



QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST



Belfast  
City Council

# CIVIC COMMITMENT TO THE SOUTH BELFAST UNIVERSITY AREA

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# Foreword

Since 1845 Queen's University has been at the heart of our city and region. We are proud of our record in working with local communities, businesses and policy makers to improve the lives and livelihoods of our citizens. We are an outward-looking institution, responding to the challenges faced by families, communities and societies, in Belfast, across Northern Ireland, and around the world.

We have grown as the city has grown. We share Belfast City Council's vision of the city as a place where people want to come to want to live, to work, to study and to experience our city.

At all levels, whether driving university strategy, or responding to local need, we understand that universities have a responsibility to serve. We take that responsibility seriously. We understand the many benefits in having a world-class university in Belfast, however, this can also create local challenges and we are committed to working to address these. In this Civic Commitment, we set out the actions that we are, and will be taking with our partners, to help make Belfast the best city it can be for its people, and in particular how we support, through our actions, all those who call the university area of South Belfast home, for whatever length of time. It reflects our responsibilities and highlights the power of positive partnership working based on mutual respect and equality.

Through this Civic Commitment to the South Belfast University Area, which has been informed by a number of reports such as The Louise Browne Report, The Holyland Transition Study<sup>1</sup> and the most recent Wider University Lower Ormeau Intervention Action Plan 2023, we are committing to working in partnership with Belfast City Council, and local communities, in order to co-create and deliver ambitious plans for cohesive, inclusive development and deliver them with the continued support of the community in South Belfast. Through Queen's Neighbourhood Forum, the assessment and impact of the priorities set out within this document will be openly accessed so that we can confidently state our accomplishments and identify areas for improvement.

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**Professor Sir Ian Greer**  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
Queen's University Belfast



**John Walsh**  
Chief Executive  
Belfast City Council



## Priority

# 1

Actively promote the growth of Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) and increase Queen's own student accommodation offer. Encourage better quality and balance of student housing across the city.

### What will we do:

- Queen's will further enhance its accommodation offer for its students.
- Queen's will establish a new 'Accommodation Bursary Scheme'<sup>25</sup> worth over half million pounds, to support students from Northern Ireland from low-income families with Queen's PBMSA costs.
- Queen's will work with private providers to make available more PBMSA for its students.
- Queen's will promote and encourage PBMSA to first year students.
- Queen's will sign up to the *UUK Student Accommodation Code*<sup>6</sup>. The Student Accommodation Code is there to protect students' rights to a safe, good quality place to live. The Code is independently audited every three years to confirm that Queen's accommodation is up to the high standards expected.
- Belfast City Council will create good practice waste management guidance for PBMSA in Belfast.
- Queen's will host 'Moving Out' events for students living in its accommodation who will be moving into local communities educating students on community living, *Student Conduct Regulations*<sup>7</sup> and *Queen's Student Charter*<sup>8</sup>.
- Queen's and Belfast City Council will work together to make it easier to report issues and concerns regarding student accommodation. We will actively work together with Housing Rights and Northern Ireland Houses in Multiple Occupancy (NIHMO) Unit to support students with housing problems.
- Belfast City Council's NIHMO Unit, under the NI Houses in Multiple Occupation Act, will ensure landlords or agents have good management policies and procedures in place to make sure:
  1. physical standards are maintained
  2. occupiers' rights are respected, and
  3. any problems which arise during the period of the licence are effectively addressed.



Landlords or Agents must be able to manage issues which may concern neighbours effectively (such as building maintenance, cleaning, noise or disturbance and suitability of the applicant or agent). Belfast City Council will consider a landlord's potential to manage these issues (or past performance) when deciding whether to grant a licence. They may include additional conditions appropriate for regulating the management, use and occupation of an HMO. The NIHMO Unit is responsible for making sure these conditions are met throughout the lifetime of the licence and will recommend the introduction of additional conditions, variation or revocation of licence depending on a landlord's performance.

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## Priority

# 2

Encourage students to be good neighbours and contribute to creating a clean, attractive, and sustainable environment that supports the wellbeing of the entire community. Be proactive in addressing the impact of waste and noise issues.

