



Subject:	Update on the Development of the Inclusive Growth City Charter
Date:	18th June, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
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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	In March 2020, the council's Commitments to Inclusive Growth document was published. One key commitment was the development and implementation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for Belfast. Since then a cross council team led by Strategy, Policy and Partnerships has been progressing the development of this charter, alongside an external business working group and the council's Social Policy Working Group.
1.2	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress to date and note the proposed key next steps.
1.3	The draft charter and suggested next steps outlined in this report, were discussed at the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group on 25th May 2021.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:</p> <p>a) Note the progress to date in relation to the development of the Charter following a period of extensive engagement, including the suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter pledges and associated evidence requirements • Charter membership model - tiers, core pledges and accreditation • Charter membership resources and support <p>b) Note the proposed key stages of work going forward, including the following timescales proposed for delivery of the next key steps outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter name / brand development & marketing plan - 14th June – 7th July • Digital content / website development - 7th July – 16th August • Second stage of engagement - 7th July to 7th September • Charter launch - October/November 2021 <p>c) Agree to the revised Inclusive Growth cohorts and note the next steps in disseminating this work across the organisation.</p>
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Inclusive Growth City Charter</u>
3.1	As highlighted in section 1.0 of this report a key commitment of council in working towards its aim of a more inclusive city was the co-creation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for employers across the city – setting a city wide standard in relation to procurement, employment and civic / neighbourhood engagement.
3.2	Engagement with businesses to date has shown that there is a strong appetite for such an initiative, which holds organisations to high standards in relation to adopting business practices which bring about added value to society. Research has shown that consumers and employees are increasingly making decisions based on business performance in these areas with some charters reporting an increase of up to almost 30% in registration applications over the last 6 months. This is thought in part to be due to the impact of Covid 19.
3.3	The Charter's potential is reflected in it's prominence within the city's Recovery Document and it's focus on working together to create a more inclusive Belfast underpins the Belfast Agenda and the Lord Mayor's focus, of " Our Belfast – a more inclusive, forward thinking and kinder city".
3.4	It is closely aligned to other strands of work across the Council, focusing on creating more community wealth and adding social value through business/organisational activity. This includes the Anchor Network on Commissioning and Procurement; BCC Social Value Policy and Framework; Social Enterprise Action Plan and BCC Employment Academies.

3.5	<p>We have a window of opportunity to lead the way for Belfast, building on the successful engagement we have carried out to date, to implement the Charter to help achieve our aim of creating a stronger, more resilient, and fairer city economy and society for Belfast.</p> <p><u>Inclusive Growth City Charter Business Working Group and Internal Steering Group</u></p>
3.6	<p>An external working group of 16 businesses and organisations have been working on the development of a draft charter for the last 12 months and the members are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aflac NI • Belfast City Airport • Belfast HSC Trust • BT • Datactics • NIC/ICTU • NOW Group • Social Enterprise NI • Allstate NI • Belfast Harbour Commissioners • BITCNI • CIPD • FSB • NIHE • PWC • Weavers Cross
3.7	<p>Feedback from the working group has been extremely positive in terms of support for the charter. They feel that that given the COVID-19 crisis and the significant impact on the economy, the charter is an opportunity to demonstrate a collective commitment to an inclusive recovery.</p>
3.8	<p>This work is also being completed in partnership with officers from Place and Economy and Finance and Resources and an internal steering group was set up to ensure the charter fully reflects corporate priorities and ambition associated with, amongst other things, employment, procurement, young people and skills progression.</p> <p><u>Engagement to Date</u></p>
3.9	<p>We have carried out extensive engagement to date with over 130 individuals across approximately 25 organisations, reflecting a wide range of employers.</p>
3.10	<p>Initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with many consultees seeing this as an ideal opportunity for the council to work in collaboration with employers and position the Charter as an innovative initiative between businesses, government and the 3rd sector. To create, reward and support a community of business and organisational leaders who want to use their powers as employers, procurers and community members to create positive impact for employees, the local economy, communities and the environment.</p>
3.11	<p>In particular, they stressed the need for the Charter to be ambitious in its thinking, open to all employers and to grow and adapt as it develops, based on a process of feedback and evaluation. Other key themes are that consultees want the charter to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on raising general employment standards (based on the principles of “Good Work”), create opportunities into employment, support local businesses and create better links with local communities and citizens;

- Be bespoke for Belfast, with a unique, compelling USP, which highlights business benefits;
- Have a clear branding and communications strategy, which is supported by a strong on-line presence;
- Facilitate better collaboration amongst businesses and organisations and improved sharing of best practice information;
- Have a tiered structure which takes businesses on a journey to better inclusive business practices – adopt a “Carrot” rather than a “Stick” approach;
- Find the right balance between incorporating mandatory elements against the importance of flexibility to encourage businesses to sign up; and
- Recognise the difference between smaller and larger businesses and not penalise those with less resources.

