



Subject:	Strengthening the role of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in community planning.
Date:	21 st June 2019
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Christine Robinson, Strategy Policy and Partnership Manager David Cuthbert, Community Planning Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report is to seek agreement to move forward with the implementation of arrangements to strengthen representation of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sectors in community planning.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: a) Agree the overall model for VCSE sector participation and representation in the community planning process. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the establishment of a Sectoral Advisory Panel;• the establishment of a VCSE Network for Belfast;• the embedding of VCSE participation in current action planning activity being convened by the community planning partnership; and

- the provision of a brokerage resource to enhance engagement with the sector.
- b) agree that council should make an initial contribution of up to £30,000 to enable progress to continue;
 - c) Agree that a financial contribution should be sought from community planning partners to implement the model;
 - d) Note that the full implementation of the structures will be dependent on funding from community planning partners.

3.0 Main report

Background

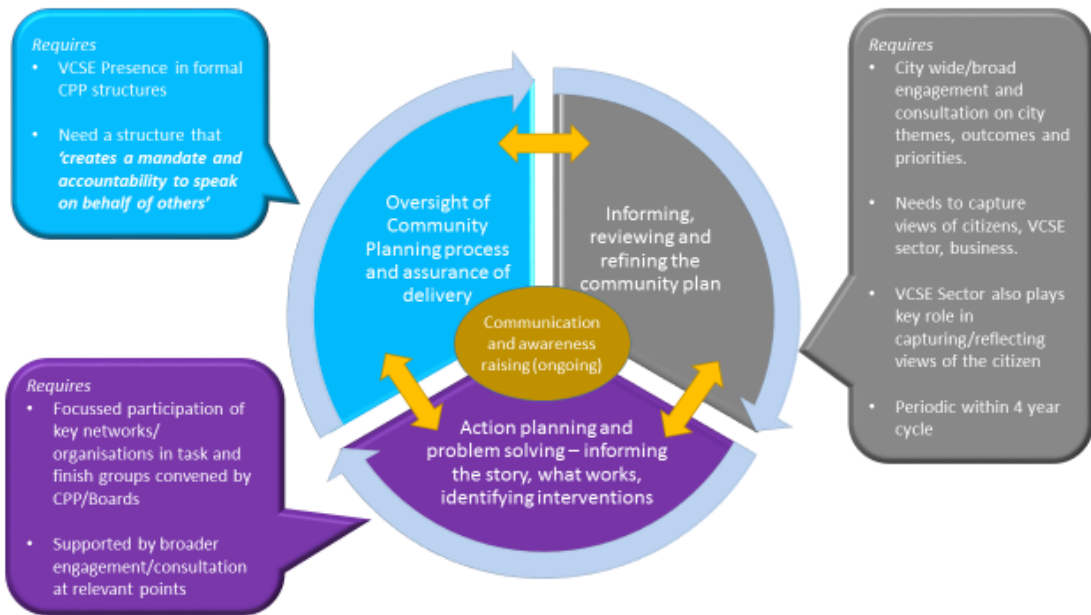
3.1 Since publishing the Belfast Agenda, our Community Planning Partnership has begun to make real progress in establishing joint working and action planning approaches across a number of key Belfast Agenda commitments.

3.2 Members will be aware that Council has been working hard to build the Partnership’s approach in a number of key enabling areas; to ensure the partnership is fit for purpose; to deliver the impact aspired to in the Belfast Agenda; and to improve the process of community planning into the future.

3.3 A key focus of this work is strengthening how we facilitate more effective participation and representation of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. Over recent weeks and months, we have been engaging with community planning partners and a wide range of organisations and groups across Belfast’s VCSE sector to develop the model.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sectors representation in community planning

3.4 To jointly develop this model with Belfast’s VCSE sectors, and to understand what arrangements would ensure effective participation within the Belfast context, a series of engagement workshops were held with organisations and groups operating in the city. Over 100 people from over 70 community and voluntary organisations/groups participated in these engagements – the discussions considered 3 forms of participation in the community planning process which are summarised in the diagram below:



3.5 Feedback from the engagement sessions indicated broad support for this approach, and has helped to inform what the role and purpose of a Forum/Panel might entail, its membership, and what communication mechanisms and support may need to be put in place to ensure effective implementation (e.g. online, sectoral events etc).

3.6 The proposed model for VCSE sectors representation and participation in community planning has now been further developed and is summarised as follows:

- i. Establishment of a **Sectoral Advisory Panel** to facilitate the selection of VCSE sectoral delegates, who can advocate on behalf of others in the sector, in the formal community planning governance structures.
- ii. Establishment of a **VCSE Network** to facilitate effective and ongoing communication across the wider VCSE sectors in the city, in relation to the Belfast Agenda, community planning and the work of the Sectoral Advisory Panel, and to provide appropriate engagement and consultation opportunities to support the community planning process;
- iii. Utilising both the knowledge, expertise and stakeholder intelligence from both (i) and (ii) above, to assist the Community Planning Partnership in identifying appropriate stakeholder **participation from VCSE sectors in action planning** activities/working groups.

Further information on each of these elements is outlined below:

3.7 Sectoral Advisory Panel

Members are asked to agree to the establishment of a Sectoral Advisory Panel. In summary the purpose of the Panel will be to:

- i) Ensure the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector's voices are articulated by participating in the Community Planning Partnership and its governance structures, and providing advice and advocacy on the sector's behalf.
- ii) Support the development of cross-sectoral relationships and improved partnership working by increasing collaboration, assisting in identifying key stakeholders and networks, and acting as a two way conduit for information sharing and engagement,
- iii) Promote ongoing and effective community engagement by promoting broad and inclusive engagement and consultation.

