

Belfast City Draft Good Relations Strategy

Good Relations is Everyone's Business

September 2018

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Introduction

Good Relations is everyone's business.

That is one of the key messages emanating from the stakeholder engagement that has driven the development of this draft Good Relations (GR) Strategy. Like the Belfast Agenda, this is not a Council Strategy but rather a Belfast Strategy, within which everyone has a stake and role to play in its realisation.

This document outlines a vision for the promotion of a shared Belfast. It is not intended to be an action plan rather a framework to support the delivery of Good Relations in Belfast.

Good Relations 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 or racial group. Good Relations is a core ingredient in the vision and outcomes of the Belfast Agenda and essential to supporting its top 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; to build a globally successful and smart regional City that is environmentally resilient with a vibrant economic and social heart. The City has also been designated as one of 100 global resilient cities, an initiative that will help the City transform into a global player, while learning from others along the way. A successful Good Relations focus in Belfast means not only resolving the problems of the past, but also being resilient and dealing with new sets of issues in a rapidly changing world.

Promoting Equality and Good Relations is key to improving the quality of life for everyone in the City and these are central to economic regeneration, attracting talent, sustaining inward investment, generating tourism and tackling poverty. Aligned with the Executive's Together: Building a United Community Strategy, the Good Relations Strategy will create the conditions for change, highlighting those complex issues that hold the City back.

The challenging aspirations within the Belfast Agenda and the Belfast Local Development Plan act as a call to action for all stakeholders to contribute to their successful delivery. Belfast is transforming. The Good Relations Strategy recognises that the way we have done things in the past needs to adapt in order to help us reach our stretching ambitions. Changing the way in which we plan, deliver and consume services and how and where we access them, how we travel within the City, how we educate our young people, how we view and use local spaces, and how we interact with one another across the City are all critical to their achievement. Social innovation will be a core element in the delivery of our plan.

The successful achievement of this vision will require all residents to be part of deciding how Belfast should look, feel and work in the future. This will be a game changer for the City and its people, some of whose lives are currently hampered by economic and social disadvantage, a lack of hope and aspiration or belief in a better future for themselves and their families. Leaving no one behind for Good Relations means building the confidence, self-belief and the resilience of all communities but particularly those most in need. 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 City Council developed an Audit of Good Relations in January 2017, within which it identified a range of needs and recommendations for moving forward. This has subsequently influenced the development of the Council's annual GR Action Plan and informs this Good Relations Strategy.

The Shared City Partnership

This Belfast Good Relations Strategy will be driven forward by the Shared City Partnership (SCP), which is a unique body across Northern Ireland's local authority areas. The Partnership acts as a good example of an integrated approach in mainstreaming Good Relations into the work of all bodies, including the private sector, across the City.

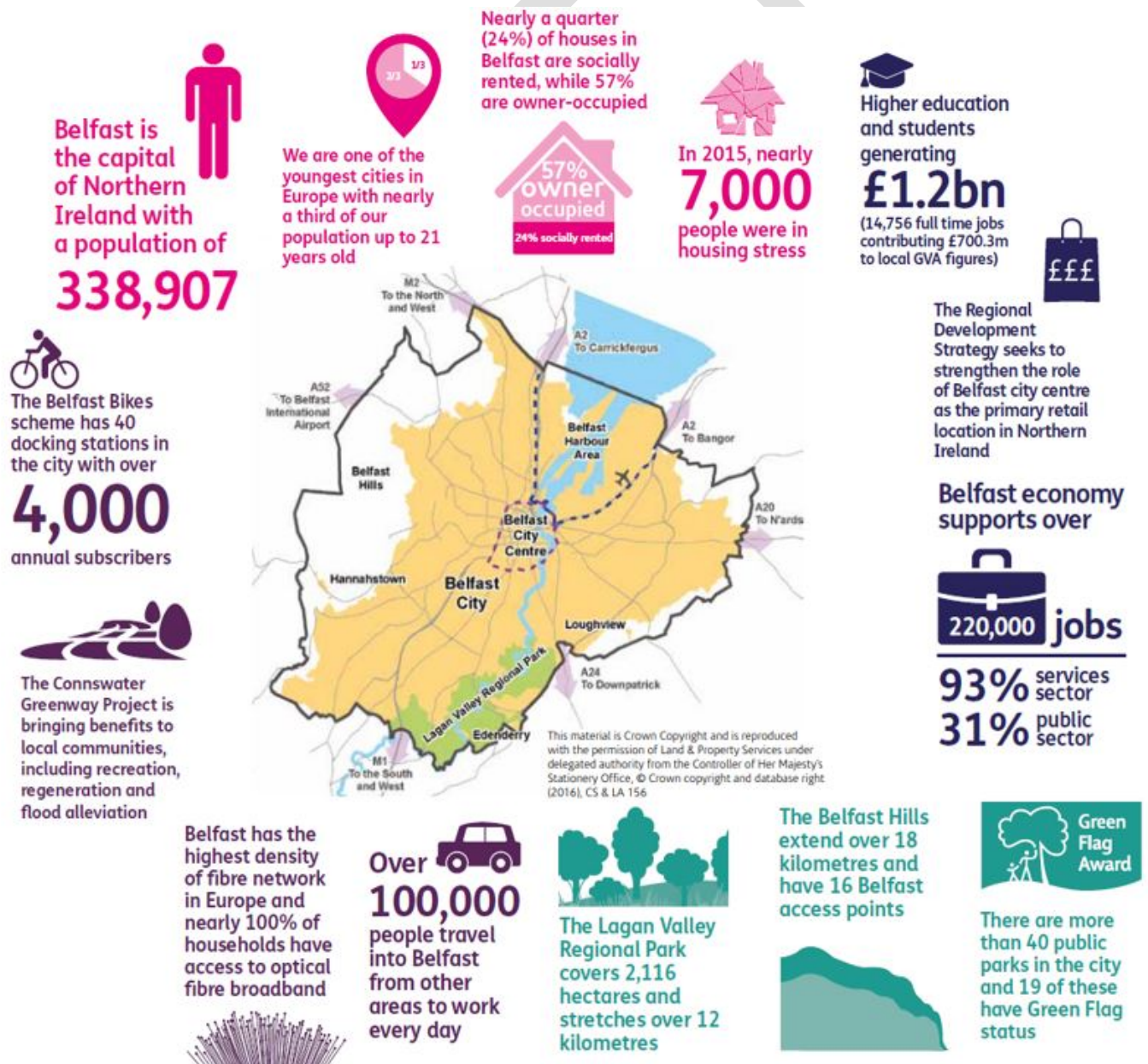
Throughout this document we have used the term Good Relations to describe good community and race relations between people of different community, religious, racial or political backgrounds.

