

T:BUC Engagement Forum

"Delivering T:BUC through Shared Space"

Tuesday, 19th January 2021, 10.15am – 12.45pm

Online Zoom conference

Opening Remarks and T:BUC Update – Dr Mark Browne

Dr Mark Browne Deputy Secretary in The Executive Office opened the event noting that there were around 200 in attendance and introduced himself as the lead the Strategic Policy, Equality and Good Relations Directorate which has responsibility for implementing the Together: Building a United Community Strategy. He noted that that we will be joined later by Junior Ministers Lyons and Kearney.

Mark went on to say that when the Forum last met back in September, it was our first virtual meeting - the theme was '**Delivering T:BUC during the Pandemic**' and we enjoyed a number of presentations highlighting how groups have sustained delivery of good relations projects using new and innovative approaches during the COVID 19 pandemic and the discussions on the unique issues that have impacted on the delivery of good relations work were helpful for TEO in knowing what help and support you might require during these difficult times.

Mark went on to say that work on the T:BUC strategy continues to create and enhance physical space that can be shared by everyone in our community – spaces that people can enjoy and engage with others because they know they are safe. He noted for too many years maintaining peace between communities here meant keeping them apart – by putting walls and barriers between them. Nowadays, peace more often means working to remove physical barriers. Mark then gave a brief update on work across the T:BUC Strategy.

During 2020/21 the [Central Good Relations Fund](#) awarded over £3.2m to 98 good relations projects for projects which must be completed by 31 March 2021. The 2021/22 Fund opens for applications in January .

He noted the great work that continues on the [District Council Good Relations Programme](#) during the pandemic and how the Councils work to adapt their programmes to reflect the new way of working. The District

Council Good Relations Programme is a match funded good relations funding Programme delivered jointly by TEO and District Councils as part of the wider T:BUC Strategy. In 2020/21 DCGRP has awarded £3.05m to the 11 councils to provide approx. 132 GR Programmes across all council areas.

Mark went on to say that 2020/21 saw 111 successful applications to the [T:BUC Camps Programme](#) however, due to the current pandemic we have had 31 withdrawals leaving 80 groups currently delivering. Mark took this opportunity to thank both the Education Authority, our delivery partners and camp leaders for their dedication and commitment, who have had to 'think outside the box' for innovative and creative ways to continue the delivery of Camps for the young people – all whilst adhering to social distancing measures

He highlighted that the delivery of the Good Relations Ambassadors Programme has also been affected however it was great to see the young Ambassadors rising to the challenge, continuing to make progress both individually and as a collective. Application to the 2021/22 T:BUC Camps Programme is now open and further information can be accessed on the Education Authority Website.

As part of Marks update he indicated that a review of the [Minority Ethnic Development Fund](#) has now been completed. The resulting report made 10 recommendations which were discussed with the Racial Equality Subgroup to inform implementation. Following this, the 2021/22 Minority Ethnic Development Fund was launched by Ministers on 18th December 2020 with a closing date for applications of 25th January 2021.

The earlier launch of the application process this year was in direct response to one of the recommendations in the report and marked the commencement of implementation. Work is underway to implement all other recommendations over the next year including moving to multi annual funding cycles in future. He pointed out that TEO remain fully committed to ensuring the MEDF continues to provide a valuable source of funding to support our minority ethnic communities and retain and enhance capacity in the sector.

He next focused on Urban Villages, highlighting that during 2020/21 there are a total of 55 Community-Led and Cross Cutting projects being delivered with an investment of £1.8m to help create thriving places

across the [Urban Village](#) areas. 43 capital projects have been completed to date and nine more have commenced. £21.8m of capital investment is currently committed across the five areas, and an overall capital investment of £47.2million is expected to be fully allocated to projects by the end of March 2021. He added that good relations statistics reflect that 88% respondents agree that different cultures are important for richness & diversity of society and it is encouraging to see such positive feedback.

Mark then moved onto highlighting Shared Education work which continues on the four projects approved from the first and second calls to the programme. The post-primary project of Limavady SEC is leading the way with construction due to start in mid-2021 and the Integrated Consultation Team beginning design work for the Ballycastle SEC. He noted that the primary school projects were progressing well with the Integrated Consultation Team for Moy SEC appointed in November 2020 and the business case for Brookeborough SEC currently being progressed between the Education Authority (EA) and DE.

