

## Belfast Good Relations Strategy - Executive Summary

### Good Relations is everyone's business!

Like the Belfast Agenda, this new Good Relations strategy is a Belfast Strategy, within which everyone has a stake and role to play in its realisation. It outlines a vision for the promotion of a Shared Belfast and seeks to be a framework to enable the delivery of Good Relations in Belfast. Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act places a duty on all public bodies to have regard to the desirability of promoting Good Relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. Good Relations is a core ingredient in the vision and outcomes of the Belfast Agenda and essential to supporting its central priority of *"delivering inclusive growth and leaving no one behind"*. It is also a critical component required to achieve the vision of the Belfast Local Development Plan which states: *"In 2035, Belfast will be a globally successful and smart regional city that is environmentally resilient with a vibrant economic and social heart"*. This strategy seeks to position Belfast to be ready for the challenges of a changing world and to engage positively in facing these challenges head on.

Belfast has a population of 338,907, representing 18% of the total population of the region. We are one of the youngest cities in Europe, with young people up to the age of 21 making up nearly a third of our population, with a fifth of the city under 15 years old. Our older population is growing - today 15% of the population is 65 and older and by 2035 this will grow to nearly a fifth (20%). Belfast has also become a much more diverse city, with many people from overseas making Belfast their home – our 'new communities'. This growth is projected to continue for many years to come.

This Good Relations Strategy recognises that following years of conflict, the people of Belfast have made great progress towards inclusion, diversity, peace and reconciliation. However, despite this, there remain key issues that continue to highlight division between communities. Low levels of trust and high levels of residential, educational, physical and social segregation persists in many areas. There are still around 85 physical barriers within the City. Furthermore, this Strategy acknowledges continued issues around expressions of identity, which often results in community tensions and increased division.

Many people within our society still think in binary terms and this approach has created a public service delivery model that has in many ways, serviced division in the past. In the current economic climate, the challenge for civic leadership and public service delivery is the need to avoid binary decision making which compounds division. This means delivering on the Belfast Agenda in a way that involves people in a meaningful and innovative city conversation on how services are delivered in the future.

### Our city is at a cross roads.

The Belfast Agenda, Belfast's Community Plan, sets out a framework, vision, values and outcomes for the City, so that by 2035 there will be inclusive growth and improved services for residents and businesses. The Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP), provides the planning framework up to 2035 and will shape the physical future of the City, supporting economic and social outcomes, while providing the delivery of sustainable development. In addition, in 2016, Belfast became the first City in Ireland and one of five in the UK to join the 100 Resilient Cities Programme, aimed at helping the city, its communities and businesses to survive, adapt and mitigate the stresses or shocks it may

experience. If we are to truly transform the City, Good Relations outcomes need to be at the heart of these strategies and need to underpin their implementation.

### **The Long-term Vision, Values and Themes for Good Relations in Belfast**

As a starting point, this Strategy seeks to promote cultural diversity and respect for everyone's cultural identity. It also promotes the concept of Belfast as a City for everyone. Collective leadership will enhance the Council's ambition of promoting diversity within active and engaged communities. Strong positive leadership will challenge the behaviour and beliefs that can create division and will also enable new thinking on the ways we currently do business, with Good Relations outcomes to the fore. This approach will be overseen by a Shared City Partnership, which will facilitate an integrated approach to the promotion of Good Relations in the City, delivering on the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda.

The strategy provides a long-term vision, values and themes for Good Relations in Belfast, creating an agreed vision of a **Shared City – “a city re-imagined, connected and resurgent, delivering inclusive growth that leaves no-one behind”**

The Shared City vision is a long-term one which fully complements the Belfast Agenda. It requires the Council, Elected Members, other government agencies, the private sector and residents to work together, collaborate and make it happen. The **core values of Good Relations** namely: Equality, Equity, Diversity and Interdependence are the foundations which drive any Good Relations Strategy. These reflect Government's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey toward a more united and shared society within its *Together: Building a United Community* Strategy.

The Belfast Good Relations Strategy will focus on outcomes for everyone within the city, in line with the Belfast Agenda. Within this, collective and individual responsibilities need to be nurtured to help people think differently. A Shared City, that “leaves no-one behind”, is one that sees Good Relations outcomes as being for the common good of everyone within our City. This is reflected in the **five themes** within the Strategy:

- **Theme 1:** *Strong, Positive and Transformative Civic Leadership - Inclusive Governance with Community Change Makers.*  
This will be underpinned by values aimed at promoting equality, equity, diversity and interdependence, and tackling sectarianism, racism, intolerance and disadvantage.
- **Theme 2:** *Shared & Connected Spaces - a Smart, Connected City, driven by Inclusive & Transformative Place Making*  
This theme will be underpinned by values aimed at a commitment to sharing, connecting people and places, and partnerships that deliver collaborative gain.
- **Theme 3:** *Shared Services - focusing on Co-Design & Social Innovation*  
This theme will be underpinned by values involving innovative design & delivery, involving citizens, and sustainable development & respect for our environment.
- **Theme 4:** *Structured Collaboration & Partnerships*  
This theme will be underpinned by values that are transformative, inspirational and creative, that are outward looking, inclusive and evidence based.
- **Theme 5:** *An Intercultural City and Respectful Cultural Expression Within the Rule of Law*  
This theme will be underpinned by values such as trust, dignity and respect, cultural diversity, and inclusiveness, care and compassion.

## Appendix 2

This new Strategy seeks to set the standard for the emergence of a better future for communities across the City. The Strategy will open up a new enabling environment which supports respect for all. It will be for the **common good** of everyone within our society, ensuring that **Good Relations is everyone's business!**