

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) managing 65 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 has met monthly (with summer break) through this and most recently on 8th September 2020.

2.3 A clearer picture is now appearing in terms of the impact of Covid. Many projects have successfully (to at least some degree) adapted their delivery. Some have completed delivery. The financial impact in terms of spend/claims was not significant in Quarter 1 due to the usual time lag on claims post-delivery, but it is anticipated spend will be down from forecast from July 2020 onwards. It is highly likely that the overall programme end date (June 2021) may now have to be extended by 3 months to reach completion.

3 Key Issues

3.1 The most strategic issue, limiting successful completion of individual projects and the programme as a whole, is the loss of the council statistician role. It's understood that PEACE IV and Community Planning were the lead users of this currently vacant service to the equivalent of 5 days per month for PEACE IV. The lack of replacement means the PEACE IV programme is now having to explore viability and financial impact of outsourcing of this service. No solution has as yet been found. The major impact of this is on programme evaluation and monitoring. This is needed at a project level for projects to report on the impact/difference they have made and for the programme as a whole to

evidence its success. Currently all of this type of comparative evaluation has had to be suspended. Depending on how the issue ultimately resolves, this may also impact on the availability of relevant supportive information for any future PEACE PLUS programme.

3.2 Thirty-five of the PEACE IV projects have now submitted Covid Change Requests via the PEACE IV Team and have received SEUPB approval. This process was created to ensure appropriate audit trails for what are effectively contractual changes due to the pandemic. Relevant changes are now being made to the EMS (Electronic Monitoring System) with SEUPB consent. Around 12 projects have successfully completed their projects and are now closed down. The key concern now lies with those projects still in furlough (very limited number) or which have not yet stated how they wish to adapt delivery. SEUPB to date have been very amenable to change in delivery methodologies and adjusting of content, but have given no leeway on contracted outputs in terms of participant numbers and contact hours. It is possible that a strategic look may be needed on this for a small number of projects which are unable to meet such outputs through no fault of their own.

3.3 During lockdown, the PEACE IV team have worked intensively with key projects which were either close to completion or which needed a sharp focus on meeting contracted outputs in terms of participants officially registered on their projects. This was vital to ensure a flow of payments could still be made to projects. Significant progress has been made. As shown in the table below, this progressed during lockdown. The total target for participants has been achieved on each theme and the key focus will now shift to sustaining and completing that contracted engagement.

Theme	Aug 2020 Start Participants	May 2020 Start Participants	Aug 2020 End Participants	May 2020 End Participants	Overall Target	Cross-Community Balance CNR/PUL/Other (May 20)
C&YP	2587 (125%)	2101 (102%)	1042 (51%)	694 (34%)	2060	53%/28%/19%
SS&S	1461 (115%)	1433 (114%)	825 (65%)	710 (56%)	1260	55%/26%/19%
BPR	2010 (129%)	1809 (116%)	1190 (77%)	952 (61%)	1548	45%/30%/25%
TOTAL:	6058 (124%)	5343 (110%)	3057 (63%)	2356 (48%)	4868	51%/28%/21% *CBU 57%/33%/10%

3.4 In communications, the focus shifted emphasis to regular communication with projects rather than the usual level of focus on external publicity. The monthly e-news bulletin however was issued in August and a DCSDC article was included by SEUPB in their 'Your EU' magazine. 2 Case Studies were also agreed with SEUPB for their website.

3.5 Operationally, in order to function in a streamline manner under Covid, the PEACE IV steering groups remain suspended until further notice. In September, the Board will consider how it wishes to progress with this given the longer duration in the impact of Covid. Meetings are currently held on Webex.

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

4.1 The backlog of payments waiting for processing by SEUPB has now been virtually resolved. Claims submitted on schedule in April 2020 look likely to be paid in September 2020 after which only the claims for April – June 2020 are currently outstanding. The programme maintains an excellent audit rating.

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 It is also noted in terms of equality that the programme has lost its capacity to effectively monitor Section 75 data from May 2020 onwards as the systems were linked to council's statistician post which is vacant since that date. DCSDC can no longer meet its monthly reporting requirements to SEUPB on this with the same degree of accuracy and can no longer report at individual project level on this at all.

4.3 As a significant number of projects have now received approval to extend their delivery deadlines (usually from December 2020 to March 2021), it has become virtually inevitable that a request will have to be made to SEUPB to extend the overall programme deadline from June 2021 to September 2021. Resources for this can potentially be found within the PEACE IV programme and will be presented to the Board for consideration.

5. Recommendations

5.1 That members note the information above.

Background Papers

None