In the area of Shared Housing the Covid 19 social distancing measures have limited the ability to deliver planned good relations projects. However, the Housing Associations delivering the shared housing schemes Good Relations Plans have developed innovative good relations approaches but looked forward to hearing from the shared housing projects at the event.

Mark then spoke about the [Uniting Communities](#) programme which continues to be delivered despite the impacts of COVID-19 disruption, with a focus on further training and development of Young Leaders and Ambassadors. For example in Ardoyne and Ballysillan T:BUC Ambassadors are currently designing and delivering their own good relations project; a programme aimed at creating the next generation of community leaders. He noted that 12 Uniting Opportunities projects have also commenced engaging some of the most marginalised groups of young people in our society through sport, creative and good relations activity.

Mark also mentioned the [Peace4Youth](#) programme which is on track to successfully achieve its objectives with over 5,000 young people having participated to date. He explained that the projects are supporting participants to develop capabilities in the outcome areas of personal development, good relations and citizenship, designed to lead to increased life chances for the young people involved including their

enhanced employability. He noted that the independent evaluation of Phase 1 of the programme in October 2018 was highly positive with the majority of indicators under the main outcome areas showing clear progression for participants and that a second evaluation was carried out in 2020 and was again highly positive. Phase 2 of the programme began in early 2019, will run until 2021/22 and is progressing well.

Mark then outlined the programme for the day welcoming the opportunity to hear from the work being carried out in the Colin Area by Footprints Women's Centre, and from Andrew Haley and Gerry Millar from the DfC Ministerial Advisory Group on their broad aims and in particular the proposed project around Cupar Way. But first Mark introduced Harry Maher and Chris Davis to talk about the DfC Shared Neighbourhoods programme.

DfC Shared Neighbourhoods programme **Over View**

Harry Maher

Presentation 1 overview Shared Housing Programme

Harry outlined the programme indicating that they are working with other departments across UK who have similar issues such as Christians/Muslims in parts of England etc. So this is not just an NI issue. He provided facts and figures demonstrating 49 Shared Schemes with 29 Across Rural communities. Harry was very keen to explore new opportunities and invited the event and groups to contact them should they want further information. Following Harry's brief overview he then invited Clanmil Housing to outline the work they had been delivering under the shared space programme.

Clanmil Housing

Tim O'Malley from Clanmil Housing reported that in 2015 Felden in North Belfast was designated as a shared housing neighbourhood, which was contentious at the time.

In 2015 young people made a video of their hopes and fears about the estate, and in 2021 they updated their thoughts on Felden.

Clanmil delivered a Good Relations programme to Felden which developed partnerships and fostered relationships and reconciliation in the estate.

The young people felt that there was going to be trouble in 2015 but were excited to be a part of a shared neighbourhood and expressed the wish that a lot more communication and dialogue would happen across the interfaces.

They felt it was very challenging in 2015 to start a shared housing project and graffiti appeared on the walls in 2015 with the intention of intimidating potential residents to stay away. The local community, however, made it very clear that this was not welcome and they wanted to create a space where people could integrate with each other in a way that was respectful and understanding. Also they could benefit from hearing other's views and cultures.

Clanmil also worked within a five mile radius of the project to encourage learning and understanding.

They brought organisations in such as Women's Tec to enable tenants to develop new skills and to enhance their personal development. They created lots of opportunities for people.

The young people felt that it is important for other shared neighbourhoods starting up that outreach and youth work should happen to assist people before they move in to the area.

Following Clamil's presentation Harry invited Radius Housing to speak.

Radius Housing

Grainne Mullin presented to the forum on how the Shared Housing Good Relations Plan is delivered in Radius Housing.

Radius Housing has been involved with TBUC from the beginning, and has implemented a number of Shared Housing initiatives, such as: Global Crescent, Ravenhill; Burnvale Crescent, Cookstown; Earls Court, Dungannon; Laurenhill Gardens, Coleraine; Belfast Road, Newry. There are a number of new areas in the pipeline in Portstewart, Newry, Derry/Londonderry, Ballymena, and Omagh.

