

GOOD RELATIONS STEERING PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING

FRIDAY, 9th MAY, 2008

- Members present: Councillor Long (Chairman); and
Councillors Hanna, Humphrey (nominee of
Councillor McCausland), Kyle, C. Maskey
and Stoker.
- External Members: Rev. D. Baker, Presbyterian Church;
Canon B. Dodds, Church of Ireland;
Rev. S. Watson, CALEB;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church;
Mrs H. Smith, Methodist Church.
- In attendance: Ms. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Miss A. Deighan, Good Relations Officer;
Mr D. Robinson, Good Relations Officer;
Mr N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor McCausland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th April were taken as read and signed as correct.

Peace III – New Good Relations Partnership

The Good Relations Manager advised the Members that a number of the organisations which would be involved in the new Partnership had provided the Council with the names of their representatives and that the remainder would be providing this information in the near future.

She informed the Panel that it was intended that the first meeting of the new Partnership would be held at 1.00 p.m. on Friday, 20th June and that training for the Members of the new Partnership would be held in August.

Noted.

Book of Honour

The Panel was reminded that some years ago Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Book of Honour, had proposed that each District Council in Northern Ireland should publish a book which recorded the names of those people from their Council area who had died in the Great War of 1914-1918. In August, 2004 the former Policy and Resources Committee had considered a report outlining that suggestion. The Committee had supported the proposal in principle but queried whether additional external funding could be secured for such a project.

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In 2005, Sir Kenneth had informed the Council that the Ad Hoc Committee had been successful in obtaining a grant of £20,000 from the Ulster Garden Village Trust and had engaged Mr Derek Smyth, a retired history teacher, to undertake the necessary research and prepare a *Book of Honour* for Belfast, using the City Council district as a pilot area. Mr Smyth had made a presentation to the former Commemorations Working Group in February, 2006, referring to the books which had already been produced by Donegal and Newry and Mourne and outlining the various phases of his research. The Council had included an article on the project in the winter 2006 edition of the *City Matters* magazine in order to seek the public's assistance in the compilation of the list of people from Belfast who had given their lives during the Great War.

She pointed out that the Belfast Book of Honour was almost complete and it was expected to be published in November, which would mark the 90th Anniversary of the ending of the First World War. She explained that the Ad Hoc Committee had had discussions with representatives of the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News and the News Letter who were keen to be involved with the project. Each newspaper would be prepared to contribute £5,000 towards the costs of producing the Book of Honour, on the understanding that the Council provided a similar sum, which it was anticipated would cover the likely publication costs. The Ad Hoc Committee was planning to establish itself as a Company Limited by Guarantee and to pursue charitable status in order to make the best possible use of any profits which were generated by the sale of the book.

The Good Relations Manger indicated that the book was an excellent example of a cross-community historical initiative which illustrated Belfast's shared history and which was funded by a combination of public and private finance. In addition, the proposal was in keeping the aims of the Council's Good Relations Strategy. Accordingly, she recommended that the Panel request the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to approve funding in the sum of £5,000 towards the cost of the publication of the Belfast Book of Honour and provide small scale hospitality at its launch.

The Panel adopted the recommendation.

Interfaces/Peace Walls

The Steering Panel considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information"

The Steering Panel will recall that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd March 2008, had adopted the following Notice of Motion, proposed by Councillor Maginness and seconded by Councillor Long:

'Belfast City Council resolves that it is now time to begin to work towards the reduction and the ultimate removal of the so called "peace walls" and barriers that presently divide our City.

To this end, the Council therefore agrees to establish a working group to explore ways and means to initiate such a process and to report back with proposals by September, 2008.'

The issue was referred without debate to the Good Relations Steering Panel. At the meeting of the Steering Panel on 7 March, the Good Relations Manager had advised the Members that a report would be submitted in due course.

Key Issues

Staff from the Good Relations Unit have participated in an Interface Working Group established towards the end of last year on an inter-agency basis. Other organisations represented include the NIO, PSNI, NIHE, North Belfast Community Action Unit and Belfast Community Safety Partnership, with the Community Relations Council acting as co-ordinator.

This Group has met several times and has begun to collate and map relevant data and information. It aims to:

- draft a policy and process for potential new interfaces which takes on the various learning initiatives currently being developed
- develop key principles and indicators to monitor and review the existing 46 peace walls
- support practical actions to achieve the above two points.

At its last meeting on 16 April, the Group agreed to commission a report which would bring together all information on interfaces gathered to date in the city into a practical working document.

