

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY 9th SEPTEMBER, 2019

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson)
and Councillors M. Kelly,
Magennis and Verner.

External Members: Mrs. O. Barron, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mr. A. Cole, Good Relations, TEO;
Mr. J. Currie, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. S. Dallas, Education Authority;
Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mrs. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Mr. I. McLaughlin, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Superintendent K. McMillan, PSNI; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Miss. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;
Mrs. D. McKinney, Programme Manager;
Mrs. M. Higgins, Senior Good Relations Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Rodgers, Councillors Lyons and Smyth, Ms. B. Arthurs, Ms. G. Duggan, M. Y. Hannore, Ms. H. McClay and Mr. M. O'Donnell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5th August, 2019 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

Mr. J. Currie and Mr. J. Donnelly declared an interest in item 3, Peace IV Update, in that they were associated with bids in respect of projects and took no part in the discussion.

Mr. I. McLaughlin declared an interest in item 6, Update on Interface Working, in that he was a Member of the TASCIT Working Group and he did not participate in the discussion.

Update on the Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme

The Chairperson advised the Partnership that Dr. J. Byrne, external consultant, was in attendance to present his findings on the delivery of the Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme 2019 and he was welcomed to the meeting.

He provided the Partnership with an overview of the findings of the report. He highlighted to the Members that 35 different events were held as part of the Bonfire and Cultural Expression programme 2019, with 10 new sites having participated. The Partnership was advised that bonfires appeared to be decreasing in size and number and that the number of beacons provided through the programme and used on 11th July had increased significantly.

Dr. Byrne advised the Partnership that, despite the media having focussed on bonfire sites which were not participating in the Council's Programme, 2019 had, in fact, been a very successful year for the Programme. He advised the Members that, prior to 8.30pm on 11th July, no sites participating in the Council's programme had any paramilitary displays or tyres on bonfires and that this progress was to be welcomed.

He also confirmed that there had been a 40% decrease in call-outs to the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service on 11th July 2019, in comparison to the previous year.

A number of Members stated that a huge amount of the progress which had been made in relation to bonfires had been community-driven and that it was to be welcomed. The Partnership suggested that officers should consider ways to promote the successes of the 2019 Programme.

The Partnership thanked Dr. Byrne for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report, and include the findings and recommendations within the independent monitoring and evaluation report in any deliberations regarding a framework for an approach to bonfires.

Peace IV Update

PEACE IV Secretariat

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

"2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources committee that they note the contents of the report.

3.0 Key Issues

3.1 Implementation of the programme is continuing, with 12 out of 14 core projects now mobilised. An overview of the different aspects of programme implementation is outlined in the PEACE IV Programme Dashboard detailed in Appendix I.

3.2 Governance

3.3 Shared City Partnership (SCP)

Signing of Supplemental Agreement PEACE IV Partnership by new members is progressing.

3.4 Thematic Steering Groups (TSG)

New members are being identified for the Thematic Steering Groups for Building Positive Relations (BPR) and Children and Young People (CYP) as previously approved by SCP.

3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Advice on the revised monitoring and evaluation system has been provided by SEUPB and NISRA. Feedback from delivery agents on the revised process has been positive and it will be rolled out across all projects.

3.6 PEACE IV Work Programme – Culture Café

As part of the wider PEACE IV programme of events, a ‘Culture Café’ programme is currently being developed. The first events will be launched alongside the Good Relations Strategy on 20 September 2019 in Crumlin Road Gaol as part of Good Relations week.

3.7 The events will be delivered in local communities across the city in a café style session and are aimed at celebrating the many different cultures in Belfast. The format and structure of the culture café will challenge people’s views, tackle taboo subjects and engage with hard to reach citizens.

3.7 Secretariat Staffing

Following the resignation of the Project Development Officer in May 2019 and a recent recruitment exercise, Rachel Fulton has been appointed to this role. Rachel’s previous post as PEACE IV Programme Support is currently been advertised.