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Who we are

The following social, economic and environmental statistics give a sense of the kind of place Belfast is. While the City has many affluent areas, it is also home to some of the most deprived communities in our society. 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, while a fifth of the City is under 15 years old. Our older population is growing - today 15% of the population is 65 and older, 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'. We are the happiest region in the UK for the third consecutive year (based on an ONS Personal Well-being Survey). The Peace Process brought people back into the City and in 2005 our City population grew for the first time in 50 years. This growth is projected to continue for many years to come.

Figure 1: Key City Statistics



What are the big Good Relations issues in the City?

The Belfast Good Relations Strategy recognises that following years of conflict, the people of Belfast have made great progress towards normalisation. However, despite this, there remain key legacy issues that continue to manifest themselves in division between communities, with low levels of trust and high levels of residential, educational, physical and social segregation in many areas. Furthermore, it recognises the persistent issues around the expression of identity, which often result in community tensions and increased polarisation.

Belfast contains the highest number of interface areas in the region where segregation remains high. Inter-community tensions are reducing but continuing. There are around 85 built interface barriers in Belfast. Since 1994, ten barriers have been erected and another 12 heightened, lengthened or extended in Belfast. Recent findings within the consultations undertaken as part of the development of the Council's PEACE IV Plan and its Good Relations Audit indicated that residents living near interfaces or 'peace walls' should be a key target group for engagement on Good Relations and peace activities. Three areas of concern were highlighted: environmental fears; lack of investment/ regeneration/ employability and disproportionate levels of poor health. The perceived disparity in investment between those affluent and most deprived communities continues to inhibit sharing and social cohesion. Furthermore, a lack of connectivity and the continued existence of physical barriers extend division across the City at certain points and gateways. The challenge remains that the most funded areas are still the most disadvantaged.

Belfast has also become a much more diverse City, with many people from overseas making Belfast their home. This increased diversity has brought with it many opportunities. However, it has also presented challenges to service delivery providers in ensuring the participation and inclusion of our new communities in the civic, social and cultural life of the City. Equality and Good Relations are key to improving the quality of life for everyone in the City. Our vision is to shape Belfast so that its infrastructure, spaces and services meet the needs and ambitions of all people who live, work, invest, study and visit the City.

Since our last Strategy we have developed a new Belfast Agenda, with a renewed emphasis on joining the dots between agencies and communities and a focus on better outcomes for residents. Politically, the Executive is currently not sitting, and Brexit has created uncertainty for many. Meanwhile, everyday life in Belfast continues to change as a result of, among other things, digitisation and globalisation.

Many people within our society still think in binary terms. The binary divide has in many ways created a public service delivery model that has 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 shifting the dialogue to delivering on the Belfast Agenda involving people in an innovative City conversation on how services are delivered.**

In this sense, our City is at a cross roads.

Belfast (2030) vision (Belfast Agenda conversation)

'Good Relations' is a top priority. People said they would like to see issues addressed including removal of interfaces/peace walls, concerns around symbols and expressing cultural identity and more shared space. The following GR themes emerged when respondents were asked "what would you like Belfast to be like in 2030?":

- A peaceful and shared city.
- A welcoming, caring and compassionate city.
- A vibrant and culturally diverse city, where everyone is respected and treated equally.
- A clean, healthy and safe city where everyone has access to good housing, quality green spaces, services and facilities that enable them to be happy, safe and active.

Belfast Agenda Vision for Belfast in 2035

The Belfast Agenda, Belfast’s Community Plan, sets out a vision, values and outcomes for the City to have achieved by 2035. This offers a clear direction of travel for the Good Relations Strategy. It joins up conversations, promotes collaborative gain in the pursuance of the future development of the City and represents genuine cooperation on big outcomes. It moves towards greater long-term planning and away from short-term actions with representative and participatory democracy working hand in hand for the common good.

The Vision states that “Belfast will be a City re-imagined and resurgent. It will be a great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful, well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable City shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. It will be a compassionate City offering opportunities for everyone and a confident and successful City energising a dynamic and prosperous City region. It will be a magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A City people dream to visit”

Figure 2: Belfast Agenda 2035 Outcomes

Over the next four years, the focus for the plan is **Inclusive growth; Leaving no one behind**. The Belfast Agenda believes that, to address the long-term challenges facing people in Belfast such as health and educational inequalities, the need for Good Relations, ensuring people feel safe and have good living conditions, the City needs to focus on improving our economy and ensuring the benefits are felt by everyone. By addressing the issues of poverty, economic inactivity, unemployment and underemployment we can help improve the wider outcomes for people in Belfast – **inclusive growth**.

