

Girdwood Community Hub
Engagement Strategy – Final draft
June 2011



1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to improving the quality of life now and for future generations for the people of Belfast. We want to help shape Belfast so that its infrastructure, spaces and services meet the needs and ambitions of all people who live in, work in, invest in, study in and visit the city.
- 1.2 In an ever-changing, global environment, cities and neighbourhoods need to be vibrant, attractive places to live, work and invest in. They need to be socially and economically stable as well as well-connected, provide the optimal life opportunities for its citizens and be attractive to investors and visitors.
- 1.3 The Girdwood Army Barracks was a symbol of Belfast past. The Girdwood Community Hub will be a positive icon of Belfast future. It will be a symbol of renaissance and hope for everyone in Belfast, in Northern Ireland and internationally – signalling that we are not going to go back and that Belfast is wholeheartedly embracing the opportunities afforded by peace and reconciliation.
- 1.4 It is the Council's and partners' vision that the Community Hub will be safe, welcoming and accessible to everyone – from across North Belfast and beyond. In developing the proposal we have also ensured that we have taken into consideration the views expressed by all groups and stakeholders on the development of the Hub and the wider development of the site.

2. Engagement

- 2.1 Consultation and engagement is a key feature of all our policy development work. We are keen to hear views from the Section 75 groups on how we could improve our understanding of their needs.
- 2.2 This document sets out Belfast City Council's approach to consultation and engagement on the development of the Community Hub at Girdwood. It outlines how we will seek to inform, consult and involve citizens on a range of issues including the design of the building, the programming and the ongoing management of the Hub.
- 2.3 This approach has been developed in close consultation with a range of community partners, who have helped shape the stages of the engagement and will continue to oversee and help facilitate its implementation.
- 2.4 The strategy sets out clear objectives, standards and principles which will govern our approach to consultation and

engagement. It also includes an action plan outlining 4 key stages to the engagement process.

2.5 Belfast City Council is committed to listening to what local people have to say about services and about what they want to see happen in the city and their area. Through this strategy, we want to:

- develop and build a Community Hub informed by what people want;
- ensure the Hub is a safe, welcome and useful venue for all;
- improve our neighbourhoods in collaboration with local people; and,
- shape and create a better Belfast based on what people need.

2.6 In the spirit of a new shared space in Belfast, the partners' preference for community engagement is on an inter-community basis. There may be occasions when it may be more useful to facilitate discussions within individual communities, but this will be assessed in consultation with the partners' group.

2.7 The partners who are supporting the development of the Girdwood Community Hub acknowledge the key role that political representatives will play in the successful its development and implementation. Therefore, political engagement at all levels for North Belfast is a key element of this strategy.

3. Who is this strategy for?

3.1 During the engagement process, it is important that we reach and work with a wide range of people and partners. By people and partners, we mean:

- Residents – all people who live in the north of the city, ensuring that all voices have an opportunity to be heard particularly those who live in close proximity to the Girdwood/Crumlin Road Gaol site as well as those who may find it more difficult to participate because of disability, language, caring responsibilities or any other circumstance.
- Elected representatives
- Service users – people who could use the Hub from across the city, as well as visitors such as tourists and participants at events from beyond Belfast
- Community and voluntary sector – non-government organisations that provide services to the people of Belfast
- Business users – people who own businesses or work in Belfast
- Statutory partners – other agencies who provide services in Belfast
- Staff – people who work for the council.

4. What we mean by Consultation and Engagement

4.1 At its most basic, consultation is about seeking the views, knowledge or guidance of others. The Consultation Institute defines consultation as:

“the dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based upon a genuine exchange of views, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action”

4.2 It is our intention to develop, manage and programme the Community Hub with people rather than delivering to them. Where services and activities are created together, there are mutual benefits for the user, for the neighbourhood and for the Council. We are committed to creating change in local neighbourhoods and in the city, together with local people – rather than for them. This approach is centred on people’s assets – skills, experiences, professional expertise, networks, time – and built on the fundamental principle that:

“People’s needs are better met when they are involved in an equal and reciprocal relationship with professionals and others, working together to get things done.”¹

4.3 The values which will drive this approach are articulated as:

4.3.1 Everyone counts – respect

There needs to be a shared belief in everyone and a commitment that everyone has the equal right to thrive in this city. This model requires us to engage with the widest range of local people; not just the more able, socially advantaged or articulate. People’s health and well-being depends not only on physical activity, but on strong and enduring relationships. The approach is built on vibrant, open and equal relationships – with local people, with other neighbourhoods and with professionals.

