

Public Document Pack

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

11th December, 2019

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the report for the following items to be considered at the meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Tuesday, 17th December, 2019.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

8. **Equality and Good Relations**

(a) Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership (Pages 1 - 20)

9. **Operational Issues**

(d) Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 3 December 2019
(Pages 21 - 34)

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Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 2 nd December 2019
Date:	17 th December 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 2 nd December 2019.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	That the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee approve the minutes and the recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 2nd December 2019 including:
2.2	<p>PEACE IV</p> <p><u>CYP1 Tech Connects</u></p> <p>That pending receipt of a information from SEUPB in relation to CYP1, delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to agree the approach required to enable a timely action to be taken.</p>

2.3	<p><u>CYP3 On the Right Track</u></p> <p>To note the challenges, affecting project delivery, agreed the revised delivery target for 2020 And to agree a request to SEUPB to engage more fully with the 3 main codes.</p>
2.4	<p><u>BPR4 Belfast & the World</u></p> <p>To approve a maximum of 45 people (40 participants and 5 support staff, including the attendance of a maximum of 2 Council staff) to attend the EU study visit to Ypres, Belgium.</p>
2.5	<p>Notice of Motion - Srebrenica</p> <p>That a programme be drawn up which would involve inviting suitable representatives to Belfast, as recommended by Remembering Srebrenica, to engage with a number of stakeholders about Srebrenica, acknowledgement and justice, and the importance of anti-prejudice work.</p>
2.6	<p>District Council Good Relations Action Plan</p> <p>To note the update in relation to delivery and spend and the following funding allocations under the Shared and Safe spaces themes</p> <p>To approve that identified underspend of £23,000 in both of these programmes be allocated to the following proposals;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ £5,000 for inspection and site recommendations reports for the provision of bonfire beacons ○ £5,000 towards an programme focusing on prejudice and marking 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide with remembering Srebrenica UK ○ £5,000 contribution to a significant piece of cross sectoral work to secure collective agreement on the strategic vision for the ‘clean, green and safe’ elements of work in the city centre. ○ £3,000 towards review of approach to supporting positive cultural expression ○ £5,000 to support the city wide initiatives which seek to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and prosperity of all.
3.0	<p>Main report</p>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Shared City Partnership (formerly known as the Good Relations 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 December 2019 meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the Resilience Strategy • Update from PEACE IV Secretariat • Update from Peace IV Children and Young People • Update from PEACE IV Shared Spaces and Services • Update from PEACE IV Building Positive Relations • Update on Islamophobia Research • Update on Notice of Motion – Srebrenica • Stena Line Schools Intervention Project • District Council Good Relations Programme Action Plan 19/20 – Update and Reallocation. • Report back on District Council Good Relations Programme Events 19/20 • Upcoming events – December19/January 20 <p>More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the minutes of the meeting attached in appendix 1.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets</p>
3.4	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 Copy of the minutes of the Shared City Partnership of 2nd December 2019.</p>

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY 2nd DECEMBER, 2019

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson); and
Alderman Rodgers and Councillor Verner.

External Members: Mr. J. Currie, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Dr. Y. Hanore, NI Inter-Faith Forum;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Mr. I. McLaughlin, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Superintendent K. McMillan, Police Service of Northern
Ireland;
Ms. H. McClay, Faith Sector;
Mr. M. O'Donnell, Department for Communities; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;
Mrs. M. Higgins, Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors M. Kelly, and Smyth and Ms. B. Arthurs, Ms. O. Bannon, and Ms. G. Duggan,

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th November were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation on the Resilience Strategy

The Commissioner for Resilience provided the Partnership with information on the behaviour of resilient cities. She provided an outline of some of the key characteristics including the fact that they were connected resourceful and flexible willing to adapt to changing circumstances and able to look at past experience and learn from those experiences in new and innovative ways. The Working Group was provided with a list of previous incidents which had major implications for the functionality of the city, including amongst other things, the big freeze during 2010/11 and, more recently, the major fire at Bank Buildings in 2018.

The Partnership was provided with an overview of the many challenges facing the city such as its dependency on fossil fuels and segregation brought about by sectarian division. The members were reminded of the environmental shocks facing the city, including flooding and extreme weather events. The Commissioner referred to a range of

other issues for example, the need to prepare for climate change and the urgent requirement to invest in social housing stock to meet future population demands. She provided the Partnership with a vision for a resilient Belfast and the transition to a low carbon climate resilient economy within a generation.

The Commissioner provided an outline of the three resilience goals which were resilient to climate change, providing the city's youth with an active urban childhood and the provision of a connected city, incorporating sustainable transport infrastructure and the need to meet the city's economic, social and environmental goals,

The Partnership acknowledged the urgent need to tackle climate change, including the planting of trees to absorb carbon from the atmosphere. The members highlighted the need to involve citizens in the Council's resilience strategy and of the need to secure adequate resources to meet the demands associated with tackling climate change. The Commissioner informed the Partnership that a Community Planning Partnership had been established, the remit of which was to make the Council accountable for its actions on climate change.

The Partnership noted the Information which had been provided and thanked the Commissioner for her detailed and informative presentation. The Good Relations Manager undertook to circulate details of the forthcoming consultation on the Resilience Strategy to the members of the Shared City Partnership.

Update on PEACE IV

Update on Peace IV Secretariat

The Good Relations Manager provided an update on the progress in respect of the Peace IV Local Action Plan and its continued support for established and emerging projects. The members were informed that a programme wide work plan was being developed, including the Culture Café series, stating that there had been positive feedback in regard to the series of Arabic Culture café events. The Partnership was advised also that, owing to the success of the Culture Café events, a further programme of events comprising seminars and workshops was being developed and would be presented to the Working Group in January, 2020.

