



<b>Report to:</b>	Good Relations Partnership
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Review of Bonfire Management Programme</b>
<b>Date:</b>	9th March, 2015
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Stevie Lavery, Programme Manager (ext 3258)
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	At the Good Relations Partnership meeting on 11 <sup>th</sup> August 2014, members made a recommendation to the SP&R Committee that an external consultant be appointed to review the Bonfire Management Programme (BMP) to provide members with the necessary information to make an informed proposal to Council with regard to the future of any similar programme.
1.2	To move forward with this work an external consultant, Lindsay Advisory, were appointed in December, 2014 with the terms of reference for this work to including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Bonfire Management Programme 2014 including an analysis of its development since 2005;</li><li>- to give consideration to those bonfires currently not part of the BMP, and;</li><li>- to provide options for any future Programme based on the review and evaluation of the current delivery model and the impact of Local Government Reform on Belfast City Council.</li></ul>
1.3	Over the past few months the consultants have met with or spoke to 50 plus stakeholders including elected members, community groups involved in the programme, BCC officers and external partners in order to get a wide range of feedback with regards to how the programme (if any) should be delivered in the future.
1.4	The following report outlines some of the key findings contained in the review and points for members to consider. It is worth pointing out that this is subject to the partnership making a recommendation to Shadow SP&R committee to seek approval from Council to proceed with any future BMP. At this stage there is no approval to implement a programme for 2015.

2	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>Following on from this consultation exercise, a draft report has been produced (see executive summary attached) and the overall consensus from the review was that there is continued support for the concept of a BMP which is made on the basis of findings including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) feedback suggests that the PUL community feel supported through this programme and may disengage if it was discontinued</li> <li>ii) there would be a missed opportunity to further develop the work that happens with regards to reducing the number of August bonfires if the programme was discontinued</li> <li>iii) the impact of withdrawal may mean more bonfires, and significantly more environmental and social issues at bonfires</li> <li>iv) there could be a significant resource cost to council and partners to address issues at bonfires with no programme to assist</li> <li>v) there will be a significant reduction in the co-ordinated effort across a number of statutory agencies to address negative issues associated with bonfires</li> <li>vi) without a coordinated programme there would be a missed opportunity to engage with certain hard to reach PUL communities who are not part of the programme</li> <li>vii) the general view was that by fully withdrawing or substantially reducing the value of grants issued, there was a very real risk that the situation would be worse than before the programme commenced in 2005.</li> </ul>
2.2	<p>Notwithstanding the positive feedback, the review also raised the following possible areas for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) A long term interagency strategic focus on how we deal with both July and August bonfires should to be developed in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- support communities in the positive celebration of their cultural heritage through <u>better bonfire management</u> on 11<sup>th</sup> July</li> <li>- support communities to provide <u>alternative activities to bonfires</u> on the 8<sup>th</sup> August</li> <li>- take a proactive approach with partners to <u>the removal of unwanted bonfires</u> where there is broad political and community support</li> </ul> </li> <li>ii) The programme requires a long term strategic direction and/or framework to enable Council, its statutory partners and participatory groups to agree on a succession strategy from the programme in its current form.</li> <li>iii) There is currently no strategic coordinated approach on what agencies and communities are working towards with regards trying to address any of the negative issues with regards to bonfires across the city including those in July and August as part of the current programme.</li> </ul>

- iv) The programme needs to have greater clarity as to what outcomes it is seeking to achieve, with statutory partners and groups signed up to working towards a shared goal.
- v) Further work needs to take place to improve how partners work with communities to reduce the number of August bonfires.
- vi) Significant work needs to take place to work with those communities who are not currently on the programme.

### 2.3 Options

At the Good Relations Partnership meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> March the consultant will deliver a presentation which will outline in more detail some of the findings from the review including possible options on a way forward for the BMP. As part of this review we are seeking approval from the partnership to make a recommendation to Shadow SP&R on a preferred option as a way forward for the BMP.

### 2.4 Recommended Option

Following on from findings contained within the review we are proposing that members consider the following recommended option as a way forward for the BMP.

*Implement a revised programme with clearer focus on outcomes (environmental, social, and good relations) and how we monitor compliance, whilst taking a parallel approach to developing a long-term interagency strategy incorporating all bonfires across Belfast.*

*This strategy will include how we engage with those communities where there are bonfires currently not on the Programme as well as working with communities who are taking a proactive approach to reducing the number of bonfires in nationalist areas.*

In summary, we will make a recommendation that Council should continue with the BMP through a funded programme with the implementation of a grant-aid framework to monitor compliance with guidelines while at the same time lead on the development of an interagency strategic framework (which will include operational delivery structures) on how we better manage all bonfires across Belfast, through better engagement with communities and working with elected members. It should be acknowledged that (if approval is received) all aspects of this option will not be fully realised for the 2015 programme such as the long term strategy given the challenging timescale.