The Group agreed that it would be important to inform the community of the existence of the document and share it with other organisations once it was finalised.

It was suggested that case studies could be included, with practical steps for practitioners or organisations to address interface issues. An action plan should be included with a view to identifying two pilot projects for future work; short, medium and long term projects could be identified, which would be dependent on the context of the situation at the interfaces where barriers were located.

Members of the group agreed on a time frame and that the draft report should be completed by summer.

The Steering Panel should note that interfaces form a major element within the Council's current bid under Peace III and that funding for future activities are expected to be available under this programme.

Resource Implications

None at this stage. Future work may be funded under Peace III.

Recommendations

That the Good Relations Steering Panel notes this interim report and that future reports on progress will be submitted at regular intervals."

During discussion in the matter, several Members pointed out that it would be essential for residents of the City who lived in close proximity to interfaces and peace walls to be consulted regarding the work of the Interface Working Group.

In response, the Good Relations Manager indicated that, while statutory agencies would be involved in the early stages of the Interface Working Group, it intended to inform communities affected by peace walls and interfaces of the contents of its findings.

Churches Forum for Belfast

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Panel, that at its meeting on 7th March during discussion on the Church representation on the Good Relations Partnership, it had been suggested that it would be beneficial if a Churches Forum were established to consider, not only Good Relations issues, but all matters relating to the Council.

She indicated that it had been established that six local authorities in Northern Ireland had some form of Christian Church Forum operating in their area. In addition, the Minister for Social Development had indicated that she intended to initiate consultation on the establishment of a new Faith Liaison and Advisory Forum which would seek to build more effective partnerships between the Government and the faith sector. The Good Relations Manager informed the Members that a report regarding these issues would be submitted to a future meeting.

Noted.

Awareness Sessions on Migrant Workers for Members

The Steering Panel was reminded that the Equality and Good Relations Learning Development Strategy had proposed that a programme of good relations awareness training sessions be held for Council staff and Elected Members. Since October 2007, a Good Relations Awareness Training session had been delivered to all new staff as part of their induction, with the programme being gradually rolled out to all other existing staff. However, at present there was no similar programme available for Members.

The Good Relations Manager explained that the Members Services Unit had indicated that it might be possible to introduce a session on good relations as part of the induction for newly-elected Councillors after the next Council Elections. In the interim, she suggested that Members might find sessions based on specific issues useful. Accordingly, the Good Relation Unit intended to develop a number of training sessions which would raise awareness of and provide a forum for discussion of good relations issues which were of particular relevance to Belfast and the Council. She pointed out that one such issue which had been identified was that of inward migration and, since the Council had established a Shadow Migrant Workers Forum, migrant workers could be the theme of the first awareness session and she outlined the likely format, which would last approximately two hours.

Following discussion, the Steering Panel agreed that a programme of good relation awareness sessions be held for Elected Members and that the first session be on the theme of migrant workers as outlined.

Elected Members' Study Visit to Chicago

The Steering Panel was reminded that, at its meeting on the 7th March, it had recommended that two Members from each of the Political Party Groupings on the Council should participate in a study visit to Chicago at the end of May. The recommendation had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Relations Committee at its meeting on 14th March.

The Good Relations Manager indicated that, following the re-allocation of funding within the budget for the Conflict Transformation Project, savings had been achieved which would mean that it would be possible to cover the costs of sending an additional Member from each of the two largest Party Groupings on the Council, namely the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin, on the visit to Chicago.

She pointed out that the principal purpose of the visit was to engage Belfast's elected representatives in discussions on the task of building a welcoming, peaceful, prosperous and open City. In addition, the visit would demonstrate the strong inter-linkages between good relations and economic competitiveness and examine political leadership in Chicago. It was considered that additional representation on the visit would be useful, in the interests of inclusivity and to engage a broader group of Elected Members in this issue.

Following discussion, the Steering Panel recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the participation of one additional Elected Member from each of the two largest Party Groupings represented on the Council on the Study Visit to Chicago.

Funding for Training Providers

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

The Steering Panel may recall that at its meeting on the 4th of May 2007, it adopted a recommendation regarding the funding of groups around the access of training provision. This sought to

encourage groups to seek portions of funding for elements of their proposal by developing partnerships through different funding bodies, such as the CRC, CFNI, Co-operation Ireland etc. This would be reviewed and monitored over the year.

