



Subject:	Review of the Belfast Agenda
Date:	23rd April 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Christine Robinson, Head of Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Jamie Uprichard, Community Planning Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is update the Committee on the suggested approach and indicative timeline for a range of consultation and engagement activities to review the Belfast Agenda, where Members will have an opportunity to shape the refreshed Community Plan.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide feedback on the stages and proposed consultation and engagement milestones to review the Belfast Agenda; and • note the role that Elected Members will play in refreshing the community plan detailed in section 3.8.

3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Duty to review Community Plan</u></p> <p>Sections 69 and 70 of the Local Government Act 2014 set out the statutory requirements for the review of community plans which must be completed before the fourth anniversary of the date on which the Plan was published. This means that the first review of the Belfast Agenda is required by November 2021.</p>
3.2	<p>Current events and the disruption to normal working arrangements have understandably created a difficulty for community planning partnerships to meet these requirements in the manner initially envisaged. The Department for Communities have therefore written to the Chairs of community planning partnerships, recognising that as part of the ongoing response to COVID-19, actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, will inform a very large element of any review. The Department considers that this will be sufficient to meet the legislative requirements for Partnerships to formally confirm that a review of the community plan has been conducted.</p>
3.3	<p>While not statutory, the link between community plans and the Programme for Government creates practical difficulties as community plans will naturally wish to reflect any substantial change to the PfG Outcomes which may be decided by the Executive. The attached letter also includes a recommendation that Partnerships should therefore consider committing to carrying out a further review before April 2022, to facilitate the timetabling around the PfG.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Additional drivers for Change</u></p> <p>In addition to the legislative requirement to review the community plan, there is an imperative need to revise the areas the city will focus on in the short term to drive recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. As the true effects emerge, we need to ensure our city economy and communities are able to rebuild in the coming months and years.</p>
3.5	<p>The Belfast Agenda was influenced by a set of shared values that have shaped its design. As part of its first formal review, we wish to reflect on lessons learned to date. We are driven by values of innovation and a focus on outcomes for people and we will identify what we need to do differently to make the next 4 years a success.</p>
3.6	<p>There is a growing literature providing recommendations for community planning including Dr Johann Gallagher’s SIB report, “Towards a Programme of Support for Community Planning in Northern Ireland” and Carnegie UK Trust’s recommendation (endorsed by</p>

	<p>committee in March 2021) following the “Embedding a Wellbeing Framework in Northern Ireland” project. The review presents an excellent opportunity to embed many of these recommendation into our community planning processes and practices to deliver the required change we want for Belfast.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Defining the scope of the Review</u></p> <p>It is important to distinguish between the Belfast Agenda, the overarching city strategy document and the subsequent delivery action plans which identify a range of interventions the Partnership will take to contribute to the overall vision and outcomes. An updated city strategy document will contain the long-term vision and outcomes, population indicators and a new 4-year priority framework the Partnership should focus on. The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) will undertake a wide range of consultation and engagement activities to ensure the refreshed Plan will include the issues our communities want addressed within this recovery period.</p>
3.8	<p>It is important that new Delivery Action Plans are designed with the public and VCSE sectors (including elements of a bottom-up approach) to ensure communities have greater involvement in the process and together, we can make a meaningful difference to people’s lives. The actions will be based on a range of criteria such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery reflects partnership activity providing collaborative gain/not business as usual activity; • Designed to contribute to the Belfast Agenda outcomes; and • Include ‘area specific’ elements making the ‘Belfast Agenda’ more meaningful to local communities.
3.9	<p><u>Key Principles agreed by the Belfast Community Planning Partnership</u></p> <p>At its meeting on 24th March 2021, the CPP considered initial plans for the review and agreed the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core purpose of the refreshed Belfast Agenda is to improve outcomes for local people. • The Belfast Agenda should reflect all that is positive about the city and its people, whilst identifying the key challenges that need to be addressed through the work of the Partnership. • Our approach will be based on the principle of co-design. Statutory partners, Elected Members, Support Partners and the VCSE panel will all have a critical role to play to make this possible.

- The refreshed Belfast Agenda will build on recent work across the city, including the work of Healthy North Belfast, the East Belfast Agenda the STEP project in South Belfast. (Seamless Transition through Education Project).
- Where possible, we will use the data and evidence that partners hold to support and inform our partnership working.
- The work of the CPP will focus on additionality and the collaborative gains that are made possible from our partnership working.
- The review process will involve the participation of all partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.

Consultation and Engagement Milestones

3.10

The CPP agreed to establish a dedicated sub-group from the Statutory Partners and VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel to support the co-design and delivery of the new Belfast Agenda (and corresponding delivery plans) by March 2022. In doing so, it has also proposed to hold a series of consultation and engagement activities organised into stages for which there is a need to reach consensus on various aspects of the Plan. In keeping with the commitment set out within the council’s Belfast: Our Recovery framework, the review of the Belfast Agenda will follow a co-design process. Specifically, we are suggesting the Partnership proactively engages communities to identify local challenges, priorities and opportunities. We want co-design to be the central principle for the review process to deliver improved outcomes for people living in Belfast. In summary, the co-design approach we adopt needs to be flexible to reflect the outcome of prior engagement ensuring we listen to and reflect the specific needs of each area of the city.



