



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Safer Belfast Plan 2009-2011.
Date:	12 th December 2008.
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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 (CSP) which brings together representatives from various agencies and sectors to work collectively on programmes and strategies to improve safety in the City. The current membership of the CSP is detailed in appendix ii of the attached Safer Belfast Plan.

The Belfast CSP has produced a draft Safer Belfast Plan 2009–2011, which prioritises four main themes, tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing alcohol fuelled violent crime, dealing with hate crime and to help Belfast feel safer. These four priority areas were chosen following a review of official data and community consultation in 2007. The consultations included Belfast City Council's public consultation and the safer city 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 this year in developing the 2 year plan has been more ambitious than previous years, the intention being that this new plan represents an overarching plan for a Safer Belfast that all of the partners will work to and be part of. The plan must not only describe the projects and initiatives across Belfast that both the Council and the other 50 participating agencies contribute to but we also want it to provide the framework for all the agencies engaged in this agenda to work towards and this should be reflected in each organisation's corporate plan. We want it to be a stimulus to the agencies working better together and joining up resources to deliver services together in a way that complements each organisation's core business to achieve an overall aim. This could be viewed as the beginning of a

'community planning' approach to creating a safer Belfast.

The Safer Belfast themes are taken forward by interagency, intersectoral city wide thematic groups. The thematic groups assess how we tackle anti-social behaviour, reduce alcohol related crime, deal with hate crime and help Belfast feel safer and develop new interventions and solutions when we need them.

In parallel to the Safer Belfast Plan the Council has also been working *internally* to build the capacity of the Council to lead on the development of a Safer Belfast and provide a *Safer City Framework* for more effective cross Council working. The framework will act as a platform to integrate Council services, resources and expertise to ensure that the council is 'fit for purpose' to lead Belfast Community Safety Partnership, and to deliver the Council's key responsibilities under the 2009-2011 Safer Belfast plan. Proposed structures to drive the process forward within the Council are being developed including mechanisms to involve elected members.

The Community Safety Partnership gains its political legitimacy through all party representation from the Council, with six Members sitting on the Strategic Tier. It also has been accountable through the Health and Environmental Services Committee. However given the cross-cutting nature of the draft Safer Belfast Plan, it is important that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is able to comment on the general direction of the plan and agrees those elements of the plan which relate to the role of Belfast City Council.

The Ministerial review of the future for CSP's and DPPs is likely to have an impact during the review of public administration. However in recognition of the need for closer working between both partnerships there has been significant representation from the various structures within the Belfast DPP throughout the Safer Belfast process.

Key Issues

Key features

This Safer Belfast Pplan encompasses much more than Belfast CSP has taken into consideration before. In addition to the delivery of partnership funded projects it includes the core work of partner organisations which relates to community safety.

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.

Performance against the projects and targets will not only be based on trend statistical data by the thematic groups but will also take account of independent monitoring and evaluation, professional judgement and self assessment from community safety projects.

The plan is also drawn up with a degree of flexibility built in to balance strategic programmes with an ability to respond to emerging problems. A process and structure have been put in place to identify emerging themes based on operational information and quality data so that if necessary resources could be re-directed (see appendix iii of the attached report for the Safer Belfast structures.

Communities are at the heart of the Safer Belfast Plan and the Belfast CSP has adopted a range of community engagement principles and processes. These are

outlined in detail in appendix v of the attached draft plan. However it is recognised that there is a need to continue to develop our approaches to engagement . The real engagement of communities, reflecting their lived experiences within their local areas is a key concern to the CSP and further consideration of how this could be made more meaningful is being considered.

Communication, marketing and awareness raising of the plan is paramount, and it is important that there are clear and consistent messages which are sensitive to community issues and the perceptions of crime and antisocial behaviour. Responsible reporting and use of the information we have through the Safer Belfast analyst gives us a responsibility to use that information wisely and deliver it to the media in a positive and responsible way.

Action Plan

The Draft plan attached to this report lays out the action plan for the delivery of the four thematic areas with detailed projects or initiatives listed in tables. The plan is currently at a high level and there is still much work to be done to finalise the projects, organisation contributions and delivery mechanisms.

There is also some work still to be done in securing funding for some of the project areas or to agree final budget provision from participating organisations. Between now and the next meeting of the CSP on 17th December, members of the community safety team will be holding meetings with member organisations to agree funding and firm up contributions to the plan. Behind each project plan there will be a more detailed action plan for delivery which will focus on the key tasks, objectives, and targets. These will be ready for the roll out of the plan by the end of March 2009.

This plan has to be finally agreed through the Belfast CSP strategic tier by the end of December and will be submitted to the Northern Ireland office on 19th December in order to secure the indicative allocation of approximately £380Kper year.

The tables from page 12 of the attached report gives the title and the estimated total cost of running each project until March 2011. It also gives a brief description of each project and identifies key risks. The next two columns identify resources from Belfast Community Safety Partnership's indicative allocation – in bold and blue. It also identifies some (not all) of our other partners who should or could have a role to play in that project. This will be part of the conversations that we will have with them in the next few weeks.

The antisocial behaviour action plan builds on the antisocial behaviour forums and is designed around a more localised community led approach. We have attempted to identify the risks to the delivery of the plan. In many cases they relate to the level of youth services and community expectations. Additional work around this theme is being considered on a separate but related agenda within and outside the Council.

The plan will place us in a much better position to tackle environmental antisocial behaviour when the clean neighbourhoods legislation is brought back onto the legislative timetable as it has the potential to assist the process of alleygating as well as providing additional enforcement powers for dealing with such issues as fly positing and graffiti etc. The biggest projects in this section in terms of resources are wardens and alleygates. Other significant projects include the programme for tackling antisocial behaviour on council sites and venues, youth outreach and community safety small grants.

Reducing Alcohol fuelled violent crime work focuses on the supply of alcohol (this relates to antisocial behaviour as well) and compliance with proper standards. Much of the work will be delivered through the Get Home Safe Partnership (a sub partnership of the CSP) and the Council's new antisocial behaviour officers and structures. The projects primarily aim to embed and widen out key aspects of the 'Get Home Safe' work which has been hugely successful. Margaret Ritchie's assembly statement around liquor licensing policy and legislative proposals will also have a bearing on how this work goes forward.

The **dealing with hate crime** work covers sectarianism, racism, religious hatred, disability and sexual orientation. We will work closely with our Good Relations structures and staff and peace III to deliver actions. The tension monitoring aspect of the work is really important because it will provide a mechanism and process by which we can intervene in areas before the tensions become actual problems.

Helping Belfast feel safer underpins, and is underpinned by, the other three aspects of the plan. The various information projects across the plan will be coordinated through the CSP's information and communication officer. CCTV should perhaps be included here but to do so it needs some strategic leadership and direction because it is such an expensive and significant piece of work.

Resource Implications

Financial

Indicative funding for the overall costs of each project is highlighted within the draft plan Negotiations to agree these resources are underway. The NIO Community safety Unit will provide in the region of £380 K through grant funding for projects with an additional £123 K for staff posts.

The Council's contributions have been included in the revenue estimates for 2009/2010

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

1. Indicate its support for the main elements of the Safer Belfast plan 2009-11;
2. Agree to support the Council's input and role as leading the Safer Belfast Plan 2009-2011.
3. Note that there is also a complementary plan being developed to ensure that the Council can internally deliver on the Safer Belfast plan through better cross-departmental working arrangements.

Key to Abbreviations

CSP- Community Safety Partnership
DPP- District Policing Partnership

Documents Attached

Draft Safer Belfast Plan 2009-2011