### What will we do:

- Queen's will ensure it has robust *Student Conduct Regulations*, including a Student Charter<sup>9</sup>, and will investigate all off-campus complaints in a timely manner.
- Queen's will conduct inductions for its students to educate them on Queen's Student Charter, Citizenship/Community Living<sup>10</sup> and Student Conduct Regulations<sup>11</sup>.
- Queen's will utilise an ISA with BCC Noise Team and the PSNI to enable effective investigations to off campus complaints.
- Belfast City Council's Night-time Noise Team will respond to noise related complaints and where a nuisance exists or is likely to occur, will serve the person responsible with a Warning Notice or a Noise Abatement Notice.
- Belfast City Council will ensure their Safer Neighbourhood Officers carry out high visibility reassurance patrols.
- Queen's and Belfast City Council will conduct joint visits during key periods to educate students on neighbourliness, crime prevention and student safety.
- Queen's and Belfast City Council will ensure tasking groups are set up to coordinate and create bespoke operational plans for key events throughout the academic year.
- Queen's will host 'Moving In' and 'Moving Out' events in partnership with statutory and local voluntary sector agencies to promote neighbourliness and educate students on community living, waste management, community safety, noise legislation, volunteering opportunities, sustainable travel and Housing Rights.
- Queen's will host a *Neighbourhood Forum*, made up of the Chairs of our local community groups. At this Forum Queen's will report on its activities to address local community concerns and the positive contribution student volunteers make to their community.
- Queen's will establish an internal governance steering group called 'Students in the Community Steering Group' to report internally on how matters relating to students living in our community are being addressed.
- Queen's Students Union 'Handy Helpers'<sup>12</sup> will conduct volunteer initiatives locally- Handy helpers is a unique initiative, which enables Queen's Students to take part in a wide range of one-off volunteering opportunities in their local community. Handy Helpers will conduct litter picks, community events that support environmental improvement within the community, promoting 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' campaigns.
- Queen's will establish a programme for its students to donate unwanted items to charity at the end of the academic year to reduce waste and call it 'Queen's Big Give.'
- Queen's and Belfast City Council will work with local communities to deliver environmental improvement projects within the Wider University Area.
- Belfast City Council will enforce fly tipping, front garden waste, graffiti on HMO's and illegal dumping.
- Belfast City Council will promote its bulky waste collection service, its recycling and amenity sites and local charity shops for donating unwanted items.
- Queen's and Belfast City Council will promote sustainable travel and Queen's will have available on its campus Queen's 'Freedom Cycles'<sup>13</sup> a facility for its students and local community to purchase, rent or repair bicycles. Belfast Bikes will also provide 2 docking locations close to the campus. A Bolder Vision for Belfast<sup>14</sup> sets out how a green, walkable, cyclable network of streets and places will improve health for all, revitalise the City's economy and restore a sense of collective pride in the centre of the City by the communities within and around it.

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## Priority

# 3

Ensure students are valued members of their communities and promote opportunities to increase community cohesion and mutual benefit for all citizens.

### What will we do:

- Queen's will conduct local research and conduct community-engaged learning opportunities for its students. Queen's 'Science Shop' is a community-engaged research initiative creating connections between students at Queen's University Belfast and community organisations across Northern Ireland. Queen's partnerships will be based on the principle of *collaboration for societal benefit*.
- Queen's will commit the resources of the University to work in partnership to find lasting solutions that tackle disadvantage and improve outcomes for places and communities across Belfast and beyond. 'Communities and Place' (QCAP)<sup>15</sup> is an initiative based on engagement and partnership between communities, policymakers and academics. Combining academic and experiential knowledge from the community, QCAP uses a 'place-based' approach to co-create new solutions to address persistent physical, economic and social challenges as well as strengthen the engagement between Queen's University and its surrounding communities. Guided by Queen's University Belfast's Strategy 2030 and its key priority regarding social and civic responsibility, QCAP will deliver on Supporting Places & Communities through Engagement, Research & Innovation.
- Queen's Students Union will deliver QUB RAG<sup>16</sup> and Belfast City Council will promote their work. QUB RAG is the official fundraising group of the Students' Union bringing Queen's students together to give back to their community. Students at Queen's are automatically a member of RAG, and each year a committee of dedicated, passionate student volunteers leads it. RAG helps Queen's students give back to the communities and causes that they're passionate about. RAG will organise student fundraising events, activities and competitions.
- Queen's SU Handy Helpers will conduct volunteering activities within local communities and local residents will be able to submit requests for Queen's student volunteers to assist them in one off community projects.



- Belfast City Council and Queen's will promote the work of Queen's students locally and the positive impact they make to society.
- Queen's Students Union will conduct 'Homework Clubs'. A programme that gives Queen's University volunteers the chance to provide homework support to children and young people who live in areas of educational underachievement. Homework Clubs will provide the perfect opportunity for Queen's students to make a positive change in their community, get involved in something rewarding and gain hands-on experience for their personal and professional development.
- Queen's will offer a route to achieving a 'Future Ready Award'<sup>17</sup> accreditation for its students who volunteer within their local communities. Belfast City Council and Queen's will promote the work of these students.
- Belfast City Council and Queen's will promote local community events that connect students with the wider community.
- Belfast City Council will consider proactively encouraging students to register to vote

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