



Belfast City Council Annual Report

2013-2014



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Introduction

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

Over the past year we have worked determinedly to strengthen and develop the unique characteristics of Belfast, 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.

In 2013, we celebrated 400 years as a city and had our busiest tourist season ever, thanks to the successful delivery of the World Police and Fire Games during the summer. Some 7,000 competitors from 67 countries descended on Belfast for the games further enhancing our reputation as a destination for international sporting and cultural events.



February 2012 saw the launch of our Investment Programme setting out our commitment to deliver £150 million investment in Belfast over three years until 2015. Two years on, we've made significant progress and achieved, or exceeded many of our targets.

The Investment Programme resulted in a number of major changes to the physical face of the city including the opening of newly refurbished parks and state-of-the-art sporting facilities.

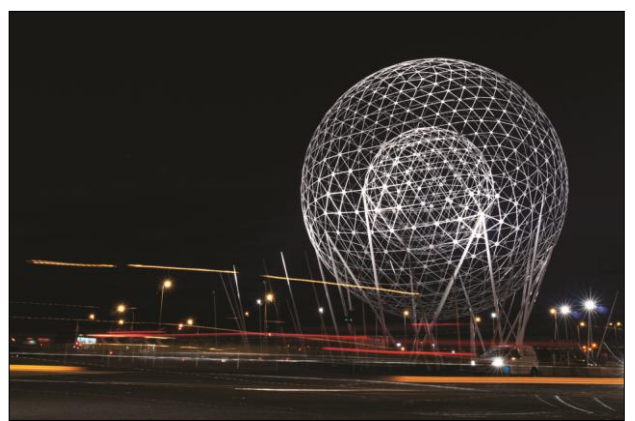
During this year we have:

- Delivered Phase 1 of the £35 million Connswater Community Greenway project, including the installation of the Sam Thompson bridge linking Victoria Park to Airport Road;
- Completed £4 million of upgrade works at Dunville & Woodvale Parks;
- Opened a new £1.8 million state-of-the-art Visit Belfast Welcome Centre;
- Began work on the £11.7 million Girdwood Community Hub;
- Re-opened the Mary Peters Athletics Track, following a £3 million refurbishment, complete with an international standard eight-lane track and seated spectator stand;
- Successfully removed or improved 61 ruinous or derelict buildings throughout the city;
- Constructed new 3G pitches at Marrowbone Millennium Park on Oldpark Road, and the Hammer Complex in the Shankill area;
- Secured funding for a £4 million upgrade of the Tropical Ravine in Botanic Gardens;

We also delivered on our promises to help residents in these tough economic times by providing job opportunities, education bursaries and local improvements including:

- Created 525 job opportunities and 486 work placement opportunities in the Council;
- Supported 432 16 to 24 year-olds into further education, training or employment through the "Achieve Bursary Fund", working with Belfast Met and the Prince's Trust;
- Allocated almost £2.8 million to 40 community groups through the Local Investment Fund – funding projects such as training and sports facilities for young people and refurbishing community buildings

We achieved all of this while also, setting a 0% rate increase for the second consecutive year and generating £2 million of efficiencies during 2013-14.



During this time we also continued to deliver 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.

Throughout the year preparations continued for the establishment of the new Belfast City Council in April 2015. This will see an increase in our Council area and population and the transfer of additional functions including Planning and Regeneration. Through ongoing engagement with our neighbouring Councils of Lisburn, Castlereagh and North Down we have compiled an initial assessment of the potential staff and assets that will transfer to us and began preparations to ensure services will be delivered efficiently and effectively to our new residents and businesses.

Similar work is also underway with the central government departments in relation to the transferring functions and new governance structures have been put in place to enable our newly elected members to develop the necessary foundations for the new Council, during this incoming shadow period.

We are very proud that the 2013 'Good Growth for Cities' index from PriceWaterhouseCoopers ranked Belfast ninth in the UK's top-10 cities in which to live and work.

In the year ahead we will work with all our partners to build on these successes to further enhance the city and improve the lives of the people we serve.



Alderman Gavin Robinson, 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 £176.3 million in 2013-14 and over 2,300 employees.

We perform six principal roles with our 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 certain 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 Boards; and
- 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 strategic 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.

