

Proposal to Belfast City Council



Local Parliament – Belfast Council Area

About Age Sector Platform

Age Sector Platform (ASP) was established in 2008 to provide a strong, unified voice for older people. Since we were established we have grown steadily in size and reputation and today, through our network of over 100 individual members, 34 group members and connections to other age sector organisations, we are connected to over 200,000 older people (age 60+) across Northern Ireland.

Our objectives are:

- To **engage** with older people, helping them to make their voice heard
- To **enable** older people to advocate on their own behalf
- To **empower** older people so they can change their lives for the better

Everything ASP does is focused on recognising, maintaining and upholding the rights and dignity of older people to be viewed as equal and not as second class citizens. We work to ensure older people's right to independence, equal participation and self-fulfilment and to exercise choice and control in all aspects of their lives.

A key strength and characteristic of ASP is that we are led and directed by older people. Our Trustees are all older people who collectively represent the broad spectrum of our beneficiaries and share their lived experience across the main issues and challenges they face.

Local Parliaments

ASP is continually responding to direction and opinion from older people as we seek to develop and enhance the impact of the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament.

A survey conducted by ASP in 2014 highlighted that only 1 in 10 older people knew how their council operates or considered that their council engages with them effectively¹. Between February – April 2016, ASP undertook a 'pilot programme' of 'local parliaments' in each of the 11 new council areas, including Belfast City Council. A total of **810** older people participated in these events.

The pilot programme was extremely successful and we are keen to build on this. In addition to running the annual 2 day event, we want to run 'local parliaments' in each council area in early 2018. These will be one day events.

¹ Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament Survey, 2014

Rationale for Belfast Local Parliament

- **Increase number of older people participating in the pensioners parliament 'process'**: The annual 2- day Belfast Parliament is over subscribed. Many older people are therefore currently being denied an opportunity to be involved.
- Connect with 'hard to reach' older people in communities across the Belfast council area.
- Enable older people to engage with Belfast City Council and actively influence and contribute to **The Belfast Agenda** strategy and support the **Age Friendly Belfast** initiative
- Help to build membership of ASP

Benefits

The local parliament event, attended by up to 100 older people, will be a mutually beneficial partnership with Belfast City Council that complements **The Belfast Agenda** and **Age Friendly Belfast** programme:

- Enabling meaningful consultation and engagement between older people and Belfast City Council - with a particular focus on 'hard to reach' older people.
- Providing opportunity for older people to engage with their elected representatives on Belfast City Council and to inform **The Belfast Agenda**.
- Age Sector Platform recognises the range of progressive activity taking place as part of Age Friendly Belfast and we believe that the local parliament has a role to play in complementing and supporting this and that the parliament could become a key component in the Age Friendly Belfast calendar.
- Enable Councillors and city council staff to hear the opinions and views of older people and support community participation by older people – increasing their confidence and supporting social inclusion.

Our 'Ask'

We would ask Belfast City Council to give consideration to making Belfast City Hall available to host the Belfast parliament and also make a financial contribution **of up to £3,000** towards the associated costs of the event i.e. catering, printing etc.

Thank You For Giving This Proposal Consideration