As part of this recommendation, the development of a Multi-Agency Action Plan for all bonfires will be developed and as far as possible implemented, (resources permitting), through engagement with local communities and elected members. This Action Plan should also seek to identify mechanisms for engaging with bonfires not on the programme to date and identify key strategies and priorities to deal with specific bonfires that have significant issues.

This option is further seeking approval that Castlereagh bonfire groups that are part of the Castlereagh Community and Cultural Forum are offered a transitional period, of one year (subject to review), to migrate from their existing rules and guidelines to Council-wide rules that are agreed through facilitated engagement with all groups. A Grant of up to £1,000 per group will be available if they wish to maintain their existing grant aid framework; or £1,500 if they sign up to the Council's guidelines.

2.5

### **Bonfire Management Guidelines and Grant Aid Framework**

If Belfast City Council agrees to continue with the BMP on the basis of the above recommendation, immediate work will have to progress in order to engage with local groups who may be part of the 2015 programme. It is important that Council officers along with partners start to work more closely with groups who are involved in the programme to support them as we implement any new programme for 2015.

Parallel to this work it is recommended that new guidelines are developed which will include details on financial requirements for those groups taking part in the programme as well as clear guidelines on what penalties may be imposed if there are breaches. This will ensure there is a clear structure in place to enable groups to continue to implement the positive work that they are involved with and at the same time allow for monitoring procedures to be put in place. It is recommended that this is delivered through a grant aid framework.

This grant aid framework will be developed whereby funding is pre-conditioned by compliance to certain targets with the allocation of specific penalties for non-compliance on a number of issues, and not just focused on non-compliances with burning of flags and emblems. This grant aid framework will outline which penalties will be imposed on any given breaches and this should be communicated to groups at start of the 2015 programme.

As members will be aware the role of local community groups in this work is very challenging and it is often difficult for groups to adhere to guidelines such as the burning of tyres, flags and emblems as breaches are often out of their control. Quite often despite the best efforts of local community groups who can be a small residents group extraneous factors such as flags being put on bonfires at the last minute resulting in breaches of the guidelines.

As part of this review, there is a recommendation that there is more support given by council officers and statutory partners to those groups who sign up to be part of the BMP to assist them in adhering to the guidelines of the programme. Given the set of circumstances around the enforcement of the breaches last year and subsequent issues raised by groups, it is recommended that consideration is given to those groups who make reasonable efforts and best endeavours to prevent breaches occurring.

2.6

### **Proposed Penalties within a Grant Aid Framework (Draft)**

As part of the development of the grant aid framework for any future programme, consideration is required on any or what penalties may be imposed in relation to breaches. As mentioned, we are proposing that this is implemented via a grant aid framework which will be further developed subject to Council's approval.

To aid the development of the framework, members are asked to consider the following table which outlines a draft of proposed breaches and their subsequent penalties which could form part of the guidelines for a future BMP.

<b>Proposed Penalties 2015 BMP (Draft) Based on Maximum Grant £1500</b>	
<b>Key Target</b>	<b>Withdrawn funding for non Compliance</b>
The burning of any flag, emblem, posters, effigies or any other symbol that may cause offence is not allowed. Groups must work closely with local bonfire builders and statutory partners to carry out their best endeavours to prevent this.	15% up to £225
Tyres and toxic materials should not be collected or burnt on the bonfire and materials should be restricted to wood	10% up to £150
Groups should refrain from the displaying of paramilitary trappings and paramilitary flags on or in the vicinity of the bonfire site or any activities associated with this programme.	10% up to £150
No collection of bonfire materials before 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2015	10% up to £150
In accordance with suggested NIFRS safety guidelines, when a bonfire is built, the clearance space between it and any surrounding buildings should be at least 5 times the height of the bonfire.	10% up to £150
Maintain a clean, compact and tidy site.	5% up to £75
<b>Total Maximum Funding that can be with held</b>	<b>60% up to £900</b>

**2.7 Groups penalised in 2014**

In relation to those groups who received a financial penalty as a result of breaches within the 2014 programme, members are asked to make a recommendation as to whether they are to be included in any future programme. As you are aware the approach to monitoring compliance with the guidelines is not without its difficulties, and feedback suggests that in 2014 there was a lack of communication to groups with regards to how compliance would be monitored and the process whereby groups were penalised.

