable Good Relations outcomes within the broad delivery of Council business in a number of targeted areas such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Health and Wellbeing2. The Environment and Climate Change3. Animation in Parks and Public Spaces4. Community Centre linkages5. Recognition events <p>All activity will be required to meet at least one of the outcomes laid out in the T:BUC Strategy and align to the Council's Good Relations Strategy.</p>			
2.05 Contact details for programme staff		Leish Dolan; dolanl@belfastcity.gov.uk David Robinson; robinsondavid@belfastcity.gov.uk Danny Sweeney; sweeneyd@belfastcity.gov.uk			
2.06 Total budgeted cost of programme (100%)		£48,862.20			
2.07 Total target no. of participants		Direct	1,000	Indirect	N/A
2.08 Budgeted unit cost of programme		£48.86			

2.09 Targeted participant background analysis	40% CNR, 40% PUL, 20% BME			
2.10 Name and post code of Programme HQ	Location	Belfast City Council	Postcode	BT2 8BP
2.11 Names and post codes for main areas of programme impact	Location	All parts of the City	Postcode	All postcodes
2.12 T:BUC Key Aim	All four T:BUC Aims: Children & Young People, Safe and Shared Communities and Cultural Expression.			
2.13 Link to good relations audit	<p>The Council has sought to create programmes that meets the Council's Strategic needs and those identified within several Audits; namely, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure there continues to be a city-wide, consistent approach to good relations while inputting at local area level. <p>Our current Audit highlights the success of this approach and further states:</p> <p>“The good relations agenda is an important part of the reconciliation process, therefore, which is more than just about cross community relationships. The impact of economic and social deprivation, changing structures that estranged people, encouraging a sense of belonging of all including those people and communities feeling estranged (before, during or after the conflict), acknowledgement and a common vision are all critical elements.”</p> <p>Embedding Good Relations outcomes into routine public service provision is a key function of the Good Relations Agenda. Using a ‘common needs’ model to bring people together for a common purpose will mean that participants will see the impact of a common approach to an issue on them and their communities.</p> <p>Audit references are found in pp 3, 21-22, 25, 28, 29, 31, 35, 37, Appendix C, pp 48-51 of Good Relations Audit.</p>			
2.14 Complementarity	This strategic approach to Good Relations work not only complements wider Council initiatives, but enhances them. It broadens out the work of Good Relations into groups from a range of sectors to			

	<p>engage with the collective delivery of Good Relations outcomes.</p> <p>This not only complements Council initiatives that are seeking to deliver social outcomes, but it also will ensure that those initiatives will contain specific Good Relations actions and outcomes in their projects.</p>
2.15 Capacity Building	<p>This programme will support local groups to develop a strategic approach to Good Relations work. As such, this programme will support them to assess the Good Relations outcomes within routine service delivery and as such start the process of embedding Good Relations into all aspects of service delivery.</p>

Section 3

Action Plan Programme Outcome Summary Table 2024/25

Programme name (2.01)	Code (2.02)	Key Aim (2.12)	Key Words (2.03)	No. direct participants (2.07)	Total Cost (2.06)	Post Codes (2.11)
Good relations small grants programme	BCC1	All 4 T:BUC Aims	DIVERSE URBAN SHARED YOUTH ADULT	2,500	£160,000	BT2 8BP BT4 1AF BT7 2EW BT12 6FD BT13 3AA BT14 6BP
St. Patrick's Day Civic Events Programme	BCC2	Cultural Expression	DIVERSE SHARED URBAN YOUTH ADULT SENIOR	500	£20,000	BT1 (City Centre)
Positive Cultural Expression Programme	BCC3	Cultural Expression	SIN-ID URBAN YOUTH ADULT SKILLS	2,000	£40,000	BT4 1HG BT12 6FQ BT13 3AA BT14 6SL
Civic Engagement and Learning Programme	BCC4	Shared Community	DIVERSE ADULTS SENIOR	500	£20,000	All postcodes. Activities open to the public.
Minority Ethnic Equality & Inclusion Programme	BCC5	Safe Community	DIVERSE ADULT SENIOR YOUTH	1,000	£70,000	BT2 8BP BT7 1FY
Interface Engagement Programme	BCC6	Safe Community	WALLS URBAN YOUTH ADULT	1,000	£70,000	BT2 8BP BT14 7EA BT13 3BU BT36 7JX BT12 6FD BT13 3AA BT14 6BP BT13 3TS BT5 4EE BT15 2GQ
Shared Education Schools Programme	BCC7	Children and Young People	YOUTH URBAN DIVERSE	300	£20,000	TBC

Strategic Connections & Support Programme	BCC8	All four T:BUC Aims	URBAN, YOUTH, WALLS	1,000	£48,862.19	City-wide. All postcodes

Section 4

T:BUC Strategic Outcome

Note: two programmes cover all 4 T:BUC aims, therefore a quarter of these two programmes has been apportioned to the table below.

