



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Community Planning (BIG Lottery Project) and the Draft Belfast Framework for Addressing Life Inequalities
Date:	18 th November 2011
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Director of Health & Environmental Services
Contact Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Strategic Planning & Policy Manager, ext 6009

Relevant Background Information

This report provides an update on the BIG Lottery Project Community Planning and presents two key documents for consideration and comment; namely the:

- Draft Belfast Community Planning Model; and,
- Draft Framework for Addressing Life Inequalities.

Members will recall that Belfast City Council along with the 5 Area Partnership Boards and Community Places (The Belfast Community Planning Consortium) was successfully awarded a contract by the BIG Lottery Fund to deliver one of three community planning pilots in Northern Ireland. The contract is to be completed by end of January 2012.

The main purpose for the BIG lottery funding was to look at how the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) could be better supported to participate in the emerging community planning process in Northern Ireland, with the overall aim of providing a model and a toolkit of good practice in community planning that will help to ensure the genuine engagement of the VCS in the new formal processes. This is in the context of building on the strengths of the sector and building capacity across all sectors.

The Belfast pilot focuses on the single theme of “health” as a manageable way of testing processes and relationships whilst also delivering improvements for local people. One of the project’s key aims was to support the development of a health and wellbeing plan for the City and specifically to test how the VCS could participate most effectively in that process. Based on this learning, it was also intended that a replicable model of community planning could be developed to guide community planning in Belfast.

The two draft documents referred to above represent important milestones for the community planning project; however they are key strategic documents for the city and Council. The Member Reference Group, which was reconstituted after the local council elections, has considered these documents which are now being presented to Committee for consideration.

Key Issues

1. BIG Lottery Community Planning Pilot – Project Update

The Pilot is overseen by a Steering Group (with membership from Council, BAPs, BH DU, Belfast Trust and Public Health Agency) and is supported by a Project Coordinator. The key elements of the project are:

- Building a **shared understanding** of community planning in Belfast
- **Engaging and involving** the VCS in Belfast in community planning

- Building the **capacity** of all partners to participate effectively in community planning
- Supporting **improved planning** at a city wide and local level and enhancing **collaborative working**
- Connecting to the local **political process**
- Developing a **model of community planning**
- Review and **evaluation**

A summary of the Project's key activities / successes to date is provided below:

Health & Wellbeing Plan – Action Learning

- The Community Planning Pilot used the development of a health and wellbeing plan for the city as an action learning tool, combining learning on engagement, planning and collaborative working with concrete outcomes from a real time planning scenario.
- The new Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) is responsible for developing and implementing the “Framework for Action” – a 4 year strategy / plan to address life inequalities in Belfast. The Pilot's role focused on developing and supporting the community engagement process to inform the framework and is now largely complete.
- The Pilot hosted a stakeholder workshop on 28 June to ensure relevant partners, including voluntary and community representatives, were involved at the early stages of the Framework design. Attended by 112 cross-sector representatives, the workshop helped refine a set of priorities for the BSP to in developing Framework for Action. Inputs have since been reflected in the draft framework (see attached as appendix 1). An evaluation is currently underway to assess the stakeholder engagement which will help build on the community engagement approaches developed through the Pilot.

Emerging Model of Community Planning

- Based on the learning to date, a draft, emerging Community Planning model for Belfast is being developed – the current draft of the model is attached at Appendix 3). The model has been considered in detail by the cross party reference group and is currently being shared and consulted upon as part of the Pilot's wider engagement programme. Specific events, workshops and online participatory processes are underway to ensure the model is fit for purpose and reflective of all stakeholder needs.

Communication, Engaging and Involving

- The Pilot continues to implement its communications and engagement plan including: a range of briefings with partners / stakeholders; two planning workshops the VCS and three seminars to showcase examples of Belfast community planning in action and introduce the model; a seminar to share learning from ILEX (Derry City Council) and a planned information seminar on local statutory planning processes.
- Two half-day workshops were held on 8th and 9th November to explore the emerging model and specifically the role of the community & voluntary sector within it; this included contributions from VCS representatives from Scotland. A similar workshop for statutory organisations will be held on 29th November. These workshops are being used to refine the draft model and to encourage collective ownership.
- A final Conference will be held on January 19th in the City Hall when the refined Belfast Community Planning model and learning from the Pilot will be presented.
- The Council's website now also has a dedicated page on Community Planning and the Pilot. For further information please see www.belfastcity.gov.uk/communityplanning

Capacity Building

- In addition to the events outlined above, the Pilot also developed an “Introduction to Community Planning” course - a 3 day accredited course currently being piloted with the

University of Ulster with over 50 people participating from across the various sectors. The course, which encouragingly was oversubscribed, will be evaluated as part of the Pilot's learning, with an assessment made as to its efficacy and sustainability.