4.3.2 Working together

This model requires that all people – citizens and professionals – are seen as equal partners with a range of skills, experience and ideas to develop and sustain the Community Hub together. It moves away from a ‘them and us’ culture to one where people pool their knowledge and skills to work together with an agreed common purpose. It values professional expertise and also acknowledges and rewards other experience.

4.3.3 Being connected

Belfast is one city of many neighbourhoods and all parts of it need to be safe, welcoming and accessible to everyone. Neighbourhoods must be the open for themselves, open for visitors and open for the city. We are seeking to ensure that the Community Hub is part of a well-connected network of complementary physical and programmed provision.

4.3.4 Being responsible and focussed on making things happen

We need a sense of civic responsibility at all levels for the city and all of its neighbourhoods. We will adopt a ‘figure it out’ attitude which is flexible and committed to delivery. This approach is centred on local people’s assets – skills, experiences, networks, time – and how they can bring these into the Community Hub and programmes.

4.3.5 Trust and openness

We commit to acting with integrity at all times and doing what we promise. We will communicate openly about expectations and decisions taken. We will take responsibility for feeding back to all interested parties.

¹ D. Boyle et al; (July 2010) *Right Here, Right Now: Taking co-production into the mainstream*; NEF/NESTA

5. Maintaining standards

5.1 With community and statutory partners, we will continuously review our approach and measure how well we are doing in meeting these objectives and maintaining the values outlined. In the initial stages, this will be through the Community Partners' meetings and subsequently through the inter-community/inter-agency Hub Forum.

5.2 Together we will regularly review the approach and our actions to ensure equality of access and opportunities for involvement. In this way, we will ensure that the Community Hub is developed and sustained as a vibrant, safe and welcoming facility.

5.3 We have outlined preliminary targets for the community engagement process. This will be reviewed and revised as necessary:

Outputs	Target
Attendees at launch Events i.e. workshops / launch events	250
No. of people participating in community engagement process	1500
% of completed event feedback forms rating events as useful or above	[75%]
No. of Press Articles/Journal articles associated with the Project	15
No. of visits to website associated with the Project in one month	5000

5.4 We have outlined preliminary targets for the political engagement process. This will be reviewed and revised as necessary:

Outputs	Target
Political reps at shared space programme events i.e. workshops / launch events	30
No. of elected reps participating in community engagement process	30

5.5 Quarterly updates will also be made to the Council's Strategic Policy Resources Committee.

6. Equality Considerations

6.1 As part of the equality strategy which underpins the Girdwood Community Hub development process, there is a commitment to equality screen a number of key phases of the process. Following consideration of 4 key questions, a number of issues have been identified and mitigating actions have been integrated into the engagement strategy. A brief summary of the narrative within the screening document is overleaf:

- *What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy (engagement strategy), for each of the Section 75 equality categories?*

In relation to the impact on equality of opportunity, it is likely that there will be a minor level of impact on the following 3 categories: racial group; age; and disability. This is particularly relevant in relation to literacy levels and written forms of communication, such as the proposed newsletter and media articles. There may also be minor impact for those with caring responsibilities, in terms of ability to participate in the public engagement activities. The strategy has been designed to use a range of methodologies including events, social media and face-to-face communication so that people will have access to the information in a range of formats. Also, as per the Council's Equality Scheme, information will be available in a range of languages and accessible formats.

- *Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the section 75 categories?*

In relation to the promotion of equality of opportunity, the engagement strategy has been designed to include inter-generational activities as well as activities which use a range of methods of communication including art and socially-based events. The principles which underpin the strategy are designed to ensure that the process is inclusive and connect people with the project and with each other. The Hub Forum will regularly monitor the impact on equality of opportunity and design in further mitigating actions where required.