Belfast will be a city...



Belfast City Outcomes

The Belfast Agenda has five outcomes detailed in Figure 2 which this Good Relations Strategy must help achieve. It has been shaped by a set of values which have also been incorporated into the vision for Good Relations.

Belfast Local Development Plan - Draft Plan Strategy

While the Belfast Agenda sets out the framework to support inclusive growth and improve services for residents and businesses, Belfast City Council’s Local Development Plan (LDP) provides the planning framework for the City up to 2035. It will guide investment in Belfast, setting out how the City should develop in the future. The Local Development Plan will be delivered alongside the Belfast Agenda and will shape the physical future of the City. It will help deliver the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda providing a 15-year planning framework to support economic and social outcomes in the City, while providing the delivery of sustainable development.

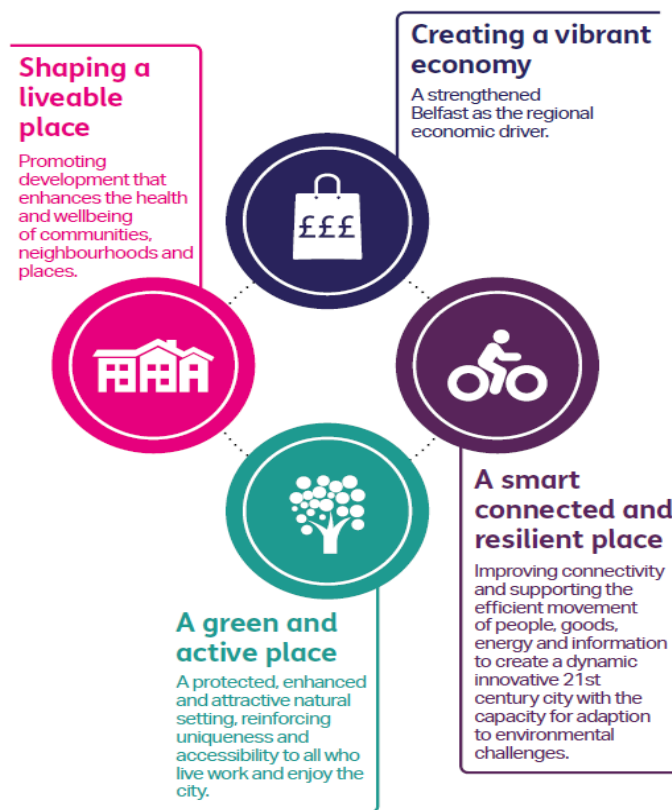
The LDP Vision is that “In 2035, Belfast will be a globally successful, smart regional City that is environmentally resilient with a vibrant economic and social heart. As a centre of learning and business, the knowledge economy flourishes where collaboration and innovation attract investment, talent and jobs. We will value and conserve our unique natural and built heritage to enhance and develop tourism. Thriving socially inclusive, well-connected neighbourhoods that encourage a healthy active lifestyle with well-designed homes where people love to live. A strong, inclusive local economy will support progressive, safe and vibrant communities. The City will provide a gateway to opportunities locally, nationally and worldwide”.

Its aims and objectives are outlined in Figure 3 and complement the Belfast Agenda. It is committed to the concept of community cohesion and Good Relations. The LDP’s Policy SP4 – Community cohesion and Good Relations states that “The council will support development that maximises opportunities to build strong, cohesive communities and that makes a positive contribution to Good Relations”. This provides a strong policy context to drive the development of cohesive communities. The strategic policy adopts a core planning principle to create and enhance Shared space and to promote social cohesion and Good Relations in the plan area. Belfast has high levels of neighbourhood segregation, which has constrained development and connectivity to all parts of the City. The Belfast Agenda is promoting inclusive growth to address social and economic inequalities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Increasing diverse neighbourhoods and access to opportunities through the spatial planning process is therefore an integral part of the LDP.

This means considering how all communities may be affected by development and ensuring that proposals help to improve community cohesion, foster social integration and inclusion, reduce isolation and improve access to opportunities in the City. Provision of good quality shared social and community infrastructure is critical for social cohesion and contributes to the creation of lifetime neighbourhoods. Lifetime neighbourhoods are places where diverse groups of people can live and work in a safe, healthy and inclusive environment, with good connectivity to the City centre, which is the economic and social hub for shared community activity¹.

Figure 3: Belfast Draft Local Development Plan Aims and Objectives 2018

Our aims



¹ Audit of Good Relations needs within Belfast City Council - Final Report - SJC Consultancy, January 2017 & BCC PEACE IV Local Action Plan February 2017

Belfast - one of 100 worldwide cities of resilience

In 2016, Belfast became the first City in Ireland and one of five in the UK to join the 100 Resilient Cities Programme². City or urban resilience describes the capacity of cities to function, so that the people living and working in cities – particularly the poor and vulnerable – survive and thrive no matter what stresses or shocks they encounter. The framework for Belfast will provide practical ways of ensuring that the Belfast Agenda and the Local Development Plan can better withstand the unexpected.

These two-place shaping and making documents, allied to the City's future resilience plan, demonstrate the importance of Good Relations and cohesion as prerequisites to a successful and inclusive City that leaves no one behind and the City's strong commitment to it. It also points to the importance of leadership, integrated development and new ways of thinking, planning and collaborating across sectors.

