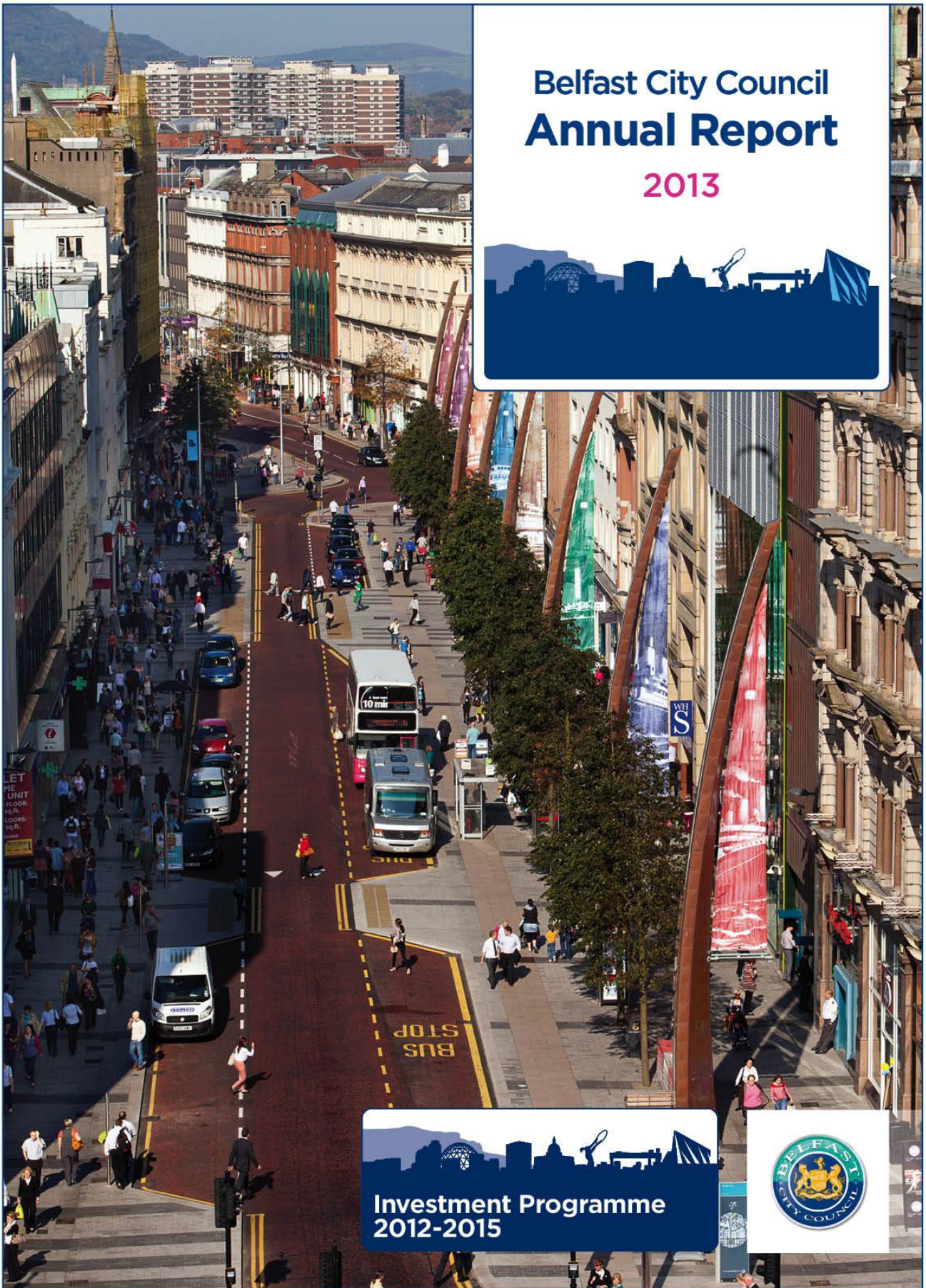


# Belfast City Council Annual Report 2013



Investment Programme  
2012-2015



## Contents

Introduction	3-4
About the council	5
Our vision and strategic themes	5-6
Governance	7
Our finances	8-9
Investment Programme – one year on	10-14
Key highlights	
- Strategic Policy and Resources Committee	15-17
- Health and Environmental Services Committee	18-20
- Parks and Leisure Committee	21-23
- Development Committee	24-26
Update on Local Government Reform	27-28
Performance Information	29-30

## Introduction

### From Chair of Strategic and Policy Resources Committee and Chief Executive

Over the past year, and despite continuing economic uncertainty, Belfast City Council has worked determinedly to strengthen and develop the unique characteristics of this city, to enhance its standing as a place where people are proud to call home, where investors and businesses are keen to commit and where visitors enjoy a positive and welcoming experience.

Last year saw the launch of our Investment Programme which sets out our commitment to deliver for the City over three years (2012 - 15) through £150m investment in the City. The past year has been one of significant progress in delivering our plan, during this time we have:

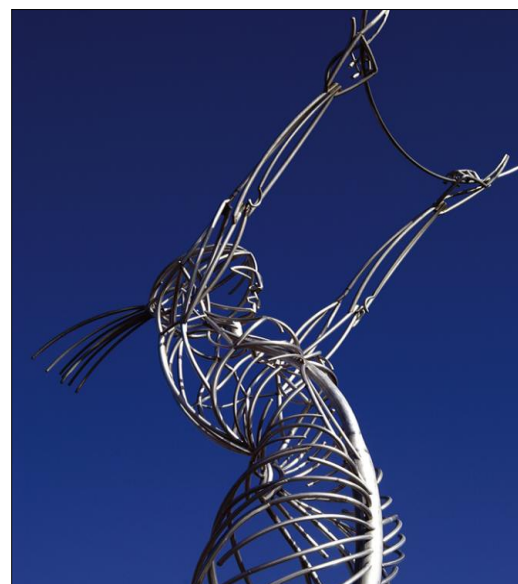
- Completed £8.27 million of physical projects and carried out £6.5 million of maintenance to vital community facilities and assets;
- Secured £13.7 from the department of Culture, Media and Sport's Urban Broadband Fund to become a "Superconnected city", helping to make Belfast competitive;
- Delivered 247 permanent and temporary job opportunities as well as offering 244 work placements;
- Launched the £300,000 "Achieve Belfast" Bursary Fund to help 16-24 year-olds into education, employment and training;
- Increased the amount of our expenditure with local suppliers from 50% to 58%;
- Refurbished 6 playgrounds;
- Secured £486,000 to deal with dilapidated buildings;
- Supported the award of nearly £7 million towards peace and reconciliation schemes as well as community development, good relations and community safety initiatives.



We have done this while continuing to deliver all our key services across the city including waste collection and street cleaning, parks, playgrounds and leisure services, delivering events, supporting tourism and promoting economic development opportunities.

The Council was also quick to take action during the flooding and severe weather conditions that affected the City. Staff responded to calls from residents, carried out inspections of affected homes, distributed sandbags and issued hardship payments.

Against a backdrop of resource constraints, financial pressures and the most significant reorganisation of local government in four decades, the behind the scenes efforts to underpin and enable all of this work cannot be understated.



For the first time the Council set a zero per cent rate while at the same time generated more than £2 million of efficiency savings, increased employment and training opportunities within the organisation and made improvements to our payment processes to minimise the delays faced by the companies that do business with us.

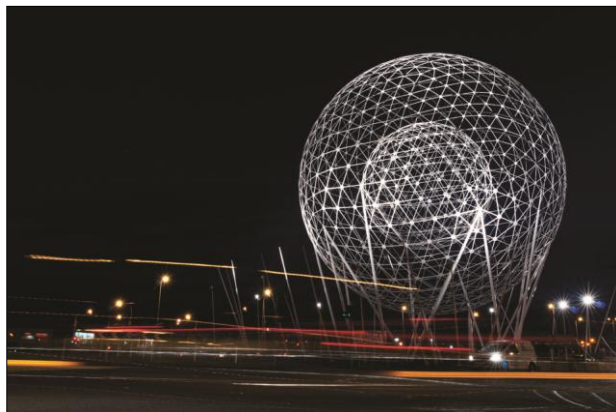
Throughout the year, we have availed of opportunities to build new partnerships and to work with other organisations to address inequalities, confront challenges and maximise benefits.

We have supported others, and been supported by others, to further our collective objectives to improve the lives of the people we serve.

As an organisation contributing to changing the face of the city, we will be building on all of these successes in the year ahead and, with the outworking of local government reform, will do so to an increased population, within a changing political structure and with additional powers.

It will be more important than ever that we do the right things, in the right way, at the right time.

It is our hope that this update on the achievements made so far, against the programmes and plans of last year, will provide reassurance that we can make it happen.



**Councillor Deirdre Hargey, Chair of Strategic and Policy Resources Committee**



**Peter McNaney, Chief Executive, Belfast City Council**

## About the Council

Belfast City Council is the local authority with responsibility for the city of Belfast, the capital and largest city in the region. The Council is the largest of the 26 councils in Northern Ireland with a gross expenditure of £175.2 million in 2012/13 and over 2,300 employees.

The Council performs six principal roles within its local area and district:

- a civic leadership role in providing a vision for Belfast and its people, working in partnership with others and investing for the future to ensure a better quality of life for our citizens,
- the direct provision of a number of services and facilities,
- the promotion of the arts, tourism, community and economic development,
- the regulation and licensing of activities relating to environmental health, consumer protection, building regulations, and public safety,
- a representative role on a number of bodies and Boards including Education and Health,
- a consultative role in relation to functions conducted by other Government bodies and agencies on issues such as planning, water, roads and housing.

## Our Vision and Corporate Themes

The corporate themes and objectives to which the organisation has worked towards over the last year were agreed at the outset of our corporate planning process.

They reflect the broad range of activity undertaken by the Council and incorporate elements that include direct service delivery, advocacy and influencing roles and the internal support structures that enable everything we do to be planned, resourced and managed appropriately.

To achieve our overall purpose as an organisation we take a lead role in improving quality of life for the people of Belfast by making the city and its neighbourhoods better places to live in, work in, invest in and visit.

Examples of the corporate themes and related priorities that we have committed ourselves to deliver include:

### Providing city leadership

Building partnerships, lobbying and advocating, consulting and responding and sharing responsibility for delivering positive outcomes for the city and its people.

### Improving our environment

Providing a clean, green and attractive urban environment, managing and minimising waste and dealing with public health issues.

### **Supporting our economy**

Supporting businesses, encouraging investment, delivering and supporting training and employment opportunities, promoting tourism and growing our rate base.

### **Engaging our neighbourhoods and communities**

Building capacity, connecting people and reducing barriers, enhancing local environments, providing leisure and recreation opportunities and improving safety.

### **Improving our services**

Aligning resources to identified priorities in order to deliver efficient, quality and value for money services.

### **Creating an organisation fit to lead and serve**

Ensuring strong financial planning, effective human resource management, robust performance, programme and project management, well organised communications, appropriate governance, audit and risk mechanisms and up to date information about management processes and procedures.

The overview of performance outlined throughout the remainder of this report illustrate how the organisation has contributed to the achievements of these priorities during 2012-13.

## Governance – how the Council makes decisions

### Committee structure



The work of Belfast City Council is overseen by a **committee structure**, which is based on the full council and six standing committees, as illustrated above.

The operational activity is carried out by our six departments each of which reports performance back to the relevant committee. Our departments are:

- Chief Executive's;
- Development;
- Finance and Resources;
- Health and Environmental Services;
- Parks and Leisure; and
- Property and Projects.

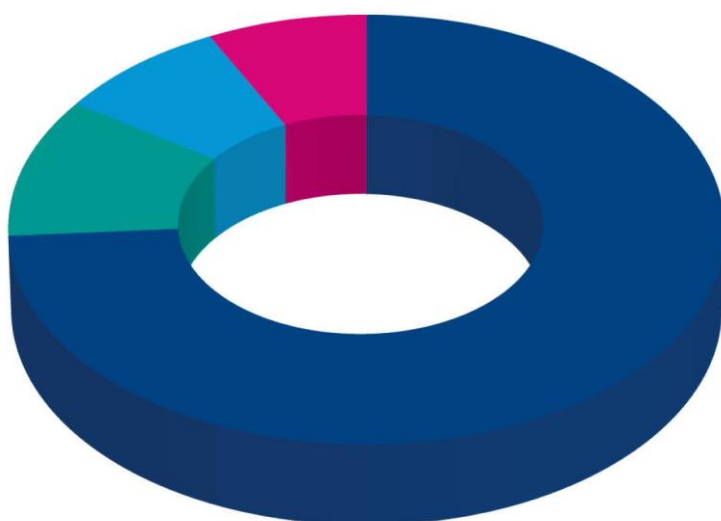
The Chief Executive's, Finance and Resources and Property and Projects departments all report directly to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

## Our finances

Some highlights for the year 2012-13 are listed below.

- Maintained a rates increase below the rate of inflation (less than £1 per week for most households) for the 2012-13 period
- Secured a rates freeze for the first time in council history, i.e. a 0% increase in the district rate, for the 2013-14 period
- Realised efficiencies of £2.3 million in cash savings.

## Where we get our money from



### Total spend – Belfast City Council 2012-13

Total spend	£175.2 m
District rate	£129.7m
Fees and charges	£18.3m
Grants	£14.1m
Other	£13.1m

Belfast City Council gets its money from three key areas. They are:

- **RATES** from householders and businesses
- **GRANTS** from central government
- **FEES AND CHARGES** from services we deliver such as leisure, waste disposal and building control

The Council receives 75% of its income from **district rates**.

Approximately two thirds of the rate income comes from businesses in the city (non-domestic) and one third from households (domestic).

### Business rates

### Household rates

The district rate is set and agreed by the Council and helps pay for the services and facilities we provide, including:

- waste collection/disposal;
- street cleaning;
- indoor/outdoor leisure facilities;
- parks and recreation areas;
- regulatory/licensing services;
- community development;
- developing the economy; and
- supporting tourism and the arts.



## Where the money went

Each year we must ensure that we have appropriate resources in place to deliver the services required by our ratepayers.

To do this the Council's six departments submit, to their committees, details of what they plan to do and how much this will cost.

These plans help the Council determine how much money is required overall and, taking account of other sources of income, what 'rate' needs to be set for the city to raise the required money.

In 2012-13, the Council committed to a **net spend of £133.87 million**, allocated as outlined below:



### Net annual budget 2012-13

Total net annual budget- £133.87 million

Development Committee	£19.66m
Health and Environmental Services Committee	£42.98m
Parks and Leisure Committee	£23.17m
Strategic Policy and Resources Committee	£31.92m
Belfast Investment Fund	£6m
Capital financing	£10.14m



### Net actual spend 2012-13

Total net actual spend - £133.01 million

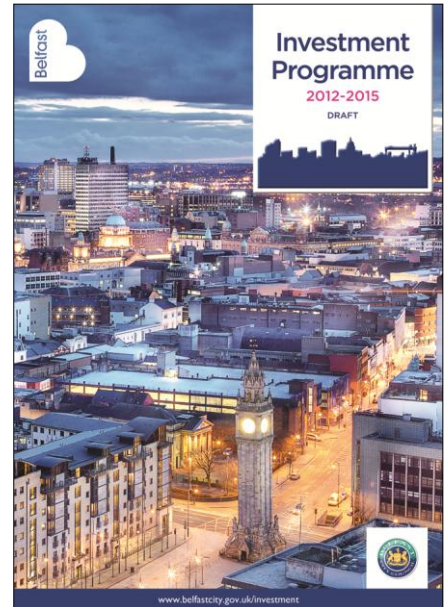
Development Committee	£19.51m
Health and Environmental Services Committee	£42.48m
Parks and Leisure Committee	£23.22m
Strategic Policy and Resources Committee	£31.66m
Belfast Investment Fund	£6m
Capital financing	£10.14m

## Investment Programme – Year 1 Achievements

During 2012, amid the ongoing economic recession, the Council responded proactively to its role as a civic leader by launching a £150 million, three-year Investment Programme.

This ambitious Programme was a unique first for the Council, not least because it was borne out of the collective will of six distinct political parties, but also because it was designed both to deliver physical improvements while also stimulating a sense of optimism and possibility in the city.

The programme articulated our investment plans in terms of four key strands, each of which aligns to our corporate themes and objectives:



- **Physical investment - £75 million** to build and improve city and community assets and support employment in construction and other sectors;
- **Economy – £34 million** towards local economic growth, including 600 job, placement and internship opportunities within the council, a bursary scheme to help those aged 16 to 24 into employment and increasing the amount of council spend with local suppliers by 10%;
- **People, communities and neighbourhoods – £29 million** to improve quality of life and tackle deprivation by investing in services and community capacity, creating quality open spaces, providing more leisure and cultural opportunities and supporting the development of safe and shared futures;
- **Value for money services – £20 million** savings through the provision of effective and efficient services including, for example, vehicle fleet, improving payment to creditors and, where possible, incorporating social clauses into our procurement processes.

We have made great strides towards these goals in the last 12 months, with a number of highlights against each of the strands detailed below.

### Physical investment

**Between April 2012 and March 2013, we spent £14.77m** on new physical projects and improvements to vital community facilities and assets. These included:

- **Refurbishing Mary Peters Athletics Track** - invested £3million to provided a new eight-lane track, revamped field area and spectator stand allowing us to attract major sporting events (such as the World Police and Fire Games planned for August 2013);
- **Transforming parks at Woodvale and Dunville** – developed new or improved parks, playgrounds and community facilities, following a £4million investment from the council and



the Department for Social Development;

- **Developing a public bike hire scheme** – secured £700,000 from DRD to support a public bike hire scheme benefiting commuters and tourists alike, while reducing emissions and traffic congestion;
- **Upgrading the crematorium** – invested £2.4 million to improve the facilities and increase the number of services available, while reducing the environmental impact of cremation;
- **Investing in communities** – agreed £4.6 million in principle to 62 neighbourhood projects as part of £5 million Local Investment Fund;



Other commitments to help improve the attractiveness of the city included:

- **Lighting up City Hall** - installed a LED 'Illuminate' lighting system in City Hall to save around £14,000 per annum on electricity costs and reduce carbon emissions by 90 tonnes
- **Expanding outdoor gyms** – established eight free of charge outdoor gyms across the city in partnership with the Public Health Agency;
- **Improving pitches provision** – undertook preparatory work on new pitches and changing facilities at ten sites across the city as part of a £14million improvement programme. We are also working in partnership with Sports NI, DSD and DCAL to invest in new pitches at the Hammer Complex and Marrowbone.
- **Creating a digital city** - secured £13.7 million from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Urban Broadband Fund to become a 'super-connected city' and transform the city's digital infrastructure;



We are currently awaiting the outcome of applications for a further £45 million to support schemes including the £30 million conference centre expansion at **Belfast Waterfront**, an

**Innovation Centre at Springvale**, a new Community Hub at **Girdwood**, a new **Belfast Zoo playground** and **infrastructure** to support a **green economy business park at the North Foreshore**.

## Economy

Between April 2012 and March 2013, we began to make an impact on the local economy by:

- **Creating opportunities for employment and training** – by reducing the council’s dependency on temporary agency workers and creating permanent directly employed established posts, we have exceeded our Investment Programme targets by putting in place 247 **employment opportunities** and offering 244 work placement, **apprenticeship** or internship opportunities (total target was 400 by 2015);
- **Tackling unemployment** - we had committed to the provision of **pre-employment support** to 1,200 people and businesses but have exceeded that with a total of 1,800 businesses supported. 39 long-term unemployed people have attended our pre-employment support programme, with five participants subsequently securing a post within the council;
- **Supporting employment** – launched the ‘Achieve Bursary Fund’, a £300,000 fund designed to support 16-24 year olds moving into education, training and employment;
- **Improving opportunities for local suppliers** - increased council spend with local suppliers from £31 million in 2010/11 to £34 million in 2011-12, representing an increase of 9.2% - the proportion of total council spend with local suppliers currently stands at 58%;
- **Increasing our use of social clauses** in the procurement of contracts, to date incorporating them into tenders for Mary Peters Athletics Track and Dunville and Woodvale Parks - we are continuing to clarify the parameters of the revised legislation in preparation for the drafting of future contracts;
- **Funding the arts** - agreed £4.1 million of funding to 50 local arts groups, supporting more than 400 jobs, 4,000 artists and 700 volunteers; and
- **Putting Belfast on the map** – secured Belfast as the starting point for the Giro D’Italia cycling race in 2014 which is expected to attract international media coverage worth around £10 million to the local economy. We also continued to prepare for the World Police and Fire Games in 2013 and the Tall Ships in 2015.



## People, Communities and Neighbourhoods

Between April 2012 and March 2013, we continued to demonstrate our commitment to people, communities and neighbourhoods, including:

- **Revitalising events in our parks** – provided £100,000 towards community parks events;
- **Improving play facilities** – spent £649,200 refurbishing six playgrounds;
- **Tackling dilapidated buildings** –improved the look of local neighbourhoods by using £486,000 to demolish, refurbish and improve 245 dilapidated buildings;
- **Improving community safety** – carried out door-to-door consultations with more than 2,000 households as part of plans to install 150 extra alleygates;
- **Supporting focused area working** – co-ordinated service delivery across multiple agencies tackling deprivation in Lower Falls/Divis area as our first pilot area;
- **Developing community gardens** – committed £200,000 to enable people to grow their own produce in community gardens;
- **Promoting volunteering** – supported 74,000 hours of volunteer work;
- **Encouraging good relations** - distributed nearly £7 million towards peace and reconciliation schemes as well as community development, good relations and community safety initiatives; and
- **Promoting health and wellbeing** - created access to over 40,000 new physical activity opportunities through 'Active Belfast'.

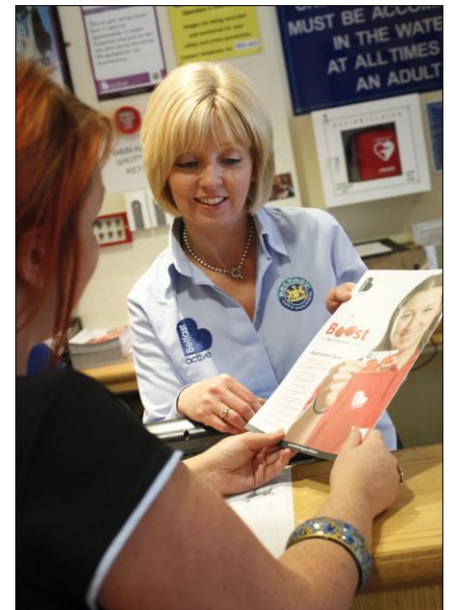


## Value for money

**Between April 2012 and March 2013** we undertook to ensure value for money and efficiencies in the delivery of our commitments.

We have helped to achieve this by fulfilling some of the commitments set out at the beginning of the Investment Programme:

- **Delivering a rates freeze** - secured, for the first time in council history, a 0% increase in the district rate for 2013-14;
- **Realising savings** – generated efficiencies of £2.3 million, bringing savings to a total of £16 million since 2006;
- **Paying our creditors promptly** – benefited our suppliers by paying 75% of creditors within 28 days of receipt, leaving us on course to achieve our 90% target by 2015; and
- **Fleet efficiencies** - modernised our fuel station at Duncrue so we can reduce emissions and ensure our vehicles are running more efficiently.



## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee



Chaired by Councillor Deirdre Hargey, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for setting the Council's overall strategic direction and corporate priorities and policies, through the development of the Corporate Plan. The Committee is also responsible for allocating resources (financial, human and assets) and for managing performance. In addition it has overall responsibility for the promotion of equality, diversity and good relations and for the organisation's human resources, corporate communications, procurement and IT functions.

### Chairman's message and priorities

Providing civic leadership by highlighting the challenges that face the city and working with others to achieve a co-ordinated solution is a key priority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. We are committed to leaving a legacy for future generations, providing effective, value for money, services and ensuring that as many people as possible within the city can connect to the opportunities all around us.

The Committee, in its capacity as the **Belfast Voluntary Transition Committee**, has also responsibility to oversee the organisational change programme attached to the Reform of Local Government. An implementation plan is in place and work well underway to prepare for the extension of the city's boundary, the transfer of new functions and legislative/governance changes emerging from the reform. Work continues with colleagues from **Lisburn and Castlereagh Councils** to plan for the extension of services to our new citizens and for the transfer of assets and staff. Communication remains a key priority, with updates to Councillors, ratepayers and staff delivered on an ongoing basis.

Work to support the delivery of the **Investment Programme** is also continuing, with an agreed delivery and reporting structure now established, following the appointment of a Programme Management Team. Regular reporting against project milestones takes place and any issues of concern are elevated to an Oversight Board for final decisions. In addition, a comprehensive communication and engagement plan is in place, providing staff with regular and comprehensive updates.

Belfast is set to become a '**super connected city**', having successfully secured **£13.7 million** in government funding to improve broadband coverage in the city. This will be further enhanced by £8 million of private investment, and £3 million from the council, giving us around £25 million overall to spend on the Super-connected Cities project. This gives us the green light to begin work on creating a world-class digital city. As well as improving broadband infrastructure, we wish to future-proof capacity and make sure all our residents have access to new and emerging online services.



As a Council we have worked hard to manage budgets and generate **efficiencies** to free up money to pay for additional investment across the city, so that we can deliver the excellent services and invest in improving them.

Our commitment to delivering high quality services and continually improving these services for residents was demonstrated through the **corporate Investors in People award**, the national standard for best practice in people management which we received during the year.

The Council plays a lead role in Belfast's Good Relations Partnership. As part of this work, we are rolling out the second phase of the **Belfast PEACE III Plan**. This is a major programme which aims to build positive relations locally and tackle sectarian and racist attitudes. To date, in the second phase of the programme, over 8,000 people have participated or attended 174 different forms of activities. The programme is on target to have engaged over 16,000 people in projects and activities that promote Belfast as a safer, shared city.

As a major asset and land owner in the city one of the Council's key priorities is to use our place shaping role to ensure that we maximise the use of our assets. In the last 12 months, we **spent £8.27 million** and carried out **£6.5m of improvements**. Work undertaken included the development of a new **fuel station** at Duncrue, preparatory work a new £200,000 **bridge in Clement Wilson Park**, and the demolition of the old Grove Leisure Centre. We also **secured £145,000 through the sale of assets**, additional money to be reinvested in future projects.

We have committed to investing £20 million in **partnership projects** under our **Belfast Investment Fund** by 2015. During the year we began to work closely with the Local Area Working Groups to identify potential projects for funding.





Over the year we:

**Took the lead in driving the physical portfolio of the Investment Programme across the city, ensuring delivery was on time, to budget and agreed specifications. In doing this we:**

- Project managed **£8.27 million of physical projects and carried out £6.5m** of improvements to community facilities and assets
- Awarded, in principle, **£4.6 million to 62 neighbourhood projects** as part of the **£5 million Local Investment Fund**

**Enabled value for money delivery by ensuring efficient use of resources to achieve council priorities. In doing this we:**

- Secured savings of more than **£225,000** through procurement related efficiencies
- Supported the organisation's **performance management framework** with regular reporting against departmental plans and targets
- Successfully tendered and awarded two major contracts which included **social and community clauses**
- Paid **75% of creditors within 28 days**

**Made the best use of technology to deliver services when and where they were needed. In doing this we:**

- Attracted over 1.5 million **website** visitors, almost 18,000 **Twitter** followers and 14,000 **Facebook** fans
- Awarded three stars in the annual **Better Connected** report which looks at the content, navigation and accuracy of more than 400 local authority websites

**Attracted and developed people who will work together to deliver our services and develop the organisation for the future. In doing this we:**

- Achieved the **Corporate Investors in People Award**
- Received '**Member of Excellence**' award from Employers for Disability Northern Ireland (EFDNI)

**Promoted and developed tourism, culture and arts, making Belfast an attractive place to live in, work in, study in, invest in and visit. In doing this we:**

- Carried out more than 1,500 **City Hall tours** and welcomed almost 65,000 visitors to the City Hall

**Promoted good relations and equality to implement the actions in the Good Relations Plan. In doing this we:**

- Hosted the successful Shared History exhibition, Different Allegiances, covering the history of Belfast as part of our **Decade of Centenaries programme**
- Supported **320 community groups** through our **Good Relations Grant Aid, St Patrick's small grants and Summer Interventin funding programmes**
- Distributed **£4 million to 22 projects** to tackle sectarianism and racism, including the **Youth Intervention Programme**
- Trained over 320 staff in **Good Relations Awareness** and more than 200 practitioners in **Migrant Awareness and Ending Hate training**
- **Organised 18 Civic events** as part of our **Good Relations and Diversity engagement programme**

## Health and Environmental Services Committee



Chaired by Councillor Patrick McCarthy, the Health and Environmental Services Committee is responsible for ensuring a safer, healthier, cleaner and more sustainable city by overseeing street cleansing, waste management, community safety and building control and environmental health functions.

### Chairman's message

Caring for Belfast's environment and creating a sustainable, clean, safe and healthy living space for all is a key priority for Belfast City Council.

The Health and Environmental Services Committee has worked to promote a high quality urban and local environment, safer buildings, high standards of waste collection and recycling, food safety and good public health.

Highlights for 2012-13 include:

Belfast suffered both serious **flooding and severe weather** conditions in 2012-13. Our Emergency Team sprung into action immediately on both occasions, initiating their Emergency Response Plan to relieve suffering to those affected. Council staff showed real adaptability in dealing with both.

During the flooding, we answered 4,111 calls, carried out 1,463 inspections, delivered 7,000 sandbags and issued 644 hardship payments to residents.

**Recycling** continues to be a major priority and we have set ourselves a challenging target of recycling 50% of our waste by 2015.

Our commitment to creating a cleaner and greener environment resulted in an improved recycling rate of 35%, representing a continuous improvement over time, increasing from 22.3% in 2010.

Over the past year, we have worked in partnership with the Department of Environment to deliver a programme for the removal or upgrading of 245 **derelict buildings** that were blighting local areas. Removing eyesores and transforming derelict sites is essential for improving quality of life and local neighbourhoods.



Belfast was successful in its bid to receive a prestigious **IBM Smarter Cities Challenge** grant, worth an estimated \$400,000 in consultancy.

IBM experts will help the council and other agencies that deliver services across the city to make better decisions about where to direct their resources to addressing health inequalities through better use of data and information.

During 2012, new **Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)** were set up across Belfast to bring about safer, shared and confident communities and to achieve better engagement between communities and the PSNI. More than £228,000 was allocated to community groups through the Community Safety Grants Scheme

We introduced **new regulations** to reduce flyposting and the amount of litter from flyers that ends up on the city's streets, and increased the level of fines and controls to reduce dog fouling and the number of stray dogs.

We also worked in partnership to improve health, specifically focusing on:

- emotional health and wellbeing, including hosting a **Celebrating Life Event**, undertaking a city wide survey and training staff and elected representatives
- signing a declaration committing Belfast to becoming an **Age Friendly City**, with a three-year action plan to improve our facilities and services for older people
- helping over 230 households gain support to insulate their homes, hence **reducing fuel poverty**
- carrying out numerous alcohol enforcement initiatives in local neighbourhoods.



Over the year, we:

**Delivered a cleaner city and provided value for money services, helping people to take care of their environment by dealing with the city's waste and cleaning the streets to improve local environments. In doing this we:**

- **Maintained a street cleanliness** level of 74 (an index of 67 or above is deemed clean)
- Cleaned **3,899 streets** every week
- Collected **approximately 650,000 domestic bins** every month, **99.9%** on time
- Supported communities to carry out **89 community cleanups**, with over **2,000 volunteers** taking part
- Collected over **42,239 large household items**, free of charge
- Engaged more than **9,500 young adults and children** in our anti litter workshops

**Supported zero waste direct to landfill, working to protect the environment. In doing this we:**

- Reduced amount of biodegradable **waste sent to landfill** from **65,708 to approximately 48,500 tonnes**
- Achieved a **city recycling rate** of approximately 35% (22.3% in 2010)
- Reduced the volume of **waste produced by each person** from 480kg per person, per year in 2011-12 to 440kg per person, per year in 2012-13
- **Recycled 37,632 tonnes** of waste
- Facilitated more than **730,000** visits to our four recycling centres and two civic amenity sites
- All waste is now sorted and materials that can be recycled removed.

**Promoted a high quality urban and local environment . In doing this we:**

- Issued **1,790 fixed penalty notices** for littering
- Dealt with more than **4,260 public health** nuisances
- Decreased Fly posting from up to 3,000 instances per month to just 57 instances in total with the implementation of the **Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act**
- Carried out inspections (including health and safety, food safety, entertainment and smoke-free) to keep residents healthy and safe in the city
- Dealt with **5,989 noise complaints**
- Commented on **411 planning applications**

**Helped people feel safer. In doing so we. In doing this we:**

- Carried out over **190 joint alcohol enforcement** patrols
- **Seized almost 6,100 units of alcohol** and sent **78** people for prosecution
- Awarded **75 Policing and Community Safety grants** and supported a **further 19 groups**
- Provided intensive **diversionary projects to 111 young people in four interface areas**
- Managed and monitored funding provided to Belfast Good Morning Services which made in excess of **200,000 phone calls** to older people and vulnerable adults
- Undertook consultation for nearly **150 new alleygates**
- Issued 386 and renewed 315 **entertainment licences**
- Awarded **£228, 000** to community groups through the **Community Safety Grants** scheme

**Reduced inequalities and tackled disadvantage, supporting services at community and neighbourhood level and working closely with communities to respond to their needs. In doing this we:**

- Established, along with the Belfast Strategic Partnership, the **Framework for Action 2011-15** to address life inequalities across the city
- Delivered alcohol-free family friendly city centre event, Strengthening Families, suicide prevention work and an integrated intervention in a deprived neighbourhood through our **Health and Wellbeing Plan**
- Tackled disadvantage amongst vulnerable groups through our **Be Warm stamp scheme**, encouraging residents to save £287,440 worth of oil stamps (an increase of 19.2% from 2011-12)
- Delivered a home insulation scheme
- First city in Northern Ireland to have joined the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities, working to develop a three-year action plan to create an **Age-friendly Belfast**.

## Parks and Leisure Committee



Chaired by Councillor Gerard McCabe, the Parks and Leisure Committee is responsible for the planning and delivery of the Council's Leisure, Parks and Cemeteries functions. Its specific responsibilities include the control and management of the Council's parks and leisure provision leisure and sports development, conservation, landscaping, Belfast Castle and Malone House, crematorium and cemetery services and Belfast Zoological Gardens and a range of parks and leisure events and activities.

### Chairman's message

Significant work has taken place with the citizens of Belfast during the past year to create an active, healthy and vibrant city.

The Parks and Leisure Department has worked towards improving the quality of life and wellbeing of citizens, encouraging healthy, safe and active lifestyles, working with partner organisations and communities to realise the city's full potential.

Highlights for 2012-13 include:

The first major project to be completed as part of the Investment Programme was the **refurbishment of the Mary Peters Athletics Track** at Malone, providing an upgraded venue for the people of Belfast, capable of attracting UK and international athletic events, such as this summer's World Police and Fire Games.

We have also passed the first round application for a £2.2 million grant towards restoring the **Tropical Ravine** in Botanic Gardens.

**Barnett Demesne** in south Belfast benefited from an investment of £487,000, with the completion of a series of mountain biking and walking trails, including the only official dirt jump park in Ireland. Cycling and walking are great ways to encourage people to get active and, best of all, the trails are free for everyone to use.

Funded by Belfast City Council and the Public Health Agency, under the Active Belfast Programme, **eight outdoor gyms have been installed in parks across the city.**



Members of the community can now try a range of exercises, including air walking, hip twisting and ski cross-country, all in one place. The outdoor gym is suitable for all fitness levels and is free to use, promoting healthy living and increasing physical activity.

Over the past year, we've launched **community gardens** in different parts of Belfast, funded by Peace III and the Public Health Agency monies. We now have **ten community gardens** and have delivered facilitated community growing sessions to people of all age groups and abilities, who come together in a spirit of social cohesion to grow their own fruit, flowers and vegetables, while encouraging them to be active outdoors.



We have delivered a programme of **city-wide events**, including Rose Week, Spring Fair and Autumn Fair and delivered a range of health and wellbeing programmes and activities across the city, including our summer scheme and Active Communities programmes.

A range of **Olympic activities** and sessions were also held throughout the year, including 'try it' days with primary schools and senior games.

The department has continued to deliver the Safer Neighbourhood programme of work to help tackle **anti social behaviour** and help people feel safer in our parks and leisure facilities.

Belfast has a proud tradition of boxing and many of the city's boxing clubs continue to produce successes at a local and international level. We recently launched an **amateur boxing strategy** which will consider the role and development of amateur boxing in Belfast.



Through the year, we have been committed to delivering a sustainable approach to service provision, contributing to a cleaner, greener and healthier environment.

This year, the department achieved the highest standard of quality and management available for parks and open spaces by gaining a total of **ten Green Flag Awards**, making us the best Green Flag performing local authority in Northern Ireland.

The department continues to **invest and support in our staff** and has delivered an internal bespoke World host training programme to employees. We will continue to improve our processes, deliver a proficient service and, finally, listen and learn from our **customers**.

Over the year, we:

**Encouraged people to have healthier, more active lifestyles, making the best use of our assets contributing to creating safer, healthier, engaged and more active communities. In doing this we:**

- Provided a service for almost **1.8 million** leisure facilities users
- Worked with 2,069 participants throughout 97 planned urban sports events, activities and programmes at **Bridges Urban Sports Park**
- Provided services to almost 6,000 **Boost members** at our leisure centres
- Provided £225,000 in **sports grants** to help clubs, organisations and elite athletes, and supported the participation of an estimated 20,000 people into sport
- Encouraged more than **2,000 participants** to get rowing through the Redgrave Rowing project
- Delivered a **city wide programme of events**, attracting almost 100,000 people
- Hosted **senior activity events** across four leisure centres, attracting **almost 400 seniors**
- Supported **500 coaches and volunteers** through coach education training

**Enriched the city's cultural and tourism offering. In doing this we:**

- Attracted over **230,000 visitors to Belfast Zoo**
- Belfast Zoo was recognised at the **NI Tourism Awards 2012** as Winner in the Marketing and Sales Excellence Category, and Highly Commended in the Visitor Inspired Category
- Hosted **770 events**, including weddings, conferences and meetings, and welcomed **190,000 visitors to Belfast Castle and Malone House**

**Promoted positive relations and shared space. In doing this we:**

- Delivered a **Midnight Soccer Intervention Programme**, in partnership with North Belfast Play Forum, which attracted over 3000 participants

**Improved quality of life by reducing inequalities and tackling disadvantage, delivering a range of health and wellbeing programmes and activities. In doing this we:**

- Delivered almost **13,000 coaching hours to 20,000 people** on the **Active Communities Programme**
- Provided swimming opportunities to more than **6,000 children** in our **Make a Splash** scheme
- **Welcomed 19,500 children** to our **summer scheme** programmes across ten leisure centres
- Referred **1,000 patients** to the **Healthwise** scheme

**Created a greener city playing a key role in protecting and linking the city through our parks, open spaces and greenways. In doing this we:**

- Provided residents and visitors with **48 parks and open spaces**, and maintained more than 1,100 hectares of open space
- Provided and maintained quality standards for the public at **135 sports pitches, 79 playgrounds, 12 bowling pavilions, three cemeteries, a crematorium, a golf course and an adventure playground**
- Improved park quality so that **68% of residents** now live within 1000m of a **Green Flag** rated park
- Planted **500 new street trees** in the last year and maintained approximately **14,500 street trees** in the Greater Belfast area

## Development Committee



Chaired by Alderman Christopher Stalford, the Development Committee is responsible for the council's role, remit, relationships and profile in the development and regeneration of the city and shall consider initiatives and issues which impact on the future development of the city. The committee is responsible also for Belfast Waterfront and the Ulster Hall, Community Services, tourism, arts and cultural issues and European matters.

### Chairman's message

There has been significant work over the year to help promote a stronger city economy, working with partners to develop the city's infrastructure to promote growth and inward investment, support employability and skills development and promote tourism. Investing in the future of Belfast's economy and people, through a programme of support for businesses and communities, as well as delivering investment in physical projects

Highlights for 2012-13 include:

We are committed to targeting interventions to ensure that people in all parts of Belfast have the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to apply for and secure jobs, particularly our young people (16 to 24 year olds)

This year, we launched a **£300,000 Belfast Bursary Fund** called 'Achieve', supporting hundreds of young people in the city to take part in further education and training opportunities, in partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College and The Prince's Trust

2012 saw **world class events in Belfast** including celebrations to mark the centenary of Titanic, with the Titanic Belfast Festival, the return of MTV, the welcoming of the Olympic torch, as well as events to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. An impressive programme of events which have put our city on the tourism map, attracting over **900,000 people and contributing around £ 9.4 million** to the economy

2013 sees a city-wide commemoration of **the 400th anniversary** of the signing of the charter which granted Belfast town status. Northern Ireland will welcome 10,000 competitors and a further 15,000 visitors from up to 70 countries to compete in the **World Police and Fire Games**, one of the largest multi-sport events in the world. In excess of £2.4 million of accommodation has been booked with 6,400 registered volunteers.

We are continuing to work towards creating a dynamic and vibrant city and have agreed a **£4.1 million funding package for more than 50 local arts groups** through our Core Multi-Annual Funding stream, a three-year plan which will support more than 400 jobs, 4,000 artists and 700 volunteers





Made a successful bid to support infrastructure costs for a **public bike hire scheme**. Plans are underway to install 300 'Belfast bikes' at 30 self-service docking stations in the city centre, after funding of £700,000 was secured from DRD. Providing the public with bikes to hire at an affordable price in central locations will encourage people to get active and reduce traffic congestion.

Two more main roads into Belfast received a facelift, thanks to our **Renewing the Routes** scheme - Lower Newtownards Road in east Belfast and Ormeau Road in south Belfast. We're investing another £1.5 million in the scheme, and will deliver more than 50 improvements to areas which have experienced decline between now and 2015.

Successfully levered in **£13.7 million** in external funds to support the Urban Broadband Fund and Belfast becoming a Super-connected City, creating **22 MOUs** with the business sector to support its successful delivery

We have played an increasing role in building Belfast's international reputation as a city worth visiting and investing in. We have agreed to support and participate in the city hosting the **Global India business meeting which will take place in June 2013**. This is a significant international networking event, bringing together over 200 chief executives from major Indian companies with their European counterparts to examine the potential for trade and investment between the two regions.

We continue to implement our **Community Development Framework** through our extensive range of activity and support programmes for citizens and the community sector. The high quality of service provision was celebrated when our **22 community centres** achieved the **PQASSO quality mark**. This is awarded by Charities Evaluation Services, and is the first time the mark has been awarded to a public authority.

Belfast continues to be one of the **youngest cities in Europe** and their needs are supported through our extensive play development programmes. We continue to be the only council in Northern Ireland to support a Youth Forum which has **40 young people aged 13-18** from across the city, engaged through meetings, projects, informing the design of services and representing the council throughout the year.