- *To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?*

In relation to the impact on good relations, it is likely that there will be a minor level of impact on the 3 categories. The ultimate aim of the Girdwood Community Hub is be a welcoming, safe and shared space for all and this engagement strategy seeks to enable that to happen. The impact of the conflict and segregation in the immediate area surrounding Girdwood has had a negative impact on local relations. Significant good relations work is ongoing in the area and this engagement strategy seeks to build on that work and complement those activities. There is also a dedicated strand of work within the strategy focussing on engagement with elected representatives across all parties.

- *Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?*

In relation to the promotion of good relations, the engagement strategy has been designed to include a wide range of good relations activities, including the development of a shared space action plan. In the spirit of a new shared space in Belfast, the partners' preference for community engagement is on an inter-community basis. There may be occasions when it may be more useful to facilitate discussions within individual communities, but this will be assessed in consultation with the partners' group. The Hub Forum will regularly monitor the impact on good relations and design in further mitigating actions where required.

6.2 The full screening document is held by the BCC Equality and Diversity Officer and will be submitted to the Equality Commission for NI as part of the Council's annual report on the implementation of its Equality Scheme.

Stage 1	Objectives	Activities	Communication activities (+ audience)	Resources	Constraints	Risks	Mitigating Actions
Information and awareness raising 01 June – 01 September 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To provide information to local residents and across the city on the Hub proposal ▪ To consolidate common vision for Hub and partnership approach ▪ To update people on the overall masterplan and revised location for Hub ▪ To outline the community engagement approach for the Hub development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agree interim terms of reference, membership and agenda for partners' meetings. The agenda to include discussion on management models for the Hub and wider site. 	Partners' group meetings (community and statutory reps)	Officer time	Limited specific information on Hub No offer of funding	Build expectations in advance of SEUPB letter of offer	Clarity on status of application BCC funding engagement process 'at risk'
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Design and distribution of news sheet on Hub concept and FAQ's – Creation of email address, web information, social media 	Referenced in 'First day' briefings for Ministers (lower level detail provided to Ministers when appropriate) and Councillor induction briefings	Officer time (BCC, DSD and OFMDFM)		Limited agreement on overall masterplan	Post-election /new Ministerial/ Councillor team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ongoing Community partners' group meetings, including drafting of Bens/Opps Plan – Common vision workshop – Joint presentation to political reps inc. MP, MLAs, Ministers and Cllrs on common vision 	News sheet on Hub concept (North Belfast residents) BCC website page (all)	BCC Corporate Comms time (to be confirmed) + £4,000 printing	Low literacy levels inc. English as a second language		Plain English news sheet Multiple forms of engagement inc. non-written forms and arts-based activities Test news sheet prior to distribution
			Hub Forum workshop (invited political reps)	Up to £6,000 for external facilitation		Focus on housing element of masterplan	FAQ's section of news sheet

Stage 2	Objectives	Activities	Communication activities (+ audience)	Resources	Constraints	Risks	Mitigating Actions
Pre-planning design 01 Sept – 1 Dec 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To participate in the physical design of the building ▪ To build confidence on securing Hub as safe and welcoming ▪ To consult on the community benefits and opportunities plan ▪ To meet the statutory obligations regarding equality legislation ▪ To announce outcome of funding application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ongoing partners' group meetings 	Partners' group meetings on social clauses and equality issues (community and statutory reps)	Officer time	Dependent on procurement of design consultant	SEUPB letter of offer subject to sign-off by oversight departments	Ongoing discussions with SEUPB fed into Hub Forum Maintaining momentum workshop
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interactive design events and workshops with community inc. youth and social media tools 	Presentation of partners' workshop outcomes (political reps)	Officer time + minor hospitality costs	Design freeze deadline – Dec 11		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Information on 'secure by design' principles 	Informal events to animate area e.g. barbecue, tea dance to discuss design concept (local residents)	Up to £6,000 for external facilitation			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintaining momentum workshop 	8 interactive workshops (inc. youth)	Up to £5,000 for events			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public meetings on Bens/Opps Plan 	Update news sheet to include info on secure by design (North Belfast residents and other stakeholders)	Corporate Comms time (to be confirmed) + £4,000 printing		Delay in submitting planning application and knock-on effect on construction schedule	Ongoing discussions between BCC, Planning Service and SEUPB fed into Hub Forum
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Drafting of equality screening documents in consultation with Community Partners' group 	City Matters article – Nov – on award and plans (all Belfast residents)	Officer time			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Presentation to Council's S75 Consultative Forum 					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – BCC business sector event on community benefits/opps plan inc. Business Enterprise 					