² <http://www.100resilientcities.org/>

Embedding Good Relations at the core of the City's new Strategies

In the development of this draft Strategy, a range of stakeholders shared their views on how they believed it could help achieve these stretching City ambitions. The following is a summary of the core messages.

Key outcomes that good community and race relations can bring to Belfast

- Improved economic vitality
- Improved health and well-being
- A shared future for all
- More investment
- Better educated population
- Equality, integration and diversity
- More/greater social and labour mobility
- More inclusive spaces
- A sense of belonging to the City
- More intercultural City
- Cost savings - joined up services
- Confident and outward looking
- Entrepreneurial City population
- Improved image
- More visitors & spend
- Reduced fear of crime
- Less civic disturbance

Biggest issues/barriers that hold us back from building good community & race relations in Belfast

- Lack of integrated education & shared housing
- Poverty and deprivation
- Lack of hope and aspiration
- Spatial segregation
- Legacy of the troubles
- Sectarianism, racism and prejudice
- Worklessness & intergenerational lack of ambition for some
- Physical barriers
- Political leadership
- Ongoing hard Good Relations issues
- Duplication of service provision - costs
- Legacy issues - multi-dimensional & deep-rooted issues
- Cultural differences, myths & intolerance
- Lack of understanding of what is culturally acceptable
- Connect area-based planning to City wide planning policy
- Negative media coverage
- Political partisanship
- Legal limitations of S75
- Perceived injustices

Important actions that BCC could undertake to build good community and race relations in Belfast

- Demonstrate strong political leadership
- Planning policy for shared communities
- Identify & work with agents of reform
- Take a systems-based approach
- Build strong, outward looking, hopeful communities
- Services realigned to needs versus geography
- Evidence, area-based, integrated, preventative, collaborative & challenge focused approach
- Demonstrate the economic case for GR
- Develop shared spaces
- Drive forward inclusive growth
- Civic conversations
- Youth engagement
- Joined up working - long term funding
- Exploring the diversity of people & identities
- Positive media coverage
- Outcomes approach

How good community and race relations can contribute to the delivery of the Belfast Agenda

- Good Relations is everyone's business
- Promoting a "common good" approach
- A "positive peace & systems thinking" approach
- Work with and upskill communities
- Need critical, evidence focused thinking
- Disrupt old approaches
- Need cross departmental approach
- Collective oversight and a focus on the bigger picture
- Collaborate, collecting and sharing data
- Agree a set of guiding principles
- Embrace change
- Civic conversations & understand differences
- Help with the development of LDP local policies
- Support a shared housing or living agenda
- Define inclusive growth
- Help the social economy to grow & contribute to Good Relations and inclusive growth

Long term Vision, Values and Themes for Good Relations in Belfast City Council

Figure 4: Belfast City Good Relations Strategy Proposed Vision, Values and Themes



Our Vision - A Shared City - a City re-imagined, connected and resurgent delivering inclusive growth that leaves no-one behind

This Shared City vision is a long-term one which fully complements the Belfast Agenda. It requires Council, elected members, other government agencies, the private sector and residents to work together, collaborate and make it happen. It is in no one’s interest to leave people behind. Many communities in Belfast still experience poverty and deprivation and the effects of segregated living.

Some of these communities also fear a sense of cultural loss, where they feel that their identity is being left behind. In addition to this, many of the City's new communities are trying to carve out a sense of belonging and inclusion in the City. There is still much to do. By addressing the issues of poverty, economic inactivity, unemployment and underemployment we can help improve the wider outcomes for people in Belfast – inclusive growth. It is also about the creation of an integrated, shared, reconciled and intercultural Belfast and an interdependent, just, equitable, open and diverse society.

Values

The following core values drive the Belfast Good Relations Strategy. **Good Relations and Equality and promoting Equity, Diversity and Interdependence** are the planks of any Good Relations Strategy and reflect Government's agreed Together: Building and United Community Strategy and guidance. We must all address issues of Equality, sectarianism, racism and prejudice in all that we do. This includes addressing the physical and community division at interfaces, ensuring and promoting the safety and inclusion of vulnerable groups, tackling the visible manifestations of **intolerance, sectarianism and racism**, addressing hate crime, promoting Equality, integration, **cultural diversity** and an **intercultural City, tackling disadvantage** and creating and expanding shared spaces and services.

The Strategy should be focused on **outcomes for all within the City** in line with the Belfast Agenda. Planning to address those deep rooted and complex issues in Belfast should be built on evidence fed by **open data**, leading to **evidence-based decisions**. To support this, agencies need to review their current systems to ensure that they support the achievement of Good Relations outcomes.

This has the potential to **disrupt norms** and the traditional ways of doing things and start conversations about the economic logic and social segregation implications of parallel service planning. We need to consider how resources could be invested if parallel planning for the two main communities was not the norm. Understanding the diseconomies of division and in turn the economic benefits of sharing can assist local communities to really think differently about how resources should and could be spent in their local areas. We need to help communities prioritise what's important to their future prosperity and that of their children with a focus and **commitment to sharing**. We will continue to explore the use of **creative, innovative, people-centred design and delivery** approaches to shared service planning and the **transformation** that this can bring to the lives of local communities.

Alongside this, **collective and individual responsibilities** need to be nurtured to help people think differently about the effects of their behaviour on others, be that positive or negative. It also helps communities to think about how they can work more collaboratively and effectively with others in improving their communities.

