

## **Summary Record**

### **Together: Building a United Community Engagement Forum**

#### **T:BUC – A Celebration!**

17 September 2019

9.30am -1.30pm

Belfast City Hall

Andy Cole, Director of Good Relations and T:BUC from The Executive Office (TEO) opened the event welcoming all the participants, providing housekeeping details and letting people know that he had now been in the TEO for 1 year. He highlighted that it was Good Relations Week with a very wide range of events and activities taking place across NI, of which the Engagement Forum was one. He stated that today is a celebration and of course, we've still a long way to go on this journey. He noted that the event today was to identify people making change for peace and outlined the programme for the day. Andy took the opportunity to welcome the Lord Mayor of Belfast Cllr John Finucane to provide a formal welcome and open the event.

The Lord Mayor welcomed all delegates particularly on Good Relations Week and took some time to outline and illustrate how Belfast City Council were working hard to deliver on Good Relations including the launch of the new Good Relations Strategy and adopting promoting good relations as a key corporate objective. The Lord Mayor felt that Council have set the standard for the city to be a place of welcome and diversity.

Following the Lord Mayor's comments Andy Cole invited Dr Mark Browne from The Executive Office to speak. Mark pointed out that TEO have responsibility for a range of things, but in particular good relations and that the Engagement Forum has been running for a number of years. He pointed out that it is a real opportunity to engage with all in the community and all the organisations and different government departments who help to deliver the T:BUC strategy.

He illustrated some of the successes including the work by Turas with around 300 people enrolling in Irish language classes. Mark noted that today is about having a two way conversation and that this is what the Engagement Forum is all about. He noted that it is an opportunity for government to communicate messages out to those working in the sector and to other departments and for you to feedback to us about what is happening on the ground. Mark recalled the last forum held in May, in Derry, where people learned about a number of projects and people who are working hard to deliver on the cultural expression theme of T:BUC by strengthening diversity. He pointed out the wide range of activity taking place including Londonderry Bands Forum, the Northwest Migrants Forum and the Urban Villages Streets Alive project.

Mark commented that as it was Good Relations Week, there are a whole range of events taking place right across the country, celebrating the work of people making change for peace by developing good relations within and between our local communities.

He went on to provide further detail about the event. Participants will have the opportunity to travel around presentation areas and get further detail on each of the 7 headline actions and hear the presentations from those who are delivering on those headline actions.

Mark also pointed out the T:BUC 2019 Annual Report was now available with lots of very interesting information in it, showing the work that's been going on across all the headline actions. Mark went on to highlight some key progress noted in the annual report. For example youth camps/ residential. He also noted the Urban Villages Programme as well as the successes of the Peace for Youth programme. He outlined nine out of 10 shared neighbourhoods have been completed. In respect of sport and creativity, there is the Uniting Communities programme, and the commitment to remove all interface barriers by 2023. The DOJ and interface barriers have reduced by 13 over the last number of years. Mark pointed out that progress is being made across the headline actions. TEO have commissioned a mid-stage strategy review which Michael Potter will speak about later in the event.

Mark also highlighted that his team was working on the development of a Good Relations Ambassadors programme, which would be piloted through the T:BUC

Camps programme in 2021 working to ensure that young people are a positive catalyst for change in their own community.

Further developments included Building Peace through emotional resilience for today and the Future. This is a mental health programme that is about helping young people who may have issues of mental health or the potential to develop issues around their mental health to improve their resilience. He also noted another initiative called Building Community Cohesion through Social Enterprise, and that this is about supporting additional and different approaches to social enterprise. He mentioned that TEO were also continuing preparation for the Peace Plus program and invited people to take an active part in the consultation process.

Mark also mentioned the District Council Good Relations Programme delivered through the District Councils. He went on to note the emergency interventions to assist where particular issues emerge and an area is important to have some diversionary activities to reduce tension. Also mentioned was the Minority Ethnic Development Fund, as well as the wide range of funding streams available through CRC, such as culture diversity schemes, core funding scheme, media grant scheme and publication grant scheme.

Mark invited Paul Killen from CRC to outline the arrangements for the presentations in the Great Hall and invited the delegates to take part in those presentations.

There followed a presentation on each of the seven T:BUC Strategy Headline actions. Participants took the opportunity to visit the presentations.

1. Shared Education Campuses
2. Uniting Communities
3. Shared Neighbourhoods
4. Peace 4 Youth
5. DoJ Interface Programme
6. T:BUC Camps
7. Urban Villages

Following the presentations from the seven headline actions Mark invited delegates to take their seats. He hoped that the presentations would go some way to illustrate the sheer breadth of the work that is ongoing right across the whole

T:BUC strategy. At this point Mark invited Michael Potter to speak about the T:BUC mid-stage review and stock take that he was currently carrying out.

