Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Community Development Strategy
Date:	26 June 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Catherine Taggart, Community Development Manger

1	**Relevant Background Information**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to present to members the final draft of the Corporate Community Development Strategy. This report also describes the results of the public consultation which has shaped the final document.
1.2	Following approval the strategy will also be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for noting due to its cross cutting nature. It will then be presented to the Cross-Party Reference Group on Community Planning (which CMT had previously identified as the key political reference group for the strategy).
1.3	Community development activity lies at the heart of much of the council's work. It is the approach we use to build the capacity of communities to become active agents in improving their city and neighbourhoods. It's an enabling approach that encourages people to come together to influence the decisions that affect their lives; to define needs; to create solutions and services for their community; and ultimately to help each other make a difference.
1.4	While there has been much academic effort focused on defining 'community development' there has been relatively little success in establishing a common understanding or shared agreement across sectors on the nature and role of community development in Northern Ireland. Such agreement is important – it is the basis for designing joint interventions; ensuring targeted grant support; and properly measuring impact. Some have argued that the relative failure of previous intervention in parts of the city have, in part, been down to this failure to agree with communities on what we to need to achieve and how best to do it. In recent years no organisation has led strongly on this challenge. In discussions

1.5	across the sectors prior to developing the strategy there was significantly strong support for the idea that the council, as civic leader, is in a unique position to make the case for community development across the various sectors. This is perhaps the central argument for developing a strategy for council – it allows us to build broad consensus on the nature of community development work in the city; its tools; techniques; and its outcomes. And it helps us identify opportunities and challenges for our own services in contributing to such outcomes.
1.6	Following an extensive pre-consultation programme, which included workshops for Members, officers and our partners in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors, a draft community development strategy was presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources committee in June 2011. This draft was accepted as a basis for public consultation which ran through the latter half of 2011. This final draft incorporates the results of the consultation and the specific implications for the council which is presented in the form of a three year action plan.

2	Key Issues
2.1	**What is community development?** The strategy (see **Appendix 3**) provides a basis on which to build a shared approach to community development in Belfast while at the same time describing how the council can best contribute in terms of its resources and services. It includes a conceptual model that describes the key aspects of community development work. This model will be shared with our partners in the community, voluntary and statutory sectors and will form the basis for agreeing future joint community development approaches and outcomes.
2.2	Our full definition states that community development is *'…the main means by which we can be better engaged with local people and support their involvement in improving the city and its neighbourhoods. It enables people to come together to: influence or take decisions about issues that matter to them and that affect their lives; define needs, issues and solutions for their community; and take action to help themselves and make a difference.'*
2.3	**The main strands of Community Development activity**: To achieve these aims the strategy identifies four main strands of community development activity. (In practical situations these strands become intertwined and are mutually reinforcing):
2.4	**Strand 1: 'Core community development'** Working with communities and individuals to build up a critical mass of active citizens, associations, groups and networks that provide the foundations for communities to articulate their needs, issues and purpose and to begin to understand how to work best together and with local and central government bodies.
2.5	While other parts of the council undoubtedly contribute to such work, our Community Services section is in a unique position in that core community development is its core aim. It forms the basis of the Community Support Programme and is likely to be the key aim of the new joint Council/DSD Community Development Infrastructure Programme.