This shift in thinking can also help to build **resilience** in local communities. To achieve this, however, investment is needed to build the skills of leaders at all levels - community, policy and political so that real progress can be made. Another important aspect of building shared communities and shared services is through the promotion and facilitation of meaningful **engagement and respectful dialogue and communicating well** with local communities. Promoting better understanding and giving local communities a stake in their future development can help break traditional thinking processes. Introducing collaborative approaches with others can foster high levels of participation

and active dialogue in the City's future planning conversation and can build greater **trust and respect**, among and between communities.

Partnerships for collaborative gain should be the driving force behind the Strategy aimed at maximising resources and building on the economies of scale that come from working together smartly with others within the Belfast Agenda. **Good Relations is everyone's business**. Good Relations work should be developmental, preventative and co-designed within a long-term approach in partnership with local communities.

A great City needs to be accessible for all. To achieve this and given the number of physical and psychological barriers that exist, **collaboration and connecting people and places** is a primary focus of the Strategy. Future investors and local entrepreneurs (private and social) in the City need to be assured that potential labour pools can access places of employment and can freely move in, out and across the City safely and free from fear. **Connecting people and places matters**. It also matters that people can access all areas for recreation and leisure. **Sustainable development and respect for our environment** are key components in creating a liveable City where people can access services and activities safely.

There are many Good Relations challenges that hold the City back to achieving its potential. To prepare for other difficulties and unknowns, the City needs to become more resilient. **Building urban resilience** requires looking at a City holistically: understanding the systems that make up the City and the interdependencies and risks it may face. Some of the stresses which Belfast currently faces are an ageing infrastructure, poverty, on-going community tensions in parts of the City, parallel service delivery, a transport system that needs investment, segregated education and housing, physical structures that segment and divide the City and an over-reliance on the public sector. Much of these stresses stem from the conflict which resulted in disinvestment from these essential projects and initiatives and a diversion of resources to security costs to keep people safe. The cost of division has been high and continues to make building resilience difficult. To rebalance the City, Council, other decision makers and fund holders need to be decisive about what they can and cannot fund if their vision is to create a Shared City which promotes inclusive growth - and leaves no one behind. This will be achieved through collaborative and sustained intervention programmes.

To move forward with confidence, Belfast needs to have **an outward looking focus**. Its young people are its future and they should be supported to see themselves as citizens of the world and not just of their local neighbourhood or Belfast. We need to invest in our young people to help them to be **creative and innovative**, so they can drive our economic prosperity.

At its core, it should be about people and building relationships between everyone in our society. **Putting the citizen at the centre** of the Strategy will be paramount, as will ensuring that Good Relations is at the core of the Belfast Agenda. The Strategy should build on the current PEACE IV opportunities which are funding significant activity until December 2021. The learning from this work and other regeneration and resilience building work should be considered through a process of **reflective learning and engagement**.

The Themes

Theme 1: Strong, Positive and Transformative Civic Leadership - Inclusive Governance with community change makers

The challenge

The need for strong and positive leadership extends well beyond politics and into the civic sphere. All those in positions of leadership in politics, education, media, faith, sport, cultural, voluntary and community, private business, and others, have a role to play in transforming our society into a rich diverse community, in which cultural expression can be celebrated and where communities can start to make informed choices of how they live harmoniously alongside their neighbours, with greater empathy for each other's perspectives.

This transformation will be enhanced by the existence of consensus on the importance of leaving no-one behind as articulated in the Belfast Agenda. As a starting point, the Good Relations Strategy will promote cultural diversity and respect for everyone's cultural identity as well as the concept of a City for everyone. This type of **collegiate and transformative leadership** will add to the Council's ambition of promoting active and engaged communities. These are communities where people feel they can contribute, they have skills and confidence to work positively with a range of stakeholders, and they are skilled and capable of meeting their own needs.

As referred to previously, the Shared City Partnership facilitates an integrated approach to the promotion of Good Relations in the City and will continue to support strong and positive leadership within the structures delivering the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda resulting in effective urban development and management and more inclusive communities.

Strong positive leadership will enable a challenge to the behaviour and beliefs that create divisions and the ways we currently do business which create barriers to Good Relations. These practices often hold people back, perpetuate segregation, limit life opportunities and have the potential to limit the implementation of the Belfast Agenda. Strong positive and transformative civic leadership can support the diversity and inclusion of all people and communities living in the City.

Strong, Positive and Transformative Civic Leadership - Inclusive Governance with local community change makers

What we will do...we will

- Build strong transformative leadership skills among civic leaders, local community change agents and statutory/ policy makers/ service providers
- Encourage social innovation in the development of new and evidence-based solutions to problems & contribute collectively to the City, Area and Neighbourhood Regeneration Framework
- Promote greater opportunities for open dialogue and conflict resolution within a resilience framework
- Challenge the processes and change the structures, formal and informal, which create barriers to Good Relations
 - Build intercommunity trust by providing more networking opportunities that increase our level of cohesion – bridging, bonding and linking social capital within and between communities across the city and building empathy
- Build the capacity of disengaged and marginalised citizens and communities

Theme 2: Shared & Connected Spaces - a smart, connected City driven by inclusive & transformative place making

The Challenge

Segregation remains high in Belfast resulting in significant costs to those who live in the vicinity of these areas such as the 85+ physical barriers that still exist across the City. The impact on relationships, labour markets, the inefficient use of services and facilities, significant urban blight, poverty and educational disadvantage are all characteristics of divided areas. Physical and psychological barriers between communities make travel around parts of the City difficult and has resulted in people avoiding certain areas perceived to be unsafe. The sense of belonging to Belfast City would be enhanced if areas were more permeable, if movement across the City was easier and safer for people and if people perceived public spaces across the City as shared spaces and were confident in their use. We need to reconnect our City to ensure it continues to be recognised as a globally competitive, cohesive, welcoming, outward looking and forward-looking City with opportunities for all.

