

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

FRIDAY, 13th FEBRUARY, 2009

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

- Members present: Councillor Long (Chairman); and
Councillors McCausland, C. Maskey and McCarthy.
- External Members: Ms. H. Smith, Methodist Church;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church;
Rev. S. Watson, CALEB;
Ms. S. Bhat, Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum;
Mr. R. Galway, Bombardier Aerospace/CBI;
Mr. P. Bunting, Irish Congress of Trade Unions;
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast Trades Council;
Ms. A. Chada, Minority Ethnic Groups;
Ms. E. Wilkinson, Department for Social Development;
Ms. M. De Silva, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Miss L. Coates, Belfast City Centre Management; and
Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
- Also attended: Ms. E. Dargan) Consortium of Community Relations
Ms. P. Perry) Council and Border Action.
- In attendance: Ms. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager; and
Mr. J. Heaney, Committee Administrator.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor Kyle and Mrs. Marken.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th January were taken as read and signed as correct.

Arising from discussion on the minutes, the Peace III Programme Manager reported that, since the last meeting, two organisations which had submitted multiple applications in relation to the Peace III Small Grants Scheme had been contacted and advised again that multiple applications were not permissible. Accordingly, the organisations had withdrawn one application each. The outstanding applications had been then assessed and the organisations had been informed of the outcome.

Peace III Implementation Update

The Peace III Programme Manager advised the Partnership that correspondence had been received from the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) in relation to the implementation of Action Plans under Priority 1.1 of the Peace III Programme. It had outlined the three main delivery methods available to each Partnership namely:

- (i) Partner Delivery Agent;
- (ii) Public Procurement; and
- (iii) Small Grants Programme.

The memorandum had set out the rules and regulations to be applied when, as a Delivery Agent a partner incurred costs and/or procured goods in their own right. In addition, the memorandum had pointed out that all goods must be procured in accordance with the guidance note G4 Peace III Procurement and Tendering. The operation of a Small Grant Programme and the selection of projects under such a scheme must be in compliance with guidance note G1 Project Selection, with the maximum value of the grant not to exceed £100,000 (€120,500) and if possible to be at the lower end of the scale.

The Peace III Programme Manager then outlined the progress which had been achieved in relation to the implementation of the various actions under each theme of the action plan as set out hereunder:

<u>Peace Plan Theme & Action</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Shared City Space		
City Centre Conference	In Preparation	Discussion with stakeholders ongoing.
Arterial Routes Programme	Ongoing	Economic Appraisal underway.
Research Mobility	In Preparation	To build on previous research and link to Planning & Transportation Strategy
Community Cohesion	Not Started	Approach to be agreed. Lead partner to be identified
Programming Open Space	In preparation	Project Plans in development.
Small Grants	Ongoing	As per attached report. 2nd Call anticipated Spring 09.
Transforming Contested Space		
Local Mediation Capacity Building	Ongoing	EOI's received by 02 Feb – in assessment stage.
Inter-Community Forum	Ongoing	“”
Engagement Capacity Building	Ongoing	“”
Dealing with Physical Manifestations	In Preparation	Report to GRP March 09

Youth Intervention Programme	Ongoing	EOI's received by 02 Feb – in assessment stage.
Small Grants	Ongoing	As per attached report. 2nd Call anticipated Spring 09.
Shared Cultural Space		
City of Festivals	Ongoing	EOI's received by 02 Feb – in assessment stage.
Inter Faith Work	Ongoing	“”
Cultural Diversity in Sport	Ongoing	“”
Culture & Arts Outreach	In preparation	Report to GRP in Spring 09
Migrant Workers Forum	Ongoing	Report to GRP in March 09
Exhibition Space	Ongoing	Further consultation on themes.
Small Grants	Ongoing	As per attached report. 2nd Call anticipated Spring 09.
Shared Organisational Space		
Voluntary & Community Sector Training	Ongoing	EOI's received by 02 Feb – in assessment stage.
Citizenship Education programme	Ongoing	“”
Learning & Dissemination Programme	In preparation	Report to GRP in Spring 09
Small Grants x6	Ongoing	As per attached report. 2nd Call anticipated Spring 09.
Programme Issues		
GRP Training	Ongoing	Further training needs to be identified and relevant training/information sessions scheduled.
Communications	Ongoing	City matters article Feb 09; EOI Info sessions & SEUPB roadshow event; Publicity & Communications Strategy developed to complement the Belfast Brand and in line with SEUPB and BCC guidelines. Existing web pages to be reviewed and updated.
Monitoring	Ongoing	Evaluation Specification developed following consultation with NISRA. Report on M&E Framework and Aids for Peace Methodology due by 31 Mar 09
Consultation	Ongoing	Ongoing Consultation with the Sports Council; Community Relations Council and other key stakeholders.