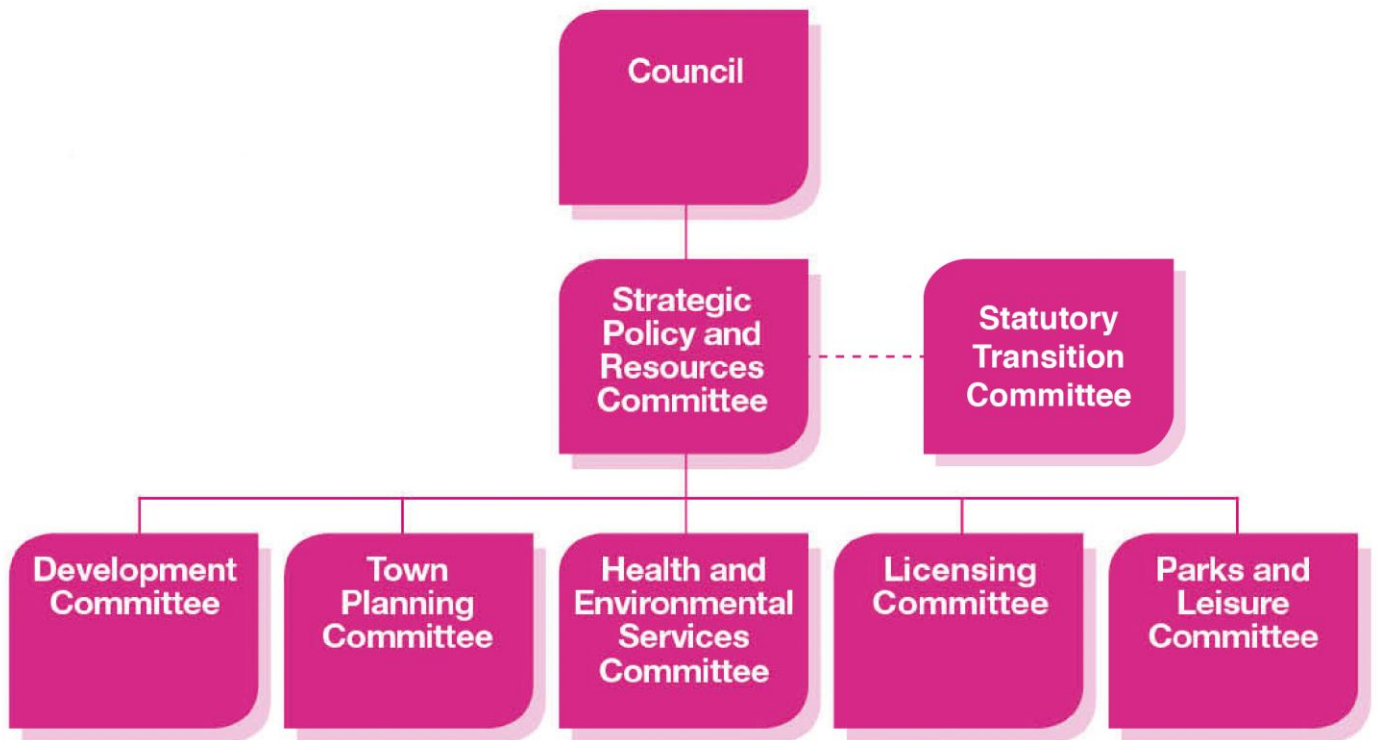
Creating an organisation fit to lead and serve

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 in the remainder of this report illustrates how the council has contributed to achieving these priorities during 2013-14.

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, which report their performance back to the relevant committee. They are:

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

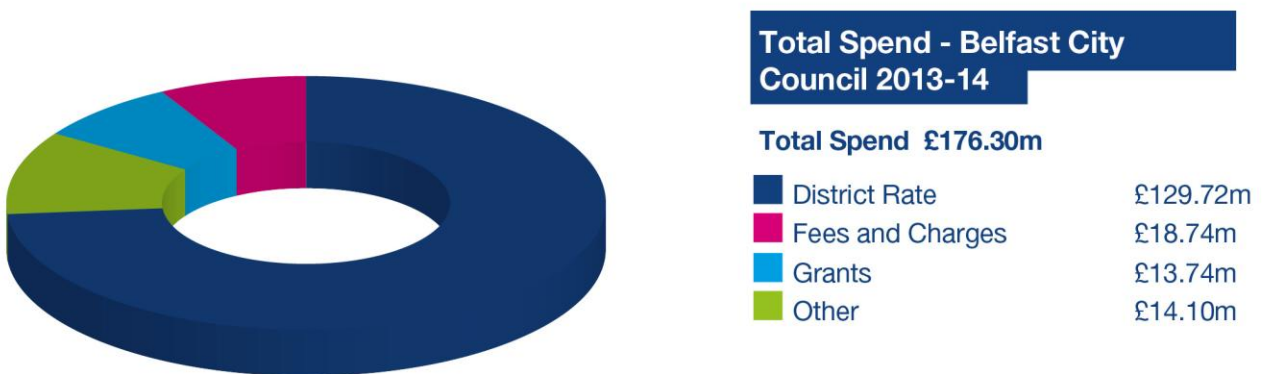
The Chief Executive's, Finance and Resources and Property and Projects departments all report directly to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

In addition this year the Belfast Statutory Transition Committee was established to lead the organisations preparations for local government reform.

Our finances

Some highlights for the year 2013-14 are listed below.

- Maintained a rates increase below the rate of inflation (when inflation is taken into account, a zero increase actually equates to a cut of around 2%)
- Secured a rates freeze for the second consecutive year– i.e. a 0% increase in the district rate for the 2014-15 period
- Realised efficiencies of over £2 million in cash savings.



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 to 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 2013-14, the council committed to a net spend of £134.19 million, allocated as outlined below:



Net annual budget 2013-14

Total net annual budget £134.19m

Development Committee	£19.32m
Health & Environmental Services Committee	£41.11m
Parks & Leisure Committee	£24.15m
Strategic Policy and Resources Committee	£33.47m
Belfast Investment Fund	£6m
Capital Financing	£10.14m