The persistence of segregation and separation in Belfast has left significant challenges for policy makers. The majority of children are still educated in religiously separated schools and the majority of people in social housing still live in divided communities. Sections of the City are physically divided by high walls, metal barriers and concrete blocks while communities are also kept apart in less obvious ways, where motorways, shopping centres, and/or vacant and derelict landscapes have been used to define the perimeters of particular communities, often marked by flags, murals and other sectional symbols. This 'conflict-related architecture' serves as a physical reminder that the problems of hostility and fear in our society have not yet disappeared.³

This separation and segregation has an impact on new communities as they try to carve out a life in Belfast and navigate the visible and invisible barriers in the City.

Shared & Connected Spaces - a smart, connected city driven by inclusive & transformative place making

What we will do...we will

Promote sharing over separation and the economic, social and environmental benefits of such

Strive to create opportunities for greater connectivity across the city

Help develop more shared spaces across the city in strategic locations with a focus on their ability to regenerate communities

Help address the issues of division and segregation including demarcation of areas by flags, murals and other symbols

Continue to build relationships across communities to increase confidence using and developing shared spaces and shared services.

Support the development of a sustainable, transferable and scalable approach to the management and promotion of shared spaces

Support and incentivise communities working in a shared manner through funding, programming and investment with a presumption in favour of sharing

Use arts, heritage, sports and technologies to animate shared spaces

Support the creation of more virtual shared spaces

Help transform contested spaces in our city

³ Attitudes to peace walls Survey 2015 - Ulster University

This Strategy aims to **promote sharing over separation** and the economic, social and environmental benefits of such. We need to continue to create spaces for communities to interact and make connections with each other, moving from parallel living to meaningful relationships and casual interactions.

What are shared spaces?

The term Shared Space means different things to different people. The Council has agreed a set of principles around Shared space (see box), recognising the importance of this to how public spaces and services are used. We hope that these will help to inform policy and service delivery throughout the City, and the delivery of the Belfast Agenda. We recognise the challenging issues in developing shared spaces. These include those associated with vacant and derelict sites in local areas, underdeveloped sites, congestion, images that make some areas feel less welcome or safe, fractured communities and physical infrastructure constraints. Many physical barriers across the City impact on the connectivity of the City's neighbourhoods, undermine the quality of the local environment and create disjointedness and isolation for many communities. This contributes to a "City centre and its outlying neighbourhoods" rather than a City of connected neighbourhoods where "the City as a whole is every resident's neighbourhood"⁴. The Strategy aims to create opportunities for greater connectivity and sharing.

One of the key ambitions of the Belfast Agenda is to address the issues of division and segregation that directly impact on individual life opportunities and the ability of organisations to deliver effective public services in the City. We need to continue to build relationships within and between communities to increase the confidence of people in using and developing shared spaces and services. This Strategy aims to support the development of a sustainable, transferable and scalable approach to the management and promotion of shared spaces - spaces that provide safe access for everyone within the community and have potential to foster greater levels of social integration and inclusion across religious, political and ethnic lines.

Benefits of shared spaces

Shared space principles

The following principles are suggested as underpinning the continued development of Shared Space in Belfast. When we use the term Shared Space we are describing space that is **welcoming, accessible, good quality and safe.**

Welcoming

- Shared Space should be welcoming, where people feel safe to visit and to take part in activity within that space, increasing an overall sense of shared experience and community
- Activities within the public spaces will respect diversity and promote inclusion

Accessible

- There will be equality of opportunity afforded to all those using public spaces and accessing goods, facilities and services
- In a Shared City, public expressions of identity will be respected and respectful
- Shared Spaces should reflect the values of diversity and inclusion

Good Quality

- Shared Space should be good quality, with attractive, high quality services and well-designed buildings and spaces

Safe

- Shared Space should be safe for all

⁴ Planning for Spatial Reconciliation - Civic Place-Making in a Divided Society - Sterrett, K., Morrissey, M., Gaffikin, F., Karelse, C., Mulholland, C. Queen's University, Belfast. Sept 2015

The promotion and development of shared spaces can bring many benefits. Belfast will be a diverse City that celebrates and respects diversity. It will be a place where everyone can enjoy all public spaces and access high quality goods, facilities and services. Public spaces will enable positive interactions between people and will be inclusive and accessible to all, which will be conducted with respect and will be safe and welcoming. It will also be challenging work and needs to recognise the different communities that exist within the City and the barriers that many of these communities face in the creation of shared spaces. We will encourage conversations between elected members and local communities with a focus on what can be achieved together, leaving no one behind.

The Strategy will prioritise the promotion of shared spaces and services and will support and incentivise communities working in a shared manner through funding, programming and investment with a presumption in favour of sharing. This will require courageous leadership and decision making by all agencies. It will require community engagement and buy in where communities are supported to see the value and benefit of sharing to their individual and community well-being. We will recognise the many communities of the City and work with them to build empathy for one another. We will aim to transform vacant and derelict sites and revitalize existing ones and build the capacity of our communities to develop and engage in these spaces.

