

Title of Report: PEACE IV Update	Officer Presenting: Head of Business Author: Programme Manager (PEACE IV)
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To update members on the implementation of the DCSD Council PEACE IV Programme.

2 Background

- 2.1 The PEACE IV Programme is a £6.7million EU funded Programme (with match funding from NI Executive). It manages 65 community projects from small grants to significant tenders and some council led projects. The programme delivery pre-Covid was just past mid-way stage with most projects due to finish by December 2020 and the overall programme due to close by June 2021.
- 2.2 The PEACE IV team has sustained the service without break during the Covid crisis and the PEACE IV Board met on 7th April, 12th May and 9th June 2020 during lockdown to oversee this.
- 2.3 The overall picture is that the programme is progressing well and has adapted much of its delivery to the 'new normal'. The financial impact in terms of spend/claims is most likely to be felt from July 2020 onwards and it is possible that the overall programme end date may have to be extended by 3 months due to Covid impact.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The Board have noted the significant impact of the loss of council's statistician. The post (currently vacant) provides an essential service for the evaluation and monitoring of the PEACE IV programme. While the post remains vacant, only a small element of the evaluation service critical to the programme can be provided. Council's statistical service provided the PEACE IV team with detailed statistical analysis at project, thematic and overall levels including Section 75 equality data, rurality information and comparative attitudinal data for attitudinal change for 5,300 participants. The Board wished council to be fully aware that it is essential for the PEACE IV programme, and for the future PEACE Plus programme, that council maintains the statistician post and refills the current vacancy as fast as possible.

3.2 In the initial phase of lockdown, the strategic focus was on ensuring progress with claims/payments to service providers/community projects. With most opportunities for practical community delivery suddenly suspended, many projects turned their attention to catching up with paperwork. A steady flow of claims, evaluation and monitoring and reporting ensued. 10 projects successfully completed their projects and are now closed down. Impact on financial forecasting and project outputs from January – March 2020 was minimal. Financial impact from April – June 2020 is also not significant.

3.3 As lockdown continued, systems and procedures were established by the PEACE IV team to enable groups to request changes to their project delivery. On 27th May, a networking meeting, 'The Art of the Possible' brought together 43 project representatives digitally. DCSDC extended the invitation to this across the border to the Donegal PEACE IV programme and a number of their projects also attended. The key communication message was for projects to adapt rather than delay delivery. To date, 25 projects have now submitted Change Requests. The majority of these have now also been formally approved by SEUPB and the PEACE IV Board so that the change can be clearly evidenced for audit purposes. Projects have shown a high level of dedication and creativity in adjusting to socially distanced and digital delivery. SEUPB have in general been supportive of any reasonable change in methodology, but have been stringent on not shifting on contracted outputs e.g. Number of participants engaged, number of hours of cross-community contact, original purpose/theme of the project.

3.4 Key progress has been made with reaching the overall contracted participant outputs for the PEACE IV programme. As shown in the table below, this progressed during lockdown. The total target for participants has been achieved on each theme and projects are continuing to work towards sustaining that engagement to the end of their contracted delivery.

Theme	May 2020 Start Participants	Mar 20 Start Participants	May 2020 End Participants	Mar 20 End Participants	Overall Target	Cross-Community Balance CNR/PUL/Other
C&YP	2101 (102%)	2052 (99%)	694 (34%)	593 (29%)	2060	53%/28%/19%
SS&S	1433 (114%)	1388 (110%)	710 (56%)	515 (41%)	1260	55%/26%/19%
BPR	1809 (116%)	1746 (113%)	952 (61%)	788 (51%)	1548	45%/30%/25%
TOTAL:	5343 (110%)	5186 (106%)	2356 (48%)	1896 (39%)	4868	51%/28%/21% *CBU 57%/33%/10%

- 3.5 Two key capital projects were impacted by Covid19. The Castlederg Shared Space Project and Phase 2 of the St.Columb's Park Walled Garden Project. After initial concerns, the Castlederg project is likely to be able to progress in the near future and the Walled Garden has revised (and had approved by SEUPB) a change in its phase 2 which will allow it to complete the work.
- 3.6 A key concern under the Children and Young People's theme was that the DCSDC salaried post which co-ordinated the projects was due to finish at the end of June. Many of the projects weren't due to complete until autumn 2020. With Covid, many of these projects asked for extensions into 2021. A business case was presented to SEUPB for the extension of funding to the post to March 2021. This was approved in late June.
- 3.7 In communications, the bi-annual printed magazine was completed and issued digitally in April 2020. In line with council's current policy, the print run has been held. Work to complete the edits on the 3 thematic videos to celebrate the impact of the programme will complete in summer 2020. Projects were regularly communicated with throughout the lockdown to ensure that delivery can continue to enhance the wellbeing of their participants and communities as effectively as possible. A PEACE IV Managers meeting was held digitally on 14th May to compare the impact of Covid19 across participating councils and share potential solutions.
- 3.8 Operationally, in order to function in a streamline manner under Covid, the PEACE IV steering groups were suspended until further notice. The Board met monthly instead of bi-monthly. This ensured one meeting covered all business and that quorate attendance was possible for decision making purposes.

4. **Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications**

- 4.1 In December 2019, NILGA raised the issue of the backlog of payments waiting for processing by SEUPB. This is an issue affecting some but not all councils. SEUPB have made progress in processing and reducing the backlog of payments to DCSDC. SEUPB currently owe DCSDC £881,990. This however includes £522,185 from the most recent claim submitted in May. This historic backlog of claims therefore has been reduced to £359,806 and it is hoped that this will be repaid in the near future.
- 4.2 In terms of equality, it is noted that rural projects and those working with older participants have found it more difficult to adapt their project delivery under Covid restrictions. Rural Broadband and capacity to access digital delivery have had differential impact on projects.

4.3 Revised financial forecasting for the programme had to be submitted to SEUPB in mid-June. Whilst it was virtually impossible to say with accuracy the detailed impact on each of the 65 projects, the overall picture is clear. Spend will be reduced in Summer and Autumn 2020 and will shift into January – June 2021. Groups who were contracted for more intensive community activity such as residentials, bus trips, conferences and major events, could adjust some, but not all of their outputs to meet social distancing requirements. As the PEACE IV team require a clear 3 months at the end of the programme to close it down and comply with audit requirements, it is highly likely that the overall programme will have to be extended to September 2021. Resources for this can potentially be found within the PEACE IV programme and will be presented to the Board in due course for consideration once the overall impact and timescale of Covid19 becomes clearer.

5. Recommendations

5.1 That members note the information above.

Background Papers

None