The Programme Manager advised the Partnership that, as agreed in January, a request for an advance of 30% of year one allocation had been made to the Special European Union's Programmes Body.

After discussion the Committee noted the information which had been provided and endorsed the request for an advance of 30% of the year one allocation.

Peace III Small Grants Update

(The following Members declared an interest in this matter in that they were members of organisations which were seeking funding under the Small Grants Scheme:

Councillor McCarthy	– South Belfast Partnership
Councillor C. Maskey	– Intercomm
Mr. S. Brennan	– Intercomm
Ms. H. Smith	– Forthspring Inter Community Group.)

The Peace III Programme Manager provided an update on the progress which had been achieved to date in relation to the small grants element of the Peace III Programme. He reminded the Partnership that, at its meeting on 16th January, it had agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that £500,000 be made available for distribution among those groups which had achieved the 65% threshold, subject to further checks with the funding to be awarded to the groups in rank order of scoring up to a limit of £500,000 and that a second call for funding under the Small Grants Scheme thus to be made in the Spring of 2009. That decision had been adopted by the Committee.

The Partnership was advised that all of the organisations which had submitted an application had been informed of the status of their application and advised that a review process, as approved by the Special European Union Programme's Body, would be undertaken. Debriefing sessions had been scheduled for all organisations at which they would be provided with the opportunity to discuss their application and to seek clarification as to the level of scoring which had been achieved.

The Peace III Programme Manager stated that those projects which had scored above 70% had been arranged in rank order and that the total value of money to be awarded to these groups would be £523,950. This represented an overcommitment of just under 5% at this stage. However, the Partnership was reminded that applications were subject to further checks prior to the issue of a letter of offer and that this approach was consistent with established practice in grant fund management. Those checks were scheduled to be undertaken during February and March.

All applications scoring above 65%, but falling below the value threshold had been placed on a timebound reserve list in rank order. Those organisations would be eligible to resubmit an application under the second call but would be required to withdraw from the reserve list in order to proceed with that course of action. The second call for small grants under the Peace III Programme would require the commitment of the remaining Small Grants Fund up to the value of £350,000.

After discussion, the Partnership noted the information which had been made available and approved the instigation of a second call for Small Grants applications under the Peace III Small Grants Fund to commence on 23rd March, with a closing date of 27th April, and that the remainder of the Small Grants Fund being allocated to that call.

Peace III Expression of Interest Update

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th December, it had approved a process and a timeframe for the seeking of expressions of interest in respect of nine of the actions contained within the Council's Peace Plan.

The Peace III Programme Manager advised the Members that a call for expressions of interest had opened on 12th January and closed on 2nd February. The call had been advertised publicly and details had been placed on the Council's website. In addition, four information sessions had been held at Grosvenor Hall on 13th and 14th January which had been attended by 110 organisations. A further presentation had been given at the Special European Union Programmes Body's roadshow which had been held at Malone House on 23rd January where 80 organisations had attended. At the closing date, 58 expressions of interest had been received against the various actions. The Peace III Programme Manager reported that, in line with the approved process, the next steps would be as follows:

- (i) the Partnership would, at a future meeting, assess the expressions of interest received;
- (ii) a detailed specification for a closed call for each of the actions would be developed;
- (iii) development workshops for organisations within the closed call would be held in order to cover the Good Relations Strategy in Belfast, monitoring and evaluation, branding and communications, cross-border working and any other relevant issues.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Development of Good Relations Thematic Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report in respect of the final recommendations from the European Union Peace II Funded Conflict Transformation Project:

“Purpose of paper

This paper outlines the final recommendations from the EU Peace-II funded Conflict Transformation Project. This project included an ongoing seminar series, 6 pieces of commissioned research and study visits to Chicago and Leicester, UK. It reflects the recommendations for action emerging from the Elected Members' study visit and the inter-agency discussions led by the ad-hoc Belfast Chief Executives' Group.

The paper proposes a series of actions to be considered as part of a thematic programme for good relations.

Relevant Background Information

In May 2008, the Good Relations Unit of Belfast City Council organised a study visit for a set of Councillors representing all its political parties. The purpose of the visit was to explore the shape of a collaborative, good relations agenda for the city and was designed to complement an earlier 2007 study visit by a group of key public and private sector professionals. Both were part of a Peace II project funded by the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership that sought to capture some of the core lessons from other cities about tackling division and violence to achieve community cohesion and successful economic development.

The Conflict Transformation Project formally closed at the end of June 2008 and the final evaluation, expenditure and audit reports have now been completed. At its meeting in October, the Good Relations Partnership received a report on the closure of the Conflict Transformation Project. The Partnership endorsed the work of the project and stressed the need to integrate the learning from the project, including the study visits to Chicago, into the core programme of work for the Council and its partners. This would build on the first Belfast Good Relations Plan published in 2007 and endorsed by all the political parties and key agencies in the city.

It was agreed by the Partnership that the areas of action arising from the report should be further developed in line with the overall Corporate Plan strategic themes discussions and officers should draft an action plan.

Key Issues

1. Chicago Study Visits

The project included 2 study visits to Chicago: one for senior officers from the public and private sectors; and the second for elected Members, to explore the linkages between economic competitiveness, social exclusion and good relations. Both visits allowed time for collective discussion about principles and the opportunity to interrogate people with considerable expertise in solving the kinds of problems Belfast faces and has yet to face.

The core assumption behind both visits was that good relations and community cohesion remain vital ingredients for the city's future development. Developing a good relations agenda means not only resolving the problems of the past but also dealing with new sets of issues thrown up by a volatile, rapidly changing world. The most successful cities have taken an integrated approach to these challenges.

*"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood."*¹

Chicago is a city that has transformed itself around the agenda of economic competitiveness, quality of life and community cohesion and has turned many previously negative features into positive aspects of urban living. Above all, Chicago has lifted its horizon from the internal difficulties of city management to the challenges of being a city in a global context, and actively set out to address those things that weakened Chicago in relation to other cities and city-regions of similar size and significance. Once a setting of serious inter-ethnic conflict, it now celebrates its diversity and employs it as a tool for economic development – its tourist department proclaims it as 'a city of parades'.

*"Go figure it out."*²

Chicago is not utopia and its political and civic leaders face such problems with bravura and confidence and show considerable ingenuity in searching for solutions – in Chicago anything is 'doable'. Certainly, Belfast, as a contested city following three decades of political conflict has its own unique features and obstacles to an integrated agenda. However, Chicago points to what is possible and its significance lies not just in the similarity of problems but in the approach and tools used to tackle them. The visits were designed to inspire members of the delegations to examine the challenges faced by Chicago and some of the emerging responses; to reflect on the implications of global pressures for Belfast; and to think practically and creatively about steps and projects that could begin to address some of the more serious problems in Belfast.

