



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.
<b>Subject:</b>	An information session on the development of a corporate strategy to strengthen council's contribution to Belfast's community development goals
<b>Date:</b>	10 December 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Catherine Taggart, ext 3525.

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Proposals for a corporate community development strategy, that would allow the council to contribute more effectively to shared community development goals, was presented to Development Committee as part of the department's 2010/11 business plan. It was also discussed by Members at individual party briefings on the business plan.</p> <p>The proposals describe an inclusive corporate approach to the development of the strategy as it will have an impact not just within Community Services but across the council and amongst our partners and local communities.</p> <p>It is particularly important that the strategy has significant political direction. Thus the pre-consultation plan places a strong emphasis on the role of Members. The plan also encourages the participation of officers from across council; the voluntary and community sectors; and our key partner organisations.</p> <p><b>Current status</b></p> <p>The voluntary organisation, Community Places, were appointed in June 2010 as facilitators in the design and development of the strategy of which there are three planned stages:</p> <p><b>The preparatory stage</b> (June to September 2010) has now been completed. This work included ensuring corporate alignment that the development of an evaluation model for the strategy that integrates into wider corporate performance measurement; analysing community development best practice in Northern Ireland and elsewhere; carrying out preliminary conversations with council officers; preparing a draft community development statement that would form the basis of discussion; and designing an approach to engagement with relevant stakeholders both internal and external.</p>

	<p><b>Stage 2</b> (September to December) includes initial engagement with Members – in particular the Community Planning Reference Group - and delivering a comprehensive engagement programme with a range of stakeholders including officers from across council, the Belfast community sector; and our statutory partners.</p> <p>In preparation for the information session with Members a stakeholder workshop was held at Malone House on 6 October and involved over 30 representatives from statutory partners and the community sector. Initial feedback has been extremely positive, with broad agreement on the need for work on a shared understanding of community development; the creation of a council strategy; and support for council leadership on this in the absence of developments elsewhere.</p> <p>There was such a high demand for attendance at the event that a second external stakeholder session was held at Belfast Castle on Wednesday, 3rd November. This event attracted 50 representatives from the statutory and community sector partners who contributed significant ideas to content of the community development statement.</p> <p><b>Stage 3</b> (January 2011) is the formation of a draft community development strategy for the council and a three year implementation plan with detailed actions for year one and outline plans for years two and three.</p>
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>If the community development strategy is to be relevant and have a significant impact across the council it will require political direction from elected representatives with a close understanding and ownership of its aims and objectives.</p> <p>Work on the community development strategy will be considered by the new Community Planning Reference Group. There are a number of reasons for this, not least of which being that community development work is a critical supporting strand of any successful approach to Community Planning as it can ensure more effective engagement with communities about issues and priorities. The Reference Group will therefore be exploring the strategy as a key part of its agenda and will be receiving regular reports on its progress. This will be an important on-going link between Members and work on the strategy going forward.</p> <p>The emerging CD strategy will, ultimately, inform the council's submission to DSD's Community Support Programme, a draft of which is due to be ready by February 2011. It is therefore also important for Members to have this early opportunity to consider some of the emerging ideas around the impact of CD work as they are likely to inform the shape and direction of the council's Community Support Plan.</p> <p>It is therefore proposed that a general information session be arranged for all Members to provide details on the pre-consultation work to date and the emerging ideas. This session would be facilitated by the project consultants, Community Places, and would likely last not more than two hours.</p> <p>Following this workshop, the CD strategy will continue to be considered by the Community Planning Reference Group as part of its on-going agenda.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The Members have stressed that one of their key requirements in the new governance arrangements is to take control of the Council resources at a strategic level. In order for this to be done, it is considered that this section of the new report needs to be much more concise and robust.
3.2	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Under the 2010/2011 departmental plan, Development Committee have already agreed a budget for the development of the strategy.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u></p> <p>None.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	This is a pre-consultation stage in the work progressing to a corporate community development strategy. The activities in this stage will form the evidence base that contributes to the equality screening assessment.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to agree to a lunchtime information session for all Members to be held in January 2011. An exact date and venue to be agreed..

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
John MGrillen, Director of Development; January 2011.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
<p>CD – Community development</p> <p>DSD – Department for Social Development</p>	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
None.	