Technology has a significant role to play, creating opportunities for the creation of greater virtual shared spaces and connectivity between communities. Continuing to use arts, heritage, sports and technologies to animate shared spaces will be a focus of the Strategy. We will encourage virtual shared spaces for innovative learning, networking and relationship building between communities, education providers, trainers and employers. We need to create a 21st Century learning City that is driven by our young people, encouraging them to be innovative and break down the current physical and psychological barriers that hamper their engagement with one another. We must also help to transform contested spaces in our City. There is still extensive residential segregation with accompanying security concerns, crime and visible manifestations of sectarianism, racism, intolerance and other forms of prejudice. Planning has a key role to play in this regard. Promoting Good Relations is particularly acute within this context. The LDP recognises that the early involvement of affected communities can play a significant role in building support for new development schemes and that embedding Good Relations into the planning process is essential.

Over the last few years Belfast has driven forward new capital projects that promote sharing over separation. Examples include Girdwood community hub, the Innovation Factory and new Council leisure centre portfolio where each centre aims to attract users from across the City by their unique offering. These key flagship projects demonstrate how shared provision can work and how they can facilitate interaction between communities and support Good Relations outcomes.

Good Relations outcomes should be fully included in the design and delivery of all future capital projects, planning decisions, environmental improvement schemes, public realm schemes, housing projects etc. being delivered and developed by council and others across the City.

Theme 3: Shared Services - focusing on inclusion & social innovation

The Challenge

Contested space has led to a duplication of services for communities that live side by side but do not integrate or share easily. Transforming contested space requires communities to create new lines of contact, empathize with one another and develop meaningful engagement and interaction with one another, moving from conflict management to City transformation and fostering and creating the conditions for change. The Peace IV programme is driving programmes forward across many contested areas, with a view to a mainstream approach being bedded down for long-term work on this transformation agenda.

In the same way as people don't live in silos, place making policy and investment needs to break silos and use social innovation to disrupt the "business as usual" approach to doing what we do. We will aim to unlock the parts of the system that do not work and contribute to the intransigent issues that we face which create division and a lack of cohesion within our City, particularly those communities in interface areas. We need to build on what connects people and use our assets - human, social and physical capital that make areas tick, with a focus on the positive rather than the deficits of a community.

With ongoing austerity there are growing challenges to the continued duplication of service delivery. The Belfast Agenda recognises the importance of integrated planning and that when it comes to service delivery, one size does not fit all. It also acknowledges the interdependence between Good Relations and cohesion, land use planning and service delivery. Good Relations is everyone's business and the Belfast Agenda and LDP offer the opportunity to join the dots more creatively than before, to break the status quo and start to work with local communities alongside infrastructure planners and providers and other public service delivery agents to co-design and co-create new solutions to hard issues.

We will encourage the use and development of shared services through different mechanisms and will be cognisant of the need for accompanying programming support. We will support projects that build the capacity of organisations and individuals to be able to confidently access services across the City. Through our programmes, we will promote new learning, stimulate debate and challenge thinking, with Shared space outcomes as a key driver.

One of the primary tools to assist in the delivery of shared services is good data about public services and their customers and the growing use and importance of evidence-based planning. It is also about communicating this learning to the residents of the City so that they are informed about key

Shared Services - focusing on co-design & social innovation

What we will do...we will

Improve our use of data and evidence-based planning

Evidence and articulate where division exacerbates social and economic issues

Co-design and co-create new solutions to challenging issues

Promote integrated planning

Encourage projects that build the capacity of organisations and communities to be confident to access services throughout the city

Encourage attitudinal and behavioural change

decisions that the council and others need to take in the transformation of the City and the lives of its people. It is about attitudinal and behavioural change and how best this is achieved in a City that is still divided.

Theme 4: Structured Collaboration & Partnerships

The Challenge

Recognising that Good Relations is everyone's business and that Good Relations is cross cutting is an important corner stone of the Strategy. It is not only about improving people's awareness of what it is, but rather it is about enabling service providers, communities, politicians and others to see the importance of Good Relations as a core part of what they do and how by working with others, they can embed it into the core of their service and infrastructure planning and delivery.

The Belfast Agenda and community planning generally aim to improve the connection between all the tiers of Government and wider society, through partnership working, to jointly deliver better outcomes for everyone. The Belfast Agenda identifies long-term priorities for improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the City and the people who live there. Our Shared City Partnership is one of the mechanisms through which we will deliver our plan ensuring that Good Relations is at the heart of what we do.

This Strategy also recognises that many of the City's services and infrastructure have been shaped by the conflict, from education and housing to public safety and community development. These are often our least shared public services and will only be addressed through structured collaboration.

Likewise, legacy issues and will only be resolved through partnership approaches. Physical barriers; segregation in schools and housing; flags, emblems, murals; parades; language; victims/survivors and other legacy issues are still challenges that continue to create issues of mistrust, prejudice, intolerance and a lack of respect and understanding of differences. More work needs to be done to acknowledge and deal with the hurt, losses, trauma and suffering caused by the conflict and to increase social and economic investment in areas worst affected. There is also recognition that the continued existence of proscribed groups blights, controls and destroys many communities, holding people in fear and delaying the transition to a reimagined City where no one is left behind. A range of Executive Initiatives are in place to address these types of tough issues which must be undertaken in partnership with Council and other partners of the Belfast Agenda.

However, Belfast is at a cross roads. We want Belfast to be recognised as an integrated, shared, reconciled and intercultural City. As such we need to move away from a binary view of our society. We need to shift the conversation from a binary political focus of division and segregation to a collegiate approach around the Belfast Agenda that focuses on the longer term, is pragmatic and creates opportunities for sharing. We need to facilitate opportunities for communities to take part in exercises that bring their voices to the fore. We need to examine our decision-making processes

Structured collaboration & partnerships

What we will do...we will

Our Shared City Partnership will oversee the delivery of our strategy ensuring that Good Relations is at the heart of what we do.

