

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 9th September, 2024

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

External Members: Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. L. Euler, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mr. L. Gunn, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Fr. M. Magill, Faith Representative;
Ms. A. Tohill, Good Relations, TEO;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Mr G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager;
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector, Mr M McBride, Education Authority NI, and Mr. P Mackel, Belfast and District Trades Union Council.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th August, 2024, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

Ms. B. Arthurs declared an interest in item no. 4, 'Shared City Partnership Workshop - Good Relations Action Plan Quarter 1 Update' in that she was the Chief Executive of Forward South Partnership.

Father M. Magill declared an interest in item no. 4, 'Shared City Partnership Workshop - Good Relations Action Plan Quarter 1 Update' in that he was a co-founder of the Belfast 4 Corners Festival.

Since the declarations of interest were not of a pecuniary nature, neither representative left the room whilst the item was under discussion.

Membership of Partnership

The Chairperson welcomed Fr. M. Magill, Parish Priest of St John the Evangelist parish in Belfast, to his first meeting of the Partnership in his capacity as the Faith Representative. In addition, the Chairperson reminded the Partnership that Ms. Ashleigh Roberts, a Community and Voluntary Representative for east Belfast, would be going on maternity leave and, on behalf of the Partnership, he wished Ms. Roberts well and thanked her for the work which she had undertaken as a member.

The Partnership concurred with the comments of the Chairperson and it was agreed that a request be submitted to the East Belfast Community Development Association seeking an nominee to replace Ms. Roberts on an interim basis.

Presentation from Cross-Departmental Working Group

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 8th August, in considering the escalation of race-hate incidents across Belfast, it had agreed that an invitation be extended to representatives of the Executive Office's Cross-Department Working Group to present on its Building Relationships in the Community Programme.

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. R. Irwin, Director of Inclusion and Wellbeing, Ms. O. McStravick, Director of Refugee and Asylum Support and Inclusion, who were representing the Executive Office. In addition, the Chairperson welcomed and Superintendent G. Kearney, PSNI Area Commander for Derry and Strabane. It was reported also that Mr. K. Shiels, Education Authority Northern Ireland, was in attendance also to provide an update on behalf of the Intercultural Education Service of the Education Authority Northern Ireland. Partnership Member Mr. L. Gunn, presented on behalf of NIHE.

The Executive Office

Mr. Irwin reminded the Partnership that CDWG was comprised of senior officials from across a range of bodies which sought to share perspectives through open dialogue and explore actionable strategies to promote understanding and community cohesion.

Regarding the recent racial incidents across Belfast, he outlined the extent of work which had been carried out, in partnership with Racial Equality Sub-Group, Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, local councils and Community Safety Response Groups, to address such incidents and make appropriate interventions. He reported that work was ongoing on a cross-departmental level to develop a new Racial Equality Strategy for 2025 to 2035, which would provide a revised framework to address racial inequalities and promote good relations.

Ms. McStravick outlined the principal aspects of the draft Refugee Integration Strategy, which sought to ensure that refugees were valued and supported, felt safe and secure, were afforded full rights and achieved their full potential. She advised the Partnership that the draft strategy had been developed in conjunction with a thematic delivery plan, which would be presented for ministerial approval in due course.

NIHE, PSNI

Mr. Gunn gave an overview of the various strategies and initiatives which oversaw the work of NIHE in this regard. He then provided a range of examples of the proactive work that which had been undertaken by the NIHE in supporting people throughout the recent disorder.

Superintendent Kearney gave an overview of the recent disorder from a policing perspective and emphasised that addressing race-hate crime remained a strategic priority for the PSNI and such incidents would continue to be challenged robustly in partnership with other organisations.

EANI

Mr Shields spoke on behalf of the EANI's Intercultural Education Service and outlined its roles and responsibilities for ensuring school safety and preventing and addressing anti-racist bullying. He gave an outlined of the work which had been undertaken in August across Belfast to prevent and race hate incidents in schools which could be linked to the recent disorder. Such work, he added, was carried out in conjunction with the wider community and he reported that there had been no adverse incidents reported since the commencement of the school year.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives of the Executive Office, the PSNI, NIHE and EANI for the information which they had provided.