The resulting discussions within the 2 Belfast delegations centred on a set of core ideas³:

- i. The primacy of political leadership – there is a critical need for a coherent development vision generated by the city's political leadership, which balances local constituency interests with the broader interests of the city;
- ii. Partnership is a core organising principle - not all the elements required to successfully compete in global markets can be found within the boundaries of a single organisation or city, no matter how big;

- iii. Wealth creation creates the resources that support other kinds of agenda and should be used to creatively invest in an improved quality of life for all of its residents, investors and visitors and target a minimum level of inequality;
- iv. Talent, a key driver of development, wants a tolerant, safe, clean and green place to live in – competitiveness depends on the quality of the environment and the quality of life within that environment;
- v. Education produces development assets and there is an imperative to minimise educational failure and ‘grow your own’ talent base;
- vi. There is a need for an accessible, connected city for all its residents – labour and leisure markets only fully function in conditions of maximum labour mobility;
- vii. The need to pivot development around the city’s key assets and use strategic publicly-funded ‘anchor’ investments as catalysts for broader regeneration and investment by the private sector;
- viii. Parks need to be transformed into shared places to be and do, not merely to own and know about;
- ix. Diversity can be a tool for economic development – community festivals and parades could bring colour and visitors to spend money in local neighbourhoods;
- x. The interface between competitiveness and good relations has to be explored in ways that go beyond rhetoric. A starting point would be a mature conversation with the private sector in Belfast.

‘History makes us who we are but this must be balanced with who we want to be.’⁴

The study visit proved a valuable vehicle to begin these discussions and Chicago was a city rich in stimulus. The critical task is to now generate a set of substantive interventions which would put Belfast on a similar trajectory.

2. Commissioned research

Further to the study visits and the ongoing inter-agency discussions, a suite of research was commissioned. Six reports have been completed and are entitled:

- **Delivering Services in a Divided City (Deloitte MCS Ltd.);**
- **Qualitative Record of Good Practice in Conflict Transformation (MacBride International);**
- **Good Relations in Local Area Planning (Community Technical Aid);**
- **Sharing and Interaction in Public Spaces in Belfast (Queen's University Belfast);**
- **Opportunities and Challenges to Shared Residential Spaces in Belfast (Institute of Conflict Research & Trademark Consulting); and**
- **Improving Connectivity and Mobility in Belfast (Colin Buchanan Partners).**

These pieces outlined the continuing challenge facing Belfast to ensure that all of its citizens are able to share the new opportunities and 'feel-good' factor. Due to enormous efforts in many communities and sectors, inter-community relations have continued to grow and strengthen. Over the last five years, Belfast has seen major retail and residential developments, an increase in the financial services sector and unemployment levels at an all-time low. However, it is still a city of contrasts and there are still many areas within the city where the change has been much slower and deprivation remains.

Fundamentally, segregation has significant costs in the city, which include production and consumption effects such as the distortion of labour markets, the inefficient use of services and facilities, demographic imbalance, significant urban blight and poverty. The 'diseconomies of segregation' are borne disproportionately by the most disadvantaged communities. This projects a negative backdrop as Belfast presents itself as an outward looking and modern location for investment and tourism. There is a clear desire to build a vision of a shared and better future between local communities in the city as we enter the next phase, moving from conflict management to city transformation, particularly in the context of local area working.

Generally, there is a growing openness to the concept of shared space and an increased recognition amongst providers and users that duplication of services is an inefficient and unsustainable method of delivery. Unsurprisingly, territoriality and safety remain key concerns. The promotion of sharing in public spaces would also ease the pressure on the mixing in residential areas. It is recommended that the economic and social value of sharing should be more explicitly promoted by statutory agencies when planning, delivering and managing shared spaces in the city.

There is evidenced advantage to developing service centres along the borders of segregated areas, particularly on arterial routes with good transport connections. Bold, well-planned and well-designed location choices, such as the re-developed Carlisle Circus Health Centre, have proved to increase accessibility and may in time, facilitate increased interaction between users.

The significance of transport and connectivity was stressed in terms of promoting access to shared spaces in the city. There is a need to comprehensively plan a safe 'path network' (public transport, cycle ways and pedestrian routes) between sites of employment, leisure and services in the city, as well as ensure individual safety at the destination. This is important for the major regeneration sites at Titanic Quarter, Giant's Park, Crumlin Road/Girdwood and Springvale.