Furthermore, as the 2014 programme was implemented with limited engagement with local groups to support them in reducing the likelihood of breaches and there were issues in relation to who was responsible for the financial administration of the grant funding and adherence to the guidelines, it is proposed that these groups are considered for inclusion in the 2015 programme. This proposal is on the basis that there is early engagement with the groups who were previously penalised to agree a strategy for preventing similar breaches on any future programme.

**2.8 Delegated authority**

As members are aware, if there is Council approval for the BMP to proceed there is a considerable amount of work that needs to take place over the coming months to develop relevant guidelines, procure relevant services from external companies as well as developing operational procedures for implementing the programme.

Due to the tight time constraints we are facing (if we receive approval from Council in April) we are seeking delegated authority from members to proceed with operationally delivery of this work with the condition that regular updates will be brought back to members as the programme progresses.

**2.9 Lisburn and Castlereagh**

It is worth noting that in the areas transferring over from Lisburn and Castlereagh, there is currently one August bonfire site that will be part of the new Belfast boundary and is not part of any Council led programme.

In Castlereagh there are currently nine July bonfire sites that will be part of the new Belfast boundary which are represented on a Bonfire Interagency Working Group which is part of the Castlereagh Community Culture Forum. This forum receives (and manages) an allocation of £1,000 per bonfire through the Tidy Bonfire Programme with the aim of working together to minimise the negative effects from bonfires and to help promote a more family friendly cultural celebration for the 11<sup>th</sup> July. The forum self regulates each bonfire against a grant aid framework with different penalties imposed for various breaches.

**2.10 Finances**

Members are also asked to note that OFMDFM and NIHE funding for the BMP is not yet secured, and as in previous years, it is unlikely that OFMDFM will confirm funding until the programme has already commenced.

The following table shows potential funding that will be secured for this programme along with a projected spend plan:

<b>Potential Funding 2015</b>		<b>Spend Plan (Based on £1.5k grant per group x 55)</b>	
OFMDFM	£50k	Grants	£82k
BCC	£25k	Cleansing	£18k
NIHE	£35k	Beacons	£20k
PCSP	£15k	Monitoring	£2k
		Contingency	£3k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£125k</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£125k</b>

Given the nature of the resources available and with the additional areas coming into Belfast, members may wish to consider awarding a maximum grant of £1500. As part of the review that was undertaken a number of groups had indicated this would be acceptable if it was supplemented with increased engagement with agencies on an ongoing basis.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	Funding from partners has yet to be finalised for this programme, BCC contribution of £25,000 is included in this year's revenue estimates. If members agree to proceed with the programme, it is on the basis that the Council is operating 'at risk'.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	Equality and good relations implications will be considered as part of the development and implementation of this work. A bonfire management programme has been included within the Good Relations Action Plan 2015/2016 which has been screened in accordance with the required guidelines.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>The Partnership is requested to note the contents of the BMP review Executive Summary and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. approve the recommended option as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the report for the future delivery of the Bonfire Management Programme, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. continuing with the Good Relations funded programme, with the implementation of a grant-aid framework to monitor compliance with guidelines;</li> <li>b. the development of a long-term interagency strategy and multiagency action plan on how we better manage all bonfires across Belfast; and</li> <li>c. offering Bonfires which are part of the Castlereagh Cultural Forum a one year transitional period to migrate from their existing guidelines to future Council guidelines.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. agree the draft proposed penalties for the Grant Aid Framework 2015, as outlined in 2.6 of the report;</li> <li>3. consider whether those groups which were penalised in 2014 should be included in this year's Programme, subject to local strategies being developed with the groups to reduce the likelihood of future breaches;</li> <li>4. agree that the maximum award in the proposed BMP Grant Programme be capped at £1500;</li> <li>5. grant delegated authority to Council officers to proceed with the operational delivery of the BMP, with update reports being submitted to the Partnership;</li> <li>6. note that the Council will have to consider any recommendation bearing in mind that it would have to proceed at risk since funding for the Programme has not been confirmed; and</li> <li>7. commend the recommendations of the Good Relations Partnership to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Stevie Lavery, Programme Manager will take forward any recommendations based on a decision being made at Council.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BMP – Bonfire Management Programme PUL – Protestant Unionist Loyalist CNR – Catholic Nationalist Republican	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
BMP Review Executive Summary	