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

Claims for Period 19 (May-Jul 19) is progressed for submission to SEUPB by 28 August 2019, forecasted spend for each theme is as follows:

Children and Young People	£148,558.16
Building Positive Relations	£100,971.20
Shared Space and Services	£121,423.15

Expenditure is approximately £77,887 below the forecasted spend target. However this is attributable to invoices not be processed during the period. The spend has been incurred and will be processed in Period 20.

SEUPB has advised that revised Expenditure Targets are to be issued in due course.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015.”

The Partnership adopted the recommendations.

Children and Young People

The Programme Manager provided the Partnership with a progress report in respect of the Children and Young People's (CYP) theme of the Peace IV Local Action Plan.

She reminded the Members that all projects within the CYP theme had now been mobilised.

She advised the Members of a number of the challenges which had impacted upon project delivery, and which had resulted in a shortfall in outputs and participant targets. The Partnership was advised that the project delivery agent had implemented some remedial measures to address the issues.

Under CYP1 – Tech Connects, the Programme Manager explained that, over the summer, the project had delivered a programme for 20 young people, aged 11-16 from Clonard Youth Club and Ledley Hall, and included a cross border story telling session in Carlingford and an after school programme with 51 young people, aged 6-10, from Kinderkids and the Vine Centre.

She outlined that the project had also planned a further 2 groups from North and West of the City to commence Tech Camp programmes in September, and that engagement had begun with 4 groups in South and East Belfast for programmes to commence in February 2020.

The Partnership was advised that 6 Primary Schools had signed up for Afterschool Programmes commencing this month, with a further 4 programmes commencing in December 2019. She highlighted that, by December 2019, the project would have 7 new after school clubs established.

Under CYP5 – NIHE Local Area Networks project, she explained that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had provided additional in-kind resources to aid the delivery of the project to assist with accurate record keeping, monitoring and evaluation.

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that the previous CYP Thematic Project Manager had recently been appointed as the Safer City Co-Ordinator within the Council, and that the recruitment exercise for the post was currently being progressed by Human Resources.

The Partnership noted the update and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the progress as detailed in the report.

Shared Spaces and Services

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources committee that they note the contents of the report.

3.0 Key Issues

Implementation of both the Shared Space & Services (SSS) capital and programming element is continuing on a phased basis. The current focus is on Sections 2 and 3 located at Springfield Dam, Springfield Park, Paisley Park and INI sites. Then progression on to Section 4 at Bog Meadows.

3.2 Capital Works

The procurement process for the appointment of a contractor for Springfield Dam is being completed, tender assessment and moderation of the package of works has concluded, with the costs currently being validated.

However, Council cannot proceed to award a tender without planning permission being in place and to that end a validity period of 120 days has been included in the tender.

With regard to the overall Peace IV Scheme the PQQ process has recently completed with the Design Team working towards moderation of submissions to enable progression to ITT (Invitation to Tender) stage.

Two further major planning applications are to be submitted in December 2019 and January 2020 for Section 2 and Section 4 of the route. The PAD meeting in respect of Section 2 & Section 4 proved useful in terms of liaising with Statutory Representatives in attendance but it should be noted that not all statutory bodies were represented in order to facilitate timely conversation/meetings round and planning/environmental concerns.

Going forward the key priorities for the capital aspect of the project are:

- **Ongoing site surveys**
- **Assessment of Peace IV Contractor PQQ returns**
- **Liaison with Dfl to determine agreed programme of works**
- **Springfield Dam – tender award once planning permission has been achieved**
- **Concept Design report to be revised to reflect Cupar Way Section (CE02)**
- **Develop Detailed Design for Section 1**

- Develop Detailed Design for Section 2, landscaping plans
- Section 2 Pre Application Notice (PAN) submitted with Community Consultation events planned in support of a planning application
- Re-run Ground Investigation tender based on issues with estimated costs
- Revised Procurement of Section 3 & 4 topographical surveys

3.3 Engagement

Consultation/Publication Information Sessions

Following a PAD meeting with BCC Planners in relation to Planning Applications for Section 2 (Ballygomartin to Springfield Road (includes INI site) and Section 4 Bog Meadows dates for public consultation/drop in sessions have been confirmed as below. Also refer to Appendix I

The drop-in sessions are advertised in local press and social media and will enable statutory bodies, community groups/organisations and members of the public, to view and input into plans and also identify potential programming opportunities.