Several Members welcomed the role which had been undertaken by the various agencies throughout the recent disorder.

A Member referred to the difficulties which community representatives had encountered in addressing disinformation which had been circulated relating to the migrant community and housing provision. He welcomed the delivery of the range of workshops and requested that additional information and information be made available to enable elected members and community representatives to challenge inaccurate opinions or misconceived viewpoints.

Noted.

Shared City Partnership Workshop and Executive Office MOU re: Refugee Integration

The Partnership considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To update the Shared City Partnership on the discussions and actions from the Shared City Partnership Workshop on 12th August 2024 and to agree the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of Refugee Integration Funding.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report and agree the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of Refugee Integration Funding and the approach detailed in the report, including granting the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services delegated authority to progress this support initiative.**

3.0 Main Report

Members will be aware that the Council receives 75% of funding from The Executive Office (TEO) for the delivery of its annual Good Relations Action Plan.

- 3.2 The current Action Plan was agreed at the Partnership in February 2024 and subsequently submitted to TEO. Council received a letter of offer from TEO on July 22nd, detailing that its allocation to this years' Action Plan would be £369,809.69. This is 35% less than what the Council had bid for (which was the same amount as was bid for in 2022/23). While this is slightly more than the £301,537.28 allocated for 2023/24, it has meant that the Action Plan has had to be once again realigned and prioritised.**

- 3.3 As a result of this shortfall, the total value of the Action Plan is £493,079.59. Within this, the 75% contribution from TEO consists of £369,809.69, with the remaining 25%, or £123,269.90 being contributed by the Council. Of this overall total, £365,000 is allocated towards programmes. It should also be noted that the Council contributes more to Good Relations work than merely its 25% match funding to the Action Plan. The overall Council contribution to Good Relations in 2023/24 was £413,320.10 and this figure will be similar for 2024/25**

- 3.4 Following the racist intimidation across the city, caused by far-right agitators a Shared City Partnership Workshop was held on the 12th August 2024.**

- 3.5 Council have now received a Memorandum of Understanding in respect of Refugee Integration Funding of an additional £100,000 from The Executive Office.**

In summary this funding is to enhance employability and integration support services for refugees in the Belfast City Council area.

- 3.6 Given the time frame around procurement and the requirement that the money must be spent by March 2025, Belfast City Council is proposing to use the funding to commission 8 projects/programmes, through an open call, that support the integration and inclusion of people that have been granted Refugee Status.

Council will invite projects that specifically address some or all of the following:

1. Proposals that are innovative and do not duplicate the work of other services
2. Proposals that engage host communities and people who have been granted Refugee Status
3. Proposals that foster contact and connections with host communities to improve the welcome that people who have been granted Refugee status receive
4. Proposals that encourage and support groups to involve people who have been granted Refugee Status to get involved in the life of their communities through participation in local activities, networks and organisations
5. Proposals that are delivered in areas where, to date, there has been limited infrastructure / funding for interventions supporting the inclusion of people granted Refugee Status
6. Proposals that provide transition / move on support
7. Proposals that provide orientation and advocacy support

It is important to note that this funding will not support one-off events or festivals. Due to the tight time frame Officers recommend that SCP recommend to the S P & R committee that the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services has delegated authority to progress this support initiative.

3.7 **Financial and Resource Implications**

All costs within the District Council's Good Relations Action Plan are covered within existing agreed budgets, further to this the MOU does not require match funding as it is funded at 100% through TEO.

3.8 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

All activity within the District Council's Good Relations Action Plan seek to improve Good Relations between

people from different political, religious, and racial backgrounds.”

Arising from discussion in respect of the extent of the PSNI's use of use of hot-spot policing techniques to address recent race hate crime, Superintendent G. Kearney undertook to clarify a query by a Member and provide an update in this regard.

The Good Relations Manager spoke to the report and an associated appendix which outlined the actions which had been agreed at a Partnership workshop which had taken place on 12th August in response to the race hate incidents at that time. In addition, he recommended, should the Partnership agree, that officers would bring forward the Council's Good Relations Audit to enable a three-year Strategy and Action Plan to be produced. Such a move, he added, would enable the adoption of a more joined-up approach to working in conjunction with the Policing and Community Safety Partnership.