		<p>Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly joint meeting with political reps inc. MP, MLAs, Ministers and Cllrs on common vision - Political briefing on award decision and announcement/decision to appeal (as approp.) - Business sector event (through Belfast Enterprise Network) 	<p>Contractor adverts inc. social clauses</p>	<p>Officer time</p>			
			<p>Site visit/community event for positive outcome OR Committee decision on next steps if negative outcome</p>	<p>Officer time</p>		<p>Negative outcome for award decision</p>	<p>Meeting with the Hub Forum and political consideration on next steps</p>

Stage 3	Objectives	Activities	Communication activities (+ audience)	Resources	Constraints	Risks	Mitigating Actions
Programming design and planning consultation 01 Jan – 01 April 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To facilitate the formal planning consultation process ▪ To continue to build confidence on securing Hub as safe and welcoming ▪ To design a programme of activities during the construction period on the theme of common vision, safe/welcoming space and reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ongoing partners' group meetings, inc. 12 month performance review/learning meeting – Quarterly joint meeting with political reps inc. MP and Ministers on review/learning – Public consultation meetings on planning application – Workshops on defining safe/welcoming principles – Formation of Hub Forum (or Community Trust) and training 	Partners' group meetings on shared space programme during construction period (community and statutory reps)	Officer time	Timeline to secure planning permission and achieve spend by end 2014 is tight	Objections raised as part of formal planning process	Issues raised in advance at Community Partners' group
			Formal planning notifications – media, mail and website (local residents and regional)	Officer time		Process/partners' group loses momentum	Review meeting for period Sep 10 – Sep 11
			Advert for recruitment of Hub Forum (<i>dependent on Partners' discussions</i>) (North Belfast residents and stakeholders)	Officer time			
			Animation activities (North Belfast residents and stakeholders)	£30,000 (under SEUPB grant)			
Update news sheet (North Belfast residents and other stakeholders)	Corporate Comms time (to be confirmed) + £5,000 printing						

Stage 4	Objectives	Activities	Communication activities (+ audience)	Resources	Constraints	Risks	Mitigating Actions
Programme implementation 01 April 2012 – 30 June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To transform the image of North Belfast to develop and deliver a thriving, welcoming and safe gateway into north of the city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Appointment of shared space team inc. £130k programming budget – Hub Forum meetings – Appointment of evaluator and baseline report 	Hub Forum/Community Trust meetings on shared space programme and wider Girdwood/Gaol site (community and statutory reps)	Officer time	Timeline to secure planning permission and achieve spend by end 2014 is tight	Local neighbourhoods inconvenienced during construction	Regular news sheets/meetings outlining progress
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Branding and logo schools' competition – Public art workshops – Inter-generational heritage workshops 	Media coverage on engagement opportunities e.g. logo competition and public art (North Belfast residents + all via website)	Officer time		Low take-up of training and skills programmes	Work with local training and enterprise agencies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Completion and presentation of 1st annual shared space effectiveness report 	Volunteering programme (all Belfast residents)	Officer time		Low participation in workshops and animation events	Advertise through and work with local community organisations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Quarterly joint meetings with political reps inc. MP and Ministers – Civic dignitaries sod-cutting ceremony 	Skills development programme inc. Steps to Work and coaching qualifications (North Belfast residents)	Officer time			
			Shared space animation prog. with spectacle events (all Belfast residents and visitors)	£100,000 (under SEUPB grant)			