Section 2 – Ballygomartin Road to Springfield Road

Wednesday 4 September – Forthspring Centre - 373-375 Springfield Rd, Belfast BT12 7DG

- 10am to 2pm and 4pm to 8 pm

Thursday 5 September – Farset International - 466 Springfield Rd, Belfast BT12 7DW

- 10am to 2pm and 4pm to 8 pm

Section 4 – Bog Meadows

Wednesday 6 November – St John’s Parish Hall - 444 Falls Rd, Belfast BT12 6EN

- 10am to 2pm and 4pm to 8pm

Thursday 7 November – Park Centre - Donegall Rd, Belfast BT12 6HN

- 10am to 2pm and 4pm to 8pm

3.4 Official Launch

The date of Wednesday 27 November 2019, from 10 am to 12.30, is the provisional date for the official launch of the Peace IV

Reconnecting Open Spaces Project, although this is subject to securing planning approval.

Further details on the event will be confirmed following discussion with all stakeholders. It is likely to take the form of a sod cutting ceremony on site, followed by speeches either on site or in Farset International, which will, provide a backdrop to Springfield Dam for media/press.

It is suggested speakers include Lord Mayor, Chair of SP&R (Alderman Kingston), Chair of Shared City Partnership (Councillor Kyle), Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive of SEUPB.

Members should note the provisional date for the launch and hold in their diaries. Formal invitations will follow in due course.

3.5 Branding

As the project moves towards detailed design and to comply with the Letter of Offer conditions there is need to put in place a consistent approach to branding and supporting message throughout the scheme in line with the principles of shared space. This requires a name to be selected, information panels, light boxes and illumination panels, features signage panels, directional signage and way finders signage to be designed and commissioned.

Information for interpretative panels will be source through ongoing programming work and developed into a format which can be included on panels.

Assistant Project Manager and Project Sponsor are to work with the Corporate Communications Officer to pull together a tender for issue at the end of August/start of September with a view to having a confirmed name and brand identity for the project launch in November. Brand identity proposals are to be considered by the SCP in due course..

3.6 Gates at INI/Workman Avenue

Following a recent meeting between BCC and INI there is agreement that both works will be undertaken in tandem in the form of one works package, procured and managed by INI.

Works to the gate at Workman Avenue may require planning permission and Officers are clarifying the position regarding planning for the proposals to Workman Avenue gates. If planning is required, this will dictate the timeframe for completion of the works.

INI and BCC are working in partnership to ensure an acceptable solution for local communities around provision of an access control system. Once a suitable system has been identified and

planning requirements confirmed further consultation will be undertaken with local residents and key stakeholders.

3.7 Programming

An overview of project progress is outlined in Appendix II – SSS Project Progress.

Following a project initiation meeting, Clonard Monastery Youth Centre has accepted the contract for the Youth Civic Education pilot project targeting young people around the Springfield Dam, Innovation Factory and Invest NI site. Participants will be involved in cross community workshops addressing ASB, sectarianism, racism, mediation, etc. with recruitment of participants underway. The first project update meeting is scheduled for 10 September 19.

An intergenerational programme, targeted at the communities across the open space network is being developed and should be issued early October 2019. This project will focus on local history, identity, culture, etc. with facilitated cross community workshops. This will enable participants to contribute to the development of story-boards / interpretative panels as part of the branding exercise.

Engagement with the community on suitable programmes to animate and use the connected spaces is ongoing.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015.”

The Partnership was advised that Planning Permission remained a risk to the capital aspect. The Programme Manager explained that both SEUPB and CPD were represented on the Capital Project Board and were aware of the issue. She advised the Members that the Council was following up with necessary agencies and planning.

The Partnership adopted the recommendations.

Building Positive Relations

The Programme Manager provided the Partnership with an overview of the 5 projects within the Building Positive Relations theme. She advised the Members that the Peace IV team would continue to work closely with all delivery agents to monitor progress and address challenges as they arose.