Societal and business benefits

3.12 Through our research of other charters and direct engagement the potential societal benefits for Belfast through the Charter community include:

- More secure, high quality jobs based on the principles of “ Good Work”
- Reduced inequality
- More resilient, sustainable local economy
- Lower levels of poverty
- Stronger communities
- More effective and efficient use of organisations and resources that currently exist to achieve Charter aim - NIUSE; community and voluntary groups; Equality Commission;

3.13 In addition the potential benefits to Charter members include:

- Sharing best practice and participation in working groups
- Alignment with organizational CSR goals/brand profile
- Collaboration/partnering with other charter members
- Better links to citizens and target groups
- Access to better networks and business contacts and support of local economy
- Alignment with Charter community on issues
- Engaging employees in the company vision and improving productivity and employee health and well-being
- Attracting employee talent, investment, clients and customers and connecting to Charter suppliers
- Better signposting to other existing organisations that can support members in achieving accreditation – employability organisations; social enterprises; BITCNI; CIPD

Draft Pledges, Membership Model and Membership Support

Draft Pledges

- 3.14 Based on the engagement to date, we have drawn up a draft Charter. Our Charter focuses on good employment, procurement and the role of businesses in their community through 8 Charter Pledges and businesses will be expected to provide evidence of excellent practice in these areas.
- 3.15 The draft pledges we are asking businesses to sign up to are outlined in Figure 1 below. Further detail about the required commitments within each pledge is attached.