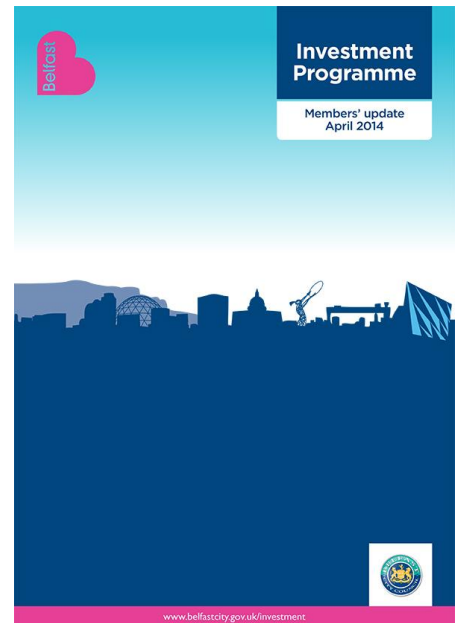
Net actual spend 2013-14

Total net annual Spend 2013-14 £133.54m

Development Committee	£19.23m
Health & Environmental Services Committee	£40.62m
Parks & Leisure Committee	£24.16m
Strategic Policy and Resources Committee	£33.39m
Belfast Investment Fund	£6m
Capital Financing	£10.14m

Investment Programme -

Launched in 2012 amid the ongoing economic recession, we responded proactively to our role as a civic leader by launching a £150 million, three-year Investment Programme. This Programme outlined our commitment to



- **Physical investment - £150 million** to build and improve city and community assets and support employment in construction and other sectors by investing £75million in local communities; £20 million in partnership projects which will contribute to city regeneration; £50 million levered from Europe and other sources to provide key economic infrastructure projects; and £5 million in smaller local regeneration projects
- **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; and
- **Value for money services – £20 million** savings delivered, the provision of effective and efficient services including, for example, improving payment to creditors and incorporating social clauses in our procurement processes, where possible.

Two years on we have achieved or exceeded many of our targets. The total value of the programme stands at a total of **£364 million which includes the additional £105 million that we are committing under our Leisure Transformation Programme**. We have surpassed our target of £50 million leveraged in from Europe and other sources which contributes to a range of projects including the Belfast Waterfront Conference and Exhibition Centre, the Girdwood Hub, the refurbishment of the Tropical Ravine and the Public Bike Share Scheme. It is anticipated that our Investment Programme will support over 8,500 construction jobs.

Some of the key highlights against each of the strands are detailed below.

Physical investment

Significant progress has been made in the delivery of the physical development element of the Investment Programme **between April 2013 and March 2014** on new physical projects and improvements to vital community facilities and assets.

Projects which were completed during 13/14 included –

- The opening of the **£3 million upgrade at Mary Peter's Track** which included a new eight-lane track, a revamped field events area and spectators stand.
- The opening of **£4 million refurbishments at Dunville and Woodvale Parks**, which were match funded by the DSD. The refurbishments included a new 3G pitch and changing accommodation, new play areas, new paths, fencing and artwork
- The installation of the new £200,000 **John Luke Bridge** in Clement Wilson Park
- The development of the £487,000 **Mountain Bike Trail at Barnett's Demesne** in partnership with SportNI and Lagan Rural Partnership

- The £470,000 new pitch at the **Hammer Complex** which was developed in partnership with SportNI
- A new £680,000 3G pitch at **Marrowbone Millennium Park** which was supported by DCAL and DSD
- The £1.8 million relocation of the **Belfast Welcome Centre** to Donegal Square to provide an innovative new visitor information centre for Belfast
- **3 community gardens** have been opened across the city at Finlay Park, Knocknagoney Linear Park and Whiterock
- A new £600,000 **fuel station** at Duncrue for Council vehicles
- Phase 3 of the **Alleygating Programme** which saw the installation of an additional 231 gates across the city designed to make people feel safer
- The refurbishment/development of new **MUGAs** at 6 sites across the city – Victoria Park, Willowbank, Finlay Street, Dover Street, New Lodge and Clara Street

During 13/14 work also got underway on –

- The **£4 million Phase 1 of the Connswater Community Greenway** project including the installation of the new £500,000 Sam Thompson Bridge at Victoria Park.
- A state of the art shared community hub at **Girdwood Park**, which has received funding for the EU's Peace III Programme and is due to open in 2015.
- **Public Bike Share Scheme** which will see the installation of 300 bikes at 30 docking stations across the city. £1.4 million has been secured
- Enabling works for the £29.5 million extension to the **Belfast Waterfront** to provide dedicated exhibition and conference facilities. This scheme will double the size of the existing conference and exhibition space creating up to 400 construction jobs. Once complete it should attract an extra 50,000 visitors and generate up to £39 million for the city each year, as well as creating around 370 jobs and opportunities.

During 13/14 we also continued preparatory work on a wide range of projects including –

- Phase 1 of our **Leisure Transformation Programme** - work on the new Olympia Centre, which received planning permission in April, is due to commence in the Autumn. Plans are being finalised for the new centre at Andersonstown with work due to commence in 2015
- Phase 2 of our **£35 million Connswater Community Greenway/East Belfast Flood Alleviation Scheme** project. The CCG project is supported by the Big Lottery, the DSD, Rivers Agency and the East Belfast Partnership
- **Pitches strategy** – The development of new 3G pitches and changing accommodation at 10 sites across the city.
- A £4 million refurbishment of the **Tropical Ravine** in Botanic Gardens which has secured £2.32 million of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund which will begin in the Autumn.
- **Belfast Zoo – Adventurers Learning Centre** – new £430,000 activity centre at Belfast Zoo part funded through the ERDF with work due to commence in the summer .
- A range of projects designed to enhance the city's economic infrastructure including a £9.1 million Innovation Centre at Springvale; a new Creative Hub and infrastructure designed to support the development of a Green Economy Business Park at the North Foreshore.
- 3 new MUGAs at Annadale, Clarendon and Springfield.