	C&YP	Shared community	Safe community	Cultural Expression	DCGRP Total
Total no. of programmes	1 (plus two quarters)	1 (plus two quarters)	2 (plus two quarters)	2 (plus two quarters)	8
Total no. of direct participants	1,175	1,375	2,875	3,375	8,800
Unit cost of programme activity	£61.46	£52.52	£66.88	£33.25	£51.00
Total cost of programmes	£72,215.55	£72,215.55	£192,215.55	£112,215.55	£448,862.20

All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

Friday, 6th December, 2024

MEETING OF THE ALL-PARTY WORKING GROUP ON THE CITY CENTRE

Members present: Councillor Long (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors, Groogan and Maskey.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of External Affairs;
Communication and Marketing;
Mr. J. Uprichard, Business Research and Development
Manager;
Mr. D. O’Kane, Planning Manager;
Ms. L. O’Donnell, Senior Manager – Culture and Tourism; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th September, 2024 were agreed.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Local Development Plan - Local Policies Plan

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in respect of the Local Policies Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the city centre was the economic, social and civic hub that provided the greatest accessibility to jobs, services, shops, entertainment and public transport and that developments should be proportionate in scale and form and appropriate to the role and function of the city centre.

He summarised the following local policies, in relation to the function of the city centre, to the Working Group:

- Policy SD2 – Settlement Areas;
- Policy EC2 – Employment Land Supply;

- Policy RET1 – Establishing a City Hierarchy;
- Policy HOU1 – Accommodating New Homes;
- Policy HOU4 – Density of Residential Development;
and
- Policy HOU3 – Protection of existing Residential Accommodation.

He outlined the Sailortown Concept Plan to repurpose lands beneath the M3 Motorway and transform Dunbar Link and Corporation Street into an urban boulevard and strengthen key vistas that would enhance the setting of historic assets.

He explained that the Ormeau Avenue Concept Plan would reknit the urban fabric of the city core, promote city centre living, accommodate a Belfast Glider service to improve connectivity and enhance the public realm and pedestrian experience.

The Working Group noted the report.

Belfast Night Czar

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Stewart, Belfast Night Czar, to the meeting.

Mr. Stewart explained that the role of the Night Czar followed Belfast's award of the Purple Flag which recognised the city's thriving and diverse nighttime economy. He stated that the role was a part-time role funded by the Linen Quarter BID, Belfast One and Destination CQ business bodied and was supported by the Purple Flag Steering Group that included the Belfast Chamber, Hospitality Ulster, Belfast City Council, the PSNI and Translink.

He outlined the following five goals which he wished to achieve while undertaking the role:

- Late night connectivity;
- Ending violence against women and girls;
- Reintroduction of Culture Night;
- A common-sense approach to café licensing; and
- Pedestrianisation of particular areas of the city centre.

He stated that he had recently attended Design the Night, a nighttime economy conference in Bristol, and outlined his learnings from the conference and recent scoping visits to comparable cities in the UK and explained that Belfast city centre's Christmas animation was exceptional in comparison to Manchester and Bristol.

He concluded by stating that partnerships were key in supporting the nighttime economy, particularly nighttime connectivity and welcomed the Council's support.

In response to a question from a member with regard to financial responsibility for transport, Mr. Stewart explained that finance was the main issue with regard to connectivity and allowing people to travel home safely from the city centre late at night and that he felt the contribution of the nighttime economy had been undervalued by government departments.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Stewart for his attendance and the Working Group agreed to invite him back to a future meeting.

Request to Present to a future meeting – ROAM NI

The Working Group acceded to a request from Councillor Doherty to invite ROAM NI to present to a future meeting.

Chairperson

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