The Good Relations Manager reported that underspend proposals for the Shared Spaces and Services (SSS) and Building Positive Relations (BPR) themes, as agreed previously by the members, had been finalised prior to submission to the Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB) and that the Children's and Young People's (CYP) proposal in respect of its underspend was being progressed currently. It was reported that claims in respect of the period August- October 2019 totalling £ 383.662.52 would be submitted to SEUPB. It was reported further that the underspend of £302,000, which had been reported previously to the Shared City Partnership (SCP), could be explained, amongst other things, by a number of factors such as staffing and delays in planning approvals being granted.

Update on PEACE IV Children and Young People

The Partnership was provided with an update on a progress report which had been reported to the Shared City Partnership (SCP) in respect of the CYP theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan. The Good Relations Manager stated that implementation of the projects within the CYP theme was continuing, all of which were supported by the PEACE IV team. She reported that both the CYP2 and CYP4 projects were performing well. In

regard to the CYP1 Tech Connects project. The Good Relations Manager provided a further update and advised that the Council was waiting on a response from SEUPB. The Partnership was asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that, pending receipt of information from SEUPB, delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, to agree the approach required to enable a timely action to be taken.

In regard to CYP3 On The Right Track – Sports Element, it was reported that the project had been accelerated to meet the target of 720 participants to meet the 2018 and 2019 combined targets which had proved challenging to achieve and was unlikely to be achieved in 2020. However, a revised implementation proposal was presented to the Partnership to address that issue.

Members agreed to note the challenges affecting project delivery, agreed the revised delivery target for 2020, and to agree a request from SEUPB to engage more fully with the three main codes.

In regard to CYP5 - NIHE Local Area Network Partner Delivery, she indicated that implementation of the project was being monitored closely and that the pace of delivery in respect of the project was increasing. The Good Relations Manager stated that the uptake of PEACE IV projects in East Belfast had been relatively low and that the SCP representative for East Belfast Community Development Association had facilitated discussions with the Youth Practitioners Forum. She stated that the meeting had been positive and had generated interest from a range of groups for future participation in PEACE IV events.

Update on PEACE IV Shared Spaces and Services

Mr. G. Stewart, McCadden Design, attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Good Relations Manager provided the SCP with a progress report in respect of the SSS theme of the PEACE1V Local Action Plan. She reported that implementation of the SSS capital and programming element was continuing on a phased basis and that the current focus was on sections two and three located at Springfield Dam, Springfield Park Paisley Park and INI sites. It was reported that progression of section 4 would be located at Bog Meadows

The members were informed of the need to create an iconic network of shared open spaces which would facilitate reconciliation and interaction between divided communities and would assist also in the provision of a catalyst for social and economic regeneration for local neighbourhoods. The members were informed that after the presentation by McCadden Design they would be required to recommend a branding design for the project which complimented the banding options associated with the reconnected Open Spaces project, She reported that it was proposed that the capital works at Springfield Dam would commence in January 2020 with a projected handover date of June 2020.

The members were provided with a number of options in regard to the branding associated with the project. The Chairperson of the Partnership thanked Mr. Stewart for his detailed and informative presentation and he departed from the meeting.

The Partnership was content with the theme on common ground, but felt that the names which were presented were not in keeping with either community ownership or the environment within which the proposed project would be developed. The Partnership recommended that the matter be deferred to allow or further options to be brought forward for consideration.

Update on PEACE IV Building Positive Relations

The Good Relations Manager reported that the four projects associated with the Building Positive Relations were continuing including;

BPR1 - Cross Community Area Networks

BPR2 - Creative Communities Project

BPR3 - Transform for Change Project

BPR4 - Belfast and the World

BPR5 - Traveller and Roma elements of Supporting Connected Communities and

BPR – Cinematography – the Belfast Peace Journey

In respect of the BPR4 project, the Partnership was informed that a EU study visit to Ypres in Belgium would focus on historical sites in regard to the legacy of the first World War. The members were advised that the Council was in the process of coordinating its activities through a number of Service Level Agreements with suitable partner organisations in regard to supporting Connected Communities, relevant to the Traveller and Roma communities. The Good Relations Manager stated that, in regard to the Belfast Peace Journey, the contract to film had been awarded and that the project initiation was due to commence on 4th December, 2019.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a maximum of forty five people (forty participants and five support staff, including a maximum of two Council Officers) attend the European Study Visit to Ypres, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Update on Islamophobia Research Paper

The Good Relations Manager submitted the undernoted report in regard to research undertaken on the experiences from the Muslim community in Belfast.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 Members will recall at their meeting in August 2019 a report was provided on the recommendations from research that the Good Relations Unit commissioned to understand the experiences of people from the Muslim community in Belfast.

1.2 The purpose of this paper is to provide members with an update on actions that will be taken forward to support matters arising from the research and from the action within

the current Good Relations Plan to provide an range of tailored interventions to address issues of hate crime.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report which supports the commitment in the Good Relations Action Plan 'to provide a range of tailored interventions to address issues of hate crime, sectarianism and racism across Belfast'.

3.0 Main report

3.1 In March 2018 the Institute for Conflict Research was commissioned to research and provide a report on the following:

- 1) the experiences of people from the Muslim community in Belfast in relation to anti- Muslim hate / discrimination**
- 2) the impact of anti-Muslim hate / discrimination at an individual and community level in Belfast**
- 3) how widespread anti-Muslim crimes / incidents / bias / discrimination are, whether there are patterns of perpetration**
- 4) the role of online activity in terms of anti-Muslim hate**
- 5) clarity on what is known about those who commit anti-Muslim hate crime / incidents, what role if any, is played by organised groups**
- 6) Recommendations on how people from the Muslim community can be supported to report incidents / crimes / discrimination**
- 7) To provide an overview of the completed research to relevant Council committees.**

3.2 In August members of the Shared City Partnership were briefed in relation to the findings of the report.

3.3 Following on from the report officers have met with various representatives and people from the Muslim community to brief them on the report and to seek recommendations on what initiatives they would like to see the Council take forward.

