

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

FRIDAY, 20th JUNE, 2008

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor Long (Chairman); and
Councillors Convery, C. Maskey,
McCausland and Stoker.

External Members: Ms. J .Hawthorne, Northern Ireland
Housing Exexecutive;
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast Trades Council;
Mr. R. Galway, (Shorts Bombardier) CBI;
Ms. L. Colts, (Avoca) Belfast City Centre Management;
Ms. S. Bhat, Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum;
Mrs. M. Marken, Catholic Church;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church;
Ms. H. Smith, Protestant Churches;
Mr. S. Watson, Protestant Churches;
Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Ms. M. De Silva, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Mr. L. Reynolds, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Ms. A. Chada, Minority Ethnic Groups

In attendance: Ms. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager; and
Mr. J. Heaney, Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor Kyle and from Messrs. P. Bunting and M. Wardlow.

Welcome

The Chairman (Councillor Long) welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of the Good Relations Partnership.

Roles and Responsibilities of Partnership Members

The Good Relations Manager advised the Members that a draft Partnership Contract had been included as an appendix to the Council's Peace Plan which had been submitted to the Special European Union Programmes Body in March. The contract had set out a framework for the operation of the Partnership and it had been envisaged that it would be amended over the next few months by way of a Partnership Agreement or Protocol to be drawn up by the Council's Director of Legal Services in Liaison with the Committee and Members' Services Section. She stated that this work had been completed and accordingly, she submitted the undernoted revised draft Protocol for the Partnership's consideration:

“Revised Protocol for the Operation of the Good Relations Partnership

Please note that the use of the term ‘Partnership’ does not signify, and is not intended to establish, that a legal partnership between the parties exists.

Membership

The Partnership shall consist of 22 members as set out in the Council’s Peace and Reconciliation Plan.

Purpose of the Partnership

The Partnership shall have responsibility for endorsing the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan, for the overall management of Belfast City Council’s element of the Peace III Programme, for establishing the criteria to be used in determining applications for funding and for approving funding applications.

Authority of the Partnership

The Partnership is established as a Working Group of the Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. As such, all recommendations of the Partnership will be subject to the agreement of that Committee and to ratification by the full Council.

Belfast City Council will retain legal responsibility for the management of the Peace III funds allocated, including financial monitoring and audit requirements; the Council will also be responsible for any officers who may be employed under this Programme.

Quorum

The quorum for a meeting of the Partnership shall be 6, including at least 2 elected Members of the Council.

Chairman

The Chairman of the Partnership shall be appointed from amongst the elected Members of the Council. If the Chairman is present he/she must take the Chair. In the absence of the Chairman, an elected Member of the Council shall be appointed to take the Chair for the duration of the meeting or until such time as the Chairman arrives.

Meetings

The Partnership shall meet monthly, with the exception of July when no meeting shall be held. The Partnership shall establish the date and time of its meetings. Council staff will provide secretarial, administrative and other support services.

Voting

The Partnership shall strive to agree all matters before it by reaching a consensus. In the absence of such consensus, any question shall be decided by a majority of the Members present and voting by show of hands. The Chairman may vote and shall, in addition, have a casting vote in the case of equality of votes.

General Rules for the Regulation of Business by the Partnership

In any instance of dispute as to the rules governing the order and conduct of business at a Partnership meeting, the Standing Orders of Belfast City Council shall be used as the appropriate reference document.

Roles of Partnership Members

All Partnership members will participate equally in its operation and will be expected to contribute positively towards the aims of the Peace III Programme.

The members of the Partnership will receive full training in their new roles, responsibilities, relationships, conflicts of interest and standards of behaviour.

All members of the Partnership will act as representatives for the various sectors from which they have been nominated or selected and will be expected to report regularly to their constituents, to ensure good ongoing feedback, consultation, and accountability.

Review of Partnership

The Shadow Partnership will be reviewed in 6 months time and the membership revised or extended if necessary.”

