UPDATE ON THE ‘HUB’ BUILDING WORKS

Thanks to Social Investment Funding from the Executive Office (OFMDFM) planning work on the inside of the ‘Hub’ is moving ahead. Architectural plans are being drawn up to maximize the space available for community usage. The building will have a number of multi-function rooms and offices available for hire by residents, businesses and groups. We are looking into establishing a sliding scale for charges to help cover costs of running and maintaining the building.

One of the key features of the redevelopment will be a sun room which will extend out the front of the building. This welcoming space will allow for the creation of a relaxed, friendly and multi-function space for use by all ages for reading, book clubs, reminiscence, talks and even quiet space; our own mini library. Importantly there will be kitchen facilities nearby for the essential cup of tea.

The large function room that was home to Belvoir Library will remain a big space with an attached kitchen facility. This room will be available to hire for a wide range of events, from band practice space to information events, physical activity sessions, exercise classes or even community celebrations.

If anyone would like to speak with me about the hub, classes, health issues or anything else just pop in for a chat on Mondays or Fridays to the Surestart office.
Frances Dowds, Community Capacity Worker

South Belfast Partnership Board is a broad based partnership representing community, political, statutory and private sector members who work to regenerate South Belfast. It seeks to regenerate through: Neutral brokering, Engaging, Facilitating & Connecting.

Public Health Agency works to protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of the people of Northern Ireland and to reduce health inequalities through strong partnerships with individuals, communities and key public, private and voluntary organisations.
COMMUNITY PLANNING

When the Review of Public Administration (RPA) changed council boundaries across Northern Ireland Belvoir & Milltown moved from Castlereagh Borough Council and became part of the new Belfast City Council (BCC).

As part of the RPA, councils also became responsible for community planning - a process which seeks to improve local quality of life through better joined up working between statutory organisations and with local people. The community plan for Belfast is called the Belfast Agenda and when it is finalised it will become the key overarching plan for Belfast including the Belvoir & Milltown areas.

In the meantime Council is currently working in four areas across Belfast to test how community planning might work best at a local level. Belvoir and Milltown was selected as one of the areas. As part of this work council staff have been meeting with a wide range of people within the area to identify key issues.

At a public meeting held in Milltown Baptist Church it was agreed that the Belvoir and Milltown project should focus on the needs of younger people and on health/older people. Next steps will involve additional workshops to drill down into the agreed priorities in terms of what needs to happen and who will do it.

The Youth workshop will be held at 4.30pm on 28th March in Milltown Baptist Church. Another workshop focusing on health issues and support for older people will be held at the beginning of May. For further information contact Patricia Flynn or Joanna Holland at Belfast City Council. Patricia T: 9027 0234 E: flynnp@belfastcity.gov.uk or you can contact Joanna T: 028 9079 2675 E: hollandj@belfastcity.gov.uk

Advice Services In Belvoir Hub

When Surestart South Belfast were applying for funding on behalf of the partnership to develop the Hub for the Belvoir and Milltown community they consulted with local people on what mattered so they could identify what programmes and supports the ‘Hub’ would work to provide.

The top priority for local residents was the provision of Advice Services. We are now able to confirm that starting on 14th March 2-4pm every Tuesday, Ballynafeigh Community Development Agency will be offering Advice Services in the Surestart office. If you would like to ring to make an appointment from 14th March onwards contact BCDA -T: 02890 491161 or advice@bcda.net
‘South Belfast Older and Active Festival’

30th March @ 10.00-12.30

The South Belfast Partnership Board is hosting this year’s ‘Seniors Festival’ in Belvoir Activity Centre on Thursday 30th March from 10.00-12.30. Attendance is free and refreshments and lunch will be provided. There will be a wide range of information stands on the day and opportunities to try out physical activities like Bocca, Tai Chi, New Age Curling, Chair based Aerobics & Dance.