3.8 It is envisaged the Panel will be comprised of up to 15 members (drawn from organisations and groups operating with the VCSE sectors in Belfast) via a nomination and selection process that will seek to ensure as far as possible a balanced membership across:

- Thematic areas and priorities in the Belfast Agenda
- Coverage of the city geography
- S75 groups
- Large and small organisations

3.9 Feedback from the recent engagement process has informed development of a draft 'Terms of Reference', which sets out in more detail:

- The purpose of the Sectoral Advisory Panel
- Principles and code of conduct
- Role of Panel Members and the Chair Person
- Membership criteria and selection process; and
- Operational matters.

3.10 A further short consultation exercise (up to 5th August 2019) will invite VCSE stakeholder input to help refine the Panel's implementation, in advance of commencing a nomination

and selection process to populate the Panel. Members are also invited to comment on the draft Terms of Reference (attached to this report in Appendix 1).

Subject to Member approval, and the agreement of Community Planning Partners, the proposed timeline for establishing the Sectoral Advisory Panel will be as follows:

Committee/Council approval and agreement of CP Partners to establish Sectoral Advisory Panel	June 2019
Further engagement/consultation on proposed draft Terms of Reference	June & July 2019
Refinement of Panel Terms of reference and selection criteria/process	August 2019
Appointment of independent expert support to administer selection process on behalf of the CPP	September 2019
Commencement of open call for nominations to Panel and application of selection process	September 2019
Inaugural meeting of Sectoral Advisory Panel	October 2019

VCSE Network

- 3.11 Members are asked to agree to the establishment of an inclusive city-wide VCSE network, to support the community planning partnership and the sectoral advisory panel. This will greatly enhance our ability to effectively communicate and engage with the wider VCSE sectors in the city. The purpose of this network would be to facilitate effective dissemination of information, and co-ordinate engagement around key Belfast Agenda themes.
- 3.12 This network will be primarily virtual (online) – in registering to be part of the network participants will be entering into a commitment from City Partners to receive communications, and also opportunities to be engaged in the shaping and design of the Belfast agenda and its delivery. In practical terms, this will involve website content, social media, an online engagement platform, along with a series sectoral engagement events (a programme of engagement around Belfast Agenda and community planning themes is being developed with Partners to animate this process).
- 3.13 It is proposed to launch the network and registration in line with the timeframes for commencement of the sectoral advisory panel. This will involve broad communications and awareness raising to promote registration and sign up from across the VCSE sectors as widely as possible. An initial network engagement event will then take place in Autumn 2019, based around Belfast Agenda themes (e.g. health and wellbeing).

VCSE Sectors participation in detailed action planning

3.14 In delivering Belfast Agenda priorities, community planning partners are convening a range of action planning activities with relevant stakeholders, often on a 'task and finish' or ad hoc basis, to explore evidence and data, understand issues at hand, and develop interventions through collaborative working.

Immediate steps are being taken to embed strengthened VCSE sectors participation in action planning, working with Action leads to ensure stakeholder identification/mapping and engagement plans are in place across areas of work including (for example):

- Drugs, alcohol and mental health
- Addressing avoidable winter deaths
- Children and young people, early years and family support
- Good relations
- Addressing educational inequalities
- Employability and skills

3.15 Going forward the strengthened approach to VCSE participation afforded by the sectoral advisory panel and wider network aims to facilitate:

- Improved identification of key stakeholders and involvement to key organisations, groups and networks to participate in such groups through advice of the sectoral advisory panel, and
- a more coherent supporting engagement mechanism to seek views across the wider VCSE sectors (through the VCSE Network) in relation to the themes and action plans under development.

Support Model

3.16 The success of strengthened participation and representation of the VCSE sectors in Belfast will require significant effort to support and co-ordinate this activity. Crucially, a review of similar models in other Cities with large and diverse VCSE sectors has identified the need for a dedicated support role that primarily seeks to promote the Panel and Network as the authentic mechanism for engaging with community planning. This requires strong networking and relationship building across the Belfast's VCSE sectors often at an informal level. In other cities with large and complex VCSE sectors, this role is usually undertaken via a dedicated post holder who has senior experience of working in the

sector(s), and knowledge of its operation, with the ability to effectively engage others and promote partnership working.

3.17 Additionally, practical support is required for:

- Administering the selection process to identify the Sectoral Advisory Panel members;
- Providing secretariat for the Sectoral Advisory Panel, including assistance with preparing agendas, making arrangements for meetings, taking minutes etc;
- Managing communications across the Sectoral Advisory Panel to assist panel members in reporting of their activity, and across the wider VCSE Network (web site, Email newsletters, social media; and
- Organising and managing sectoral engagement events on behalf of the Sectoral Advisory Panel and Community Planning Partnership.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.18 It is estimated that the financial implication of fully implementing this model will be in the range of £85 – 100k.

3.19 Timely implementation and launch of the proposed model (envisaged for Autumn 2019) is dependent on the necessary resource being made available by Council and Community Planning Partners. Officer discussions with potential funders, including Department of Communities are ongoing. It is proposed to write to Community Planning Partner organisations to seek a resource contribution to support implementation.

3.20 It is requested that the Council make an initial contribution of up to £30,000 to enable the work to move forward, this funding will be drawn from the City and Organisational Strategy Departmental budget.

3.21 Implementation of the recommendations in this report are subject to the availability of suitable funding.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.22 There are no equality or good relations implications as a result of this report, however the proposals contained within the report will support enhanced consideration of equality and

	good relations issues by ensuring more robust community involvement via strengthened representation in the community planning process.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Draft Terms of Reference (and consultation questions) for a ‘Sectoral Advisory Panel’