Local Investment Fund

- Under our Investment Programme we established a £5 million Local Investment Fund to support the delivery of key local regeneration projects in neighbourhoods.
- To date nearly £2.8 million has been allocated to 40 projects. Due-diligence work is continuing on the other projects which have been approved in principle and officers are continuing to work closely with groups to ensure their successful delivery.

Belfast Investment Fund

- We have also established a £20 million Belfast Investment Fund to enable the Council to take a lead role and work in partnership to deliver key investment projects across the city. A range of projects are currently being considered for funding under this Programme and we will continue to work with groups to develop these over the coming year.

Economy

Between April 2013 and March 2014, we began to make an impact on the local economy by:

- **Putting Belfast on the map** – securing and hosting major events including the World Police and Fire Games and leading on the preparations for the Giro d'Italia, attracting around 248,000 people and benefiting the local economy by almost £8 million. In 2015, we will welcome back the Tall Ships, whose economic impact is expected to exceed £16 million;
- **Creating opportunities for employment and training** – We have exceeded our Investment Programme targets by putting in place 525 **employment opportunities** offering 486 work placement and, **apprenticeship** or internship opportunities over the past two years;
- **Tackling unemployment** - we had committed to the provision of **pre-employment support** with over 1500 people supported this year;
- **Supporting employment** – Our Achieve Bursary Fund has helped 432 16 to 24-year-olds to date into further education, training or employment through Belfast Met and Prince's Trust;
- **Improving opportunities for local suppliers** – We are actively working toward increasing the amount of our expenditure with local suppliers to 60% to help boost the local economy, 76% of every £1 we pay out is spent or re-spent within the local economy;
- **Super Connected Belfast** – the first phase of the project, a £9.8 million voucher scheme is underway, so far 220 firms have received funding to pay for the installation of faster broadband connection. Recipients of vouchers indicate that up to 600 jobs will be created over the next 3 years as a result of this scheme;
- **Increasing our use of social clauses** - All our physical contracts are now screened to make sure they provide the maximum benefit to local communities in the past year we have included social clauses in; Connswater professional services contract phase 1; Connswater work contract phase 1; Belfast Waterfront professional services contract; Waste contract for kerbside collection; Integrated Design Framework and Girdwood Hub;
- **Funding the arts** - awarded £2.2 million of funding for 92 local arts groups, supporting more than 400 jobs, 4,000 artists and 700 volunteers;



People, communities and neighbourhoods

Between April 2013 and March 2014, we continued to demonstrate our commitment to people, communities and neighbourhoods, including:

- **Renewing the Routes** – work was completed on the Ormeau Road and Newtownards Roads which saw 146 environmental and commercial enhancements and work is currently underway on the Andersonstown and Oldpark Roads;
- **Tackling dilapidated buildings** — to date we have carried out £486,000 of refurbishments to more than 300 dilapidated buildings, and spent a further £260,000 on remedial works and other properties
- **Improving community safety** – completed Phase 3 of our Alleygating Programme installing an additional 231 gates across the city to help people feel safer;
- **Supporting focused, area working** – co-ordinated service delivery across multiple agencies, tackling deprivation in five areas across the city;
- **Encouraging good relations** - distributed £4 million towards projects to tackle sectarianism and racism;
- **Playground Improvement Programme** - Refurbishment work was completed on 6 of our playgrounds at Dover Street, Taughmonagh, Michelle Baird Memorial Park, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park; New Lodge and Clara Street under our Playground Improvement Programme. A further 6 will be upgraded this year as part of our rolling programme.

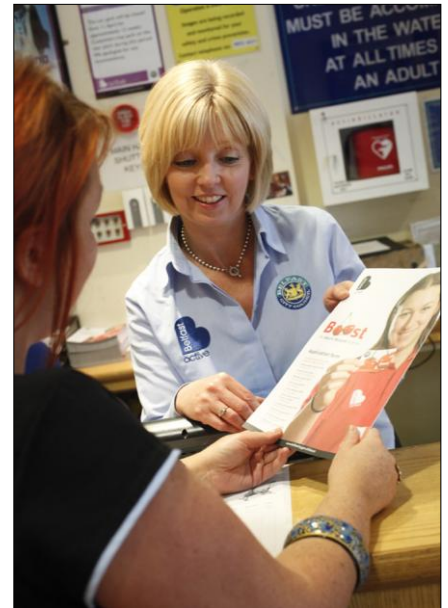


Value for money

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 second consecutive year in council history, a 0% increase in the district rate for 2014-15, a cut of almost five per cent in real terms, without affecting frontline services or any of our investment commitments.
- **Realising savings** – generated efficiencies of £2 million, bringing savings to a total of £18 million since 2006;
- **Paying our creditors promptly** – benefited our suppliers by paying 86% of creditors within 28 days of receipt, leaving us on course to achieve our 90% target by 2015;



Strategic Policy and Resources Committee



Chaired by Alderman Gavin Robinson, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for setting the council's overall strategic policy, direction and priorities through the development of the Corporate Plan. It is responsible for allocating resources (financial, employees and assets) and managing performance. In addition, it has overall responsibility for the promotion of equality, diversity and good relations and the council's human resources, corporate communications, procurement and IT functions.

Chairman's message and priorities

Providing civic leadership by addressing the challenges that face the city and working with others to achieve a co-ordinated solution are two of the key drivers for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

We are committed to leaving a positive legacy for future generations by providing good leadership, delivering effective, value for money services and ensuring that as many of our citizens as possible can connect to the opportunities all around us.