If you are interested in attending please T: 02890 244 070 Ext 14 / 0779 921 2926 or Email: kerry.mcivor@southbelfast.org

Dig It & Eat It Taster Session

12th April @ 3-5pm Belvoir Hub

Spring is here and it's time to dust off the garden tools and head outdoors to start planning for this year’s crops. Don't know where to start? Come along to Belvoir Hub for a taster session and sign up for weekly sessions. Men and women of all ages are welcome.

From window boxes to allotments and community gardens, food can be grown just about anywhere and everyone can get involved.

To register your interest contact Frances T: 07769346146 E: frances.dowds@southbelfast.org

Time for Me Senior Women’s Programme

Thanks to Women’s Information Northern Ireland (WINI) up to 12 local senior women have taken part in a four week personal development programme.

Feedback from the participants has been really positive.

“Loved it… coming together and laughing….. topics were helpful and relevant ….. very well presented”

Discussions are under way with Conservation Volunteers for further workshops for senior women and men in Belvoir Hub. Membership of this group is open so feel free to come along and take part.
Focus on Hub Partner Belvoir Credit Union

Bernie can you tell me a bit about the CU & when it was established?
The Ulster Federation of Credit Unions approached us, asking if we were interested in setting up a Credit Union in Belvoir. So Belvoir Credit Union was established in 1998, and on the 9th Feb 2017 we turned 19. We have been housed in a few locations over the years from Belvoir Activity Centre to Belvoir Players and a tiny, Housing Executive bedsit. Some of these locations allowed for higher community visibility, like Belvoir Players, which was really important for growing the membership. There are a total of 143 credit unions across NI and we are 1 of 40 registered under the Ulster Federation.

How did you recognise a need for the CU? And who does the work?
There was a high level of doorstep lending in the area. The extreme interest rates charged often tied people into an unending cycle of borrowing so the Credit Union offered a more affordable way to save, borrow and repay. We have 5 volunteers and no paid staff running the Credit Union. Our volunteers go out of their way to help people in whatever way we can, making it easy for them to save, helping them to fill in forms. “We make the process as simple as possible, we talk members through the mechanics, how much they have saved, how much they can afford to borrow and how much they will pay back weekly or fortnightly. We also have members who don’t borrow, just save.”

Tell me about your membership?
Membership is open to everyone who lives in or works in the Belvoir area, including children who live elsewhere but have family in the area. Grandparents often open accounts for their grandchildren. It’s a great way to encourage good money management from an early age. The simple fact is that more members make a stronger Credit Union and all members benefit.

“We support people to live within their means and to only take on debt they can afford. Importantly we, unlike banks, pay a dividend, our recent annual interest payment was 2 ½ %. You don’t get this sort of return from any bank nowadays.”

What does it mean to you having a dedicated space in Belvoir Hub to serve your members?
“Since we have been based in Belvoir Hub we are now more visible than ever and our membership has doubled. We are reaping the benefit of Surestart services by being based in a central location. It’s a lot less hassle as well; having a dedicated space means we don’t have to set up and clear away. It will be great to have the new building completed so that our members have a bit more comfort when they’re queuing to be seen. It’s a great location and when it’s fully redeveloped it will be much more enjoyable to work in.”

Have you seen changes over the years and what impact is there on the lives of local people?
People used to borrow money for luxuries, now they’re more likely to be filing an oil tank or paying car insurance, its practicalities nowadays. I’ve personally had members say to me that the Credit Union has made a real difference to them. It’s really heartwarming to hear the pride and delight of young people in their 20’s and 30’s who are saving for the first time in their lives. The importance of the Credit Union is learning to save little and often and holding onto their capital as it opens the door to borrowing in an affordable way.

Do you have a vision for the future of the Credit Union?
We open 51 out of 52 weeks in the year and would like to be able to offer more opening times, possibly Monday mornings. This would be a real support to families living on benefits as that’s when they mostly receive their payments. We would also like to recruit more volunteers to help out. Belvoir Credit Union offer a unique opportunity to gain really useful skills and would suit young people who want to gain work experience or retired people alike.

