

Good Relations Partnership – Minutes of 9th February, 2015

“Good Relations Action Plan 2015/16

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Members that, each year, the Council submitted an annual Action Plan to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) in order to draw down funding for the Good Relations work of the Council. The Action Plan would be 75% funded by OFMdfM, while the remaining 25% would be included in the Council's 2015/16 budget. She explained that correspondence had been received advising that the Action Plan must be submitted by 27th February in order to be scored and assessed. She explained that the Good Relations Unit had updated the audit which had been carried out in January and February 2014, in order to incorporate any issues which had been identified in those areas which would come into the Belfast boundary from April, 2015.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it approves the Good Relations Action Plan 2015/2016 for submission to OFMdfM. The Partnership also noted that the Action Plan submission would be subject to alteration and amendment during the assessing and scoring process which would be undertaken by OFMdfM and that the Partnership would be notified of any changes in the final approved Action Plan at a later date.”

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“Good Relations Grant Aid Funding – Tranche 1

The Members considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The first tranche of funding under Good Relations and Summer Intervention Grant Aid for activities taking place between 1st April 2015 and 30th September 2015 closed on 21st January 2015. The application pack also included other small grants across Council as part of the Corporate Grants project.

2 Key Issues

2.1 By the closing date of applications, the Good Relations Fund had received 94 applications totalling approximately £550,000. and the Summer Intervention Fund had received 70 applications to be scored a later date.

The Good Relations Fund is co funded by OFMDFM (75%) and Belfast City Council and the Summer Intervention Fund is fully funded by OFMDFM at 100%.

2.2 As the grants under the Good Relations Fund are aimed at activities taking place between 1st April 2015 and 30th September 2015, these have been assessed first and have been scored against set criteria by Good Relations Officers as outlined in the guidance notes. Following this, an independent assessment panel was set up to review a sample of applications. This was chaired by the Good Relations Manager, attended by 3 other Officers independent of the Good Relations Unit and facilitated by CGU.

2.3 The role of these panels is to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification of sampled applications and the overall process. The Independent panel was satisfied with the scoring and application of the criteria and agreed to recommend the Officer's recommendations for awards and these are attached.

2.4 Members should note that the recommendations for awards for the Summer Intervention Fund will be brought to a future meeting of the Good Relations Partnership for approval.

2.5 An application via the Good Relations Action Plan as approved by Council on 3rd March 2015 has been submitted to OFMDFM asking for a total of £688,500.00 which is 75% of the cost of the Plan. This includes £360,000 towards grant aid costs. This plan was drawn up in accordance with the Council's estimates for 2015/16.

2.6 However, Members are reminded of the experience last year when the Council was informed late in the year after estimates were drawn up, that the budget had been significantly reduced which produced a shortfall in the budget. OFMDFM have also advised that initial indications of the Department's 2015/16 budget suggest an opening position that is lesser than their opening position last year.

2.7 Members are reminded that an all party delegation met with the Junior Ministers in OFMDFM on 9th February where the Members outlined the Partnership's eagerness to work with OFMDFM on the Together Building a United Community Strategy and the Belfast agenda. However, they raised concerns around the resourcing of this work, long-term sustainability and the need for timely communication around funding, as the current situation impacts on business planning and service delivery. Members also asked the Junior Ministers to take into account the additional residents coming into the new Belfast Council boundary and the accompanying good relations issues when allocating funding to the Good Relations Programme this year.

<p>Options: In the meantime, however, Members are being asked to consider options to inform a recommendation to the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee in relation to Tranche 1 of the Good Relations Fund 2015/16 in the absence of a Letter of Offer from OFMDFM and no confirmation of the potential budget.</p>		
<p>Option 1: Await confirmation from OFMDFM regarding budget allocation for 2015/16</p>	<p>Pros: Council is protected from not proceeding at risk</p>	<p>Cons: Confirmation from OFMDFM may not be received until late in the year. Projects are meant to have commenced from 1 April. Relationship with groups is damaged and work on programmes over the summer will be impacted.</p>

<p>Option 2: Allocate awards as laid out in the submitted Good Relations Action Plan at up to a maximum of £360K for the year - £180K in first tranche</p>	<p>Pros: Groups are able to commence projects from 1st April. Positive relationships with applicants are maintained</p>	<p>Cons: Council would be proceeding at substantial financial risk as given the information provided, there it is unlikely that the full amount will be received from OFMDFM and Council would be liable for the cost incurred over what could be claimed back. Funding for Tranche 2 which covers activities from October 2015 - March 2016 would be severely compromised. The programme costs which amount to 30% (£280K) in the overall Action Plan would be impacted upon significantly.</p>
<p>Option 3: Allocate awards for Tranche 1 on a lesser amount which would allow for the Good Relations Action Plan to be reprioritised</p>	<p>Pros: Financial risk to Council is substantially reduced. A proportion of groups can commence projects from 1st April. Programme costs would be reduced but could be prioritised. A proportion of Funding for Tranche 2 would likely still be available for projects from October 2015-March 2016</p>	<p>Cons: Reduced allocation to Good Relations Grant Aid with lesser amount of groups benefitting</p>

