



Belfast City Council

Report to	Strategic Policy & Resources
Subject:	Compassionate City Charter for Belfast
Date:	19 September 2014
Reporting Officer:	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager. Ext: 6020
Contact Officer:	Sandra Robinson, Principal Officer, Lord Mayor's Office Ext: 6244 Anne Deighan, Good Relations Officer. Ext: 6029

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	At the September 2014 Council meeting a Motion was brought by Councillor Curran and seconded by Councillor Kyle that 'this Council agrees to become a Charter for Compassion Partner which seeks to endorse the following principles of the Charter for Compassion:
1.2	<p>The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the center of our world and put another there, and to honor the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.</p> <p>It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.</p> <p>We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful</p>

	<p>information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.</p> <p>We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.</p> <p>The council will commit to exploring how the charter will translate into a tangible plan for compassionate action among our citizens and communities, and how it can be best used to promote understanding our unique city context."</p>
1.3	In accordance with Standing Order 11(e), the Motion was referred to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.
1.4	This global campaign is to raise awareness of the benefits of compassionate actions.
1.5	Its purpose is to encourage city leadership from around the world to create and bring together efforts towards increasing compassion through local initiatives, policy and projects.
1.6	As of July 2014 organising campaigns are taking place in over 240 communities worldwide.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Belfast Compassionate City Charter is an established charity and the Board members are: Frank Liddy, Chair; Mary McManus, Treasurer - East Belfast Community Development Association; Heather McGregor, Secretary – QUB; Rev Bill Shaw Presbyterian Church in Ireland; John Paul Lederach, Professor of Practice for International Peace building at University of Notre Dame.
2.2	Should Council endorse the Charter, it would be envisaged that a high profile public signing of the Charter will take place in City Hall. An action plan will be developed by the Charity to initially commence having the charter available for signing. World Cafe conversations with communities in the four corners of the city will then follow. These events will take place during autumn/winter.
2.3	The results of the cafe conversations will be collated and it is envisaged that a conference will be held in Spring 2015 to disseminate the feedback and future planning.

2.4	Elected Members from each of the areas will be advised in advance when the community conversations will take place.
2.5	The role of the Council in all the activities associated with the roll out of the Compassionate City Charter will be to support the work of the Board and endorse the principles that underpin the aims of the Charter.

3	Resource Implications
	A budget has not been set aside for this work.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	None

5	Recommendations
	<p>The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) agree to adopt the principles that underpin the aims of the Charter (ii) agree to support the work of the Board.

6	Decision Tracking
	Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager Ext:6029 in consultation with the Lord Mayor's Office

7	Key to Abbreviations
	N/A

8	Documents Attached