3.11

A Review Launch will aim to raise awareness of the Belfast Agenda and reinvigorate the community planning process with communities. It is assumed that lockdown measures will be in place for the foreseeable future and therefore, the majority of engagement activities will at least initially take place virtually/ online. The ‘Your Say Belfast’ engagement platform will

<p>3.12</p> <p>3.13</p>	<p>be heavily utilised to make it easier for citizens to engage and have their say. The web-based system will provide a grouped space where all engagement activities will be located and critically where feedback on each stage will also be provided. However, if the situation improves, we will allow for face to face engagement later in the process.</p> <p>Very similar to the recent Programme for Government (PfG) consultation, we wish to move quickly to agree or reaffirm the long-term vision and outcomes, which were set in 2017, following extensive engagement. At this stage, we also wish to reach consensus on a 4-year priority framework which will identify the specific areas to be progressed by the Partnership. Again, similar to the PfG, this will identify priorities to address Health Inequalities, which may include for example a focus on mental health, emotional wellbeing or Alcohol and Drugs. From recent feedback and political priorities, it is also proposed that zero-carbon should become a 5th pillar of the agenda.</p> <p>It is vital that we recognise that the Partnership cannot focus on everything and therefore we need to gain consensus on the priority framework before we continue our engagement with an action planning and problem-solving phase. While we expect this stage will be informed by the co-design process, we expect it may take a local-area and/or citywide approach or some combination thereof. This stage will also present an opportunity for both partner organisations, BAPs and the VCSE Panel to present/host sector views or inputs for further in-depth Board consideration and analysis. This stage represents the greatest challenge as we seek to develop draft Delivery Action Plans which can be endorsed by the city and owned by Boards/ partner organisations. Note, it is intended that these plans will remain live documents moving forward being informed by continual engagement.</p>
<p>3.14</p> <p>3.15</p>	<p><u>Role of Elected Members</u></p> <p>It is proposed that elected members will be engaged at each stage highlighted in section 3.6 through the All Party Working Group on Community Planning. In addition, it is recommended that all elected members will have the opportunity to shape the priority framework and plans for the new 4 year period through Party Group briefings. In addition, elected members will also be supported by our Marketing and Communications team who will be provide ongoing support via a communications toolkit to enable them to engage their constituents to make their voices heard.</p> <p>While the specifics regarding engagement events will be finalised with partners, it is expected that there will be a series of thematic and/or local-area virtual workshops. This will provide a further role for elected members to provide a leading role within their communities to shaping the city's future plans.</p>

3.16	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.17	<p>It is recommended that the consultation and engagement activities to review the Belfast Agenda will take account of the draft Audit of Inequalities and include specific sessions with targeted harder to reach groups to ensure that equality implications are considered as part of the review process.</p>
4.0	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>DfC Letter of November 2020</p>

The Chair
Belfast City Council
Community Planning Partnership

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18 November 2020

I am writing regarding the statutory requirements for the review of community plans. As you will know these are set out in Part 10 of the Local Government (NI) Act NI 2014¹, explicitly in Sections 69 and 70. In accordance with Section 69 (1) a review must be completed before the fourth anniversary of the date on which the community plan was published. The publication date for the eleven community plans varied from late March to November 2017, so the review of plans will be due for completion by the relevant fourth anniversary date during 2021.

Current events and the disruption to normal working arrangements have understandably created a difficulty for partnerships to meet these requirements in the manner initially envisaged. The link between community plans and the Programme for Government (although not statutory) also creates practical difficulty since community plans will naturally wish to reflect any substantial change to the PfG Outcomes which may be decided by the Executive.

The periodic review of community plans, which by their nature are long term, is key to ensuring they deliver desired outcomes. We recognise that the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how much partnership working over the last period has been aided by the community planning process. The Minister believes that the collective leadership of central and local government alongside grass roots community organisations, working together, has never been more important. In this context it is clear that community plans and the structures and relationships which have evolved from the process are important and should be sustained.

All partnerships either have or are currently considering changes to the plans that are needed in light the COVID-19 pandemic, The Department considers that it will be sufficient to meet legislative requirements for Partnerships to formally confirm that a review of the community plan has been conducted and that Partners agree the plan continues to meet (or will meet in an amended form) the needs of the local community. In addition I would recommend that Partnerships should consider formally committing to carrying out a further review before April 2022, since reviews can occur at any time before the next legislative review date, i.e. before 2025. This secondary review would facilitate the timetabling around PfG.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ni/2014/8/part/10>

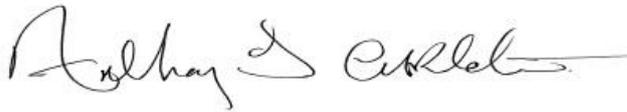
Appendix I – DfC Letter dated November 2020

I would also reassure Partnerships that the review of the community plan does not need to follow any specific format, indeed it is likely that current work of partnerships in relation to actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, will inform a very large element of any review.

The Department will continue to liaise with officials from The Executive Office as they plan and take forward the new Programme for Government (PfG) and will ensure that community plans remain part of that process, recognising the contribution to delivering PfG Outcomes.

I am aware that several Partnerships have met remotely and continue to work together over recent months and I do hope that all Partnerships will be able to progress with this important work over the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Carleton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony Carleton

Director Local Government & Housing Regulation