In addition to overseeing the implementation of, and effective engagement with, the Council's ambitious Investment Programme (see pages 12 to 17), the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee has also played a key role in preparing the council for the new **Community Planning** duty that will emerge from the local government reform programme. Such a process will provide a framework within which public agencies will be able to work together with the community to plan and deliver more co-ordinated services that make a real difference to people's lives.

The Committee is also responsible for the innovative '**super-connected city**' project. Having successfully secured **£13.7 million** in government funding to improve broadband coverage across Belfast, work to create a world-class digital city has now begun. To date 220 firms have benefited from a £9.8 million voucher scheme to enable the installation of faster broadband connection to their premises. Voucher recipients have already indicated that up to 600 jobs will be created over the next 3 years as a result of this scheme.

Having launched a new mobile friendly **Council website** with increased options for online transactions, we have now put in place the potential for citizens to avail of many of our services remotely. This includes such transactions as: enabling online leisure centre bookings; making payments; submitting applications for the superfast broadband grant. As well as offering greater interaction with our **1.5 million** annual website visitors these developments also improve the efficiency of our administration services.

During the last year the Good Relations Partnership, successfully managed the implementation of phase two of the Belfast PEACE III Plan. Across the city over 20 projects tackling issues of sectarianism and racism were supported and more than 13,000 people were engaged in a wide range of activities including consultations, community planning exercises, training programmes and related events. The Plan will be fully implemented by September 2014 but, with the support of the Good Relations Partnership, many of the projects will continue to be developed beyond the end of the Plan.



As well as improving relations between different communities we are also committed to ensuring that our services and facilities are accessible to everyone equally. In December Belfast was shortlisted at the European Commission's Access City Awards When our **therapy garden** at Musgrave Park won praise for its sensory and therapeutic experiences in the 'Built Environment and Public Spaces' category.



The Visit Belfast Welcome Centre which relocated and enjoyed a £1.8 million facelift and the Mary Peters Athletics Track was renovated with £3 million of improvements. Each facility picked up prizes for their striking and innovative design at the prestigious Royal Society of Ulster Architects Design awards. The Visit Belfast Welcome Centre also secured the '*Best Innovation Award*' at the NITB Tourism Awards.

Our Local Investment Fund (LIF) which offers funding for community projects received recognition as the 'Best Initiative by Councillors' at the NILGA Awards while one of the supported projects, the Highfield/Springmartin pitch, was also Highly Commended at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Awards.

Finally the Council's **efficiency programme**, is important because the savings we make free up money for other things. This includes improving front line services and paying for additional investment across the city, so that we not only continue to deliver the excellent services people expect but also invest in delivering improvements. To date we have achieved £18 million of savings and will meet our target of £20 million by the end of 2015. We will continue to look for ways to make our services ever more efficient and effective when we become a new council with an increased rates base in 2015.

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

- Project managed a **number physical projects** and carried out a **range of improvements** to community facilities and assets
- Raised almost **£7 million through rental income**, additional money to be reinvested in future projects.
- Allocated almost £2.8 million to 40 community groups, as part of £5 million **Local Investment Fund**

Enabled value for money services by ensuring efficient use of resources to achieve council priorities

- Secured **savings of more than £189,000** through procurement-related efficiencies
- Supported the organisation's **performance management framework** with regular reporting against departmental plans and targets
- Screened all physical contracts to look for opportunities to include social and community clauses
- Paid 86% of creditors within 28 days

Made the best use of technology to deliver services when and where they were needed

- Attracted over 1.5 million **website** visitors, almost 28,000 **Twitter** followers and 17,000 **Facebook** fans
- Awarded three stars in the annual **Better Connected** report which looks at the content, navigation and accuracy of 433 local authority websites

Attracted and developed people who will work together to deliver our services and develop the organisation for the future

- Maintained 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

- Carried out more than 1,600 City Hall tours and welcomed over 64,000 visitors to City Hall

Promoted good relations and equality to implement the actions in our Good Relations Plan

- Supported **320 community groups** through our **Good Relations grant aid, St Patrick's Day small grants and summer intervention funding programmes**
- Distributed **£4 million to 22 projects** to tackle sectarianism and racism, including the **Youth Intervention Programme**
- Trained over 300 staff in **Good Relations Awareness** and more than 200 practitioners in **Migrant Awareness and Ending Hate training**

Health and Environmental Services Committee



Chaired by Councillor Steven Corr, 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

The Health and Environmental Services Committee has worked to promote and provide top class, key frontline services to residents and businesses in Belfast in an efficient, effective and professional manner. We provided essential services such as waste collection and recycling services, dog warden and pest control services, environmental health advice, inspections and enforcement, as well as ensuring the safety of our residents through entertainment licensing and the enforcement of the building regulations. We also work through a number of citywide partnerships to address health inequalities, support community safety and healthy aging.

Recycling continues to be a major priority and we have set ourselves a challenging target of recycling 50% of our waste by 2015. We introduced new services for kerbside food waste and black box collections as part of the **Towards Zero Waste Action Plan** which successfully reduced the amount of waste we send to landfill. Last year the city recycled 42,500 tonnes of waste.

Our commitment to creating a cleaner and greener environment resulted in an improved recycling rate of over 40%, representing a continuous improvement over time, increasing from 22.3% in 2010.



We began a glass recycling trial in October 2013. As part of this we issued 11,000 blue bin households in east and west Belfast with a purple box to recycle glass bottles and jars.

The trial was so successful, it will now be extended to a further 11,000 areas in north and south Belfast.