The full reports are available on the website at: www.belfastcity.gov.uk/conflict or from the Good Relations Unit.

3. Today's action, tomorrow's legacy - next steps

It is the opinion of those Members who participated in the Chicago study visit, that the Council should further enhance the good relations outcomes of a number of key strategic themes of the Corporate Plan. The Good Relations Partnership, at its August meeting, recommended that officers should develop a series of actions around the themes emerging from the Conflict Transformation Project, drawing particularly from the study visits to Chicago.

In its initial consideration of the reports, the Partnership highlighted the need to contextualise the learning in the corporate plan framework and identify, where possible, resources within the Peace III Plan. Notwithstanding the imperative of spend targets, this is the final Peace Programme in Northern Ireland and it is essential that the Council invests in those strategic projects that will deliver a significant legacy for the city.

The key actions to be taken forward are outlined below, under the 4 relevant strategic themes of the Council's corporate plan.

3.1 City leadership

The need to design, promote and manage increase shared spaces in the city of Belfast has emerged as the overarching priority from the discussions, learning and research which took place as part of the Conflict Transformation Project. It is proposed that the place-shaping agenda in Belfast must acknowledge that the sense of place has been and continues to be contested. Specific interventions are needed to increase and sustain shared spaces in the city and it is essential that we begin to reduce and eliminate the expense of duplication. This is of particular importance in relation to the future development of public service centres as strategic anchor investments.

There is a growing openness to the concept of shared space and an increased recognition amongst providers and users that duplication of services is an inefficient and unsustainable method of delivery. As a result, there is willingness to share well-planned essential services with members of 'other' groups. The promotion of sharing in public spaces would also ease the pressure on the mixing in residential areas. Notwithstanding the social benefits, there is a strong business case for sharing – even if in the shorter term, this may require more investment, it will undoubtedly drive longer term efficiencies and reduce duplication.

It is proposed that the Council, under its city leadership and place-making theme, champions the concept of 'shared by design' to encompass the planning, management and animation aspects of spaces in the city.

For example, it is essential that potential sites which arise for purchase under the Public Land Bank should be considered in their potential to generate new sites of sharing and interaction in the city. Those sites located on interfaces could be imaginatively used to provide public service centres which are designed, managed and utilised as shared spaces. Initiating a number of feasibility studies designed to pinpoint potential multi-delivery centres would be a realistic starting point. The imperative of the 'credit crunch' will act as a further driver to finding more unified service delivery between and beyond public agencies in the future. These studies could be a further development of the place-shaping debates taking place currently within Belfast City Council.

It is proposed that a 'shared by design' framework of principles and criteria is developed which can inform the emerging place-shaping agenda in Belfast. It should be integrated into relevant internal strategies, including assets management, human resources as well as outward-facing strategy documents, such as the revised Transport Policy, the City Investment Strategy and other master-planning mechanisms.

As part of this, a mechanism must be developed so that decisions would be good relations-proofed; enabling good relations outcomes to be built potentially into all Council services, initiatives and physical developments without the necessity to explicitly market them as 'good relations'.

The framework could also be used to influence work on the transferral of powers to local councils, including planning, so as to fully exploit future opportunities for good relations outcomes and generate a new discussion with the private sector. Such work could be seen as a pilot for work not just in Belfast but eventually across the region.

The use of the new Belfast brand should also be considered as a route towards a more open and shared city. Consideration could be given to further extension of the brand in relation to 'good relations' messages – B shared; B open etc. and the incorporation of these in communications for citizens, visitors and investors.

There is also a continued need to invest in the capacity of the political leadership and provide space for new thinking. Following on from the elected Members' visit to Chicago, there is potential for a development programme for elected members on the social and economic value of good relations, community cohesion and shared space in the city. Council should not move away from further study trips to assess and bring back best practice. It is clearly imperative that this is balanced with a rigorous value for money analysis of the benefits and demonstrable outputs for the city from such initiatives.