There are 226 households living in these areas.

Grainne Mullan then discussed the mechanics of it's delivery:

The framework is developed by co-design, involving the Executive Office, the Housing Executive, the Housing Associations, and the communities themselves. Open consultation with the community, wider stakeholder and the creation of a local advisory group takes place. This is key to the success and buy-in from these groups. The advisory group is made up of statutory agencies, elected representatives, representatives from the community and faith groups, as well as people who have knowledge of area. A 5 year Development Plan is drafted, following a survey of the new community members. This is community led and grassroots delivery enables prolonged meaningful contact. This plan is a flexible and builds a programme for the area. Grainne noted that the outcomes are all aligned to the Programme for Government. Promotion, engagement, bonding, bridging, sustainability, and learning are the key actions of the plan. The Development Plan involved activities on a number of themes, including: health and wellbeing; education, training and employment; arts and culture; advice and advocacy; and community development. Grainne Mullin then introduced a video showcasing a diversity project which ran as part of the Shared Housing Project in East Belfast.

The project involved drama and movement.

Participants highlighted that 'If we don't understand each other and each other's needs how can we address them'. The project aimed to create healthier and happier communities. NI is changing, it is no longer them and us, it is all of us together. The project brings people together to acknowledge each other's cultures, and art transcends race and religion. She felt it important that kids grow up being respectful of each other's freedom of choice.

Following Grainne's presentation we heard from Ruth Montgomery from a Rural housing project.

Rural Housing Ruth Montgomery

Ruth outlined the project stating that the Old Mill Court is Rural Housing Association's first Housing for all scheme and completed in December 2019. Ruth went on to say that they only had a few months of face-to-face delivery before the covid-19 pandemic hit. During these first few months they had carried out extensive engagement work with both our advisory group, made up of local statutory & voluntary agencies working in the area and well as tenants themselves to help develop a community led five year good relations plan for the village. What they didn't consider

when developing our five year good relations plan was the emergence of a global pandemic which would continue into 2021.

Ruth stated that for them as good relations practitioners at the heart of good relations work is a need to connect communities by bringing people together and COVID-19 has made that very difficult. Whilst they were able to conduct some good relations activities prior to the pandemic as illustrated by their video, they were not at a point where they felt that they had an established good relations project in place. Most of the tenants did not know their neighbours prior to moving into their new homes, very few tenants had participated in good relations work prior to the project and bridging work focused on connecting our tenants with the surrounding community was only in its infancy.

The pandemic had meant they have had to become more creative in their approach to good relations work,

Some of the ways they had continued to sustain good relations activities throughout the pandemic has included working closely with organisations such as ArtsEkta to deliver a series diversity boxes projects to 230 tenants, residents and school children within Sion Mills and surrounding areas, which could be completed from the safety of tenants homes or within school bubbles. These projects had enabled local residents to explore and learn about different cultures from around the world through arts and crafts, online resources, cookery etc. Ruth noted that they were currently delivering a community bakery project exploring Irish & ulster recipes combined with fortnightly learning packs teaching participants about Irish & ulster scots language, culture, history and heritage.

During periods of relaxed restrictions they were also able to transform old mill court itself into a shared community space where we could host safe socially distanced community events such as diversity days and Community circuses, which tenants could view from their doorsteps whilst interacting with their neighbours from a safe distance. When planning these events we conducted in depth risk assessments, working collaboratively with other housing associations and consulting government guidelines to ensure the safety of all attendees.

Ruth pointed out that before the pandemic they tended to use local community centres to host good relations projects but the pandemic has demonstrated we can use Old Mill Court itself as a shared space to host community events which bring people together from different backgrounds and this is something they would continue to do beyond the pandemic. By using the scheme itself as a community space it has helped

the tenants start to build those positive relationships and one year on we have seen a huge progression in creating a more integrated and inclusive community within Old Mill Court and also within the village of Sion Mills as a whole

The next presentation to be introduced by Mark Browne was from Linsey Farrell, Director of Urban Villages Initiative and CIT and Isobel Loughran, CEO of Footprints Women's Centre:

Linsey and Isobel outlined that the group had been supported by Urban Villages for 4 years allocating over £100K towards capital spend for Women's Centre. Footprints had carried out research to gain a better understanding of the needs of newcomers settling in the Colin Area. They have set up a support services for newcomer families from Syrian community. They support these people by improving social interaction, service provision, childcare support, food support etc..