We scooped a top waste management award for our kerbside box recycling scheme. The scheme was named Best Local Authority Recycling Initiative, at the Awards for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management 2014, in a year which saw a 44% increase in entries from across the UK.





We have continued our programme to improve ruinous and dilapidated buildings in the city. Over the past two years we have carried out £486,000 of refurbishments to more than 300 dilapidated buildings, and spent a further £260,000 on remedial works and other properties

Removing eyesores and transforming derelict sites is essential for improving quality of life and local

neighbourhoods and we continue to work in partnership with other agencies to address this issue.

We continued to deliver the Lower Falls intervention which has developed a multi-agency action plan. Recent figures suggest the project has helped **reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)** in the local area by 19%. Overall, ASB incidents have been reduced in 2013-14 by 27% compared to the number of incidents recorded in the previous year. We delivered initiatives and campaigns addressing priorities such as Drugs, Human Trafficking and Hate Crime. We continue to work with local communities to deliver local projects addressing domestic violence and alcohol awareness.

The **'Be Warm' fuel stamps scheme** reached £1 million worth of stamps sold to households across the city. The schemes supports people to budget for the increasing cost of home heating oil in Northern Ireland. We also engaged with 518 older people through our Winter Warmth clinics, with 200 new referrals for the home safety check scheme.

On behalf of the council, the department has been leading on work to make sure that we will be able to offer high quality services across the new Belfast area from April 2015. This convergence work will make sure that we are in position to provide such services as street cleansing, community centres, waste collection, street cleansing, recycling, community safety, building control, etc. in the parts of Castlereagh, Lisburn and North Down that are coming into Belfast in April 2015.



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

- Maintained a street cleanliness level of 74 (an index of 67 or above is deemed clean)
- Cleaned 3,902 streets every week
- Collected 650,393 domestic bins every month, 99.89% on time
- Supported communities to carry out 96 community cleanups, with over 2,571 volunteers taking part
- Collected 42,494 bulky household waste collections
- Presented to 12,167 participants in school talks which included anti-litter discussions
- Presented to 28,209 participants in community talks which included anti-litter discussions

Supported zero waste direct to landfill, working to protect the environment

- Reduced amount of biodegradable **waste sent to landfill** from 49,109 to **approximately 40,771 tonnes**
- Achieved a **city recycling rate** of approximately 40%
- 57.6% of Household Waste is diverted from Landfill
- Recycled 42,500 tonnes of waste
- Facilitated more than **501,000** visits to our four recycling centres and two civic amenity sites
- Extended the in house glass recycling project to an additional 11,000 households which now sees a total of 22,000 households involved across the city

Promoted a high quality urban and local environment

- Issued **1,927 fixed penalty notices** for littering
- Issued **822 fixed penalty notices** for dog straying
- Helped over 1,000 people in Belfast quit smoking through the smoking cessation service
- We aligned our Dogs and Pest Control Service with our Cleansing function to allow better neighbourhood response and coordination of service delivery

Helped people feel safer

- Carried out over **191 joint alcohol enforcement** patrols.
- **98% compliance with Noise Act warning notices**
- **Through the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships we have allocated a total of £620,000 towards projects and initiatives in local communities;**
- **Awarded £175,000 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

- Through the Active Belfast Partnership we have supported more than 1,500 people with physical activity programmes and allocated £200,000 to local organisations through the Active Belfast grant scheme
- We have engaged with 518 older people through our winter warmth clinics, with 200 new referrals for the home safety check scheme.

Parks and Leisure Committee



Chaired by Councillor Gareth McKee, 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, Belfast Zoo and a range of parks and leisure events and activities.

Chairman's message

Significant work has taken place with the citizens of Belfast over 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, with the support from our staff, external partners, elected members, community groups and funding from the Investment programme.



The **Corporate Leisure Transformation**

Programme has gathered momentum this year, we're investing £105 million to modernise and revitalise our leisure provision across Belfast. This investment is needed to improve the health and quality of life of our citizens and you'll see dramatic improvements, over the next ten years, as we enhance the service with greater outreach, fresh programming and new products. This will be at no additional cost to the ratepayer.

The **Mary Peters Athletics Track** was re-opened, following a £3 million refurbishment, complete with an international standard eight-lane track and seated spectator stand, providing a modern athletics/sporting facility for the Greater Belfast area and Northern Ireland as a whole. The opening event for the track, saw over 1,100 spectators attend and 461 participants.

The new **John Luke Bridge in Clement Wilson Park** was opened for walkers and cyclists to use. The £200,000 project is part of our Investment Programme, and replaces the old bridge that was on site for more than 50 years.

We were awarded £2.3 million grant towards the £4 million refurbishment of the **Tropical Ravine** in Botanic Gardens, the refurbishment will not only conserve the building's historic nature, but will restore the unique features and add interactive and digital exhibits which will bring more users into the park to exercise and enjoy.

We are continuing with our **community gardens** project in different parts of Belfast, funded by Peace III and the Public Health Agency monies. We now have **thirteen 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. 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. Some of the youth/ diversionary programmes supported include; summer camps, first aid, sports and coaching, lantern parade and weekend bird programme.

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. Following last year's **Amateur Boxing Strategy** launch, the programme is now being rolled out across the city to schools, youth groups and boxing clubs.

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

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

- Provided a service for almost 1.8 million leisure facilities users.
- Worked with almost 1,500 participants throughout 84 planned urban sports events, activities and programmes at Bridges Urban Sports Park.
- Provided services to almost 6,500 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 over 2,000 participants to get rowing through Redgrave Rowing project.
- Delivered a city wide events programme including Rose Week, Spring Fair, Autumn Fair and park fun days entertaining over 179,300 people.
- Funded and supported “Couch to 5K” a programme supporting new runners to begin exercising in a safe and engaging way, attracting almost 3600 participants.