It was agreed in Chicago that it is essential that the elected Members have a politically-led space to facilitate the continuation of discussions started in Chicago and introduce controversial issues into a safe forum. Further discussion is needed on issues about how we move beyond neutrality, celebrate our diversity and promote open, welcoming and safe spaces in the city. It was stressed that the agenda for the Good Relations Partnership must be balanced between procedural funding obligations and larger strategic discussions. This could also be done through a 'split' agenda for the Good Relations Partnership – one part funding-driven and one part strategically-focussed.

3.2 Better opportunities for success

The links to building an attractive, competitive city are clearly outlined in Richard Florida's work on the three central 'prongs' of technology, talent and tolerance; a city ill at ease with difference will neither attract nor retain talent in a globalised, mobile labour and investment market. The visits to Chicago and the ensuing discussions reinforced the direct relationship between good relations and competitiveness.

The use of culture and identity as significant ingredients of a tourism product was very evident in Chicago and has much potential in relation to further product development in Belfast. It is clear that Belfast must address the perceived and physical impermeability of some of its neighbourhoods. In Chicago, there was a menu of programmes (neighbourhood festivals, greeter schemes, food promotions) which ensured that neighbourhoods of identity (Little Italy, Greektown, etc.) were seen as open and welcoming to all the citizens of the city. There is opportunity in Belfast to work with local areas on a series of linked cultural tourism and night-time economy projects which promote a unique, non-hostile identity and ensures that the social and economic value of the multiple cultural identities of the city is maximised. These projects must exist within an inclusive overarching framework of Belfast as a city of many neighbourhoods, incentivising open and welcoming spaces. Freedom of movement must be predicated on a sense of safety that stretches across the city and between neighbourhoods rather than just within local areas.

In addition, Chicago had identified itself clearly as a city of culture and festivals and there is much scope to further build on a significant platform of events in Belfast. These will further enhance 'shared' experiences and also act as an attractor for higher visitor numbers and so revenue to the city. Such events could take place in the city centre but also begin to build in venues outside the centre as well. It is critical that we locate Council-led events at venues and open spaces across the city, encouraging residents and visitors to move beyond the local. Finding ways to connect places is extremely important in this regard.

3.3 Better care for Belfast's environment

It is recommended that the Council seeks to develop more shared destinations by placing greater emphasis on natural resources as major attractors, such as the Belfast Hills, the river and its waterways. Chicago placed significant emphasis on maximising its green and open spaces and there is opportunity for Belfast to do likewise. By linking high quality programmes across parks throughout the city it may encourage citizens to travel to new parts and have new experiences while remaining 'comfortable' and feeling safe.

The significance of transport and connectivity is critical in terms of the expansion of shared spaces and promoting access to those sites. Labour mobility in the city is dependent on ease of access and reduction in the perception of risk to personal safety. It is proposed to build engagement with Translink and the responsible

Department on the potential orbital and cross-city routes, building public transport demand, the direct and indirect economic and social benefits of improved public transport provision and considering buses as mobile shared spaces.

Likewise, it would be possible to promote a series of 'alternative' events which present Belfast in a non-traditional way and innovatively use the city's public space – shaking people's perception of their city. Unique, high-profile events, such as the introduction of a 'no-traffic' day in the city centre, urban beaches, open heritage days and projection/lighting events all are models which have been used elsewhere. These spectacular events enable people to use public space in a new way, enhance the city's image as attractive and modern and contribute to a new confident civic identity.

3.4 Better support for people and communities

As part of the Conflict Transformation Project, the Community Relations Council led the establishment of the Interface Working Group. This group has developed a co-ordinated strategy for the regeneration of those neighbourhoods located at the interface as well as a matrix which seeks to facilitate a more holistic assessment regarding the erection and maintenance of interface barriers. It may also be used to identify those interface barriers which may no longer be necessary and initiate discussions on the conditions needed for their removal.

Access to, safety within and a sense of belonging in our open spaces in Belfast are directly influenced by the existence of interface barriers, 'flagging', territorialism and ongoing incidences of inter-communal violence. It is essential that in contributing to these conversations, that we address the existence of interface barriers (both physical and perceived) on our own sites, in the first instance perhaps, Alexander Park and the Waterworks. Animation programmes, physical refurbishment and sustained community engagement could support interventions in these two parks.