Open Tuesday evening 6.45 - 8 in Belvoir Hub. T: 02895 088389 / 07950205480 - £2 M’ship Fee
BELVOIR HUB UPCOMING PROGRAMMES & SUPPORTS

Advice Services in Belvoir Hub

From 14th March 2-4pm every Tuesday, Ballynafeigh Community Development Agency will be offering Advice Services in the Surestart office. If you would like to ring to make an appointment from 14th March onwards contact BCDA - T: 02890 491161 or advice@bcda.net

Dig It & Eat It

12th April @ 3-5pm every Wednesday Conservation Volunteers will be running a taster session followed by weekly Dig It and Eat It workshops. From window boxes to allotments and community gardens, food can be grown just about anywhere and everyone can get involved. Don't know where to start? Come along to Belvoir Hub for a taster session and sign up for weekly sessions. Men and women of all ages are welcome. To register your interest contact Frances T: 07769346146 E: frances.dowds@southbelfast.org

The Create Project

Are you a young woman aged 16-24 not in Training, Education or Employment? Interested in doing something fun with your time? The Create Project is running a taster session on Thursday 6th April @ 10.00-12.00 in Belvoir Youth Centre and you can shape the programme, come along and find out how. To Register or for further information contact Tammy – 028 9049 1161 E: tammy.rountree@bcda.net Let Tammy know if transport or childcare is required.

Dealing with Children's Challenging Behaviour Programme

This 9 week course starting 5th April 10.00-12.00 in Belvoir Youth Centre is for parents with primary school aged children. It will provide practical tools and strategies to help support your child and family, with fun resources to take home. For more information or to register call Natasha on 90312377
**Events March 2017**

**14th March – South Belfast Partnership Board invite you to a ‘Community Conversation’**

The Creative Local Action Responses Engagement (CLARE) initiative wants to hear what you and South Belfast think of its model on how it reaches out to, and works with, vulnerable people in our communities on **Tuesday 14th March, Crescent Arts Centre from 1.30-4pm**. Come along for lunch and chat. If you are interested in attending please T: 02890 244 070 Ext 14 / 0779 921 2926 or Email: kerry.mcivor@southbelfast.org W: http://www.southbelfast.org

**24th March - General Consumer Council - ‘Consumer Parliament’**

The Consumer Parliament is an opportunity to raise and discuss the issues most important to you and have your energy, water, postal, transport and consumer rights queries answered on **Friday 24th March from 9.30am** at Spires Conference Centre, Belfast. Attendance is free and refreshments and lunch will be provided. Special £5 all day parking rate is available. To book a place E:keelin.kelly@consumercouncil.org.uk or T: Keelin Kelly, Head of Communications @ 028 9025 1600

**28th March - Belfast City Council - Community Planning Workshop**

A consultative event seeking to improve local quality of life through better joined up working between statutory organisations and with local people. Youth workshop @ 4.30pm in Milltown Baptist Church. To book a place contact Patricia Flynn or Joanna Holland at Belfast City Council. Patricia T: 9027 0234 E: flynnp@belfastcity.gov.uk or you can contact Joanna T: 028 9079 2675 E: hollandj@belfastcity.gov.uk

**Leave no one behind: A city-wide symposium on the community perspective of Belfast City Council’s Local Development Plan**

Wednesday 29th March, 12-4pm in Elmwood Hall, QUB. The symposium will explore how best to involve citizens and local communities in contributing to and developing the plan; looking at what this new plan for Belfast will mean to you as a citizen and to your neighbourhood, your community, your business, your organization. To book a place or find out more contact Sophie Rasmussen Tel: 02890 244 070 Ext 11 E: sophie.rasmussen@southbelfast.org

**BELVOIR HUB PARTNERS**

Belvoir Community Association  
Belvoir Credit Union  
Lagan Valley Flute Band  
South Belfast Sure Start