



Report to: Adjourned Strategic Policy & Resources Committee

Subject: Peace III - Revised Peace & Reconciliation Action Plan (Peace Plan)

Date: 26 February 2008

Reporting Officer: Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager Ext: 6020

Relevant Background Information

The Committee will be aware that a draft Peace Plan, approved by Council on 1 October, was out for public consultation during October and November 2007. The Consultation Document outlined how we proposed to manage and deliver Peace III funding under the priority 1.1 "building positive relations at the local level".

Every effort was made to ensure wide public awareness of the Council's proposals and an extensive consultation process was undertaken:

- the full Consultation Document was available on the Council's website
- a press release was issued in the name of the Lord Mayor
- articles were published on the NICVA e-Bulletin and the Community Relations Council's Information Bulletin
- advance notice was sent to the 5 District Partnership Boards, requesting them to issue attached fliers to their own local organisations and inviting them to organise an event in their own area
- fliers were issued to over 650 groups on our Good Relations mailing list
- a letter was issued to the major statutory bodies in Belfast
- an article was included in *City Matters*.

We organised 4 meetings in the north, south, east and west of the city in the last week in October. We ensured that special sessions were held with representatives of S 75 groups, young people, older people and women (all target groups identified by the SEUPB). In addition we responded to 9 additional requests for meetings with various sectoral interests.

Good Relations Unit staff made presentations on the Council's proposals at all these events and we had a pool of 6 independent researchers, chosen from the Community Relations Council's select list, who facilitated the discussion at the consultation meetings. We engaged Gráinne Kelly (who co-devised the principles of peace and reconciliation used by the SEUPB) to collate all the responses made both at the consultation sessions and in written submissions and produce a final report for the Council.

Altogether over 220 participants, representing 125 organisations, took part and we received 15 written submissions. A copy of Gráinne Kelly's full report along with a table summarising the key points raised during consultation and the Council's response to those points are included as Appendices to the revised Peace Plan.

Key Issues

As a result of comments and suggestions made during the consultation, some substantial changes have been made to the document. The principal differences are:

1. There is more detail around the guiding principles, values and vision.
2. The Action Plan is more detailed, with specific proposals and named partners.
3. There are up-dated references to the Programme for Government and the Chicago visit.
4. There is a detailed report on the extensive public consultation exercise undertaken in relation to the Peace Plan.
5. The Good Relations Partnership will be established in shadow form as quickly as possible so that the Partnership members may be fully trained in preparation for their roles and may begin to start firming up the criteria to be used in determining applications for funding. The shadow Partnership will be reviewed in 6 months time, in line with SEUPB advice.
6. There was considerable discussion around the composition of the Partnership and the revised recommendation is:
 - elected Councillors – 6, one from each political party group
 - voluntary/community sector – 4 nominees
 - other statutory agencies – 2 nominees from the Belfast Chief Executives' Group
 - trade unions – 2 from ICTU
 - private business sector – 2, one each from CBI and Belfast City Centre Management
 - churches – 2, one each from the Protestant and Catholic churches
 - minority faith groups – 1 nominee from appropriate organisations
 - minority ethnic groups - 1 nominee from appropriate organisations.

Subject to Council approval, letters will be issued in the next couple of weeks to relevant organisations and umbrella bodies, commencing the selection process and inviting nominations from appropriate representatives for the Good Relations Partnership.

7. The proposed Good Relations Learning & Development Strategy has been withdrawn, as most respondents felt that the principal beneficiaries of this would be Council employees and not those in the wider community. This will be re-submitted in due course under priority 2.2 of the Peace III Programme "developing key institutional capacities for a shared society", which is more appropriate for this project¹.
8. The Council's bid is for an amount of £12 million or €18 million; this figure includes the additional staffing required and our projected management costs of just under 10% of the total.
9. The Action Plan outlines the proposed methodology for implementation. To retain a strategic outcome focused approach and ensure that the activities under the Plan are delivered in a co-ordinated and coherent manner, we will commission the majority of the work (80%) and distribute 20% of the funding by way of open calls. This is based on advice from SEUPB and other EU funders, who recommend that open calls should be reduced, as the assessment of these is very resource intensive and often results in a low success rate for applicants. The SEUPB have agreed with this 80/20 ratio.
10. We will also set up a small grants scheme of up to £500,000 per year (assuming a successful bid of £12m).

¹ Learning and Development Strategy only included under priority 1.1 on SEUPB advice

11. The proposed timescale for the delivery of the Peace III Programme will have to be postponed as the SEUPB now inform us that they will require a minimum of 13 weeks from the time they receive our final Plan until they are able to make any decision. We hope to be able to submit our Plan in early March so may not receive any response until around May 2008. Although we may begin to draw up procedures and draft up Job Descriptions etc for anticipated staff in a parallel process at this time, we will not be able to advertise or begin a recruitment process until we receive a formal SEUPB notification of offer. ²

12. The SEUPB have also informed us that they expect spending targets to be even over the period of the Plan. Our original proposal was that most expenditure would take place in the later years of the Plan so the spend targets have also been revised.

13. SEUPB have agreed to train our financial staff in EU procedures when we receive their Financial Guidelines, promised in May 2007.

14. Various minor textual changes have also been made and these are outlined in the Consultation Summary Table.

Recommendation

This Peace Plan was considered and approved by the Good Relations Steering Panel at its meeting on Friday 8 February.

The Committee is requested to consider the content of this Peace Plan and approve it for submission to the Special EU Programmes Body following ratification by Council in early March.

Officer to contact for further information:

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² The Committee is reminded that the Peace III Programme officially started in January 2007