Key Issues

Groups are entitled and encouraged to undertake training as part of their development. The Good Relations Fund supports groups undertaking good relations engagement activities and applications are scored according to the quality of that engagement. The Fund is not designed to support the core activities of an organisation.

Many training organisations which receive core funding for their work are funded under Peace II, which will be coming to an end in June 2008. There is no 'gap' funding in place to bridge the period between the end of Peace II and the roll-out of Peace III. Organisations are aware that Belfast City Council will be administering Measure I.I of Peace III.

Currently there are 4 applications with the Good Relations Unit from groups seeking to access training programmes – totalling roughly £35,000. In the report submitted to the Steering Panel last May, it was pointed out that while the groups themselves will benefit from undertaking this training, there is also a large financial benefit to the training provider. In the past year, training providers have been encouraging groups to apply directly to the Council to access funding to undertake a pre-designed training course. Where a pattern has emerged, the fund has supported new programmes being piloted – not the core work of the training provider.

The Steering Panel should be aware that groups who apply to the Council for assistance with training are not subject to the same procurement processes as the Council. If the Council is engaging a training provider, for example, at least 3 written quotations must be obtained for any work costing over £3,000. There is no such requirement for voluntary/community groups to demonstrate value for money in this regard.

Recommendations

That the applications received remain on hold to allow discussions to be held and an appropriate policy devised. A report will be made to the next meeting of the Steering Panel on this issue.”

After discussion, the Panel adopted the recommendations contained within the foregoing report.

Good Relations Grant – Aid

The Good Relations Manager submitted for the information of the Panel a report detailing a summary of applications to the Good Relations Grant-Aid Fund, together with the associated recommendations.

After discussion, the Steering Panel agreed unanimously that the recommended grant-aid be awarded under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive to the following organisations:

Ref no.	Organisation	Recommendation £
596/1165	Barnardos Tuar Ceatha Services	1,700
685/1161	Ligoniel Improvement Association	5,000
345/1174	South Belfast Roundtable	9,700
605/1172	Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS)	7,500
686/1163	Victims and Survivors Trust	7,420
690/1169	Di-verse	1,000
320/1158	Roden Street Community Development Group	4,535
693/1177	Crossroads Project Ltd	4,000
302/1156	Women's Information Group	2,580
588/1163	Ballynafeigh Community Development Association	4,910
531/1164	Voluntary Service Bureau	2,900
580/1160	Community Relations in Schools	8,500
Provisional Total This Month		59,745

Arising from discussion in the matter, the Good Relations Officer advised the Members that evaluation forms were required to be completed by organisations before the final 30% of the organisation's funding was provided. The information on those forms would provide useful feedback to the Steering Panel regarding the projects and she undertook to provide this information to future meetings, together with a list of the organisations which benefited from events which received assistance under the Good Relations Fund.

Media Coverage

The Good Relations Manager advised the Panel that On 26th April an article had appeared in the Irish News regarding the Evaluation Report which had been presented to the Panel in October, 2007 in relation to the Council's Bonfire Management Programme. The article had contained a number of inaccuracies and had misquoted from the report. Due to the misleading and unhelpful nature of the article, the Head of Corporate Communications had spoken to the journalist concerned to express the Council's concern at the inaccurate content of the story. Subsequently, the issue had then been discussed by Stephen Nolan on B.B.C. Radio Ulster. Consequently, a press

statement had been issued by the Council to counter the inaccurate story in the Irish News and the comments thereon by the Nolan Show. Although the statement had been printed by the News Letter, the Irish News had not referred to it. She indicated that, in order to ensure that as many residents of Belfast were made aware of the Council's Bonfire Management Programme, an article would be produced in the next edition of "City Matters" which would provide a general outline of the scheme.

During discussion in the matter, the Steering Panel expressed its disappointment at the poor standard of journalism displayed by the Irish News.

In response to various questions regarding the Bonfire Management Programme, the Good Relations Officer indicated that a scheme was being organised by the Ballynafeigh Community Development Association the aim of which would be to obtain wider community input and support across the City for better bonfire management.

Arising from discussion in the matter, the Good Relations Manager advised the Steering Panel that proposals in connection with media coverage for the forthcoming study visit to Chicago were being prepared currently.

The Panel noted the information which had been provided by the officers.

On-going Items and Up-dates

Migrant Issues

The Good Relations Manager informed the Steering Panel that the next editions of City Matters and Intercom would both include articles concerning migrant issues.

Noted.

Chairman