Should Members agree to recommend Option 3 to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, they would need to consider an amount of funding to allocate. The following are options which could be considered:

- a. **Fund all 71 groups which have applied to the Scheme and are eligible which would require an amount of £178,326 noting this is what is proposed under Option 2.**
- b. **Fund 57 groups which have scored 50% and above which would require an amount of £155,946**
- c. **Fund 43 groups which have scored 55% and above which would require an amount of £126,616**
- d. **Fund 31 groups which have scored 60% and above which would require a total of £107,816**

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial:

Good Relations Fund - The total budget for allowance of grants under the 2015/16 Action Plan is £360K for the year. However, as outlined in 2.6 above, OFMDFM have not confirmed their match funding and to grant awards on this amount would place the Council at substantial financial risk. Council is required to match fund the District Council Good Relations Programme at 25%.

3.2 Human Resources:

The work is covered within the work programme of the Good Relations Unit.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications:

None.

4 Recommendation

4.1 The Partnership is requested to consider the options presented and recommend an option on how to proceed in relation to the Good Relations Fund in the absence of confirmation of match funding from OFMDFM, for consideration at the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee 20th March 2015."

During discussion, the Partnership was advised that the Letter of Offer for 2014 had not been received from OFMDFM until half way through the year and that it had not as yet been received for 2015. It was pointed out that, should the Partnership be minded to recommend that all 71 eligible applications be funded in Tranche 1, then the programme would be proceeding at a financial risk to the Council.

After discussion, the Partnership agreed to recommend to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, that:

- a) on the basis that full funding of £178,326 can be confirmed from OFMDFM, that Option 2, as set out within paragraph 2.8 within the report, be the preferred option, which would allow for the delivery of all 71 eligible projects in Tranche 1;*
- b) on the basis that the full £178,326 cannot be confirmed from OFMDFM, that advice be sought from the Director of Finance and Resources on potential funding opportunities which could make up any shortfall to allow for the delivery of all 71 eligible projects in Tranche 1; and*
- c) should funding of £178,326 be unattainable through both OFMDFM and the Director of Finance and Resources, that the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to proceed with Option C, as set out within paragraph 2.9 of the report, namely, that funding of £126,616 be allocated to the 43 groups which had scored 55% and above in meeting the Good Relations Criteria."*

Diversity Working Group – 3rd March, 2015

“Decade of Centenaries

The Good Relations Manager provided the Working Group with an update on the Decade of Centenaries Programme and presented a list of proposed events for the coming year.

A draft specification for the exhibition covering 1916 was presented to Members for approval and the Good Relations Manager emphasised that regular updates and input would be sought from Members as the development of the exhibition proceeds. A Member requested further information on the influence of O’Donovan Rossa and it was agreed that the Good Relations Manager would present a report on this at the next meeting.

The Working Group granted approval to officers to seek authority from the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to seek tenders for a suitable organisation which would design, develop and install the exhibition in advance of funding being secured from the Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister.

Bicentennial of the Battle of Waterloo

The Good Relations Manager informed the Group that Councillor Craig had requested that consideration be given to the High Sheriff hosting three talks in relation to the Bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo and that an informal reception be held for the Royal Irish Regiment. The Members were informed that Councillor Craig had spoken to a local historian who would be prepared to give the talks. It was understood that there would be costs relating to the speaker and to provide refreshments.

The Good Relations Manager reminded Members that the Decade of Centenaries programme had already been agreed by Council and that it would focus solely on the period between 1912 -1922. She pointed out that the Linen Hall Library would be marking International Women’s Day, taking in the period from 1815-2015 and this would include reference to the Battle of Waterloo. Furthermore, from 10th until 17th April, they would also have coins and medals on display which would include items from this time.

The Working Group agreed to recommend to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the free use of the City Hall for such events, on the condition that funding for the events would be found elsewhere.

Request for the use of the City Hall – Orangefest

The Director of Property and Projects reminded Members that, since 2012, an application to hold ‘Orangefest’ in the grounds of the City Hall had been approved by the Committee and that the event had taken place annually since July 2012.

He outlined the details of a request which had been received from the organisers for the use of the City Hall grounds on Monday 13th July, 2015, between the hours of 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. The proposed event would be similar to previous years and would involve a mini-market, catering demonstrations and a small open-air children’s entertainments programme.

This year, however, the organisers had also requested that the City Hall be open and that public tours of the building were available for those attending. He pointed out that Monday, 13th

July 2015 was a Public Holiday and that this would depend on necessary staff being willing to work to cover security and to provide tours of the City Hall. He pointed out also that such staffing costs associated with the opening of the building on that day could be passed on to the event organisers.

During discussion, a Member stated that, given that it was an aim of the Council to open the City Hall to members of the public, then this should be accommodated where possible. A further Member suggested that the City Hall was generally open to members of the public on the majority of Bank or Public Holidays and that this should be no different.

The Working Group agreed to recommend that the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approves the request as outlined and that it agrees, in principle, to open the City Hall on Monday, 13th July 2015 in order to provide tours of the building, provided that the necessary staffing arrangements could be put in place.”