They noted that one of the biggest barriers to integration is the Language barrier. Footprints Centre had set up a google classroom assistant and run English classes to reduce isolation and create opportunities for them to connect with community and services around them. They felt that one of the most important things is to give newcomers a voice so they can communicate the improvements they need in order to settle and become part of the community and wider society.

Mark Browne thanks Linsey and Isobel for their input then invited Andrew Haley and Gerry Millar to speak and outline the work the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) were doing.

Cupar Way: The beginning of a conversation about an important place for local communities and city.

Andrew Haley and Gerry Millar spoke about potential plans for Cupar Way an interface in Belfast.

They noted that they were currently completing other projects such as Springfield Dam. Early engagement with the locals will be planned although a walkabout has already occurred to see what the area was like and what the possibilities were to enhance it. There is inter-agency involvement with the Councils, Ministerial Advisory Group at Dept. for Communities and look at the connectivity between Cupar Way, the City

Centre etc. NIHE have indicated interest in some environmental improvements to the area and there is also some tourism viability with the possibility of a Troubles Museum at the Peace wall.

The next steps are to have conversations with the communities in the area to see what is possible.

A Question & Answer session followed the presentations were Mark Browne invited questions from the floor.

Harry Maher (was asked a question about allocation of housing in shared housing areas). Response: we look at the waiting lists and aim for at least a 70/30 balance as the proportion that form part of the social housing programme.

Question asked of Ruth Montgomery re are intergenerational projects offered? Response: We try to tailor elements suitable for all age groups. Re work in rural areas, we try and reach out to other areas within a 5-mile radius but that can be difficult due to issues with rural transport.

Question for Isobel Loughran (Where does food come from for the Social Supermarket and how is childcare provision addressed). Response: We are a registered day-care facility and we have provision for working with vulnerable children. The Social Supermarket is an alternative to a foodbank and the food comes from Fair Share. We also provide a range of services to women. We also make sure that the voices of BAME families are heard by engaging them in our research projects and helping them to integrate into the community.

Question from Mark Browne to Gerry & Andrew (How do we protect artwork on shared spaces and how do we maintain physical connections?). Response: It's about knowing more about how people move within these shared spaces and their communities, needing to engage with stakeholders about sensitivities, try things out and learn from them. Not sure exactly how we can protect art pieces e.g. at Cupar Way.

Mark Browne welcomed the Jnr Ministers and invited them to say a few words.

Declan Kearney noted that there is a real desire for shared space across our community and there would be no point in providing shared

housing/education/facilities etc if people didn't want them. Ending of physical divisions needs to be a key priority across government and society, we all want to achieve positive relations across society. He noted that people can still get together virtually and was very impressed by the creative way that people have been brought together. More needs to be done to tackle division in view of the attack on the Belfast Multicultural Association's premises, the funds raised for repair show how society will oppose racism. He went on to thank everyone for all of their hard work. Mr Kearney also congratulated Paddy White from Youthlink for winning the CRC Good Relations Award.

Gordon Lyons then spoke saying that great progress has been made and programmes still continue even within current restrictions, great work ongoing to integrate minority ethnic communities. It is about the work of people in communities, this is why shared spaces happen, besides the physical changes. Great work happening on the interface programme and shared education campuses. Great that the target of 10 shared neighbourhoods has been achieved. He was very impressed by the fantastic work being done by the Housing Associations. Want to thank everyone for their hard work. Mr Lyons also congratulated Paddy White from Youthlink for winning the CRC Good Relations Award.

Mark Browne thanked the Junior Ministers for attending and to the speakers for their excellent presentations. He went on to thank CRC for organising the Engagement Forum. He went on to say how impressed he has been by how much has been done to advance Good Relations in the face of this pandemic, and he felt, listening to what has been shared today has only reinforced that feeling.

Mark Browne, before closing the meeting, paid tribute to Mel Corry of Trademark who passed away recently and referenced the attack on the premises of the Belfast Multicultural Association