



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Health and Environmental Services Committee
Subject:	Safer City Planning Support
Date:	8th September, 2010
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Relevant Background Information

Community safety is one of the main concerns of the people of Belfast and hence is an issue of considerable importance to the Elected Representatives. Consequently, it is a key element of the *Supporting People and Communities* theme of the new Corporate Plan.

Members will be aware that the Council takes the lead role in supporting the Belfast Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) which brings together representatives from various agencies and sectors to work collectively on programmes and strategies to improve safety in the City.

The Belfast CSP has produced a Safer Belfast Plan 2009–2011, which prioritises four main themes, tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing alcohol fuelled violent crime, dealing with hate crime and helping Belfast feel safer. These four priority areas were identified following consultation as well as a review of recorded data and input from elected members. The Safer Belfast Plan priorities were also informed by the Council's public consultation and research which was commissioned jointly by Belfast CSP and Belfast District Policing Partnership (DPP).

The landscape for the public sector is changing and preparation for community planning is challenging us to develop a more holistic and sustainable approach to developing a Safer Belfast. Therefore the approach adopted in developing the Safer Belfast Plan (09-11) was more ambitious than previous years; the intention being that it should represent an overarching plan for a Safer Belfast that reflects the strategic priorities of participating partners.

Members will also be aware that in parallel to the Safer Belfast Plan the Council's community safety team has also been working *internally* to build the capacity of the Council to better coordinate its activities in this field in line with the broader interagency Safer Belfast Plan. As such the Council has recently approved its second internal plan for co-ordinating and raising the profile of activities to deal with anti-social behaviour, etc. across all council Departments.

Key Issues

As part of the interagency Safer Belfast Plan (2009-2011) participating organisations established a series of performance criteria which were to be reviewed on a quarterly basis using the services of a 'Safer Belfast Analyst'.

In February 2008 therefore the committee agreed to support the services of a dedicated PSNI analyst, via a secondment arrangement, (to the value of £30,000 per annum) to support information sharing between key organisations and undertake evaluation of performance of the CSP's initiatives against the four Safer Belfast priorities. Importantly, the analyst, when in post, developed vital information sharing processes which informed the Council's and other partners' service delivery such as on-street drinking operations, warden deployment and alleygating.

At this time it was proposed that this arrangement was put in place for one year from April 2008 until March 2009; subject to review at the end of this period. The post holder was to be jointly managed by the Council's Community Safety Team and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and took up the position in late summer 2008. A further report on the adoption of the Safer Belfast Plan in January 2009 supported the continued services of the analyst. In December 2009, due to operational arrangements in the PSNI, the analyst left this secondment post. Since then, discussions have been ongoing with the PSNI about resourcing the Safer Belfast Analyst again; however it is only recently that the Analysis Centre have indicated they have the capacity to allocate a staff member to this post.

The sustainability and adaptability of the new CSP approach is considerably strengthened by our investment in a Safer Belfast Analyst to provide relevant and up to date information about community safety issues, and the development of mature performance management systems to measure and deliver continuous improvement.

The Safer Belfast Analyst had been invaluable both in strategic planning and operational delivery for the Community Safety Partnership and the Council, as well as providing a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of the work. The gap in service because no analyst was in post, has made it difficult to extract intelligence, information and data that are critical to effective decision making process.

The analyst role is in the gathering of intelligence, problem solving and informing and producing performance reports in six monthly 'strategic assessment' reports for the BCSP. The information is also used to inform keys areas of Council work such as deployment of Community Safety Wardens, working to tackle underage and on street drinking through joint Belfast City Council and PSNI alcohol operations, targeting programmes and interventions at hotspots etc. The reports that are presented contain multi-agency data from the Council, the PSNI and the NIHE. During the Safer City Planning process for 2011 onwards it will be essential that the agreement of priorities is informed by accurate and timely information from sources such as this process and, crucially, up to date crime statistics. It is also vital that there is a mechanism in place to monitor the impact of resulting work against priorities.

Consequently, it is proposed that the services of a PSNI analyst are re-engaged via a new secondment arrangement to support the Safer Belfast Planning process for 2011 onwards and to assist with the evaluation of the impact made by emerging initiatives. It is estimated that the cost of these services would however have risen from the original estimate of £30,000 in 2008 to £34,623 per annum (due to normal inflationary increases). The PSNI and the Analysis Centre have however agreed to resource the training and development of this officer and will also provide operational management for the postholder.

As before, the PSNI analyst would be partly based in PSNI offices to facilitate access to police computer systems and databases; however, a proportion of the analyst's time would also be spent in the Council's Community Safety Team to support our work both internally and in partnership with other agencies. As such, it is envisaged that the analyst could also be used to inform and evaluate existing areas of joint working between Council and PSNI such as the Safer Neighbourhoods Pilot and our warden services. In doing so it is hoped that the Council and participating partners would have access to accurate and timely information to inform their work. It may also be possible to use the facilities within the council emergency planning suite were there is protected access to PSNI systems, therefore allowing better integration of the post holder within the Council.

The previous secondment arrangement of a PSNI officer and analyst to the community safety team has shown the value that such an arrangement can have to our organisation and it is envisaged that this further proposal would build upon this success. The PSNI has indicated its support for this arrangement and is keen to progress the recruitment of a replacement as soon as possible given the intention to ensure the safer city priorities are agreed in time to feed into the autumn planning cycle of statutory bodies for 2011-12.

Resource Implications

It is intended that the salary cost of this post would continue to be met by the Council, with training and operational management resources being supported by the PSNI. Allowances have been made in the revenue estimates for 2010-2011 to accommodate this arrangement. The PSNI would continue to employ the postholder, however the day-to-day work and duties of the postholder would be defined via an SLA. There would be no increase in head count.

Allowances have been made in the Revenue Estimates to support this post.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to support the re-engagement of the services of a PSNI analyst until March, 2012.