After discussion, during which the Good Relations Manager answered a number of questions in relation to the wider remit of the Partnership, the Partnership approved the Protocol and noted the undernoted process for its operation:

- (i) the legal structure of the Partnership was such that it was effectively a Working Group of the Council;

**Good Relations Partnership,
Friday, 20th June, 2008**

- (ii) there was a requirement for Partnership Members to report back to the organisations or sector which they represented;
- (iii) the Council would provide adequate training for Members in their new role; and
- (iv) the Partnership's structure would be reviewed after six months of operation.

Peace III Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report in relation to the Council's Peace and Reconciliation Plan:

“Relevant Background Information

The Council submitted a Peace & Reconciliation Plan (Peace Plan) to the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) along with a bid for £12 million at the end of March 2008 (full copy of original Plan attached).

The SEUPB's Steering Committee considered eight Action Plans from Councils and Council clusters on 12th and 13th May and approved three Plans. The SEUPB has recommended that the allocation for Belfast will be £6,299,415.

Key Issues

Revisions to Action Plan

The SEUPB stated that the Peace Plan should be revised in accordance with the Economic Appraisal of the Plan that was carried out by the consultancy firm BDO Stoy Hayward, who commented in detail on the various proposals included in the Council's Plan.

It has not been possible to revise the entire Plan within the timescale. However, the relevant sections of the Peace Plan have been revised accordingly and activities reduced to align with the new financial allocation. The revised proposed Action Plan and Timeline are attached as Appendices to this report.

Members will be aware that the allocation of £6m is only half our original bid and therefore the Plan has had to be very significantly reduced. In making the necessary cuts, we have deleted or substantially reduced those projects where the consultants raised queries, for example, in relation to the fit with the SEUPB's Peace III Operational Plan, the Council's ability to deliver within the timeframe, where there was possible overlap with existing projects or budgets or where there was doubt about additionality or added value.

Open calls/small grants

Although we have had to reduce amounts allocated in other projects, overall, we have tried to maintain the amounts available under open calls and small grants at a high level to ensure the greatest possible participation from voluntary and community groups throughout Belfast in the Peace Plan. We have retained £850,000 for this purpose.

We have already stated in the Plan that a small grants scheme will maximise the spread and effect of the programme, ensuring that a range of groups and bodies may become engaged with good relations activities, identifying local issues and key needs and filling any gaps, often with innovative proposals. The underlying principles of the programme are more likely to become embedded at broader societal level as more people participate.

It was clear to us during consultation that peace and reconciliation work may be a new area for many groups in the city. Consequently, we anticipate allocating approximately 10% (£85,000) of the small grants allocation to provide skills training, development and support for groups and organisations. We expect this to be used for training groups on issues such as:

- working together in partnership
- forming consortia/coalitions
- making a bid, particularly costing and budgeting items properly
- maximising participation of marginalised groups in the Peace Programme
- building cross-border links
- ensuring appropriate communication of activities and sharing learning.

Although we recognise the importance of the small grants element, we are aware that their administration is labour intensive and will have to review this approach next summer, in view of our restricted staff resources.

Management/support costs

The SEUPB has also stated that no more than 10% of the total allocation (£629,942) may be used for all management and support costs. This has necessarily meant completely revising the staffing structure originally proposed.

Staffing structure

The SEUPB has requested that all key personnel required in connection with the delivery of the Plan be recruited as a matter of urgency to enable implementation of activities as quickly as possible. In view of this, the revised staffing structure (copy to be tabled) is being submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th June 2008 to allow the recruitment process to get underway as quickly as possible. We anticipate recruitment taking place over the summer period in the hope that staff will be in post from September.

The SEUPB have indicated that a formal Letter of Offer will be made to the Council in the near future and that financial guidance will be provided shortly.