3.4 Through these meetings the following suggestions were made

- 1) A comprehensive training opportunity for community workers and other partners to skill them to recognise what constitutes Islamophobia and how to interrupt**

- 2) Enhanced opportunities, through good relation projects, to support better contact between Muslim and non-Muslim communities
- 3) Greater visibility for events such as Eid and their potential to bring communities together
- 4) Support for more localised opportunities within neighbourhoods to bring neighbours together to celebrate Eid and other festivals such as the one funded by the Council in the Holylands which brought neighbours together for a street festival to celebrate Eid.
- 5) Support for Arabic cultural festivals / Arabic bazars in parks and other City facilities
- 6) Activities highlighting the diversity of the Muslim Community in Belfast
- 7) Greater visibility in the City Centre for Arabic festivals such as shop mannequins dressed in headscarves during Ramadan, City Hall lit up to mark the end of Ramadan, Arabic Exhibitions / lectures and events
- 8) Greater visibility of people from the Muslim community in Council messaging material.

3.5 To take forward the above recommendations and those arriving from the report, Officers are researching the market for available dedicated training programmes to promote better dialogue and understanding in relation to Islamophobia. The training would be targeted specifically at leaders within communities and statutory agencies and leaders within the Muslim community .

3.6 The training would include:

- an overview of what is anti-Muslim hatred
- what are the demographics of perpetrators and victims
- what are trigger points
- an outline of far right groups and connections / links between far-right groups in England and Belfast
- an understanding of gendered and intersectional hate
- online anti-Muslim trends – what they are, who is behind them and extremist networks
- what victims can do to help themselves online
- what Mosques and Islamic institutions can do to help themselves
- understanding the link between anti-Muslim hate and the promotion of extremism
- online campaigns tackling anti-Muslim hate
- ensuring reporting by victims
- developing the skills of participants to interrupt anti-Muslim sentiment.

3.7 The report and conversations with people from a Muslim background also recommended that Belfast City Council should consider ways to encourage and support relationship

building and cultural awareness programmes and activities involving local community organisations and groups representing the Muslim community as part of a process of reducing hate crimes and hate speech.

3.8 The Good Relations Unit will be undertaking a number of initiatives to support the above, this includes:

- **Development of Living Library initiative:** The development of a Living Library programme involving women from a Muslim background. This informal structure will open up opportunities for other communities and individuals to meet people from a Muslim background, to engage in casual discussions and to hear the diverse experiences and stories of people from the Muslim community.
- **DiverseCity:** Through the DiverseCity project regular opportunities will be created for people from Belfast to visit the Islamic Centre. These visits are an excellent opportunity for individuals to visit an Islamic Centre, to ask questions about the Muslim community in Belfast, to understand aspects of Islam and to observe prayer. In addition people from the Muslim community will also be encouraged to get involved with other events from the DiverseCity programme to enhance their familiarity with other communities and cultures in Belfast.
- **Visit my Mosque Day:** The good relations unit will also support the Belfast Islamic Centre and NI Muslim Family Association to promote their annual 'Visit my Mosque Day' to wider audiences in Belfast.
- **Eid celebration:** The good relations unit will also work with the Belfast Islamic Centre, NI Muslim Family Association and other organisations such as the Somali Association to develop ways to open up EID celebrations as a means of supporting better contact and understanding between Muslim and Non-Muslim communities. Opportunities will also be created through the Lord Mayor's office to mark EID.
- **Interagency monitoring:** The Good Relations Unit and South Belfast Round Table, with other partner organisations, will be developing a structure based on the Roma Tension Monitoring Model. The proposed structure will bring together inter-agency partners to monitor and take actions to support the Muslim community and to promote better prevention and reporting of hate crime.
- **Arabic Festival:** The good relations unit will explore with Culture and Arts and Events opportunities as to

how the Council can support festivals such as Eid and develop opportunities to celebrate Arabic Culture through bazars, exhibitions and the arts.

Financial & Resource Implications

Proposals arising from this paper will be covered within the annual Good Relations Action Plan and relate specifically to the action around providing a range of tailored interventions to address issues of hate crime, sectarianism and racism across Belfast, 75% of which is recouped by the Executive Office under the District Council's Good Relations Programme.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

The actions in this report relate to commitments made in the Good Relations Action Plan to provide a range of tailored interventions to address issues of hate crime, sectarianism and racism across Belfast."

The Senior Good Relations Officer reported that officers from the Council had been engaged proactively with representatives from The Muslim community to explore what initiatives the Council might promote. The Partnership was advised that it was the intention of the Council to appoint an external organisation, Faith Matters, to deliver a targeted, focussed training programme, as there was not currently the expertise, within the province, to provide the necessary elements required.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Update on Notice of Motion – Srebrenica

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership of the motion in regard to the Srebrenica genocide and which had been referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It was reported that at the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22nd November, 2019, it had been agreed:

- That officers Liaise with Remembering Srebrenica to ascertain their plans for the commemoration of the 25th anniversary in 2020
- That officers work, in partnership with representatives from Remembering Srebrenica, to determine how this period could be marked in Belfast
- That any proposals be brought to the Shared City Partnership in the first instance for discussion, given the remit of the Partnership in regard to the subject matter.
- The Partnership was provided with information on the background to the Srebrenica genocide in July 1995 when in excess of 8,000 Bosniaks, mostly Muslim, were killed. The members were informed that the major anniversary in connection with the genocide would be held in 2020 in Ballymena. The Good Relations Manager stated that

officers from the Council were liaising with Remembering Srebrenica to examine the possibility of delivering a programme in March 2020 which would involve representatives of Srebrenica coming to Belfast to acknowledge the importance of justice and the significant impact of anti-prejudice work, The Working Group was advised also that the TEO had requested the Council to partner them to deliver and host International Remembrance Day in January 2020.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and endorsed the programme of events outlined, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Stena Line Schools Intervention Project

The Partnership was provided with an update on the collaborative schools intervention project which was supported by Stena Line, Belfast City Council and the Education Authority