In relation to BPR1, Cross Community Area Networks, she explained that a revised Partner Agreement and Project Partner Delivery Document had been issued to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and that NIHE was currently recruiting project staff.

With regards to BPR3, Transform for Change Project, the Programme Manager advised the Partnership that NICVA and consortium partners were beginning to mobilise the

project with a targeted engagement and recruitment plan underway. The Members were reminded of correspondence which had been issued asking for their involvement in the project

In relation to BPR5, Supporting Connected Communities, the Partnership was advised that a Cultural Festival would be taking place on 17th September in Girdwood, with invitations sent to Members in due course. The Programme Manager also outlined that, in relation to the Traveller and Roma elements of the project, discussions were ongoing to identify a suitable delivery mechanism and project content.

In terms of BPR4, Belfast and the World, she highlighted to the Members that a civic event on Playing together and Playing apart would take place on 17th September at the National Football Stadium, Windsor Park at 7p.m. and that all Members were welcome to attend. She also pointed out that, due to a delay in approvals, it was requested that the Partnership would agree to reschedule the first EU study visit under BPR4 to March 2020. She explained that this would allow two additional cohorts, of up to 80 participants, to have completed the programme which would increase the recruitment pool.

The Partnership noted the update which had been provided and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it would agree to the rescheduling of the Building Positive Relations 4 (BPR4) Belfast and the World study visit to March 2020.

Paper on Anti- Semitism Definition

The Partnership considered the undernoted report, in conjunction with the accompanying appendices:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on the advice received by the Equality Commission NI and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission as to whether it would be appropriate for the Council to specifically adopt a definition in respect of one particular group and not other minority groups living in Northern Ireland.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Partnership is asked to consider advice received from the Equality Commission NI and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission as to whether it would be appropriate for the Council to specifically adopt a definition in respect of one particular group and not other minority groups living in Northern Ireland.

2.2 Subsequently, members are asked to consider if the Council should adopt the definition of ant-Semitism as outlined in the motion to Council in January 2019.

2.3 In addition, the Partnership is asked to advise on the request from Mr S Jaffe from the Northern Ireland Friends of Israel to address the Partnership.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 At the last meeting of the Shared City Partnership in March 2019, members had agreed that consideration of the motion on the definition of anti-Semitism would be deferred to enable officers to obtain advice from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland as to whether it would be appropriate for the Council to specifically adopt a definition in respect of one particular group and not other minority groups living in Northern Ireland.
- 3.2 The motion, had been proposed at the Council meeting in January 2019 by Councillor Craig and seconded by Councillor Long under the heading 'Motion – Definition of Anti-Semitism insofar as it relates to the definition of anti-Semitism.
- 3.3 It was requested that the following definition of anti-Semitism be adopted:
- 'Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.'*
- 3.4 The motion had been subsequently forwarded to the Partnership by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.
- 3.5 A copy of the definition and the associated examples as published by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and referred to in the original notice of motion as requested are attached at Appendix 1 for members' information.
- 3.6 This is the definition used by the UK government, Scottish government and the Welsh Assembly. A number of other local councils use it, as do the police, CPS and judiciary. It is also the definition that the Belfast Jewish Community have asked the Council to consider.
- 3.7 Members had considered the proposed wording and the various points for consideration that had been highlighted in a previous report. During discussion, it became apparent that the members felt that this matter should not be considered in isolation and felt that it was important to take into account a range of views on the issue.
- 3.8 The Members had also referred to the request from Mr. S. Jaffe from the Northern Ireland Friends of Israel to address the Partnership.