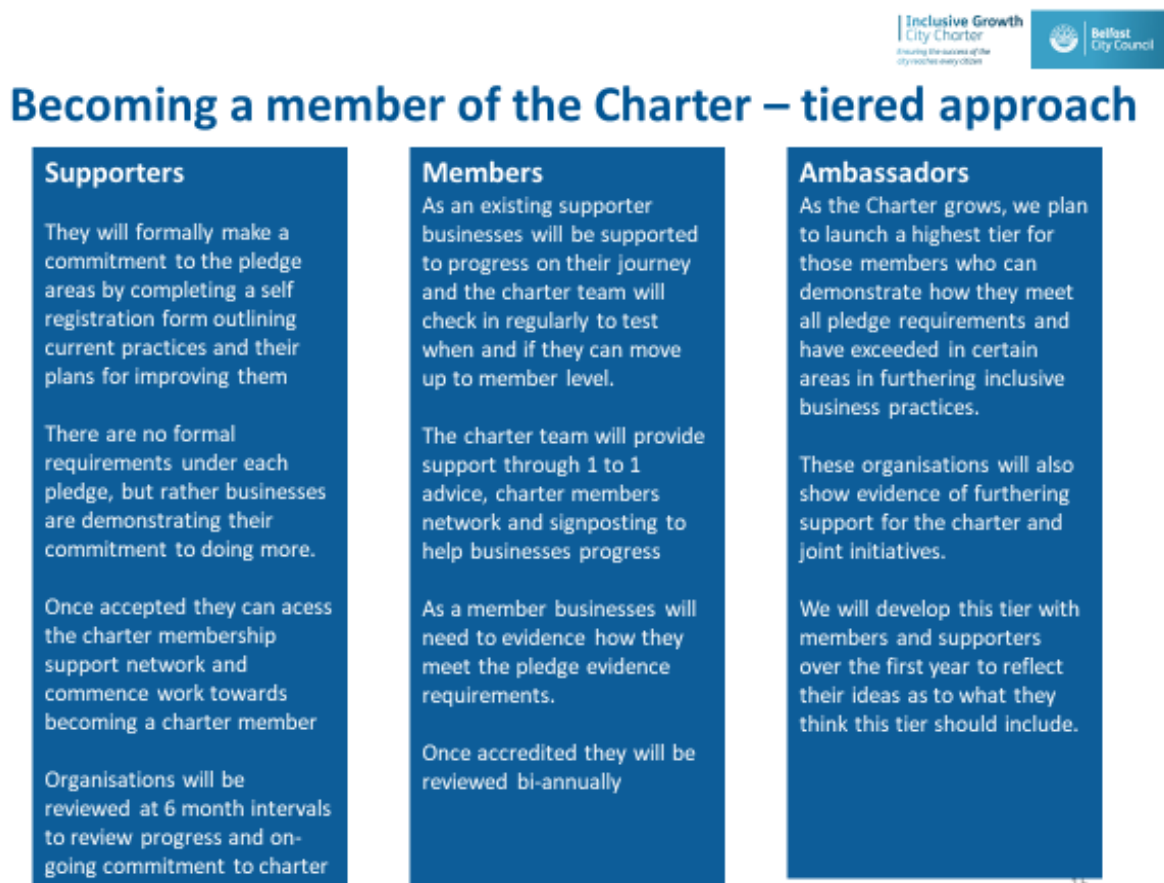
Figure 1. Draft Pledges



Membership Structure

3.16 There are currently three anticipated levels of membership/tiers, as outlined in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2. Draft membership model



3.17 We are proposing that, initially, our Charter membership requires businesses to meet 3 core charter pledges and an additional 3 further charter pledges which they can choose from the remaining 5. As part of our engagement, we gathered information around which pledges could be considered core and the following pledges were seen as being particularly important:

- Provide fair wages and contracts
- Offer opportunities into work
- Support the local and social economy
- Protect our environment

3.18 We then propose that to achieve the ambassador level of accreditation businesses must meet all 8 pledges

3.19 It is worth noting that the pledge around fair wages and contracts was seen as the one that could potentially stop some businesses from signing up to the Charter if it was a core pledge, especially given the pressure on businesses due to Covid 19. We therefore propose exploring during the next stage of engagement, consultees wider views on this and potential options.

Membership Package

3.20 The engagement to date has emphasised the importance of the Charter being clear as to what it can offer members in terms of support and added value. The key elements that businesses have identified to date, which we have incorporated as part of our initial package, include:

- Promotion of new sign ups as appropriate
- Signposting and availability to best practice advice and information – CIPD resource site; NIUSE; BITCNI etc
- Interactive and engaging private members forum/network, supported by a strong on-line facility
- Access to a members programme of activity to help them meet the pledges and improve their practices eg webinars/meet the buyer days/ links to the Youth Forum and Migrant Forum/ access to BCC employment academies
- Improved links through the charter team and other members to communities and target groups of citizens
- Opportunity to develop new business relationships and improve business to business collaboration and networking
- Access to a list of charter members and their business profile to identify who they many want to do business with going forward
- Potential links in the future to using Charter accreditation to access public procurement
- Ability to “measure” the social value they have contributed through their activities as a member of the Charter

Proposed Next Steps

Delivery Timescales

3.21 We propose the following timescales for delivery of the next key steps outlined below:

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|---|---|
| • Charter Mark development & marketing plan | - 14th June – 7th July |
| • Digital content / website development | - 7 th July – 16 th August |
| • Second stage of engagement | - 7 th July to 7 th September |
| • Charter launch | - October/November 2021 |

Charter Mark development and public relations / marketing

3.22 All consultees highlighted the importance to the success of the Charter of the creation of a dynamic, unique and strong identity and a compelling accompanying narrative. One which communicates clearly and succinctly the aim and desired impact of the Charter and one which communicates clearly the benefits to businesses of being aligned with the Charter eg being a Charter member can act as a selling point for businesses, helping them stand out and appeal to customers and employees. In addition, it must be able to differentiate itself from other charters and accreditations that currently exist.