Shift the conversation from a binary political focus of division and segregation to a collegiate approach around the Belfast Agenda that focuses on the longer term, is pragmatic and creates opportunities for sharing

Explore how to better engage with civic society.

Consider Good Relations outcomes in all our policy, planning and financial decisions

to ensure our decisions don't create institutional division and perpetuate and compound segregation. We need to challenge and be challenged. We need to be able to test and trial new integrated and multi-agency approaches to service delivery challenges based on solid evidence, but done in partnership with our City communities, our statutory partners and the private sector using these types of projects as pathways to mainstreaming. We need to examine new ways of funding these projects to enable us to be able to take calculated risks. We need regeneration powers to enable us to drive forward the changes required to make our City great again. We need to use our area-based planning approaches as vehicles for the delivery of our Shared City goals - enabling our City neighbourhoods to think strategically about how they benefit from area and City-wide basis ambitions. We will prioritise sharing over separation in all our policy, planning and financial decisions.

We will continue to develop trust and confidence in Council to lead on partnership projects with other statutory, private, community and voluntary organisations with a focus on more coordination of policies, programmes and interventions, building on our powers and responsibilities.

Theme 5: An Intercultural City and Respectful cultural expression within the rule of law

The Challenge

Cultural division is still a blight on the City – manifested in physical barriers, flags, emblems, murals, parades & protests and territoriality. Developing an environment of peaceful interaction and social stability is crucial to transforming Belfast and sustaining peace and prosperity in the City for our residents. It is essential to attracting new residents, students and investment that will help us prosper and grow and be creative and innovative. As we grow the City and as its population becomes more diverse, the place and value of all cultures and faiths must be affirmed. We recognise that the people of Belfast live out their identity through differing cultural expressions. However, many who live in the City have a shared identity as residents of Belfast and we will seek to support activity which promotes this. Diversity is an important aspect of our City's future success and international experience demonstrates that the cities that are most successful are those that have embraced diversity. We will foster strong and positive relations between people from different cultures, religious belief, political opinions and identities where no one is left behind.

It is important to note that citizens have various rights to engage in cultural activity. Such culturally related rights include the right to a private life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, the right to lead one's life in accordance with a cultural identity, the right to choose freely a cultural identity, the right to a religious identity and the freedom of association with a cultural purpose.

Within our society, opposing political identities are expressed and manifest through cultural practices. Public expressions of culture are perceived as reflecting those identities and as such they are often contentious, serving to reinforce division in a particularly emotive way. Addressing the

Respectful cultural expression within the rule of law

What we will do...we will

Foster strong and positive relations between people from different cultures, religious belief, political opinions and identities

Demonstrate leadership in addressing the negative impact of the relationship between political identities and public expressions of culture

Encourage cultural expression to be celebrated and undertaken within a culture of lawfulness

Encourage a re-imagining of the significance of upcoming commemorations

negative impact of the relationship between political identities and public expressions of culture requires positive and strong leadership.

This Strategy seeks to lead the task of transforming Belfast into a successful, shared society, in which Good Relations and inclusion can flourish and one where cultural expression can be celebrated and undertaken within a culture of lawfulness. The role of all those in positions of leadership is vital in this task.

We must also recognise that the forthcoming commemorations, unless planned and managed well, could create challenges. We will encourage a re-imagining of their significance and from this could come a sense of optimism associated with the positive potential of public and ethical remembering.

In regard of respectful cultural expression, the Strategy therefore seeks to promote the following:

- The creation of an open, inclusive and mutually respectful society, which seeks to increase and deepen understanding of different and shared cultural identities
- A community in which everyone's public expressions of their cultural identity are both respected and respectful
- A Shared City where everyone should feel welcome and entitled to express their cultural identity, in a way that respects others and within the rule of law
- A City where the development of each person's cultural identity is seen as contributing to our collective cultural wealth
- The development of a culture of lawfulness, in which everyone sees the mutual benefits of using public spaces for cultural activity

Respectful cultural expression within the rule of law

Underpinning respectful cultural expression within the rule of law is a series of **values** which we will uphold:

- Everyone should be entitled to express their cultural identity in public, and within the rule of law;
- We recognise the importance of good relationships in our communities and institutions, and that our words and actions should impact positively on developing and maintaining those relationships;
- We appreciate the cultural, political and religious diversity that exists within our society;
- We will think and act generously and respectfully when organising and taking part in cultural activity, mindful of the impact that our actions may have on individuals and the community.

Conclusion: The Common Good

This new Good Relations Strategy seeks to create a vision for the City in which everyone can benefit from Good Relations. The Strategy believes that making progress on improving Good Relations will be for the common good of all within society, creating the conditions for increased cooperation between and within communities across the City.

In a City seeking to improve Good Relations, the concept of the common good challenges us all to view ourselves as members of one community, respecting and valuing the identity, culture and traditions of others within the community, for the common good of everyone. Citizenship, collective action, and active participation in the planning of our City and the development of public services can achieve a more inclusive society with a focus on the common good for all. We will prioritise building the capacity of individuals and communities to engage in the creation of a more inclusive society as well as helping people to think about their own roles and responsibilities in this task.

Within this Strategy, we seek to set the standard for the emergence of a better future for communities across the City and develop a new enabling environment which supports empathy and respect. This will be for the common good of everyone within our society demonstrating that **Good Relations is everyone's business.**

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