In addition the arterial routes programme offers a number of opportunities to work with communities to promote solutions to these barriers and to create joint planning about their short and long term potential.

4. Resources and proposed pathways

It was agreed in Chicago by the participating Members that the learning from the visit demonstrated the multiple avenues which exist in city management to deliver good relations and community cohesion outcomes. However, the capability to deliver actions lies beyond the Good Relations Partnership with other Committees

within Council, and with partner agencies. It is essential the actions outlined in Chicago should be situated within the appropriate service delivery streams within Council, and ultimately, with its partner organisations.

The role of the Good Relations Partnership should be to provide advice and guidance to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and, seek to 'quality assure' the good relations outcomes during implementation.

In its Peace III Programme Peace & Reconciliation Plan, the Council has stressed the importance of strategic, commissioned work which will have a significant legacy in terms of cohesion, open, shared spaces and securing Belfast as an attractive, competitive and safe city.

The 10 proposed action areas as indicated link directly to various objectives in the corporate plan. Some of these actions are already up and running and some require further work – others are new. In addition there are a number of existing programmes and projects in the Council which can be mapped under a broad umbrella of making relationships better in the city – these would include the Urbact programme European OpenCities, and the proposed Power of Possibility project under Peace 3.

It is therefore proposed that, within the context of the Corporate Plan and its commitment to thematic approaches, discussion is immediately initiated with the appropriate Committees within Council, to develop detailed action plans for each of these themes, outlining resources, partner agencies and time-frames. The action plan would also inform the Value Creation Mapping process. A number of these areas of action sit under the objectives of the Partnership's Peace Plan and potentially could attract a financial contribution from the Peace III funding programme.

The ad-hoc Belfast Chief Executives' Group has been central to the development of the partnership recommendations over the duration of course of the Conflict Transformation Project, participating in a study visit to Chicago in October 2007. In the evaluation of the Conflict Transformation Project, all representatives were very complimentary about the work that the Council had been leading in this area and all signalled their commitment to continue to engage on this complex issue. It is proposed that they, and their senior operational nominees, are engaged in the continued development of this work.

Externally, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee granted authority to the Chief Executive to initiate discussions with the appropriate partner agencies and the Northern Ireland Good Relations Panel, currently chaired by the Head of the NI Civil Service, on the contribution partner agencies will make to the delivery of the framework.

5. Conclusion

It is proposed that the attached draft action plan is used as the basis for discussion with Committees within Council and, as appropriate, with external partners. The 10 areas of action are:

i. Elected Members' Leadership Programme

An ongoing discussion forum to explore issues related to city transformation, managing diversity and other related issues, with internationally profiled speakers, as appropriate. It is also critical that a balance is maintained on the Partnership's agenda between procedural funding matters and larger strategic discussions related to city transformation.

ii. Shared by Design Framework

A framework of principles and criteria on 'shared by design' is developed by the Council for integration into relevant internal and external strategies, e.g. place-shaping, asset management, human resources and used to support decision-making in the Council.

iii. Shared Public Service Centres

A feasibility study to identify potential anchor 'shared space' investment sites which will lead to the development of a series of shared public service centres in the city

iv. Engagement with private sector

Contribute good relations perspectives to discussions with the private sector in the city with a view to designing a collaborative project for Phase II of Peace III Plan

v. Mobility for meeting

Engagement with Department of Regional Development and Translink to improve connectivity in the city with the possible piloting of cross-city or orbital bus routes to 2 key regeneration sites, improved signage and better walking and cycling routes.

vi. City of neighbourhoods

The development of an inclusive charter of principles, used to support the delivery of a series of linked cultural tourism projects on culture and identity across several neighbourhoods in the city.

vii. Improved connectivity to city's natural resources

A series of linked cultural events using the Belfast Hills and/or the Lagan River to improve physical connectivity between the city centre, its neighbourhoods and the natural resources of the city.

viii. Programming Open Spaces

A series of linked events in parks across the city, promoting connectivity and access to non-traditional users.

ix. New city, new spaces

A promotional initiative using Belfast 'B' – B open – and a series of innovative shared space events in the city centre, e.g. an urban beach, lighting displays and no-traffic day. This could link with the re-opening of City Hall, in terms of civic space.

x. Interfaces regeneration strategy

A series of co-ordinated inter-agency regeneration efforts in neighbourhoods located at the interface, including the next phase of the 'Renewing the Routes' initiative.