Enriched the city’s cultural and tourism offering

- Attracted over 240,000 visitors to Belfast Zoo.
- Belfast Zoo was recognised at the NI Tourism Awards 2013 as Winner in the Best Visitor Experience Category.
- Hosted 775 events, including weddings, conferences and meetings, and welcomed 190,000 visitors to Belfast Castle and Malone House.

Promoted positive relations and shared space

- Delivered a Midnight Soccer Intervention Programme, in partnership with North Belfast Play Forum, which attracted nearly 4000 participants.

Improved quality of life by reducing inequalities and tackling disadvantage, delivering a range of health and wellbeing programmes and activities

- Delivered almost 16,000 coaching hours to 22,500 people on the Active Communities Programme.
- Supported 371 sports clubs and 235 schools and community groups through sports development and biodiversity programmes i.e. Park Life programme.
- Provided swimming opportunities to more than 6000 children in our ‘Make a Splash’ scheme.
- Delivered a ‘Try it’ sports programme engaging with 20 primary schools and over 800 children.
- 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:

- Managed and maintained to high quality standards 250 parks, open spaces and leisure assets across the city, covering an area of approximately 3,000 acres.
- Improved park quality so that 69% of residents live within 1000m of a Green Flag rated park.
- Continued to manage and maintain 12,500 street trees.

Development Committee



Chaired by Deirdre Hargey, the Development Committee is responsible for the council's role, remit, relationships and profile in the development and regeneration of the city and considers initiatives and issues which impact on the future development of the city. The committee is also responsible 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, as we join with partners to develop both the city's infrastructure and its capacity to promote growth and inward investment while also supporting employability and skills development and promoting tourism.

One of our key priorities is to invest in the future of Belfast's economy and people by supporting businesses and communities and continuing to deliver ongoing programmed projects.

During the year we led the **Belfast Future City** conference which brought over 150 city stakeholders together to begin to build agreement on the strategic themes for the Belfast Masterplan. This secured commitment to establishing shared priorities for the development of the city and is a first step towards creating the city's new community plan.

Engaging young people and harnessing their creativity are central to establishing a successful, dynamic city. This year our Youth Forum met the challenge when they participated in both the '#Live Louder' competition to engage young musicians and the 'Digi-dragons' competition to encourage innovative digital solutions for environmental and mental health related issues. Winners secured funding to further develop their creative and digital skills.

Over the past year, we celebrated 400 years as a city and had our busiest tourist season ever, thanks to the successful delivery of the **World Police and Fire Games** during the summer. Some 7,000 competitors from 67 countries descended on Belfast further enhancing our reputation as a destination for international sporting and cultural events. Significant preparations also went into ensuring the success of two world class 'Big Start' events in Belfast in May 2014; the **Circuit of Ireland Rally** and the **Giro d'Italia**.



Building on the success of these events, the opening in December 2013 of the **Visit Belfast Welcome Centre** on Donegall Square North, will undoubtedly prove a valuable addition to the city centre as it continues to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for tourists, visitors and residents seeking information about the City.



Belfast also featured prominently in the international business world, with the prestigious **Horasis Global India Business Meeting** taking place in June when 300 Indian and Asian business delegates combined with local businesses to participate.

Belfast Tech Mission's visit to Silicon Valley in California was another first in 2013. Twenty local companies working in the technology and digital-led industries showcased new technologies and products while promoting Belfast as a leading digitally connected city and a prime location for international investment. Our ongoing work to develop the innovation centre and creative hub in the city will strengthen these links and help to foster our world class creative talent.

Our work in delivering the Investment Programme and Local Investment Fund, to bring about real change in our neighbourhoods by tackling deep rooted poverty, isolation and division was highlighted at the **2013 EUROCITIES** Social Affairs Forum in City Hall in October. This Forum focused on social innovation, collaborative working and investment in communities.

Recognising the economic challenges many households are facing, the £430,000 funding for a city wide **Tribunal Representation Service** where claimants who wish to challenge Social Security Agency decisions can seek support. The Fund is managed by the Belfast Advice Group and is used to employ five full-time Tribunal Representatives as well as administrative support. This enhances our provision for local communities and advice services in our efforts to improve quality of life for all citizens.

Our Investment Programme highlighted the need to develop skills and employability and the **Achieve Initiative** provides £300,000 to support 16-24 year-olds to move into further education, training and employment. Through the Prince's Trust Development Awards we've already supported 432 young people; 73% of whom live in the 10% of most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. The initiative is now focusing on awarding 240 grants of £500 to successful Belfast Metropolitan College students who have applied to our new Achieve Belfast Bursary fund.

St George's Market has been awarded the title of 'Best Large Indoor Market' at the annual NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities) awards which are regarded as the most prestigious in the business. The 'Best Large Indoor Market' is one of the most coveted titles, and the 2014 award the most keenly contested in the history of the competition, with St George's beating off internationally renowned markets such as Billingsgate, Borough and Spitalfields to lift this year's crown.

Working with the Arts Council, we announced the opening of a '**Creative and Cultural Belfast**' fund to support projects delivered jointly by cultural organisations and community groups and which reach out to people who are less likely to participate in culture and arts due to social, economic or other barriers. We have committed £150,000 per year for each of the next three years, which is being match-funded by the Arts Council. Over the next few years we will see the successful projects coming to life.

