



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Age Friendly Approach and Declaration
<b>Date:</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2012
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Northern Ireland, like many other European Countries, has an increasing number of older people. The demographic structure has changed from a population largely under 50 to one where people over 50 account for around a third of the population and where people over 60 are estimated to outnumber people under 16 within the next few years.
1.2	In Belfast 19.65% of the population is over 60. With life expectancy rising dramatically in the last 50 years, annual improvements in survival rates and falling levels of fertility it is estimated that by 2030 25% of people in Belfast will be over 65 years of age. As a City we must address this and be prepared for an increasingly ageing society and plan for how this will affect our City economically, socially and culturally e.g. the number of retired people will increase and therefore tax payers decrease; the costs of pensions, benefits and health care will also increase significantly.
1.3	The World health Organisation (WHO) has a global Network of Age Friendly Cities. WHO regards active ageing as a life long process shaped by several factors that alone and acting together, favour health, participation and security in older adult life. The WHO has produced a guide and checklist to engage Cities to become more age friendly. If a City meets a list of criteria and makes an application to the WHO a City can be awarded "Age Friendly" status.
1.4	An age-friendly city encourages active ageing by optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age. In practical terms, an age friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to and inclusive of older people with varying needs. In an age friendly city policies, services, settings and structures support and enable people to age actively. The outdoor environment have a major impact on the quality of life of older people and an age friendly city will have to consider; outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing , social participation, civic participations and employment, communication and information, community support and health services.
1.5	A discussion paper outlining the process for gaining Age Friendly status was taken to the All Party Reference Group on older people on 24 <sup>th</sup> January 2011. The group were keen on starting this process by undertaking a baseline study of the City and investigating potential

1.6	<p>resources to lead the project. Since then officers have been progressing the Age Friendly process by developing networks and relationships with other Age Friendly Cities, undertaking a baseline study of Belfast's Age friendly status, investigating potential resources to lead the project and outlining the benefits to the City of becoming Age Friendly.</p> <p>A further paper outlining the Age Friendly approach and signing of the declaration was taken to the Reference Group on Older people on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February and a decision to seek committee approval for supporting the signing of the declaration for Belfast, was fully supported by the members in attendance.</p>
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>The Building the WHO Global Network 1st International Conference on Age-Friendly Cities was held in the Burlington Hotel in Dublin on 28-30<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Councillor Pat McCarthy and Adele Faulkner from Health and Environmental Services attended the conference. At the conference a number of Cities and regions signed an Age Friendly declaration including Dublin, New York, Edmonton, Mexico and Manchester.</p>
2.2	<p>Due to the late notice of the conference, Belfast was not in a position to sign the declaration at that time. Since then we have developed alliances with Co Louth, the first age friendly County in Ireland and Manchester the first UK Age Friendly City. Both have offered their support to Belfast in the process of adoption of Age Friendly status. Conversations have also started with Newry and Mourne District Council who are exploring the development of an Age Strategy and becoming Age Friendly.</p>
2.3	<p>Supporting the adoption of Belfast as a city that supports and promotes the focus on its status as 'age-friendly' is linked into the supporting people and communities priority of the Investment programme. It is a work stream within the Belfast Strategic partnership and can be supported and delivered in conjunction with the Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership ( HASP) which is part funded by Council. The signing of the declaration will be the first step in working towards improvements and access to services that benefit health. It is closely aligned to the work undertaken through our active Belfast programmes. The next step will be to lever European funding streams to support this work.</p>
2.4	<p>The first step in the process for Belfast becoming an Age Friendly City is to sign the Age Friendly declaration. The Age Friendly Declaration will formally commit Belfast's support to the principles of Age Friendly Cities. The Declaration contains a set of basic principles and commitments to make communities more age friendly. The commitments are summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Promoting the Declaration in appropriate forums and adhering to the principles</li> <li>b) Collaboration including participating in the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities (including a 5 year assessment and plan of improvement)</li> <li>c) Development of communication channels and network with other cities and communities to promote equal rights and opportunities for older citizens</li> </ul> <p>A full copy of the declaration is attached. The declaration would be signed by the Lord Mayor of Belfast. It is proposed that if this committee approves this approach the Declaration will be signed and publicised in conjunction with the 2012 Seniors Citizens Convention on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p>Officers within the Environmental health Service will continue work with our European unit to seek EU funding to support developing and progressing with the approach once the age –friendly declaration is signed.</p> <p>Funding from the current and future thematic budget will be used to host events, consultations and the Seniors Citizens Convention.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
4.1	<p>The Committee is asked to agree</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To support progress with Belfast status as an Age Friendly Approach</li> <li>2. That the Lord Mayor will sign the Age Friendly Declaration which will commit Belfast to participating in the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly cities.</li> </ol>

<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
WHO – World Health Organisation

<b>Documents Attached</b>
Age Friendly Declaration