- 3.9** The Partnership agreed that consideration of the matter would be deferred to enable officers to obtain advice from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland as to whether it would be appropriate for the Council to specifically adopt a definition in respect of one particular group and not other minority groups living in Northern Ireland.
- 3.10** Subsequently, a copy of the correspondence from both the Equality Commission of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is attached for members' attention.
- 3.11** The advice given by ECNI to employers and service providers is based on anti-discrimination laws. These laws do not use or define the term anti-Semitism, but does prohibit discrimination against Jewish people, amongst others, on the grounds of race, religious belief and political opinion in relation to the wide range of activities regulated by the laws including services provided by Councils. Belfast City Councils' equal opportunities policy opposes discrimination on the grounds of race, religious belief and political opinion, therefore it implicitly opposes discrimination against Jewish people, amongst others, on those grounds too.
- 3.12** In addition, the term good relations is not defined in the relevant sections of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 or in the Race Relations NI Order 1997. The Section 75 (2) duties would encompass Jewish people amongst the various religious and racial groups between who the Council is obliged to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations.
- 3.13** The correspondence from NIHRC reflects that the atrocities of the Holocaust led to the development of the modern human rights framework with the purpose of ensuring that such grave acts and omissions would never occur again. Therefore adopting a human rights based approach to laws, policies, guidance and practices at all levels offers a solid foundation for delivering on this promise.
- 3.14** Anti- Semitism is an issue that engages the right to freedom from racial discrimination and right to freedom of religion. The correspondence outlines the various human rights treaties, along with relevant sections and articles which the UK has ratified and is therefore, bound by the obligations therein.
- 3.15** These include the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- 3.16** The identified human rights standards are not prescriptive in terms of how these obligations are respected, protected and fulfilled, However, CERD, Article 2 (2) requires that:

'State Parties shall, when the circumstances so warrant, take, in the social, economic, cultural and other fields, special and concrete measures to ensure the adequate development and protection of certain racial groups or individuals belonging to them, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These measures shall in no case entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate rights for different racial groups after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved.'

- 3.17 The UN CERD has provided guidance on developing special measures for specific groups including non-citizens, indigenous peoples and persons of African descent. The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief is currently drafting a report specifically on anti-Semitism for the United Nations General Assembly which is due to be published in September 2019.
- 3.18 Both the ECNI & NIHRC advise that the adoption of a particular definition of anti- Semitism is ultimately a matter for the Council. From the ECNI perspective, However, Council would have to consider the implications of adopting a definition for one group in the context of other related Council policies and take into account equality scheme commitments in the relation to the development of any policies including the passing of resolutions that fall within the function of council.
- 3.19 From a human rights perspective, any definition of anti- Semitism should be in line with human rights standards, particularly CERD, Article 2 (2) quoted in 3. There is also nothing to preclude Belfast City Council from developing a similar approach to other forms of discrimination affecting specific groups.
- 3.20 To assist in reaching a decision, NIHRC outline the three key human rights considerations that should be taken in to account:
1. Do the circumstances warrant the creation of a definition?
 2. Is the definition's purpose to ensure the adequate development and protection of a certain racial group or individuals belonging to that group, and in order to guarantee that group the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms?
 3. Does the definition in any case, create, as a consequence, the maintenance of unequal or separate rights for different racial groups after the objectives for creating such a definition has been achieved?

The above considerations should be guided by the principles of proportionality and legitimate aim.

- 3.21 Therefore, based on the 2 sets of correspondence, there is nothing to preclude Council from adopting a definition of anti-Semitism but any definition should be in line with Human Rights standards.

Council could also develop a similar approach to other forms of discrimination affecting specific groups.

3.22 ECNI has advised that from their point of view, current anti-discrimination laws, which Council adheres to, and the Council's Equal Opportunities policy both implicitly prohibit and oppose discrimination against Jewish people, amongst others, on the grounds of race, religious belief or political opinion.

3.23 Taking into account the 3 key considerations prior to reaching a decision as outlined in the NIHRC response in 3.20, Members are asked to consider the following issues:

- Are the current anti-discrimination laws and policies, as outlined in both sets of correspondence, which the Council are bound by adequate to protect Jewish people or individuals belonging to that group and sufficient in ensuring that Jewish people are not discriminated against on the grounds of race, religious belief or political opinion?
- Do members think that adopting a separate definition for anti-Semitism is required in order to guarantee that Jewish people have the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms? On the other hand, does existing law and policy ensure this enjoyment is already in place?
- If the answer is yes to the above two questions, members are asked to consider what would be the purpose of adopting a separate definition.
- If the answer is no, members are asked to consider would there be a consequence to adopting the definition in terms of unequal or separate rights for different racial groups.
- How would the adoption of such a definition impact positively on equality and good relations within the City?