It was reported that in March 2019, the Council had agreed to accept the gift of a Knotted Gun, donated by the Olsson family and which was sited in Girdwood. As a result of the Council accepting the gift, it was reported that Stena Line had made a commitment to invest £25,000 per year over a three period in a programme for children and young people delivered through schools which would look at the issue of non-violence. It was reported also that officers from the Council had met with representatives from the Education Authority and that a partnership approach had been agreed between those organisations, thereby ensuring additional funds would be made available through the Education Authority. It was reported also that the Council would be making a financial contribution of £40,000 over a three year period towards the project, through the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) Action Plan,

The Good Relations Manager stated that an advisory Group would be responsible for the management of the project and that it would report back to the Partnership on a quarterly basis.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

District Council Good Relations Programme Action Plan 2019/20 – Update and Reallocation

The Senior Good Relations Officer submitted the undernoted report in respect of the delivery and spend to date in regard to the DCGRP action Plan 2019/20.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide an update on delivery and associated spend to date in relation to the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP) Action Plan 19/20 and present recommendations for reallocation of funding to projects that will meet the aims of the Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 To note the update in relation to delivery and spend and the following funding allocations.

Interface programme (BCC 7)

- £8,000 towards reimaging gates at Woodvale Avenue

Shared Space programme (BCC 8)

- £8,500 towards shared space programme in the Suffolk area
- £5,000 towards repair of artwork on Lepper street

To recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they approve that identified underspend of £23,000 in both of these programmes be allocated to the following proposals;

- £5,000 for inspection and site recommendations reports for the provision of bonfire beacons
- £5,000 towards an programme focusing on prejudice and marking 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide with remembering Srebrenica UK
- £5,000 contribution to a significant piece of cross sectoral work to secure collective agreement on the strategic vision for the 'clean, green and safe' elements of work in the city centre.
- £3,000 towards review of approach to supporting positive cultural expression
- £5,000 to support the city wide initiatives which seek to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and prosperity of all.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 Following a review of progress in relation to delivery of the 19/20 DCGRP Action Plan officers can report that claims for Q1 and Q2 have been submitted and processed by TEO. Payments of £266,208 have been made to Belfast City Council for this period, which represents 100% spend.
- 3.2 Projected spend estimates are on track for most programmes but as reported in November four projects have had delayed delivery. These are
- BCC5 – Schools Intervention Project
 - BCC6 – GR Approach to Hate Crime
 - BCC 7 – Interface Programme
 - BCC8 – Shared Space Programme
- 3.3 A detailed update on BCC 5 is provided in a separate paper and officers are confident that there will be no issues in

relation to meeting projected project delivery and spend by March 2020.

- 3.4 A significant element of BCC 6 relates to actions that will be brought forward by the Islamophobia research which was previously presented to the Shared City Partnership. A detailed update on BCC 6 with identified delivery programmes is provided in a separate paper and officers are confident that there will be no issues in relation to meeting projected project delivery and spend by March 2020.
- 3.5 From 2017/18, the Action Plan has included dedicated programmes in relation to Shared Space and Interfaces but there have been ongoing challenges in relation to spend for these programmes. Feedback suggests that there are a number of reasons for this including the sensitive nature of this work and ongoing engagement which is required to support development of proposals.
- 3.6 In addition, the International Fund for Ireland's Peacewalls programme provides substantial funding to a range of organisations involved in delivery of this work. DoJ and NIHE also provide financial support for physical transformations in interface areas.
- 3.7 The emerging Good Relations Audit contains some recommendations in relation to future approaches to Interface working and will be reported in more detail at the January meeting for members' consideration.
- 3.8 **BCC 7, Interface programme**
- This programme included plans to work with communities in Greater Whitewell/Whitecity to develop ongoing cross community contact following the transformation of an interface barrier at the Serpentine Road and development of a new play park in Navarra place which opened in September of this year. Delays in completion of the physical project as well as staff changes have had an impact of delivery of an ongoing good relations project. Officers continue engagement with the communities here and will support ongoing good relations work. However, it is unlikely that there will be significant delivery prior to March 2020.
- 3.9 Officers have had ongoing engagement with Belfast Interface project in relation to the development of new technology that could be used to visualise potential physical transformations in Interface communities but it is unlikely that there will be potential to progress this work prior to March 2020.
- 3.10 5 proposals have been received for Cross Community Interface events at the following locations:

- Duncairn Community Partnership – McCrory Hall, Duncairn Gardens
- Forthspring Inter-Community Group – Forthspring (Springfield Road)
- Lower Oldpark Community Association – Girdwood
- Twaddell/Ardoyne/Shankill Communities in Transition – Ardoyne Ambulance Station
- Springfield Star – Blackmountain

The above groups will receive a £500 contribution towards a cross-community Christmas Goodwill event at the interface to promote shared space.

3.11 Through engagement on the Peace IV Shared Space capital project officers have identified the potential to enhance that capital bid with a proposal to develop existing gates at Woodvale Avenue.

3.12 At present there is an anticipated underspend of £8,000 within the overall Interface Programme.

BCC 8 Shared Space programme

3.13 Staff engagement with Suffolk Community Forum (SCF) has developed a programme using the tradition of flax growing and linen as a means of supporting meaningful and purposeful cross community relationships between residents of Suffolk and Lenadoon. The overall aim of the project is to increase cross community contact and the use of shared space through engaging participants in traditional crafts and activities.

This project would be delivered on a cross community basis and will be completed by March 2020. Costs for the project are £8,500. A detailed project brief is attached in Appendix I.

3.14 Officers have also received a request to repair an artpiece that was developed on Lepper Street, just off the Duncairn Gardens which assisted in the reimagining of the area and creation of a more shared space through our Peace III programme. DoJ are undertaking extensive physical works in this area to replace a solid fence with palisade fencing and the refurbishment of this artpiece would enhance and complement the impact of this work. Costs will be £5,000. A detailed project brief is attached in Appendix II.

3.15 At present there is an anticipated underspend of £8,000 within the overall Shared Space Programme.

3.16 All activity delivered through the DCGRP Action Plan must reflect the Together: Building a United Community strategy and support local approaches to identified good relations needs. The programme is co-funded by TEO (75%) and Belfast

City Council (25%) through the District Council Good Relations Programme.