Michael Potter introduced himself as a researcher for the Assembly Research Service. The terms of reference for the stocktake is that it is to report on progress and to identify barriers to progress, identify any gaps in strategy delivery and to bring forward any recommendations aimed at improving strategy, implementation, delivery and outcomes He outlined that there have been significant changes in NI and this impacted on the review especially when trying to focus on dealing with the traditional divides?

Michael provided context including two and a half years without government and that has had an impact and Brexit. He also pointed out that there was a growing ambiguity about identity in Northern Ireland through census returns and surveys.

Michael also pointed out that there are 46 separate sections to T:BUC. as it's not just about the headline actions. Michael indicated that he was particularly interested in programme delivery and the practicalities on the ground, meetings with key stakeholders, meetings with delivery partners and projects, key observers. So to whom are departments speaking? He stated that he has tried to get a good cross-section of comments and views and most importantly, participants, every opportunity to talk about what they think of T:BUC. He noted that there was a lot of partnership working and cross-departmental cooperation.

He noted that there was loads of good practice going on and it was very important to capture it. Questions Michael is asking include Does T:BUC actually make a difference? And if so, when will we know that it makes a difference? And there have been quite a few elements of co-design as well which appears to be working well. He noted that the most important work is the most difficult work and he asked which particular activities are actually having an impact. He noted that sometimes a little movement is a huge, huge gain in some areas. He also commented that there is an issue around short term funding. He stated that there was a lot of good stuff going on with considerable experience on the ground.

Michael noted that a lot of cross government cooperation that can be taken forward however the big question was how this will get sustained when the money runs out. He went on to point out that while T:BUC was primarily about the two main traditions in NI there was considerable involvement by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and this needed have greater emphasis within the policy.

Mark thanked Michael for his input and looked forward to the final report as an honest assessment of what's being done and what's good to continue as well as what we can do better over the next couple of years.

Mark moved on invite the rapporteurs up to the front when they each gave a brief summary from each of headline action presentations and workshops.

Liza Wilkinson reported back from the **Shared Housing Programme** noting a recent survey suggested that 72 percent of people preferred to live in shared housing. It's not saying single is identity is bad but it was about giving people a choice. Liza noted there was lots of local areas that are put forward, as shared housing that don't end up as shared housing. The process is promoting them then engaging with key stakeholders, working with the actual tenants who live in the community. It was important too to look at working on a five mile radius and seeing what services are there for example shared education and interfaces etc. Liza also raised the question as to how do we make sure that the tenants in shared housing schemes feel integrated into the wider community? Liza went on to illustrate this with examples as provided by Radius in Global Crescent and use of localised 5 year Good Relations plans and making sure that good relations is still at the heart of community integration activity. There were questions about political support and potential resistance and Liza noted that that this was something that the scheme has come up against. Also talked about was how we make sure that there's not duplication of meetings and programmes to ensure we are providing the best service for people in communities.

Damien McNally reported back on **T:BUC Camps** being delivered by TEO and the Education Authority. Damien noted that it was now a year round programme, not a summer camp. Damien outlined what has worked well such as young people on previous programmes now engaged in the design and delivery of subsequent camps and programmes and participating in other social action projects. So it enables

teams of young people to come together again and to make a difference, provides opportunities to showcase the learning and the benefits of the programmes. Some of the challenges included recruitment in some age groups who may have other commitments such as part-time jobs and lots of other activities.

He noted that there was a sense there was a focus on contact hrs over outcomes and that targets can be a challenge and it's hard to balance contact vs. impact and against the usual of work needs to be funded and stand on a year round basis. Damien noted that it was important to have the ability to track young people, what they do after their programmes and creating a T:BUC Alumni Pack.

Denise Hughes reported back on the work of the **Shared Education Campus** team. Denise pointed out that young people learning to share from an early age was important and that the sharing didn't mean less than but rather it actually meant more than, that they would have more choice, more opportunities. And it actually didn't take away anything from their own sense of identity or belonging, or loyalty. It was seen as very positive, also that the sharing in this in this case would give an opportunity for the development of a shared narrative around history, and around the future. Denise challenged the use of the term Shared Campus arguing that is this what we've been doing for years within the CR sector re-branded yet again, Denise felt that there was a lack of clarity around what is being shared? Is it just the space? Is it classes? Sport? Language?

Feedback also questioned the fact that it's a shared, and not integrated approach. Some did say it was a step in the right direction. But again, is it replacing integration and should it? She asked did this actually institutionalise difference? There was also a query about some interface areas that have been doing this work within urban areas, but are a long way from Shared Campuses. Another question raised around where are the new migrants? Where are the new communities again within this? And are they just an add on, an afterthought or is there anything really strategic built in?

