

APPENDIX 2

Draft Final CSP

Consultation with key stakeholders

A1.1 Key findings from consultation

As part of the process of developing the Community Support Plan we undertook a number of pre consultation and consultation activities with the following stakeholders:

- Councillors;
- Community services staff;
- Other internal council departments;
- Community centre management committee members;
- Other statutory organisations; and
- Community and voluntary sector organisations

External consultation was undertaken by Williamson Consulting on behalf of Belfast City Council, and the internal consultation was led by the Development Department in the council.

The public consultation period lasted from 14th January 2008 to 7th March 2008. In summary:

- 19 events were held;
- 2001 questionnaires were distributed to householders, 114 returned at 5.7% response rate;
- 52 online responses were received; and
- 8 written responses from:
 - Belfast community sports development network
 - VSB
 - Belfast area partnerships
 - East Belfast community development agency
 - Health Action Zone
 - NI Volunteer Development Agency
 - West Belfast Partnership Board
 - Rainbow Project.

It has not been possible to include all the views expressed but the views herein represent an overview of the dominant themes.

A1.2 General Comments

The majority of commentators felt that while the draft Community Support Plan (CSP) was very comprehensive, it is too ambitious for the Council to deliver alone. It was suggested that the final CSP should therefore highlight the specific role that the council's community services unit will take in delivering the actions and meeting the needs and concerns of the sector.

Council's response and actions

Council are committed to working in partnership to delivery the targeted outcomes. We also recognise the need for further clarity on the role of the community services unit and have included a new section 'Our role' in Chapter 5.

Based on the consultation feedback, we have decided to focus the work of Community Services Unit at two levels:

1) Take a lead role through:

- *A partnership approach;*
- *Coordination of council departments and projects which are community focused*
- *Development of a partnership based community development strategy for Belfast*
- *Evidence based policy responses.*

2) Support groups and citizens through:

- *Providing assistance to local groups to access grants and practical help;*
- *Helping local groups to cooperate with each other;*
- *Signposting residents and local groups to sources of support where it is available;*
- *Support for neighbourhood planning;*
- *Ensuring effective communication within the sector; and*
- *Ensuring access to facilities such as community centres*

A1.3 Priorities and strategic themes

A common view expressed by consultees was that it might be too ambitious to tackle all of the identified priorities in this plan period. Also, given the nature of the needs identified, respondents noted that a cohesive and holistic approach will be required to address the themes involving more than just the council.

It was indicated that the council needs to ensure it has the capacity to deliver on the themes and priorities identified; and at the same time the council needs to work on building capacity in the community.

Council's response

The council agrees that the extent of identified priorities is perhaps too ambitious and has therefore refined the priorities for this period. Given the needs analysis and the results of the consultation, we have decided to focus on:

- **Development of a Community Development Strategy for Belfast**

Council is committed to working in partnership to agree a strategic framework for community development in the city. We intend to identify and invite key players to jointly agree a process and associated action plan with a view to launching an agreed strategy by 2010. Council do not underestimate the challenge involved given the complex nature of the sector and the current context of change; however we are committed to leading an inclusive process and facilitating a partnership approach with related resources.

- **Improve grass roots participation**

The engagement of local people is an essential ingredient of good community development practice. We intend to exploit the asset of our locally based staff network to improve the opportunities, avenues, methods and capacity for community engagement. The CSU and the SNAP team will work closely with the sector to support local area working within both the current arrangements and to identify sustainable mechanisms in light of the Review of Public Administration.

- **Improve citizen access to Council services**

A new business planning framework and restructuring of the service will contribute to our key objective of improving access to our council owned facilities. We will also endeavour to work with other stakeholders, including DSD and the sector, to assess local needs against current neighbourhood provision in order to support holistic planning of service provision for local communities.

- **Business Improvement**

We are committed to a continuous improvement agenda with particular focus on improvements to our customer focus, evidence based decision making, performance framework, grant support, internal and external communications and asset management.

The council is committed to working in partnership and endorses the views expressed in the consultation that success can only be achieved through holistic and joined up endeavours by all stakeholders. Council agrees that a partnership approach with clearly defined roles and responsibilities is critical to the success of the CSP which is why we have indicated more explicitly in the action plan which actions we will:

- Lead;
- Lobby;
- Facilitate; or
- Deliver

A1.5 Objectives and actions

The consultees felt that the list of objectives was quite comprehensive, however the view was that some of the objectives are the remit of some other organisations, and thus the council should only support these.

For example:

- Governance and quality standards issues is provided through organisations such as NICVA, DSD., VDA., Atlantic Philanthropy.
- VSB and VDA are leaders in promotion, development and capacity of volunteers;

Council's response and actions

Based on these views the council will not develop quality standards for community organisations as a strategic action, but rather we will work to support NICVA, DSD, VDA and other organisations in this field.

Volunteering is a critical issue for the council. A key priority action is the development of a Council volunteering policy; in this process we will seek advice from organisations who specialise in the development of volunteers.

A 1.6 Some other specific comments

Consultees had some suggestions on either what needs to be more highlighted, improved, or added to the final version of CSP, such as:

- It is crucial that the grant programme is outcome focused;
- Community development strategy is a priority but on a city wide level;
- To work on inclusion of immigrants;
- Include business improvement and investing as separate objectives; and
- Set up more children and young people projects;

Council's response and actions

Some of these suggestions reinforce the current objectives in the CSP. We will focus our efforts on community development strategy and have already embarked on a review exercise to ensure that our grants programme is outcome focused. Also we are planning to develop a Children and Young People Strategy for the council which will result in increased efforts to target children and young people and address their needs. We have also included a more specific objective in relation to immigrants and a section on 'people and processes' which explains how we will invest in our staff and improve our service delivery.