A total underspend of £23,000 has been identified for 19/20 in both BCC7 and BCC8 . Officers have identified the following pieces of work that can be undertaken to ensure delivery in relation to the T;BUC Themes:

- **£5,000 for inspection and site recommendations reports for the provision of bonfire beacons. This work is required on an annual basis, if costs are taken from the 19/20 programme it will provide an additional resource for Interface programmes in 20/21**
- **£5,000 towards an programme focusing on prejudice and marking 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide with remembering Srebrenica UK**
- **£3,000 towards review of approach to supporting positive cultural expression**
- **£5,000 contribution to a significant piece of cross sectoral work to secure collective agreement on the strategic vision for the ‘clean, green and safe’ elements of work in the city centre. This will be an opportunity to ensure that a key piece of policy development ensures consideration of good relations outcomes in the regeneration and promotion of the city centre.**
- **£5,000 to support the city wide initiatives which seek to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and prosperity of all.**

3.17 Financial & Resource Implications

The changes contained in this report will support the achievement of full spend and delivery targets for 19/20. All activity can be delivered within existing budgets.

3.18 Equality or Good Relations Implications

All activity is aligned with one of the four Good Relations Outcomes within the Action Plan, which has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs, and screened out.”

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and asked if the repair work undertaken in respect of damage to the artwork at Lepper Street was a one off intervention, or whether such restoration work would be undertaken in all similar circumstances. The Senior Good Relations Officer stated that the restoration work referred to, was a one off intervention and stated that she would research what other actions, including the use of more durable materials, to reduce the impact of similar vandalism to artwork throughout the city.

The Partnership recommended also to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they approve the identified underspend of £23,000 in both of these programmes be allocated to the following proposals;

- £5,000 for inspection and site recommendations reports for the provision of bonfire Beacons.
- £5,000 towards a programme focusing on prejudice and marking the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide with Remembering Srebrenica UK.
- £5,000 contribution to a significant piece of cross sectoral work to secure collective agreement on the strategic vision for the 'clean, green, and safe' elements of work in the city centre.
- £3,000 towards review of approach to supporting positive cultural expression.
- £5,000 to support the city wide initiatives which seek to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and prosperity of all.

Report back on District Council Good Relations Programme Events 2019/20

The Good Relations Manager provided the Partnership with an update on events which had been delivered through the 1919/20 DCGRP outside of the planned programmes, such as Diversecity and Decade of Centenaries. She referred to a number of events held in September 2019 in support of the TASCIT group which had facilitated a number of visits to Belfast City Council as part of their 'Challenging Conversations' Course. She reported that twenty residents from the Ardoyne, Woodvale and Glenbryn area of the city had attended the meeting and received information from officers of the Council on the work undertaken to support the integration of new communities in Belfast, in addition to the Council's approach to contentious issues, such as bonfires. It was reported that Councillors Kyle and Magennis had hosted the event in the City Hall.

The Good Relations Manager reported that The Executive Office (TEO) District Programme Manager had addressed a Good Relations organised event for groups receiving grant funding and provided an overview of the context in which the Together; Building a United Community (T;BUC) operated. Staff from the Good Relations Unit had provided an update on the Good Relations Strategy, including the ongoing audit and the new framework which had been put in place to support their work. The Good Relations Manager reported that feedback from the event had been positive with fifty one groups represented and that it had planned to host a further event in April 2020.

Noted.

Upcoming Events – December 2019/January 2020

The Partnership was provided with a list of future upcoming events including;

- Grand Culture Café Winter Edition – Peace IV
- Visit to Belfast Jewish Synagogue;
- Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration and
- Visit to Ballynafeigh Orange Hall

Noted.

Date of next Meeting

The Partnership agreed that its next meeting would be held on Monday, 13th January at 1:30 p.m.

Chairperson

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Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 3 December 2019
Date:	17 December 2019
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS),

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
<i>After Committee Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>After Council Decision</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Some time in the future</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Never</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
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 2019 meeting and present minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee notes the key issues arising at the meeting and approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 3 December 2019 at appendix 1.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p data-bbox="276 309 432 342">Key Issues</p> <p data-bbox="276 409 751 443"><u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 510 1422 745">3.1.1 The Panel received a verbal update from the NIAO on their audit of the Statement of Accounts of the council for the year-end 31 March 2019. These accounts are a fundamental part of the council's 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 data-bbox="165 813 1430 947">3.1.2 The NIAO informed the Panel that their audit of the accounts is complete and the Local Government Auditor (LGA) will report positively on the 2018-19 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1014 1422 1294">3.1.3 The NIAO went on to report that the Report to those Charged with Governance for 2018/19, which outlines the system / control issues arising from their audit, contains 5 recommendations for management action, none of which are priority one (i.e. significant or material in nature). The final versions of the Annual Audit Letter and the Report to those Charged with Governance will be reported to the next meeting of the Panel.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1361 1422 1552">3.1.4 In addition, the Panel also considered the NIAO Improvement Audit and Assessment Report, which examined the council's performance improvements arrangements for 18/19. The NIAO have issued an unqualified audit opinion, have made no statutory recommendations and have made 5 recommendations for improvement.</p> <p data-bbox="276 1619 552 1653"><u>Audit and Risk Panel</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 1720 1430 2056">3.1.5 Members of the Panel play a pivotal role in assisting the council in continually improving the governance arrangements of the Council. Following the Audit & Risk Panel training session on Monday 21st October 2019, the Panel agreed a range of improvement actions to maximise the value of the Panel including the need to raise awareness and improve attendance at the Panel, raising general issues with reports to committee with the Director of Legal and Civic Services, requesting management to attend the Panel when audits receive assurance opinions of major improvement. The Panel also</p>