3.23	<p>Feedback to date from the external working group members and some consultees is that it must be business focused and not just seen as a Council brand and should appeal to businesses in both the language and imagery used.</p>
	<p>We will develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a position statement/ “elevator pitch” for the Inclusive Growth City Charter and it's desired aim • a mock up of a landing page for the website with accompanying imagery
3.24	<p>In addition this will be supported by the development of an initial range of marketing collateral, adopting the Charter Mark and narrative developed eg Charter Mark for each tier; short videos to promote and sell the Charter; supporting PR and social media graphics etc for use when we are launching and promoting the scheme.</p>
3.25	<p>The proposed draft Charter Mark, narrative and key marketing collateral will be market tested with a range of businesses, along with feedback from the external business working group and Social Value Working Group.</p>
	<p><u>Charter Website Content Development</u></p>
3.26	<p>As outlined earlier, a key component of the Charter model and membership package is a strong on-line presence. Consultees saw this as vital to encouraging sign up and ensuring the Charter facilitated interaction amongst members, shared best practice and signposting information, offered publicity for members and offered one space where all the Charter information could be accessed easily, minimising unnecessary calls/administration.</p>
	<p>We are currently working to finalise the approach for digital presence.</p>
	<p><u>Second Stage of Engagement</u></p>
3.27	<p>We have made great progress in the development of the Charter and are now at the stage where we need to carry out further targeted engagement with businesses/organisations and citizens on the detailed draft that has been co-developed.</p>
3.28	<p>This will enable us to meet our commitment of the charter being accessible to all employers and make final changes to help ensure that the launch and early implementation is as successful as possible. This engagement plan is being developed with the internal steering group to ensure we make use of existing relationships and deliver a consistent message.</p>
3.29	<p>As part of this second stage of engagement we will ensure we engage with a wider number of SME's and those citizens who often face additional barriers to economic growth eg. those with a disability, those with dependants, those from a migrant community. In addition a public consultation will be carried out using the council's Your Say platform.</p>
3.30	<p>We also want to use the engagement as an opportunity to promote the Charter and encourage early adopters prior to our anticipated launch date of Autumn 2021. Many consultees are already exhibiting areas of best practice across the pledges and have agreed in principle to be part of</p>

	early marketing and promotional activity. This is an ideal opportunity for us to start building membership, whilst also offering publicity for our Belfast businesses.
3.31	Feedback from businesses and the working group is that this next stage of engagement should not commence prior to the identity and accompanying narrative being developed and agreed.
	<u>Charter Launch</u>
3.32	Following the 2 nd stage of engagement and the finalisation of the Charter and website, we will plan a pilot and hold a business event to launch the Charter. This will involve the design of a delivery plan, materials and a communications plan, with the identification of Charter partners to take part. Members of the external working group have agreed to co-facilitate this event, reinforcing our commitment to ensuring the Charter is not just seen as a council initiative but as a Charter for Belfast.
	Inclusive Growth Cohorts
3.33	<p>Within the March 2020 'Commitments to Inclusive Growth' (IG), four cohorts were identified to help shape targeted IG-related interventions to those most vulnerable throughout the city. The existing cohorts are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unemployed residents 2. Residents with low skill levels 3. In work, low earning individuals 4. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
3.34	<p>In light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the collaborative agreement with Queen's University Belfast (QUB), there was an opportunity to review these cohorts, both in terms of their present appropriateness and exploration of possible alternatives. As part of the Social Policy Working Group (SPWG) meeting on 25 May 2021 Professor Chris Lloyd (QUB) presented his recommendations for a new set of IG cohorts, which are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unemployed residents: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Long-term b. Post Covid-19 lockdowns 2. Residents with low skill levels 3. In work, low earning individuals 4. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) 5. Young people without benchmark qualifications (less than 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C) 6. People living in multiply deprived neighbourhoods 7. Economic Inactive
3.35	It is important to note that when developing further information on the cohorts across the city, we will also include consideration of individual personal characteristics in relation to age, gender and ethnicity.

	Proposed Next Steps
3.36	Following the 25th May 2021 SPWG meeting, the proposed cohorts will be adjusted to reflect the discussions and decisions of the group (i.e. inclusion of 'economic inactivity' and demographic sub-categories). Detailed guidance detailing each of the cohorts, as well as a revised decision-making framework will be developed for use by officers across the organisation.
4.0	Financial and Resource Implications
4.1	As outlined in this report there are key areas of work that will require the procurement of external specialist services, however there are no additional financial or resource implications as this has already been accounted for within the current Inclusive Growth budget.
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
5.1	As agreed within the initial Inclusive Growth Commitments equality screening, a separate screening will be undertaken as part of the draft charter design process. The findings from the initial screening are already being utilised to inform the engagement design and content.
6.0	Documents Attached
6.1	None