



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Working towards a more integrated Safer City Agenda
Date:	20 th March 2009
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Relevant Background Information

Community safety is one of the main concerns of the people of Belfast and hence is a key element of the *Supporting People and Communities* theme of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Members will be aware that the Council's contribution to a Safer City is achieved through:

- **The Community Safety Partnership**

The Council takes the lead role in supporting the Belfast Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which brings together representatives from various agencies and sectors to work collectively on the delivery of programmes to help make communities safer. Each of the political parties is represented. The CSP has recently agreed a Safer Belfast Plan for 2009–2011, which prioritises four main themes: tackling anti-social behaviour; reducing alcohol fuelled violent crime; dealing with hate crime; and to help Belfast feel safer. The Council receives funding from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) on behalf of the CSP of £380,000 for programme work and £123,000 for staff per year (secured until end of March 2011). Partner agencies also make some contributions to particular programmes.

- **The District Policing Partnership**

The Council is also responsible for leading and administering the District Policing Partnership (DPP) which consists of a Principal DPP and four geographically based sub groups. The DPP, which is made up of both Elected and Independent Members, has statutory responsibility for community engagement on policing issues, gaining the co-operation of the public with the police in preventing crime and in monitoring the performance of the police against the targets included in the Annual and Local Policing Plans. The Northern Ireland Policing Board provides for 75% of approved expenditure incurred by the DPP which consists mostly of Members' Allowances and staff salaries. There is also provision for the advertising and holding of a significant number of public consultation meetings and public meetings to monitor police performance and a small

amount to support local initiatives.. In the 2008/09 financial year, the total budget for the DPP is £511,000 of which the Council contributes £128,000.

- **Community Safety Team**

A Community Safety Team to support the CSP and also to oversee the delivery of a number of programmes and projects is currently located within the Environmental Health Service. This team has recently been reviewed and the new structure will create a geographic focus as well as support for key projects. There will be 4 Community Safety Co-ordinators and 4 Anti-social Behaviour Officers with responsibility for the North, South East and West of the City respectively. There will also be project officers responsible for wardens services, alleygating, alcohol misuse, hate crime etc. Both the Roaming and Holyland wardens are also employed within that team, although this service is also under review.

- **ASB Co-ordinator – Parks and Leisure**

The ASB Co-ordinator in Parks and Leisure was originally employed on a pilot basis to develop community based solutions to anti-social behaviour in nine parks and leisure sites. This post also supports the wider range of activities undertaken in the Parks and Leisure Department. An evaluation of the pilot strongly endorsed the methodology which has seen a 43% drop in ASB in the pilot sites. The Parks and Leisure Committee at its December 2008 meeting agreed to roll out the approach to other sites and to recruit the post of anti-social behaviour officer on a permanent basis to support this.

- **Other Council Services**

Many of the Council services carry out activities which improve community safety. This includes leisure and community centres providing diversionary activities, park rangers keeping their parks safe, cleansing graffiti squads, the night time noise service and many of the Good Relations activities, particularly around interfaces and bonfire management.

Cross Council Working

As a Safer Belfast is now one of the Council's themes under the Corporate Plan, a greater focus has been placed on achieving a more integrated approach. The Chief Executive has taken a lead role in driving this theme. An internal Safer City Group has been established and a 'One – Council Safer City Plan' produced which aims to make better use of resources, ensure joined up communication and find innovative ways of responding to emerging problems.

CSP and DPP Review

The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice is currently undertaking a review of the future for CSPs and DPPs with a view to ultimately achieving an integrated partnership. However it is now unlikely that any radical changes will be made before devolution of these powers. Therefore in the meantime a consultation document is likely to call for better joining up of the two partnerships at a local level.

Community Engagement

There are a plethora of community engagement structures and process which have a role in developing a safer city. These include DPP Sub Groups (meetings in Public), Partners and Communities Together (PACTs), Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships, Area Partnership Boards, Community Empowerment Partnerships and the Council's emerging approach to Local Area Working.

In addition, the West Belfast Community Safety Forum has been set up in the West of the city with the aim of improving the engagement of the community with the statutory sector and with the criminal justice agencies in particular. At a recent meeting involving

Minister Goggins and a joint delegation from the DPP and CSP, the Minister acknowledged that there was a need to support communities in other areas of the city too, but that the approach in each area is likely to be different. He further challenged the delegation to consider what might be appropriate in other areas, but was non committal about any additional financial support.

Key Issues

Members through various Committees and through the Council itself have expressed the view that there is too much duplication of effort and confusion created by the way we currently deliver the safer city agenda and have called for a much more integrated approach.

Concerns have also been raised in respect of the myriad of community engagement structures and processes and there is a clear need to rationalise this. Recent developments in terms of the establishment of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum and the PSNI led roll out of PACTs (Partners and Communities Together) have escalated discussions on community engagement processes.

In addition, at a recent meeting involving Minister Goggins and a joint delegation from the DPP and CSP, the Minister invited Council Members to consider how, in the short to medium term, CSPs and DPPs could work more closely together.

There is clearly a need for political leadership on these issues. To start this process, it is proposed that a safer city workshop should be held in the Lord Mayor's Parlour, Clarendon Dock on Thursday 25th March from 4.30pm to 7.00pm to which all Members have received an invitation. The workshop will be followed by dinner. The purpose of the workshop will be to:

- Gain a consistent understanding of the current work being undertaken on safer city, the roles of the CSP and DPP and developments that are taking place such as the review of CSPs / DPPs, proposals for PACTs, etc;
- Develop a clear view on what additional measures are needed to ensure better integration of service delivery internally within the Council;
- Develop a consistent understanding of the current and developing community engagement structures and processes and consider if it is possible for the Council to work across these more effectively;
- Consider the possibilities for better aligning the work of the CSP and DPP in the short to medium term;
- Agree how Members should be involved in taking proposals and actions forward and further shaping the safer city agenda.

The NIO and PSNI have been invited to give an input to the workshop.

A more detailed discussion document, which includes a summary of the meeting with Minister Goggins, is attached.

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost of the workshop is estimated in the region of £1,500.

No other costs are evident at this stage.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the issues which need further debate and discussion and agree to extend an invitation to all Members to attend the safer city workshop on 25th March to begin this process.

Key to Abbreviations

CSP - Community Safety Partnership
DPP – District Policing partnership
NIO – Northern Ireland Office
PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland
PACT- Partners and Communities Together
ASB- Anti-Social Behaviour

Documents Attached

Safer City Discussion Document