	<p>considered a self-assessment against best practice for Audit Committee's and found that the Audit & Risk Panel was operating in line with best practice.</p> <p><u>Internal Audit and Corporate Risk Management</u></p> <p>3.1.6 The Panel noted the progress being made against the annual audit plan, with 8 audits finalised in the period September – December 2019, 2 of which received an assurance opinion of major improvement required. Following discussion, the Panel agreed to defer the audit of Fleet Management, People Strategy and Developer Contributions but stressed the importance of these audits going ahead in 2020/21.</p> <p>3.1.7 The Panel agreed the mitigation plans in place to manage the corporate risks that are considered by management to present the greatest threat to the delivery of our corporate plan and / or compliance with key statutory requirements. Progress in implementing these corporate risk mitigation plans will be reported to CMT, the Assurance Board and the Audit & Risk Panel. The Head of AGRS reported that only half of the critical services had planned their exercise for the 2019/20 year and that Directors had been reminded of the importance of ensuring that these exercises were properly planned and undertaken by the end of March 2020. In relation to this matter, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources highlighted an issue in that there is no dedicated resource for Business Continuity Management and indicated that this is under consideration.</p> <p>3.1.8 The Panel received the recommendations monitor report and highlighted their concern at the number of audit recommendations that had not been implemented by the agreed date and related to audits undertaken in 2017 or earlier. The Panel agreed for AGRS to work with management to review these recommendations and their continued relevance, to determine the reasons for delay in implementation and to agree new dates. The Panel asked that a short report is brought back to them on this exercise.</p> <p>3.1.9 The Panel agreed the updates to the Risk Strategy and the Business Continuity Management Policy.</p>
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3.1.10	<p><u>Corporate Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Absence Management and Performance Improvement</u></p> <p>The Panel considered a report from the Partnership Manager on the Safeguarding arrangements in place at our leisure centres and requested a further report on compensation claims relating to our leisure centres. The Panel also received quarter 2 reports on corporate health and safety, absence management and performance improvement. The Head of Human Resources agreed to provide the Panel with more detail on compliance with the Attendance Policy and more analysis on work related stress. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager highlighted to the Panel that corporately the council had implemented 83% of fire safety actions and 51% of health and safety actions which fell due within the period, against a corporate target of 80%.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.2 None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.3 None known at this time.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 3 December 2019

Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 3rd December, 2019

MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

Members present: Councillor Hussey (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers;
Councillors Carson, Hanvey and O'Hara; and
Ms S. Hetherington.

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Strategic Director of Finance and Resources;
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk
Services (AGRS);
Mr. T. Wallace, Head of Finance;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of Human Resources;
Mr. L. Mulholland, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager;
Mr. M. Whitmore, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager;
Mrs. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager;
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;
Mr. N. Munnis, Partnership Manager;
Ms. S. Murphy, Northern Ireland Audit Office; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th September were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Safeguarding Arrangements at Leisure Centres

The Panel was reminded that the management of the Council's leisure facilities and services was delivered under contract by Greenwich Leisure Ltd. (GLL). Contract compliance and performance monitoring was governed by Active Belfast Limited (ABL) and in turn reported to the Council via the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

It was reported that, under the contract, GLL was responsible for all operational aspects of facility management and service delivery, which included Health and Safety and safeguarding, together with the liability for Health and Safety and safeguarding. Although not directly responsible for delivery or liability, it was accepted that the Council,

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as owner of the service, was a key stakeholder and potentially could suffer reputational damage should a serious incident occur. Consequently, the contract governance arrangements included robust monitoring and assurance reporting in relation to both Health and Safety and safeguarding.

The Partnership Manager advised that, in seeking assurance that GLL was operating within existing legislation and best practice, and that GLL policies and procedures were closely aligned to those of the Council, a number of key actions had been included in the ABL annual contract compliance calendar.

He confirmed that these actions and the agreed annual review process took full account of the identified Council corporate risk in relation to both broader Health and Safety management and specifically safeguarding arrangements.

During discussion, he advised that all new products in the facilities were subject to a risk assessment before being put into operation.

In relation to Leisure Centre Liability Claims, he indicated that Compensation Claim Liability depended on the nature of the claim.

After the discussion, the Panel noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a further breakdown of compensation claims, in relation to Leisure Centres, be reported at a future meeting of the Panel.

Absence Rates Q/E September 2019

The Panel considered a report providing information on the absence figures for the second quarter of 2019/2020. The Head of Human Resources reported that sickness absence per employee for that period had been 6.05 days against an agreed corporate target of 6.33 days. She advised that the number of absences which had been classified as long term (20 days or more) during the quarter had been 68.54%, which was a decrease compared to the same period last year at 71.10%.

She advised that the number of days lost per full time equivalent was less in quarter two (2.99 days) when compared to quarter one (3.08 days) and there had been a significant improvement when compared to the same period last year (3.57 days).

In relation to Disability Related Absence, approximately 30% of absence (3817.3 days) had been recorded as disability related and 50% of disability related absence was being managed as long term.

She highlighted that a recent benchmarking exercise had been conducted of the Council's rate of disability related absence in comparison to other local authority and public sector employers. Of the 9 organisations that responded, none of them specifically recorded disability related absence. However, CIPD data suggested that 30 – 35 percent would be the average disability related absence figure for a large organisation.

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In relation to the use of discretion, she reported that, in quarter two, of the 554 employees that were off due to sickness absence, discretion had been applied to 77 which accounted for 24% of the total absence for Quarter 2.

She informed the Panel that a number of health and wellbeing activities and initiatives continued to assist with managing attendance at work including:

- Positive Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing training;
- Stress Awareness for Managers; and
- Mindfulness.

She also highlighted that further health and wellbeing initiatives and programmes would be developed as part of the People Strategy.

During discussion, Members questioned the potential to report on targets for sickness absence trigger points, compliance management, and the availability of data regarding work related stress.

The Panel noted the information which had been provided and agreed the following additions to reporting be examined by Human Resources:

- Targets sickness absence trigger points;
- Absence Reporting Compliance by Departments; and
- Data regarding work related stress absence, per Department and Grade.

Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided the Panel with an update in relation to the Council's Health and Safety performance during the period ending 30th September, 2019. She reviewed the progress which had been achieved in relation to the key performance indicators, where the Council had fully implemented 51% of the health and safety actions and 83% of the fire actions due at the end of quarter two.

She reported that the number of employee accidents for quarter two was 41, which was four more than in the last quarter. She reported that the highest number of accidents had been caused by employees being injured while lifting or carrying.

The Panel was informed that the number of RIDDOR reportable accidents had stayed the same from the last quarter, at 14.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager reported that there had been a decrease in the number of reported Work Related Violence incidents from the last quarter, from 25 to 18 and the majority of which were of threatening behaviour and 2 incidents which involved physical violence.

She advised that there were 28 non-employee accidents during quarter one with 13 accidents due to slip, trip or falls.

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She informed the Panel that correspondence had been received from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service in relation to a fire evacuation at the Ulster Hall and it had made recommendations regarding the upgrade of fire doors at the Ulster Hall. Subsequent visits to the premises had been undertaken by the fire officer and representatives from the Property Maintenance Unit to agree remedial works.

She advised that correspondence had been received from the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) during quarter two 2019/20. An HSENI Inspector had met with one of the Corporate Health and Safety team regarding a RIDDOR accident involving an employee cutting themselves with hedge trimmers. She confirmed that the inspector was content with the safety arrangements and no further action was required.

She reported that a HSENI inspector also contacted the Corporate Health and Safety Manager regarding their observation of a Refuse Collection Vehicle crew not wearing seat belts and this account had been passed to the Waste Collection Service for follow up.

Noted.

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) - Final report to those charged with governance for 2018/19 (Verbal Update)

Ms. Murphy from the Northern Ireland Audit Office updated the Panel on the issues raised in the Local Government Auditor's Report for 2018/19 in relation to the Accounts of Belfast City Council.

The Panel noted the final report for consideration would be issued for the next meeting in March.

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) - Annual Audit Letter for 2018/19 (Verbal Update)

Ms. Murphy from the Northern Ireland Audit Office updated the Panel on the Annual Audit Letter which was being prepared for publication and would be issued under Regulation 17 of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The Panel noted the letter would be submitted to the next meeting in March.

AGRS Progress Report November 2019

The Panel considered a report which provided an overview of the specific internal audits which had been carried out and finalised during September and November, 2019, by Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

It was highlighted that a number of audits had been completed in the period, 2 of which had received an assurance opinion of major improvement, relating to a follow up audit of Waste Collection and the audit of the Corporate Risk on Safeguarding. It was reported that action plans to address the audit issues had been agreed with management in these areas.

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It was reported that audits had been completed of Planning Enforcement, Budgetary Control, Member Payments, Police and Community Safety Partnerships, Corporate Risk Review – Health and Safety, Corporate Risk Review - Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall all required 'Some Improvement'.

The Panel was informed that that the following audits were in progress:

- Corporate Risk Review – Belfast Agenda (fieldwork complete);
- Corporate Health and Safety - Work Related Transport – (fieldwork);
- Organisational Culture – (fieldwork);
- Pitches Strategy – (fieldwork);
- Payroll audit – (fieldwork);
- Houses of Multiple Occupation – (planning);
- IT Asset Management (fieldwork complete);
- IT Project Management (fieldwork complete);
- Resilience (planning); and
- Continuous Improvement (planning).

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services advised that management had requested the deferral of the following three reviews which had been planned, until 2020/21:

- **Fleet Management** - due to resources being focussed on the procurement of a new fleet by the year-end and the recruitment of a Logistics Manager.
- **People Strategy** - due to delays in approving the strategy; and
- **Developer Contributions** – due to delayed actions from the review in 2017, which had not yet been fully implemented.

In relation to investigations, she advised that AGRS were currently liaising with departments regarding whistleblowing cases, together with reviewing or investigating matches that had arisen as part of the National Fraud Initiative exercise.

During discussion, the Panel raised concerns in relation to the major improvement reviews which had been highlighted and the rationale for the deferrals. The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services explained further the management response to these audit reports.

In regards to Waste Collection Follow up Review, the Director of Finance and Resources advised that access issues and waste collection trends were being examined as part of the work of the Customer Focus Programme and would be reported to the People and Communities Committee in due course.

The Audit and Risk Panel noted the AGRS Progress Report for the period September 2019 – November 2019 and agreed that the planned audits of Fleet Management, People Strategy and Developer Contributions be deferred.

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Recommendations Monitor October 2019

The Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) Manager reported that, at the start of this exercise, there had been 288 “outstanding” actions in the MKinsight system. He advised that AGRS staff had reviewed and, where appropriate, validated the progress that management had made to implement these actions. As a result of its validation exercise, it was reported that approximately a third of these actions had been closed. The AGRS Manager advised that, of the 198 actions that remained live, 141 of these had been partially implemented.

The AGRS Manager highlighted that there continued to be a number of actions which had been outstanding for a significant period of time and that in order to assist management to help clear these long outstanding recommendations, AGRS proposed to meet with management in these areas ahead of the next recommendations monitoring exercise in order to:

- discuss and clarify the issue and recommendations, to ensure management were aware of what was required in order to fully implement the recommendation;
- identify whether the recommendations remained valid;
- agree who should be responsible for taking the remaining action forward to implementation;
- challenge management on the validity of reasons for the continued delays to implementation; and
- assess whether the recommendations were being addressed via another specific programme of work (for example the Procurement Improvement Programme)

During discussion, the Panel raised concerns in relation to the number of outstanding actions which had been reported and highlighted the importance of realistic timelines when managers accept such actions from the AGRS. The Director of Finance and Resources advised that this would be reviewed in January with a key focus to resolve High Priority outstanding actions.

After discussion, the Panel noted the contents of the report and that an update report would be submitted at its next meeting.

Corporate Risk Management Q/E September 2019

The Head of AGRS provided an overview of the report and explained the process around identification of the corporate risks and the development of the related risk mitigation plans. She explained that this represented the baseline position against which progress would be reported on each quarter at meetings of the Corporate Management Team, the Assurance Board and the Audit and Risk Panel.

