

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 11th March, 2024

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Duffy (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors Lyons, McLaughlin and McMullan.

External Members: Mr. L. Gunn, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Ms. C. McMenamin, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Ms. T. Mimna, Good Relations, TEO;
Mr. W. Naeem, Interfaith Forum; and
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor Smyth, Mr J Girvan, Neighbourhood Services Manager and Mrs. B. Arthurs, Mr. P. Anderson, Superintendent Henry, Mr. M. McBride, Mr. G. Walker and Ms. A M White.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5th February, 2024, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McMullan declared an interest in the item "The Executive Office Asylum Dispersal Funding Update", in that he was an individual member of Belfast City of Sanctuary, and he left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Shared City Partnership Membership (Verbal Update)

The Good Relations Manager advised the Working Group that Mr. Liam Gunn had been appointed as the nominee from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Chairperson welcomed him to his first meeting.

The Good Relations Manager also advised that Ms. Clare Guinness, Belfast Chamber of Commerce, had been appointed as the Business representative nominee and, although not at today's meeting, he hoped that she would be available to attend the next meeting of the Partnership.

Noted.

The Executive Office Asylum Dispersal Funding Update

(Councillor McMullan, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.)

The Acting Senior Good Relations Officer reminded the Members that, in March 2023, The Executive Office (TEO) had awarded the Council £406,228 of Asylum Dispersal Funding to support proposals to enhance or develop support for asylum seekers. She then provided the Working Group with an update on the projects which had been delivered over the past 9 months, noting that £70,000 of the overall funding awarded by TEO had been allocated to the provision of an Immigration Advice Project, however, following a procurement exercise, whereby no award had been made and following a further commissioning of Regional Immigration Advice Services by TEO, the Council was now proposing to reprofile this money into supporting four further projects.

She reported that, given the increase in the number of people seeking asylum, whom had been accommodated in new areas of Belfast and the growing use of community and voluntary organisations, across the city, it was proposed that the remainder of this funding be used to procure four projects to support the localised community integration and inclusion of asylum seekers in Belfast. This would be done through an open call, prioritising organisations that had not been recipients of this fund, while also inviting applications in areas where asylum seekers have not been traditionally accommodated.

The officer advised that the proposed approach was consistent with previous conversations raised at the Shared City Partnership in relation to supporting capacity within local communities to accommodate the integration and inclusion of asylum seekers.

Following a query regarding the fair distribution of the available funding, the officer encouraged the Members of the Partnership to make any organisations that they felt might be keen to avail of the funding aware of the fact that it would be going out for an open call and assured the Members that officers could provide advice to organisations that were interested in developing projects in relation to asylum seekers.

In regard to specific concerns raised regarding the lack of integration of asylum seekers into the community within the Shankill area, the Good Relations Manager undertook to liaise further with the Member directly.

Discussion ensued regarding the data around the housing of asylum seekers and following discussion it was agreed that a representative from Mears be invited to a future meeting of the Partnership to provide an overview of its role.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it approves that the remaining £70,000 of Asylum Dispersal Money be used to procure four further projects to support the localised community integration and inclusion of asylum seekers in Belfast.

Segregation and the Environment Research Report

The Acting Senior Good Relations Officer reminded the Partnership that, as part of the Good Relations Action Plan for 2022/23, provision had been made for the development of a piece of research to identify the links between segregation within the city and its subsequent impact on the environment and the climate.

At its meeting in February 2023, Members of the Partnership: *“noted the report and the actions being taken to implement the recommendations in the research, including the provision already made within the previously agreed Good Relations Action Plan”*. Further, Members agreed *“to publish and disseminate the report, Segregation and the Environment, after further internal and external engagement has taken place”*.

The officer continued that, as part of the further internal and external engagement, the research had been considered by the Chief Officers Management Team (CMT), in February 2023 who had discussed the report and requested that further discussion on the research be undertaken. CMT had also requested that the author of the report would attend a future meeting of CMT to discuss its contents further with them. Mr. Peter Osborne had subsequently attended CMT in April 2023 to input into the conversation and to address queries that the senior management had had regarding the content, background and recommendations contained within the report.

Following this, two workshops had been held with a number of internal staff sections, to discuss the research and the recommendations further. Central to this was to look at how the recommendations could be taken forward by various relevant Council sections. In addition, officers had engaged through various meetings and events with external parties.

Once this process had been completed, CMT had considered a revised draft of the report, along with the revised recommendations. Following discussion, CMT had engaged with Party Group Leaders, who agreed that officers now progress the report through the Shared City Partnership and for onward agreement by Elected Members.

The Acting Senior Good Relations Officer then drew the Members' attention to Updated Research Report, including updated recommendations, that had been attached as an appendices to the report.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that, following full Council approval, the research report is launched, published and that the recommendations within the report are progressed.