Lastly, is the adoption of such a definition been guided by the principles of proportionality and legitimate aim?

3.24 In relation to some of the examples given as part of the wider definition of anti-Semitism, Members should note there is a distinction between free political speech and that which may be viewed as discriminatory. The right of freedom of expression is considered to have an elevated status in the context of political debate.

3.25 Members consideration of the advice from the received from the Equality Commission NI and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission as to whether it would be appropriate for the Council to specifically adopt a definition in respect of one particular group and not other minority groups living in Northern Ireland.

- 3.26 In addition, the Partnership is asked to advise on the request from Mr S Jaffe from the Northern Ireland Friends of Israel to address the Partnership.

Financial & Resource Implications

There are no direct resource implications in terms of staff time or additional costs associated with this request

Equality or Good Relations Implications

All Council Strategies and policies are screened to look at the impact of such a policy or Strategy on groups listed under Section 75 which includes different religious, political or racial backgrounds. If a policy is deemed to have a potentially negative impact, then the Council must explore mitigating actions to alleviate the negative impact.”

During discussion, Members felt that the current policies and legislation outlined in the report provided sufficient protection for all citizens, including the Jewish community.

Accordingly, the Partnership agreed, subject to the Legal Services Section confirming that the Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy, in conjunction with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and other relevant legislation and policies, was fit for purpose, to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that there was no requirement to adopt a separate definition in this instance, as sufficient protection was afforded to all citizens including citizens who were Jewish. The Partnership agreed also that the Chairperson of the Shared City Partnership would meet with Mr. S Jaffe, in response to his request.

Request for Support Costs for the Storing of Donations for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To advise members of a request from the Department for Communities, who have written to each of the 11 Councils seeking support costs for the storing of donations in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to allocate support costs to assist with storage for donations relating to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme, including £300 for this financial year and £300 for the following financial year.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that since December 2015 over 1500 individuals have been resettled across Northern Ireland as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Person's relocations scheme (SVPRS).**
- 3.2 The SVPR Scheme resettles displaced refugees who are currently living in camps in countries neighbouring Syria, including Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. The Scheme is based on need. It prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence.**
- 3.3 The Department for Communities, who are the lead department overseeing the operation of the scheme in Northern Ireland, has written to each of the 11 Councils seeking support costs for the storing of donations in relation to the scheme.**
- 3.4 The regular arrival of the Syrian refugees is still generating expressions of good will from the public. The many donations of food and essential household items are kept at the Storehouse North Down. The Storehouse is an ideal space to collect, hold, sort and distribute the items received, with volunteers from the Kiltonga Christian Centre helping with the sorting and distribution.**
- 3.5 To maintain the space required, Storehouse require financial assistance and as such they are requesting £300 for this financial year and for the following financial year from each of the 11 Councils to meet the storage costs.**

Financial & Resource Implications

The £600 costs associated with this could be covered within the annual Good Relations Action Plan, 75% of which is recouped by the Executive Office under the District Council's Good Relations Programme.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no anticipated negative equality and good relations implications."

During discussion, a number of Members queried why the Department for Communities (DfC) was not able to cover the cost for the storage from within their own funds.

After further discussion, the Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, in principle, to allocate support costs to assist with storage for donations relating to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme, including £300 this financial year and £300 the following financial year, subject to the DfC advising why it was unable to cover the costs.

Update on Interface Working

(Mr. I. McLaughlin declared an interest in this item as he was a Member of the TASCIT Working Group, and he did not participate in the discussion).

The Senior Good Relations Officer provided the Partnership with an update on the current and potential interface projects which were being delivered through the District Council Good Relations Programme.

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that, each year, the Good Relations Unit provided financial support for communities to come together to celebrate at small-scale “Christmas Goodwill” events across the interface. She outlined that provision had been agreed within the current Good Relations Plan for a maximum of 10 events to take place, costing no more than £500 each. She explained that a call for applications would be issued in early October, and, in order to ensure that the successful groups would be advised of a decision in a timely manner, it was requested that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services be given delegated authority to award the funding. The Members were advised that a report on the funding awards would be brought to the Partnership in due course.

