

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 11th September, 2023

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Duffy (Chairperson);
Councillors I. McLaughlin and Smyth.

External Members: Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. O. Barron, Belfast Trust;
Superintendent Ford, PSNI;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
P. Mackel, Belfast and District Trade Unions Council; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross;

In attendance: Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. J. Girvan, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. S. Lavery, Programme Manager;
Ms. L. Dolan, Good Relations Officer;
Mr. D. Robinson, Good Relations Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Mr. P. Anderson, Mr. J. Donnelly, Ms. A. Roberts and Mr. G. Walker.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th August 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

Belfast Stories Presentation Request

The Members were reminded that Belfast Stories would be a transformative new experience in the city centre, sharing the stories of the people and the place (past, present and future), told through exhibitions, screen and social spaces.

It was due to open in 2028/29 and would transform the current vacant site at the corner of Royal Avenue and North Street including the restoration of one of Belfast's most beloved heritage buildings, the art deco former Bank of Ireland.

Sharing people's stories would be foundational to the city of Belfast's transformative journey towards new perspectives and connections as individuals and communities.

The Members were advised that, since Belfast Stories last presentation in September 2022 to the Shared City Partnership, the consultation report had now been completed and presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee in June 2023 and officers would be keen to update the Members of the Shared City Partnership on its progress.

A Member raised a number of queries, and he was advised that these could be further discussed with the representatives immediately following the proposed presentation.

The Partnership agreed to extend an invitation to the Belfast Stories team to attend the October meeting of the Partnership.

SCP Membership (Verbal Update)

The Partnership was advised that the recruitment exercise for the North Belfast Community Representative had been completed. Five applications had been received and following a shortlisting process all had proceeded to interview.

The Good Relations Manager advised that Mr. G. Walker had been appointed as the North Belfast Community Representative, unfortunately, he was unable to attend today's meeting as he was on holiday. The Panel also agreed that Mr. M. Lavery be placed on a reserve list for 12 months, to be offered the role in the event that Mr. Walker was no longer able to fulfill the role.

The Partnership also noted that there were currently vacant positions from the Faith Sector and Business Representative roles. Significant efforts has been made via post, email, and telephone, however, officers had been unable to establish a representative from the Church of Ireland. The Good Relations Manager advised that Officers would continue to try and progress this appointment before the October Meeting.

In regard to the vacant Business Representative roles, correspondence had been forwarded to the Belfast City Chamber of Commerce, however, officers had again received no response. Contact had been made via telephone and hopefully the matter was being actioned and representatives would be appointed for the October meeting.

The Partnership asked the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to note the update in regard to Membership of the Shared City Partnership.

Peace IV Update (Verbal)

The Good Relations Manager provided the Members with a verbal update regarding the Peace IV Programme.

He reported that the PPEs for both the CYP and BPR Programmes had been compiled and submitted to the SEUPB for comment. The final PPEs would be presented to the Partnership in October 2023.

In terms of the SSS Theme, he reported that the final snagging of works at Section 2 had been completed, for example, the additional fencing to separate the Department for Communities and Belfast City Council lands as well as outstanding health and safety issues around the water/ravine area.

He highlighted that a low key opening of Section 2 to the public was scheduled for week commencing 11th September, with a community celebration event taking place on Saturday, 16th September from 12.00 noon - 4.00 p.m. A number of events had been raised to encourage people to move between both sites and the Members were encouraged to attend to show their support.

The final SSS theme claim, which was significant, was being progressed and was due to be completed to the SEUPB by the end of September. Verification of claims by the SEUPB continued to progress, with £65K of NIHE P32/33 claims having been completed during August. The value of outstanding claims remained at £3.6m, as claims continued to be submitted.

The Members were advised that an event to celebrate the achievement, impacts and closure of PEACE IV was taking place at the City Hall on Thursday, 21st September, at 10.30 a.m. Once again, the Partnership Members were encouraged to attend.

The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the update.

TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding Update and Project Request

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Issues

- 11 To provide members with an update on the projects funded through the Home Office Dispersal Funding and to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources committee to use reprofiled dispersal money and Belfast Health and Development Unit funding, to support a drop-in good relations and health and well-being winter inclusion programme for asylum seekers.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and to:**

Agree the approach for reprofiling costs in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and funding available through the Belfast Health Development Unit, to support the commissioning of a drop-in good relations and health and well-being winter programme for asylum seekers.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Members are reminded that in December 2022 the Executive Office (TEO) had requested Councils, at short notice, to submit urgent proposals for projects to enhance and/or develop support and services for asylum seekers, which could be funded by TEO through Home Office Dispersal Funding.
- 3.2 In response Council submitted proposals in December 2023, which were considered and approved as eligible for funding by the Executive Office.
- 3.3 In March 2023, TEO awarded Council £406,228 to support the proposals submitted.
- 3.4 The following projects and support costs have been agreed by Council and TEO, with most projects now mobilised.

Table 1.

Delivery Partner	Summary of project	Costs
Proposal 1: Red Cross Mobilised and delivering	Asylum Support & Triage Project, providing bilingual helpline and casework support	£152,643
Proposal 2: Barnardos Mobilised and delivering	Family Help Project – Supporting parents and children coping with displacement through conflict, with a focus on school readiness, child development and parenting.	£85,000
Proposal 3: Conway Education Centre Mobilised and delivering	Language, mentoring, training befriending and integration programme	£41,125
Proposal 4: Lower Ormeau Residents Group Completed	Community Integration Programme and trauma therapy intervention	£14,728
Proposal 5: Belfast City Council Committed	Cultural Competence Programme	£20,000

Proposal 6: Belfast City Council Reprofile requested	Project Management & Coordination Costs	£20,000 Request to reprofile £12,000
Proposal 7: Immigration and Legal Advice Project Tender not awarded	Discussions with TEO in relation to a joint proposal	£72, 732

3.5 Some of the planned costs in relation to the project management and co-ordination have not been used. It is proposed to allocate £12,000 of these costs towards commissioning a good relations and health and well being drop-in service, operating in Council community centres, for asylum seekers. This would also be supported by £8,000 of BHDU funds.

3.6 It has been documented that the impact of prolonged hotel stay has been damaging to the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers. Men, women and children have been spending increased periods of time in hotel accommodation, designed to be temporary, cut off from communities and wider support networks.

3.7 Partner organisations and support services have highlighted the impact of this on people who have already endured trauma and the damaging impact on their mental health, robbing children of their childhood and leaving people unable to progress with their lives in any meaningful way, or participate in community life.

3.8 This proposal is to commission a drop-in support service to run during the Winter months to provide social, health and well being initiatives to help alleviate the pressures on people confined to hotels, with the aim of also linking asylum seekers to wider council and community support networks as well as volunteering opportunities.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

4.1 The proposals in this report are funded through Home Office Dispersal Funding, via the Executive Office as well as through the Belfast Health and Development Unit.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

5.1 These proposals have strong good relations outcomes and complement the work being delivered through the Council’s Good Relations Action Plan and the Belfast Agenda, as well as delivering on the recommendations arising from the research Council commissioned to examine the Inequalities experienced by Black, Asian, minority ethnic and Traveller communities in Belfast.”

Discission ensued as to whether the Council’s community centres were best placed for the delivery of the health and wellbeing service. Whilst the Members noted that it could be difficult for people to travel across the city, it was felt that community centres were central to welcoming people into different areas of the city. It also was noted that the proposed delivery model would be an excellent learning exercise for the Council in terms of how asylum seekers accessed the services offered.

The Good Relation Manager highlighted that the delivery of these services was budget dependent, currently up to March 2024

A Member also highlighted that, whilst it was good news that health and wellbeing services were being offered, it was essential that there was an exit strategy for when the funding ended to ensure that the support services did not abruptly end and that ongoing support for the asylum seekers in some form was still available.

The Committee recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the report and agree the approach for reprofiling costs in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and funding available through the Belfast Health Development Unit, to support the commissioning of a drop-in good relations and health and well-being winter programme for asylum seekers.

PeacePlus Workshop

The Members were advised that a Workshop to consider the PeacePlus Programme would now take place and the formal meeting ended.

Chairperson