Review and Evaluation

- x. An evaluation framework has been developed to enable the Pilot to assess the impact of the project. A final project evaluation and overall Project Report for BIG Lottery must be completed by end of January).

Connecting to the Political Process

- xi. SP&R Committee was keen to ensure that the role of Elected Members as civic leaders and local advocates was properly reflected within the pilot and any emerging model. Early in the process, the SP&R Committee established a cross Party Reference Group with the dual role of overseeing the Pilot and leading the development of a community planning framework for Council. Two joint workshops have been held with the Pilot Steering Group providing valuable input to the project and emerging Belfast model.
- xii. The Reference Group will continue to champion and develop community planning within Council and across the city and, working and reporting through the SP&R Committee, will look at options for taking forward community planning in Belfast after the Pilot finishes.
- xiii. All Elected Members were invited to the BIG Lottery events and capacity building course. Party Briefings and workshops with the new SP&R Committee have been organised around the key themes in the Council's Corporate Plan which also provides a strategic context for community planning. Members will have an opportunity to consider the potential of community planning and its implications for the Council further at the Council's corporate planning "People, Communities and Neighbourhoods" workshop on 29th November. Party briefings are also offered so that Members can find out more about the pilot, the emerging model and the framework for addressing health inequalities.

2. Belfast Strategic Partnership and Framework for Action

As mentioned above, the BIG Lottery Pilot has been working with Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) and Belfast Health Development Unit to develop the BSP's Framework for Action to Address Life Inequalities. The Framework aims to:

- Provide the strategic context (and an overarching structure)
- Highlight high level priorities
- Encourage effective collaborative working
- Align and integrate individual plans and actions
- Support key players
- Outline BSP commitment to addressing life inequalities

The Framework focuses on those actions where the BSP can bring added value through collaborative approaches; it seeks to be action orientated, building on strengths and removing barriers to collaboration. A copy of the Framework is attached at appendix 1. The key themes within the draft framework are:

- Addressing mental health & emotional wellbeing
- Addressing learning and education issues
- Addressing alcohol and drug related issues
- Focussing on early years and early interventions
- Regenerating living spaces and healthy places

The Framework also identifies the following cross cutting themes:

- Addressing poverty related issues

- Building community capacity
- Organisational development
- Active Belfast
- Health and Health Equity in all Local Policies

The BSP is responsible for taking forward the draft Framework. A representative from each of the political parties sits on the BSP which is chaired by the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council. Working groups are being established to develop the detail of each theme (appendix 2 provides a structural overview of the BSP and the themes). It is anticipated that a revised Framework supported by annual action plans will be published in March 2012. Comments are currently being sought from key stakeholders including Members of the Partnership.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

Will be considered as part of the finalisation of both the model and the framework.

Resource Implications

Financial and Human Resources

None at present. Support costs for managing and coordinating the project will be met from within the BIG funding.

Legislative Developments

We still await clarification from Government on the likely timeframe for the formal introduction of a duty of Community Planning and the power of wellbeing and what this may mean for Council in terms of resource implications. The Council will continue to seek to influence the development of formal community planning guidance. The pilot project and the development of the Belfast community planning model will assist with this process.

Decisions required

The Committee is asked to note the progress to date and specifically the emerging model at Appendix 3 and Draft framework at Appendix 1.

Members are also asked to agree attendance through the party leaders for the final conference on 19th January 2012. Further details to follow.

Decision Tracking

The Director of Health and Environmental Services will bring progress reports back to the Committee as the project progresses.

Key to Abbreviations

BAPs – Belfast Area Partnerships	BSP – Belfast Strategic Partnership
BH DU – Belfast Health Development Unit	VCS - Voluntary and Community Sector
BIG – Big Lottery Fund	

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – BSP Draft Framework for Action
 Appendix 2 – BSP Structure Model
 Appendix 3 – Draft Belfast Community Planning model

Model:

