

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Community Planning</b>
<b>Date:</b>	21 February 2014
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## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To update Members on the preparations for community planning presented to the Belfast Statutory Transition Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014.
- 1.2 To outline the role of elected Members in leading this process, including the potential role of the Area Working Groups during 2014.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014, the Statutory Transition Committee agreed a one-year work programme to help ensure the council is prepared for the Duty of community planning (the STC report is attached at Appendix 1). The action plan reflects non statutory guidance which has been issued by the DoE in the “Community Planning Foundation Programme” and has four key strands:
  - i. **Start to develop the city vision and long-term objectives**
  - ii. **Develop an approach to community planning at the local level**
  - iii. **Develop the right governance, structures and accountability frameworks**
  - iv. **Ensure effective communications and build capacity to support community planning**
- 2.2 Further information about each of these strands is set out in the remainder of this report.

## 3.0 Role of Elected Members

- 3.1 Members are the democratically elected leadership at the heart of the community planning process. They will lead the development of a long-term vision and priorities for Belfast and its neighbourhoods. They will drive engagement and partnership-working to ensure that change is substantive; that decisions by council and its partners are informed by the broad range of views of local people; and need is balance against realistic resourcing and deliverability.
- 3.3 Members will also need to have an oversight role to ensure that progress is monitored and that agreed actions are delivered, even by other agencies.
- 3.4 Because of the central role of Members, the STC has agreed to hold a Community Planning workshop, to which other Members of Council will be invited, to create a shared understanding of the community planning process and to co-design a process that fits the Belfast context. The focus of the workshop will be to examine the practicalities associated with Members’ new leadership role in the process. **The workshop will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> March at 5.00pm** and will be facilitated by Neil McInroy from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.
- 3.5 The current cross-party working group on community planning (with two Members from each party) has been leading the Council’s emerging approach to date. As the process of developing

the community plan continues, this group will meet stakeholders and experts to help develop recommendations for the STC and SP&R. Some of the recommendations emerging from the group are contained in this report.

#### 4.0 Community Planning and Belfast – city vision and outcomes

- 4.1 The new functions and powers being transferred to councils in 2015 will enable BCC to take a lead role in shaping the future of the City, through growing the economy, spatial planning and addressing social problems. The community planning framework for Belfast will need to provide a joined up approach to delivering on priorities both at a city and a neighbourhood level.
- 4.2 One of the functions of the community plan is to set out the shared vision and long-term social, economic and environmental objectives for Belfast. **Determining the vision and its objectives will be the responsibility of the new council.** This is an important opportunity in Belfast to bring better integration and alignment of the many plans, activities and partnerships in the city (including those in the new areas).
- 4.2 The process of developing the city vision must be underpinned by a strong evidence base and a programme of consultation and engagement with stakeholders.
- 4.3 At previous workshops, Members have said they want to take an engaged but pragmatic approach that reflects the real-life demands, opportunities and characteristics of the city and which is supported by clear evidence and ability to deliver and to measure success.
- 4.4 The Council's Cross Party Reference Group on Community Planning has discussed a high level approach to designing the visioning process in Belfast. The working group has suggested that it will be important to build on existing work and research, where possible, and that effective engagement mechanisms should be developed to test emerging themes and priorities.
- 4.5 Given the critical nature of this element it is proposed that expert assistance is commissioned to support the development of a shared vision for Belfast. It is also proposed that a cross-sector "reference panel" is created as a touch-stone for the design of the visioning process. Key principles of the process will be that it should support the civic leadership role of our Members and ensure the maximum appropriate level of participation from across public, private, community and voluntary sectors.
- 4.6 It is also proposed that this development process is supported, along with other engagement methods, by a large-scale public survey in order that the views of residents from across the city are represented. A specialist market research company will be retained to carry out this work. This understanding of the views of local people will help the new council plan its services and priorities for the newly enlarged city and the longer term future.

#### 5.0 Developing an approach to community planning and regeneration at a local level

- 5.1 The STC agreed that **Area Working Groups should play a key role in exploring and shaping the local dimension of community planning.**

5.2 As Members are aware, at the local level there is often a strong relationship between community planning and neighbourhood regeneration (physical, social and economic). Regeneration powers are passing to the council from DSD and it will be important for us to link these closely to our approach to community planning. In other strategic plans, including the Investment Programme, Members have emphasised the importance of connecting neighbourhood development to city development and of ensuring that local people have the greatest possible access to the advantages that flow from a growing and competitive city. For this reason, Members have stressed the need for any local plans and priorities to be connected to the city-wide plan and therefore to the overall ambition that leaders have for the city, whether that be in terms of employment, skills, health or any other aspect of quality of life.

Therefore Members and partners will need to consider how to:

- develop and implement local plans and priorities within a city-wide framework;
- Develop a governance framework which clarifies the decision making and resource allocation processes at city and neighbourhood level;
- better integrate and improve service delivery at a local level;
- maximise the impact and integration of funding streams to support local communities;
- ensure effective engagement and participation by local communities in influencing priorities and improving local areas and opportunities for local people;
- consider local governance and networking structures for the future, given that responsibilities for the Area Partnership Boards and neighbourhood renewal powers will be transferred to the Council in 2015.

5.3 In light of this, proposed key tasks for the AWGs in supporting the development of community planning over the next year are:

- ***Practical Work to test area planning approaches:*** A separate paper on the Committee's agenda sets out the current status of a number of physical projects being advanced through various funding mechanisms including BIF, LIF, SIF and the capital programme. When Members have considered these projects within their area working groups they have commented on the potential to create synergies between a cluster of projects and to inter-weave this with programming activity at a local level. Essentially this type of 'place-shaping' work, strongly linked to shared local outcomes, is likely to become the business as usual model when implementing the Council's new powers of regeneration and planning. It is therefore proposed that a key role for the AWGs in the months ahead will be to identify opportunities for "learning by doing" using existing and emerging projects, programmes and to test how different integrated planning approaches might work. This will inform the on-going development of policy, governance and delivery structures for regeneration and community planning from 2015 onwards. The on-going implementation of LIF and the area interventions both underway and planned also provide practical opportunities for learning.
- ***Thinking about potential area-based governance issues, including geographies*** A key aspect in moving forward with the local element of community planning will be to establish sound governance arrangements linked to the new council and community planning structures. At a local level, governance for community planning will need to factor in existing partnerships and groups with local plans and strategies. This piece of work is intrinsically linked to issues emerging from the overall governance discussion and the way

decisions in the new Council will be made. A decision will also need to be made as to how to involve the new areas in the area working planning phase over the next 12 months and during the Shadow Council, new AWG boundaries for the new Council will need to be designed.

- ***Understanding current stakeholders, plans and strategies:*** Stakeholder engagement is a key aspect of community planning and mapping key stakeholders, and existing plans and strategies is a key task within the DoE's Foundation Programme. Area Working Groups will support the development of stakeholder maps and engagement strategies to underpin the development of community planning. Based on an assessment of issues and outcomes for local areas, AWG's will oversee the on-going development of effective local intelligence for the new geographies. It will also be important to test the local element of emerging strategies such as the Integrated Economic Strategy, Interfaces Strategy etc. The Area Working Groups will therefore test and refine these emerging strategies.

## 6.0 Communications, capacity building and engagement

- 6.1 It is essential that our key stakeholders are fully aware of and understand community planning and a programme of awareness and capacity building is therefore being developed and will be delivered in tandem with the other strands of work.
- 6.2 Capacity building requirements or other learning issues may become clearer as we get on with the practice of community planning. A learning and review element has therefore been factored into the draft programme – this will enable us to take into account any emerging statutory guidance from the DoE, such as on performance management, and allow council and its community planning partners to continually improve our approach to community planning so that it delivers the necessary results for local people.

### Consultation and Engagement

- 6.3 Under the draft Local Government Bill, council will be required to consult with a wide range of people and organisations who live in the council area or who work, do business or have an interest in the future of the area. This consultation will extend to the development of the corporate plan, community plan and improvement duties of council. In addition, as required by the Planning Act, council will need to prepare, publish and implement a Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how council will consult and engage in relation to the development and discharge of the Local Development Plan.
- 6.4 It is also recognised locally and nationally, that community planning and local area improvement can only really be achieved where local communities and partners are involved and participate. Securing the best involvement in a cost effective manner requires proper planning. The Council has therefore been reviewing its approach to consultation and engagement and will be developing a corporate consultation and engagement framework to guide its future approach.

## 7.0 Resource Implications

- 7.1 Putting effective foundations in place to supporting community planning will require additional funding in the first instance. These 'start-up' costs have been factored into the budget estimates for 2014/15 and a budget has been set aside to fund the engagement exercises and to meet the cost of additional expertise as outlined above.
- 7.2 As we move forward with community planning post 2015, there will be ongoing costs associated with the support, implementation and monitoring of community planning. Going forward there will also be resource implications related to ongoing delivery.
- 7.3 In addition to the publication costs, council will need to support partnership working and engagement, local area planning etc which will require officer time and other resources. As the agreed approach to community planning emerges, further reports will be brought to the STC and SP&R to explore the organisational and resource implications of supporting community planning longer term.

## 8.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 8.1 Equality and good relations will be considered in all aspects of the on-going development of community planning.

## 9.0 Recommendations

- 9.1 Members are asked to note and agree the Community Planning Work Programme 2014 -2015, and specifically:
- i. The proposed four phased approach over the next twelve months to:
    - Start to develop the city vision and long-term objectives
    - Develop an approach to community planning at the local level
    - Develop the right governance, structures and accountability frameworks
    - Ensure effective communications and build capacity to support community planning
    - The commencement of research and survey work to support these workstreams.
  - ii. The workshop be held 4<sup>th</sup> March for the STC (to which other Members will be invited) to create a shared understanding of the community planning process and to co-design a process that fits the Belfast context.
  - iii. The role of the AWGs over the coming year to take forward consideration of local community planning and regeneration issues.

## 7.0 Documents attached

Appendix 1 Belfast City Council Community Planning Work Programme 2014 – 2015