2.6	**Strand 2: 'Engagement that works'**: Communities need to have the ability to engage effectively within their own communities (geographical or otherwise); with other communities; and with public agencies to ensure that their services meet their needs. Groups therefore need the skills and information necessary to identify priorities, seek consensus and propose solutions. From the deliverers' perspective, councils and other public bodies must acquire the skills and capacity to engage meaningfully and effectively with communities in such a way that it influences the design and delivery of our services.
2.7	Again, engagement is an increasingly important strand of work across the council and will be a key capacity for successful Community Planning and will support sustainable action to successful deliver the Investment Programme. Currently, Community Services act both as channels or facilitators for local engagement. Other services with a strong engagement element include Good Relations, Parks and Leisure, Community Safety, Health Development and Cleansing Services.
2.8	**Strand 3 - Building effective partnerships:** Increasingly, more formalised partnership-working is at the heart of many of the relationships between communities and service providers in our city.
2.9	The specific community development contribution to partnership working is providing the support for community organisations and service providers to co-design, monitor and evaluate services that address local need. They also need to be able to understand the wider interlocking social, economic and environmental issues which impact on local areas. The Council's work on the BIG Lottery Community Planning has clearly established the importance of successful community development as the seedbed on which Community Planning will grow.
2.10	**Strand 4 - Shared service design and delivery:** Although not always relevant or appropriate, in some instances communities may wish to move to a position where they are the co-deliverers of local services. Community groups become delivery partners in meeting local needs, developing community assets and delivering local and central government aims.
2.11	In our Investment Programme we have made specific commitments to building social economy enterprises and supporting such initiatives as alternative financing and the use of social clauses. In doing so we have established the importance of our existing community and voluntary infrastructure as a relatively untapped source of sustainable economic development. This strand is about working with the sector to build on the capacity and skills that exist to support local economic development. There are obvious areas of work here in which a community development approach can support the community transfer of assets; social financing; employability initiatives; and direct service delivery by the community and voluntary sector on behalf of the council and its partners.
2.12	**Public consultation response:** The consultation on the final draft was substantial. 130 organisations, representing community, voluntary, and statutory organisations were invited, as part of pre-consultation work, to participate in a series of workshops to discuss the potential shape and content of a community development model and strategy. The initial content was also guided by UK best practice advice and support from Community Places, from Gabriel Channan, an independent adviser on community involvement, engagement and development and former research and policy director at the Community Development

	Foundation and from Dr Brendan Murtagh at QUB. The council then undertook a three month public consultation process that included sending copies of the draft document directly to approximately 300 organisations and networks to seek their views.
2.13	In the response to the consultation there was consistent recognition of the importance of community development work to the city and its value to the citizen and in enhancing the work of organisations in both the statutory and third sector. There was broad support for the council taking a lead in this area and that given our civic leadership role we were in a unique position to encourage greater understanding of the nature and importance of community development and to foster a shared approach to both delivering community development work and measuring its impact. (More details on the consultation are attached as **Appendix One**.)
2.14	**Opportunities for partnership working:** Since the council started work on its strategy a number of other organisations have begun developing their own community development strategies or frameworks. These include the Public Health Agency, the Health and Social Care Board, the Rural Community Network, the East Belfast Community Development Association and the Department for Social Development.
2.15	Staff from Community Services have worked with all of the above organisations to maximise opportunities between the council's strategy and these emerging initiatives. There is substantial alignment in the critical aspects of strategies – particularly around outcomes frameworks, capacity building, engagement and the importance of community development to service design and delivery. The PHA and HSCB are keen to work with the council on promoting this role and wish to develop joint pieces of work. While the DSD's own Ubrand Regeneration and Community Development Policy framework remains at an early draft stage the Department has adopted the ideas behind the council's strategy. They have also agreed these will form the basis for an outcomes framework for the joint £6million Community Development Infrastructure Programme that is currently in development.
2.16	**Implementation plan:** The development of the strategy was led by a Touchstone Group that included the directors of Development, Parks and Leisure and Health and Environmental Services. The group examined a series of opportunities that can begin to embed community development practice across services; contribute to determining and measuring our community impact; and building more effective engagement structures. It was developed with the understanding that the opportunities emerging from the new strategy are not necessarily entirely new initiatives. Instead the emphasis has been on how approaches to community development can support and enhance current activity.
2.17	Officers in Development Department are now working with colleagues across Council to draft a robust implementation plan which will identify action and link each initiative to a particular community development strand; identifying the lead service and the targeted outcome of the work so we can report progress and impact.
2.18	These discussions will be particularly important as the Community Development Strategy consultation was in advance of the publication of the council's

Investment Programme. It will thus be important to identify and confirm how best the community development strategy can contribute to the effective delivery of the programme.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	It should be noted that many of the pieces of work identified in the implementation are contributing to existing initiatives and programmes and will thus be resourced from within existing budgets. Those which have been identified as the responsibility of Community Services have been included in the Development Department budget for 2012 to 2013.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	Drawing on the evidence from pre-consultation work with councillors, traders, officers; and the analysis of the substantial twelve week public consultation exercise; and with support from the council's Equality Officer, it has been confirmed that the strategy has no substantial negative equality implications and thus will not require a full Equality Impact Assessment.

5	Recommendations

5.1	Members are requested to:
	
	  i. Agree the final draft of the Community Development strategy.
	  ii. Note the ongoing development of a robust implementation plan across Council to ensure delivery against targeted outcomes.

6	Documents Attached
Appendix 1:	Response to the Public Consultation
Appendix 2:	Final draft of the Community Development strategy 2012 to 2015