Peace IV - Secretariat Update

The PEACE Programme Manager provided the Partnership with an update in respect of the activity associated with the closure of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

She reported that as PEACE IV progressed towards closure, officers had been reviewing the ongoing contractual obligations, this included future audit requirements and the retention all documentation associated with the delivery of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

She advised that all documentation associated with the delivery of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan were required to be retained for 5 years after the submission of the final claim, in line with the PEACE IV Programme Rules, therefore, the retention date was until 31st December 2028. In line with this, the contractual obligations, including the retention date, had been outlined to external delivery partners during the On the Spot Verification visit at project closure.

The Programme Manager advised that she had been liaising with relevant Council Departments, including Procurement Services, Human Resources and Finance to ensure compliance with PEACE IV retention requirements. Advice from Legal and Information Governance on the retention of records was being progressed and the archiving of all relevant information would be done in line with the Council's Records Retention Disposal Schedule and Policy.

In term of the reimbursement of PEACE IV claims the officer advised that this was progressing, with the Period 34 BPR claim for Council (£181K) and Period 34 CYP claim for NIHE (£62K) having now been paid. The value of outstanding claims remained as previously reported at £4.2m.

The Peace Programme Manager advised that community stakeholders continue to animate the Forth Meadow Community Greenway and are keen for the Partnership to continue to support the Greenway. . It was proposed that Partnership Members participate in a walk along part of the Greenway from Glencairn, to the Springfield Dam and finishing at the City Cemetery, followed by refreshments at St John's Parish.

The Members agreed that this would be valuable as it would enable them to see first hand the works that had been undertaken.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and the appendices.

Peace Plus Belfast City Council Local Action Plan Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to provide Shared City Partnership members with an update on the assessment of PEACE PLUS 1.1. Co-designed Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan, and the proposed Capacity Building Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

Members note the contents of the report and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

As members are aware, planning for the mobilisation of the Local Action Plan is progressing.

Officers have received and responded to initial clarifications from SEUPB regarding the submitted appendices that support the formal application, which indicates that the assessment process has progressed. The time frame for assessment approval and mobilisation of the Local Action Plan is being closely monitored to enable a realistic delivery schedule, any proposed delays will be reported to members, as necessary.

To aid understanding of Council's obligations in rolling out the Local Action Plan, including the monitoring and evaluation requirements, a request was submitted to SEUPB seeking advice on the proposed training that will be provided for Councils. In response, SEUPB advised they 'have not decided on approach around this, whether in terms of written guidance or training session with councils,' and they 'will revert on any decision and provide collective information to all 17 local authorities.'

In the absence of training / guidance, the management of risk in preparing for mobilisation is critical.

The immediate priorities, as previously reported, include the recruitment of staff, the delivery of a procurement capacity building programme and preparing for procurement. Recruitment of a Lead Officer to support the development of systems and processes, commenced on 16 February, with further recruitment for project support administration to process in March 2024.

3.2 Capacity Building Programme

The content of the capacity building programme has been discussed with colleagues in Commercial and Procurement Services and Employability and Skills, as outlined below.

Training	Provider
PEACEPLUS Mobilisation Pre- Market Overview	PEACEPLUS Team
Introduction to Tendering	Commercial Procurement Services
Writing a Winning Bid	External Facilitator
Consortium Development	External Facilitator
Collaborative Bidding	External Facilitator
BCC Procurement System and Social Value Procurement Policy	Commercial Procurement Services
PEACEPLUS Monitoring and Evaluation	PEACEPLUS Team

Dates for delivery are to be confirmed, after which stakeholders will be informed and public advertising of the programme will be progressed. It is envisaged that subject to agreement delivery will commence mid-March to May 2024, which should align with the opening of tender calls.

3.3 Financial & Resource Implications

Expenditure associated with the LCAP is eligible from the submission date.

As such expenditure is within the existing budget which will be claimed retrospectively from SEUPB. Council is awaiting guidance on the drawdown of the £30K advance from SEUPB.

3.4 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Plan has been submitted for equality and good relations screening as well as rural needs assessment.”

A Member commended the work that was currently being undertaken by the Peace Programme Manager and welcomed the fact that the recruitment of a Lead Officer had now commenced and that further recruitment for project support

administration was due to commence later in the month. He added that it was disappointing that PEACE IV staff had not been able to be retained whilst transitioning to the new programme.

The Good Relations Manager concurred, he stated that due to the temporary nature of roles in a funded programme that staff had moved on to avail of new opportunities. He stated that 'future succession planning' was an issue that needed addressed to try and avoid such a loss of valuable officer experience and knowledge.

The Partnership agreed to recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Chairperson