She also outlined that a request for funding had been received from the Twaddell, Ardoyne and Shankill Communities in Transition (TASCIT) for £2,000, to cover meetings, venue hire and hospitality, for the development of a programme of Good Relations activity through the formation of an Upper North Belfast Confidence Building Forum.

The Partnership was also advised that TASCIT had requested Good Relations support in facilitating a number of visits to the Council as part of its “Challenging Conversations” course. The Members were advised that the course would involve dialogue and training sessions across Ardoyne, Woodvale and Glenbryn to explore issues of culture and identity. The Good Relations Manager explained that the only financial costs associated with the request were the provision of a room and small-scale hospitality in the City Hall.

The Partnership noted the update and agreed:

1. that funding of up to £5,000 be made available for contributions of up to £500 for a maximum of ten groups to deliver the Goodwill Christmas events at interfaces across the City, with authority given to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to allocate funding awards;
2. that a contribution of up to £2,000 from the Good Relations budget be made available to the TASCIT group to develop a programme of Good Relations activity for the proposed Upper North Belfast Confidence Building Forum; and
3. that the Shared City Partnership would support the ongoing work of TASCIT, through providing facilitated conversations with members and Council staff, and the provision of a room and small scale hospitality as outlined.

Events Update

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that the Launch of the new Good Relations Strategy would take place at 1.30pm, on 20th September, in the Crumlin Road Gaol. She also pointed out that an event was taking place as part of the Decade of Centenaries,

entitled The Spanish Flu Pandemic and its Impact on Belfast, at 6.30pm, on 3rd October at the City Hall. All Members of the Partnership were invited to attend both events.

Update on Provision of English Classes

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that it had previously received a presentation on the Council's Language Strategy and that Members had raised questions in relation to the provision of English Language classes for new residents to the City, whose first language was not English.

The Partnership had previously requested that officers would liaise with The Executive Office (TEO) and the relevant Department to ascertain their findings in relation to the current provision of English language classes and, if gaps were identified, what options were available to improve the provision.

The Manager explained that the Department for the Economy (DfE) was the policy lead on the delivery of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

She explained that ESOL was delivered through DfE's network of 6 regional FE colleges, which had worked to develop a curriculum for ESOL courses at pre-entry level up to Level 3 in reading, writing, speaking and listening. She advised the Partnership that the colleges had delivered approximately 4,000 ESOL enrolments and committed approximately £3m in resource each academic year. In addition, she explained that the Voluntary and Community Sector also provided ESOL classes.

The Partnership was advised that ESOL provision was free for refugees, asylum seekers and those granted humanitarian protection. The Manager highlighted that numbers participating in the classes had increased considerably since the introduction of the government's Syrian Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). She explained that responsibilities in relation to SVPRS were fulfilled by the administration of Home Office funding, and, to date, approximately £745,000 additional funding had been allocated across 90 projects in both the FE colleges and the voluntary and community sector since 2017/2018, to improve SVPRS participants' integration experience and employability.

The Partnership was advised that co-ordinated use of the community and voluntary provision acted as an important first step towards formal classes which could lead to accreditation and that it played a key role in enabling asylum seekers and refugees the opportunity to develop their language skills and to help with their integration.

The Members were advised that other devolved administrations had highlighted the importance of better strategic links and planning to improve the availability of information on ESOL provision, progression routes from informal learning paths and creating routes for learners with specific vocational needs.

The Manager explained that the ESOL NI website had been launched in June 2018 to raise awareness of the availability of ESOL classes throughout NI and that the website was available in numerous different languages.

The Partnership was advised that the issue of waiting lists was investigated by the Department and it was found that 19 students, 3 of whom were SVPRS, were on waiting lists for any ESOL provision, some of whom were on waiting lists to progress to a higher level.

The Partnership noted the update which had been provided and agreed to send any comments on the report to the Manager.

Chairperson