She provided an update on the completion of the Directors quarterly assurance statements. In addition, the Head of AGRS drew the Panels attention to the fact that over half of the councils critical services had not yet planned their business continuity exercise

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for 19/20 and that Directors had been reminded of the importance of ensuring that these exercises should be properly planned and undertaken by the end of March 2020.

The Panel noted the information which had been provided and that a short review of the information contained within the report and appendices would be provided at its next meeting.

**Review and update of Risk Management Strategy and Business Continuity
Management Policy**

The Head of AGRS explained the key updates to the Risk Strategy, together with recent and planned improvements to the Council's risk management process.

She updated the Panel on the Business Continuity Management (BCM) Policy, planned improvements and a position statement on the implementation of recommendations arising from the external review of BCM which had been undertaken in 2016/17. She pointed out that the Action Plan from the external review had not been fully implemented as the issue of where responsibility for the oversight of the business continuity system should sit within the Council (a recommendation in the report) had not yet been resolved. In relation to this matter, the Director of Finance and Resources highlighted that there was no dedicated resource for Business Continuity Management and indicated that this was under consideration.

The Audit and Risk Panel noted the contents of the report and recommended for approval the updated Risk Strategy and Business Continuity Policy.

**Audit and Risk Panel Training Summary and Actions Arising and Annual
Review of Effectiveness of Audit and Risk Panel**

The Panel was reminded that Audit and Risk Panel training was held on 21st October facilitated by an external Governance Trainer. The training focused on maximising the value of the Audit and Risk Panel and covered:

- Strategic context of the Council and impact on the Audit and Risk Panel;
- Audit and Risk Panel role and oversight;
- How the Panel fulfils its responsibilities;
- The value of the Audit and Risk Panel; and
- Current developments.

During the course of the training the Panel had identified some further areas for improvement, as follows:

- There was a need to raise awareness and consider ways of improving attendance at the Audit and Risk Panel for example, to review the number of non-executive members, promoting the benefits of attendance etc.
- The Head of AGRS to liaise with the City Solicitor regarding the need to ensure that corporately, general issues that the Panel had

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experienced with the timeliness, length and reporting of Committee information was addressed.

- The Panel indicated agreement with the quarterly reporting of progress against the internal audit plan and for the Head of AGRS to highlight where delays in completing audits was having an impact on overall completion of the plan of work for the year. Head of AGRS to seek feedback on the information needed of the Audit and Risk Panel;
- Head of AGRS to ensure that Audit and Risk Panel papers were succinct, timely and presented effectively to the Panel;
- Head of AGRS to ensure that significant delays in implementation of corporate risk actions were reported to the Panel.
- Audit and Risk Panel endorsed the benefit of being able to request senior management to attend future meetings of the Panel in order to provide the Panel with an update on the action being taken to address issues highlighted in audit reports. The Panel also saw value in requesting senior management to attend the Panel on occasions, to present an update on the progress that is being made to manage corporate risks; and
- AGRS to ensure that the review of organisational culture addressed the need for ethics to be simple and action based, rather than process based.

She advised that progress would be reviewed at the next training session for the Panel in October 2020.

In relation to the Assessment of the Audit and Risk Panel effectiveness, based on discussions on the day, on behalf of the Audit and Risk Panel, AGRS completed an assessment of the Audit and Risk Panel effectiveness against CIPFA best practice. The assessment found that previous areas for improvement in relation to assurances over partnerships and reviewing the Council's ethical framework had now been incorporated into the Panels terms of reference and factored into the annual internal audit strategy and plan. The assessment found the Panel to be in compliance with best practice.

After discussion, the Panel agreed to the proposed actions arising from the workshop, as set out, and noted a review of the implementation of these actions would be reported in October 2020 and noted the assessment of the Panel's effectiveness.

Mid-year report on Performance Improvement 2019/20 (Q2) (including an update on the implementation of the proposals for improvement)

The Director of Finance and Resources reminded the Panel that Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act required the Council to agree improvement objectives on an annual basis and publish these in the form of an Improvement Plan. The Council's Improvement Plan 2019-20 was agreed by Council in June, 2019 and contained the Council's commitment to securing continuous improvement as well as delivery of the Improvement Objectives.

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He updated the Panel on the progress which had been made against activities contributing to the six Improvement Objectives contained within the Corporate Plan 2019-20 to:

- Build the city's position as a magnet for foreign direct investment;
- Make Belfast a great place to do business by supporting entrepreneurs and business starts;
- Design and deliver programmes to address health inequalities in the city;
- Deliver city regeneration and investment projects;
- Deliver the integrated tourism strategy to increase the number of leisure and business tourists; and
- Deliver an integrated approach to employment and skills.

During discussion, he indicated that the Council was awaiting data in relation to improvement objective 4 - Increase household recycling and reduce waste to landfill for 2018/19 from the Department for Communities.

After discussion, the Panel approved the Performance Unit's overall assessment of the status of the activities contributing to the improvement objectives at mid-year.

Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) - Improvement Audit and Assessment Report

Ms. Murphy advised that the Local Government Auditor had certified the improvement audit and assessment for the Council with a standard, unqualified opinion. She pointed out that this provided assurance to the Panel that the Council's arrangements to monitor performance of the delivery of its Improvement Objectives for 2019-20 had complied with the performance improvement requirements of Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014.

She highlighted the 5 proposals which had arisen from the Council's audit and assessment under the following thematic areas:

- General duty to improve;
- Governance arrangements;
- Improvement objectives;
- Consultation;
- Improvement plan;
- Arrangements to improve;
- Collection, use and publication of performance information; and
- Demonstrating a track record of improvement.

She summarised the final audit and assessment report which set out the findings and conclusions from the assessment and included the audit and assessment certificate.

The Committee noted that that the NIAO had undertaken its annual audit and assessment on the Council's arrangements to secure continuous improvement and that

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it had given the unqualified opinion that the Council has complied with the requirements of the Act.

Chairperson