Furthermore, the Good Relations Manager indicated that as part of the existing Action Plan, ASCONI would be contracted to deliver an 'Anti-Racism and Cultural Competence' training programme. He encouraged the Members of Shared City Partnership to avail of that opportunity.

In addition, he outlined the principal aspects of a draft Memorandum of Understanding, its aims and objectives, which had been drawn-up between the Council and the Executive Office to enable the Council to deliver a Refugee Integration Funding Programme, in respect of which funding of £128,000 had been made available, with such expenditure to be spent by the end of March 2025.

After discussion, the Partnership agreed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 20th September, be requested to note the contents of the aforementioned report and to endorse the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the Refugee Integration Funding and that authority be granted to Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to progress the initiative and award funding in accordance with the objectives as set out under 3.6 of the report.

In addition, the Partnership agreed that invitations to present at its October meeting be extended to the Active Communities Network; MEARs and to Victims Support NI on its role in combatting hate crime.

Peace IV - Secretariat Update

The PEACE Programme Manager provided an update in respect of the activity associated with the closure of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan. She indicated that value of outstanding PEACE IV claims which were still awaiting verification and reimbursement by SEUPB stood currently at £2.9m. She added that, since SEUPB had been unable to provide a timeframe for the verification and reimbursement of the outstanding claim, a formal meeting request had been forwarded to SEUPB to discuss the delays which had been encountered.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and the steps which had been taken to expedite a meeting with SEUPB.

PEACEPLUS - Council Local Action Plan Update

The Partnership considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to provide Shared City Partnership members with an update on the assessment of PEACE PLUS 1.1. Co-designed Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

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

3.0 Main report

3.1 Application Assessment Status

At April’s meeting, members were advised that clarifications had been received from The Executive Office (TEO) Corporate Governance Branch (CGB) and Economic Assessment Branch (EAB). Subsequent clarifications were also received from SEUPB, and all responses were to be provided within a tight timeframe.

3.2 Due to the extent of the clarifications, the introduction of new finance system, Easter holidays and end of leave year, CMT advised that an extended response timeframe should be requested. Subsequently responses were provided to TEO by 17 April 2024 to enable the consideration by the TEO Major Business Case Committee (MBCC) on 25 April 2024, and SEUPB Steering Committee in May 2024.

3.3 Following submission of the above responses, further clarifications were received and responded to from the TEO Communities in Transition team. TEO subsequently advised that further queries were raised by CGB and EAB) before providing advice to Major Business Case Committee.

3.4 Given the timeframe, the application will now be considered by the MBCC on 30 May 2024, and the SEUPB steering committee on 19 June 2024, with a Letter of Offer

to follow. TEO has advised this timeframe remains within the 28 week window outlined in the assessment process.

3.5 The Programme Manager has liaised with relevant officers to respond to all clarifications and will also consider the impact of the delayed timeframe on implementation and mobilisation, as well as community expectations.

3.6 Members are requested to note that responses to five clarification documents have been provided, and should also note the revised timeframe for approval,

3.7 **Staff Recruitment**

Appointments have been made for the Lead Officer, who will take up the role on 3 June 2024, and the Programme Support Assistant. Interviews are progressing for the Project Officer and Project Managers throughout April / May 2024.

3.8 **Capacity Building Programme**

Delivery of the Prepare to Procure Capacity Building Programme is continuing, with sessions focusing on the procurement process. The Writing Winning Tenders session which took place on 25 April 2024 was fully booked and well received.

Feedback from attendees has been positive, however further sessions on the procurement process focusing on building capacity of smaller community organisations is being considered.

3.9 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS LCAP is eligible from the submission date. As such expenditure is within the existing budget which will be claimed retrospectively from SEUPB. Advice on the drawdown of the £30K advance from SEUPB is outstanding and will be progressed by the Programme Manager, once the clarification process has been completed.

3.10 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

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

The Partnership adopted the recommendation to note the contents of the report.

Chairperson