Over the year, we:

**Developed strong neighbourhoods and supported communities, making the best use of council and other local services and facilities to address the issues facing the city and its neighbourhoods. In doing this we:**

- Distributed approx **£2.8 million** through 547 separate **community grants** in support of community development in the city
- Progressed the **Community Development Strategy**, shaping the work of community services across the council
- Managed and maintained **22 community centres**
- Saw over **535,000 people attend** community centre programmes
- Provided **1,400 organised play sessions** through after school, outreach and summer play activities
- Achieved over **74,000 volunteer hours** in community centres

**Promoted and developed tourism, culture and arts, making Belfast an attractive place to live in, work in, study in, invest in and visit. In doing this we:**

- Delivered the third **Belfast Music Week**, building on the legacy of MTV: EMA Awards, which featured over **250 events in approximately 70 venues** across the city
- £1.35 million was distributed to over 120 **culture and arts** organisations
- £10 million was invested by the council in Titanic Belfast, which saw **870,000 visitors** in its first year of operation
- Saw over 365,000 people attend events at **Belfast Waterfront and the Ulster Hall**

**Encouraged business growth and competitiveness in key sectors and secured investment in the city. In doing this we:**

- Saw a footfall of almost 1.6 million people attend our **markets** in St George's, Smithfield and the two continental markets held at City Hall
- Provided the **HARTE programme**, supporting long-term unemployed people secure full-time employment in the hospitality and retail sector
- Helped to create over **230 jobs** through support provided to local businesses
- Approved a budget of £210, 000 for **direct business support** for local independent retailers and trader groups
- Supported over **1,800 local businesses** across the city
- Supported **ten participating companies on the BITES programme** in making over £75,000 of savings
- Hosted our first **Belfast Restaurant Week** in October 2012, with 82 restaurants participating and over 30 events programmed

## Implementing Local Government Reform

Preparation work is now well underway for the reform of local government, which will take place by **April 2015**. The aim of the reform programme is to **develop stronger and more effective councils which deliver a broader range of services for everyone**.

As part of the plans, **the 26 existing councils in Northern Ireland will be replaced by 11 new councils**, including Belfast.

The new Belfast City Council will grow to take in parts of the existing Lisburn and Castlereagh councils, as well as a small part of North Down council, welcoming around 56,000 additional citizens and approximately 22,000 extra households, as well as hundreds of new businesses.

The number of councillors will increase from 51 to 60 to reflect the growth in the city's population base.

Local government reform will also bring with it the transfer of key functions such as planning, regeneration and enhanced local economic development powers to the council.

The transfer of such functions, alongside the introduction of new community planning powers, will further enhance the ability of our local elected members to respond to the needs and concerns of their communities and shape, in partnership with others, the future development of their areas.



## Highlights

Regionally, the pace of reform has picked up real momentum with a number of key decisions taken by the NI Executive over recent months which has given greater certainty and clarity to the programme including:

























- **New council boundaries** - legislation to finalise the new council boundaries was approved by the NI Assembly on 12 June 2012
- **Funding** - £47.8 million funding package agreed by NI Executive in March 2013 to support delivery of local government reform
- **Transfer of functions** – in April 2013, the NI Executive agreed the package of functions to transfer to councils in April 2015.

## Within Belfast City Council















Preparatory work is now well underway for the reform of local government, with some internal highlights set out below:

- **Belfast Voluntary Transition Committee** – established at the beginning of the year to provide political leadership and direction to the council's preparations for reform. Members and officers are working together to pave the way for reform and to maximise the potential benefits that it presents.
- **Programme management** – a programme office has been established to support the organisational preparations for reform. An implementation plan was agreed by the Belfast VTC in June 2012 to build the organisational capacity to deliver, with update reports provided regularly.
- **Lisburn and Castlereagh engagement** – put in place a formal engagement process with colleagues from Lisburn and Castlereagh (at a political and senior officer level) with a joint programme of work in place covering the necessary preparations for the extension of the council boundary and the continuation of services to citizens. Key work being progressed has focused on the transfer of assets and staff to Belfast City Council.
- **Communications** – has been a key focus over recent months with a dedicated reform section included on the council's external and internal websites. Regular updates on our preparations for reform have been included in the staff magazine, Intercom, and City Matters which is issued to all households in Belfast, while a programme of member and staff engagement has been rolled out over the year.
- **Transfer of functions** – former Belfast Planning Manager seconded in November 2012 to assist with the council's preparations for the formal transfer and delivery of planning related functions. Ongoing engagement with DSD including a joint planning workshop held in March 2013.
- **Shaping regional policy and implementation** – senior council officers are actively engaged in the Implementation Working Groups, established regionally to take forward important elements of reform including the transfer of functions, the development of necessary enabling legislation and addressing important human resources, finance and systems convergence issues.

## Performance Information

	Priority action	2012-13 performance	Status <sup>1</sup>	Performance compared to 2011-12
Providing City leadership	Amount of money leveraged from EU and UK funding streams	£17.41 million		
	Number of buildings removed or improved under programme to address ruinous or derelict properties	245		
	Money contributed to the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF)	£6 million		
Improving our Environment	Street Cleanliness Index	74		
	Bins collected on designated days	99.9%		
	% parks and green spaces that have attained Green Flag accreditation	36%		
Supporting our Economy	Number of visitors to Belfast Zoo	232,536		
	Number of City Hall tours	1,681		
	Number of jobs created	234		
	Attendance at events held in Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall	365,884		
Improving our services	Efficiency savings achieved	£2.3 million		
	Average number of working days per employee lost due to absence	10.43 days		

<sup>1</sup> **Green** – where target has been met or surpassed, or a project on schedule and within budget  
**Amber** – where a target has not quite been met but falls within pre-determined tolerances, or a project less than one month behind schedule and/or less than 20% over budget  
**Red** - where a target is not being achieved, or a project is more than a month behind schedule and/or more than 20% over budget

	Priority action	2012-13 performance	Status <sup>1</sup>	Performance compared to 2011-12
	% debt less than 90 days	71.6%		
	% compliance of GRNs after invoicing	56.2%		
	Number of website visitors	1,564,518		
	% procurement compliance	100%		
Engaging our neighbourhoods and communities	Number of community groups utilising Good Relations funding	290		
	Number of people who visit council leisure facilities (indoor and outdoor)	1,861,240		
	% Usage of community centres	73%		
	Programme participation levels (Outreach)	179,594	