Over the year, we:

Promoted and Supported engaged and active community

- Distributed almost £2.8 million through 514 separate **community grants** in support of community development.
- Welcomed over 548,000 visitors to our 22 community centres
- Attracted nearly 73,700 volunteer hours in our community centre programmes
- Provided 106 summer schemes attracting 9,369 children

Promoted and developed tourism, culture and arts, making Belfast an attractive place to live in, work in, study in, invest in and visit

- Secured 60 cruise ships for 2014
- Generated £5.7 million spend by leisure visitors and dealt with 534,515 tourist enquiries
- Welcomed 24,000 attendees at conferences secured by Visit Belfast
- Invested approximately £2 million in cultural and artistic activities including the City of Festivals and Creative Legacies.
- Hosted more than 344,000 people at events at the **Waterfront and Ulster Halls**
- Contributed to a 100% hotel occupancy rate during the Police & Fire Games

Encouraged business growth and competitiveness in key sectors and secured investment in the city

- Supported more than 1,500 businesses through training, business events and grants
- Secured a 100% funded grant from UKERI to provide skills development for companies wishing to trade with India
- 'Skilled' up 4,956 participants through best-practice, development and networking events programmes and initiatives
- Helped to create 380 jobs by working with local partners across the city including HARTE and the Belfast Enterprise Academy.
- Hosted almost 1,070 businesses and over 4,900 people at Economic Development business improvement programmes
- Welcomed almost 1.7 million people to St George's, Smithfield and the City Hall continental **markets**

Belfast Statutory Transition Committee



Chaired by Alderman Gavin Robinson, the Belfast Statutory Transition Committee provided political leadership in taking forward preparations for local government reform. It was responsible for putting in place important foundations to enable the smooth transfer and integration of new place-shaping functions and powers from central government and ensuring a seamless convergence, in terms of continuous service provision and addressing any identified investment needs, of those new areas which will join with Belfast in April 2015

Chairman's message and priorities

During the past year, Belfast City Council has made considerable progress in preparing for and maximising the potential opportunities presented by the local government reform programme.

The transfer and integration of significant new place-shaping functions such as spatial planning, regeneration and enhanced economic development powers, together with the introduction of new community planning powers will further enhance the ability of locally elected Members to respond to the needs and concerns of their communities and shape, in partnership with others, the future development of the city.

Local Government Reform offers an opportunity for us to work together with partners, particularly on areas which cut across different agencies, including health and wellbeing and community safety. This presents a more efficient way to handle key issues, with relevant groups coming together to solve local problems.

The Belfast Statutory Transition Committee comprised of 25 elected Members including two Members from Lisburn City Council and two Members from Castlereagh Borough Council and was operational from December 2013 up until the local government elections on 22 May 2014.

The Committee provided the political leadership in our preparations for reform and helped ensure that the transition to the new council is as seamless as possible, and that we are ready to use the additional powers to deliver the vision of the new authority.

The following core values and priorities underpin our approach to preparing for reform and laying the foundations for the creation of a new Belfast Council which provides value for money and responsive services to all citizens

- Maintain service delivery & standards across the new larger council area from 1 April 2015
- Ensuring the effective transfer and integration of central government functions and powers
- Focus on the needs of customers, foster a 'can-do' attitude and be problem solvers
- Minimise any adverse impact upon local ratepayers resulting from local government reform
- Effectively engage with local citizens, communities, staff and other stakeholders
- Value our employees

Over the coming year the focus of the new Council, operating during the shadow period, will be on developing an organisation that can effectively deliver the new functions and powers and to provide high quality services in those areas coming into the city from Castlereagh, Lisburn and North Down.

Preparing for the New Belfast Council

Maximising the opportunities presented by local government reform for Belfast and its citizens.

Significant work has taken place over the past year to put in place the necessary foundations for the new Council

- Effective delivery of **local government elections** and creation of the **new Belfast Council** operating during shadow period up until 1 April 2015.
- **Appointed the Chief Executive Designate**, Suzanne Wylie, in April 2014, who is responsible for helping Members to ensure the establishment and effective operation of the new council from 1 April 2015.
- Developed proposals in relation to **interim governance arrangements** for the Shadow period.
- Put in place **dedicated programme management resource and infrastructure** to support the effective coordination of the Council's preparations implementation of reform
- Ongoing **engagement with Lisburn, Castlereagh and North Down councils** - Work continued at political and officer level with neighbouring councils in preparation for the extension of the city boundary in order to ensure service continuity
 - Oversaw predatory work and assessment of **potential assets and liabilities** transferring to the Council
 - Oversaw **assessment of service convergence issues** and budget estimating linked to the extension of the council's boundary.
 - Completed initial **assessment of potential numbers and types of staff to transfer** to Belfast from Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council.
- The council responded to a number of reform-related **consultations** during the past year, including the Local Government Bill, (now the Act), and a number of pieces of subordinate legislation which are required to support the Local Government Act
- Engagement with **central government departments** increased, including the Department for Social Development (DSD), Department of the Environment, and Department for Regional Development. Joint principles were agreed with DSD, including an approach to transition (2015 to 17) and transformation phases (2017 and beyond), and a series of joint workshops took place
- **Communications** remained high on the agenda with face-to-face, magazine and web channels used for both staff and members of the public. A section on changes to the Belfast boundary was included in a joint Lisburn and Castlereagh resident's publication, and a programme for other stakeholders is under development