Recommendations

That the Partnership agrees:

- that the revised Action Plan and Timeline to be submitted to the SEUPB
- that staff recruitment be undertaken as quickly as possible
- to issue a press release welcoming the award to Belfast of £6m to be used specifically for peace and reconciliation purposes
- that the revised Action Plan be made available on the Council's website to enable community and voluntary groups to start thinking about possible projects to be developed under Peace III."

1	Shared Space	Revised
1.1	Safe Accessible City Centre	100,000
1.2	Arterial Routes	800,000
1.3	Mobility	50,000
1.4	Community Cohesion	150,000
1.5	Open Space Programming	100,000
1.6	Open Calls/Small Grants	<u>150,000</u>
		1,350,000

2	Transforming Contested Spaces	
2.1	Brownfield Regeneration Pilot	-
2.2	Local Mediation & Capacity Building	200,000
2.3	Inter-Community Forum	450,000
2.4	Engagement Capacity Building	50,000
2.5	Dealing with Physical Manifestations	300,000
2.6	Capital Enhancement	-
2.7	Youth Intervention	300,000
2.8	Open Calls/Small Grants	<u>300,000</u>
		1,600,000
3	Shared Cultural Space	
3.1	City of Festivals	350,000
3.2	Inter-Faith Work	300,000
3.3	Cultural Diversity in Sport	350,000
3.4	Culture & Arts Outreach	350,000
3.5	Migrant Workers' Forum	300,000
3.6	Language & Interpretation	--
3.7	Exhibition Space	100,000
3.8	Open Calls/Small Grants	<u>250,000</u>
		2,000,000
4	Building Shared Organisational Space	
4.1	Voluntary/Community Sector Training	200,000
4.2	Citizenship Education Programme	200,000
4.3	Access to Employment	--
4.4	Learning & Dissemination Programme	150,000
4.5	Good Relations in Private Sector	-
4.6	Open Calls/Small Grants	<u>150,000</u>
		700,000
	6,299,415 total allocation - 629,942 support costs 5,669,473 max programme	5,650,000

£850,000 in Open Calls/Small Grants = 15% of allocation

The Good Relations Manager drew the Members' attention to the allocation of the £6.3 million, which was approximately half of the Council's original bid. She reported that the reduction in funding would clearly have a significant effect on the number and scale of projects which could be undertaken. Accordingly, it had been necessary to delete or reduce substantially those proposed projects in respect of which the SEUPB's consultants had expressed concerns during the economic appraisal stage and in particular those where the possibility of overlap with existing projects had been

identified or where there had been doubt expressed concerning additionality or added value. She pointed out that the reduction in overall funding would obviously also have an effect also on the staffing levels which would be made available to deliver the programme. In this regard, she circulated a copy of a revised staffing structure which had been agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and which had identified the number of staff required in order to implement the plan.

After discussion, the Partnership adopted the recommendations contained within the report.

Training for Partnership Members

The Partnership was reminded that the Council's Peace Plan had proposed that training should be made available in order to prepare the Members for their new roles and responsibilities. The training would cover such topics as, roles and responsibilities, relationships with stakeholders, the Nolan Principles (Standards in Public Life), conflicts of interest, standards of behaviour and accountability. The Good Relations Manager pointed out that it was envisaged that the training would be similar to the 'On Board Program' which was delivered by CIPFA to members of various boards in Northern Ireland. She indicated that the cost of providing a one-day in-house session would be approximately £2,450, which included tailoring the course to the specific requirements of the Council.

After discussion, the Partnership agreed, in view of the need to ensure proper governance and management, to undertake the training provided by CIPFA and that the training should be carried out on the 15th August. As a consequence of that decision, the Partnership agreed also that its monthly meeting be held on that date.

Date and Time of Future Meetings

In order to permit the minutes of the Good Relations Partnership to be prepared and circulated along with the Committee papers for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the Partnership agreed that, where possible, it would meet on the first Friday of each month. In addition, the Partnership noted that the agreed dates for the remainder of 2008 were:

Friday, 15th August
Friday, 5th September
Friday, 10th October
Friday, 7th November
Friday, 5th December

Chairman