Emer Little reported back on the **Urban Villages Programme**. Emer commented that it was an excellent initiative because there had been an extensive initial consultation. It was a ground-up approach. It had cross-cutting themes of education, employment, community and partnership. Emer also noted there was

programme and capital funding available. Emer also commented that we need to know who's funded to do what in what areas and for what periods of time to avoid duplication and administration time in applications. She also commented that applications being assessed focused on outcomes and the need to ensure that applications are measured against actual outcomes by the T:BUC strategy. Emer also pointed out that we do need Ministers in place to make all of this happen.

Jim O'Neill reported back on the **Removal of Interfaces**. He noted that it was really important to talk to those most affected by the barriers. That could include, obviously, the local community who live there, business owners, elected representatives including places of worship with the people who actually attend the church, which is in the vicinity. Jim noted that there were different ways of consulting, use of local service, public meetings, and displays. He stressed the importance of partnerships with local community groups and various agencies. He noted one of the challenges in the interface areas was the timing of the opening and closing of some of the barriers which were not consistent.

He noted that there was a challenge by way of gatekeepers, people who claim to represent the local community but actually exclude many people from that process. Jim pointed out that fear of the unknown, the uncertainty among local communities about what will happen as the barriers came down was very real for local communities. Jim noted that recreational rioting came up a couple of times in terms of young people just coming together to engage in rioting across the interfaces. He pointed out the achievements such as the reimagining of the local barriers, making them more presentable, enabling young people to come together across those barriers, also the freeing up of more space for local communities. He noted 2023 was the target deadline for the taking down barriers but felt it was a work in progress. He noted one of the difficulties is that there's no functioning assembly at the moment.

Gavin King reported on the **Peace 4 Youth** (P4Y) programme and there was presentations from a range of staff involved in the programme in terms of what is working well. He noted that P4Y, covers a wide range of activity. This enables the programme to address a wide range of good relations needs. There was also a real sense of the value of the ongoing commitment to co-design in the programme and also the value of non-formal learning approaches, formal skill-based interventions.

He noted that formal skill-based interventions haven't worked for many of the participants in the past, but non-formal approaches have proved very effective. Given such large numbers of young people on such a range of partner organisations, there's a real challenge to ensure the processes are standardised and standards are maintained and secondly age profile, the programmes had a significant uptake from school age children. But the challenge is to get young adults involved in the programme.

Michael Doherty reported on the **Uniting Communities through Sport and Creativity**. Michael outlined that this group works with 16 to 24 year olds. He noted in 2014, 78 percent of young people saw religion as part of our difference. He noted that young people seem to get a lot out of it. Some of the challenges included there is a recruitment problem, where the programme is based itself, and then the change of partnerships that come along at different times. There was also issues around the summer intervention programs were groups are looking for the same resource to do some similar type programmes. Michael noted 40 percent of the young people say that they had no role model whenever they were growing up however the young people in the group said very clearly that they would hope that they would become role models in the future.

On completion of the rapporteurs reports Mark asked that they remain to respond to any questions from the floor.

Martin McDonald. Chair of the Community Relations Council made comment noting that this was his first T:BUC Engagement Forum which he found very informative and useful. In particular to be able to get that overview of all the interventions that the various departments and TEO are involved in. He noted that CRC was also carrying out its own analysis of the work and a gap analysis in terms of what the department has been involved in. He noted that we do need to start to mainstream it and to make that very extraordinary interventions are part of our normal everyday lives.

Maura Hendron Alliance MLA congratulated all in the room who have spent so much time, give so much effort to creating good relations in our society.

Nisha Tandon from Arts Sector and Community Relations Council Board member noted the fantastic work, congratulating all who organised this very informative, very valuable, well thought out sessions.

Nisha also pointed out that as we are working towards good relations that good relations means that there should be more work with the minority ethnic communities. Nisha asked what is being done to attract these new communities and new people to be part of this very genuine and good work, which this strategy is doing.

Mark Browne responded by saying that racial equality and minority ethnic groups are a key part of the T:BUC strategy and they are not sitting out to one side being dealt with in some other way. Whilst we have a specific racial equality strategy, but it is a part of and under the broader umbrella of T:BUC. He noted there is work to do to make sure that we are attracting people from that community to come to these events.

Jacqueline Irwin CRC, CEO added her thanks to those who have gone before. For everyone who's in the room today and the many, many hundreds of others who aren't here who have been involved in this work. The purpose of today was, at least in part, to give that overall sense of just how much actually is going on at the moment. Even for those of us who are embedded in the middle of it, it is something to see exactly how much activity is going on.

Mark thanked Jacqueline for her comments and delivered closing remarks. He thanked the panel and delegates for participating. He then updated the conference on the date of next Engagement Forum, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020 venue to be confirmed. He pointed out how the information received will be used and published. The Community Relations Council will be providing a summary report for publication on The Executive Office and Community Relations Council websites. Dr Mark Browne extended an invitation to complete the evaluation forms and thanked all for participating. He then invited everyone to take the opportunity to talk to the TEO team providing information on funding processes and Outcomes Based Accountability and then finished by inviting all to stay for lunch.