Additional work must be completed on the financial resources available to the plan; however, it is likely that many of the actions could be aligned to the resources which exist within the current Council-led Peace III Programme. Potentially, there is opportunity to align some of project specifications for the commissioned work to deliver those actions outlined above.

It is important that those Committees, who have the authority to deliver some of the work outlined above, are given the opportunity to define their contribution and discuss the most efficient method to achieve the anticipated outcomes. It is for this reason that a meeting with Committee Chairpersons is proposed and further work on the detail of the individual actions will be developed over the coming months.

The learning and actions outlined above, if implemented, have the potential to significantly enhance the sophistication and mainstream nature of the Council's good relations agenda and accelerate the achievement of its good relations objectives.

This must be the ultimate legacy of the Peace III Programme and central to the Council's legacy for the city.

Resource Implications

Financial

None at present as some of those areas named already have budget. Others would have to produce business plans.

Human Resources

None at present.

Decisions required

- The Partnership recommends the broad principles of action included above, in line with the Council's Corporate Plan, to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee;
- The Good Relations Partnership Chairperson convenes a meeting with all Committee Chairs and those Members who participated on the study visit to Chicago in May 2008 to seek approval to progress these recommendations through their respective Committees;
- The Chief Executive briefs a group of relevant partner agencies in the city on the emerging action plan, to seek their broad agreement and to delegate authority to senior operational officers within their organisation to contribute to its implementation.

Officers to contact for further information:

**Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development
Caroline Wilson, Good Relations Officer, Ext 6037"**

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

Good Relations Grant Aid Fund – Current Financial Position

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that, at its meeting on 15th August, it had agreed to suspend temporarily the Good Relations Grant Aid Fund since it had been oversubscribed. Subsequently, at the September meeting of the Partnership, she had provided a detailed report on the financial position of the Good Relations Unit, outlining the structure and the 75% funding arrangements made under the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister's District Council Community Relations Programme for both salary costs of approved posts and programme costs.

She advised the Partnership that the Good Relations Grant Aid Fund had reopened in November, albeit with a restricted budget. She pointed out that, although the Office of the First and the Deputy First Minister had indicated that there would be an increase in the District Fund Council Community Relations Programme fund, the level of increase would not be announced until July or August, which was well into the Council's financial year, therefore making accurate financial forecasting impossible. The Partnership was advised further that the assumption would have to be made that the core funding to be allocated in 2009/2010 would be on a par with the current year and that the Council would meet the remaining 25% from its own resources.

Accordingly, the Good Relations Manager recommended that the total amount available for Good Relations Grant Aid Funding during the financial year 2009/2010 should remain at £350,000. In addition, she recommended that the fund reopen with immediate effect, under the current criteria and a maximum grant of £10,000, with the closing date for the first round being 20th March. Recommendations in this regard would be submitted for the Partnership's consideration at its meeting scheduled to be held on 10th April.

In order to ensure that the fund was utilised to its maximum effect and, in line with the aims of the Council, the Good Relations Manager recommended that a slight amendment be made to the assessment process, details of which would be submitted for the Partnership's consideration at its next meeting.

Several Members expressed concern that some groups, whilst producing excellent work, did not have the capacity to enable them to complete the application forms in such a manner as to advance their cause for substantial funding. In response, the Chairman indicated that officers from the Good Relations Unit worked closely with all groups to provide help in building capacity and to ensure that the groups would be able to provide the necessary information when completing their application forms. In addition, the Good Relations Manager pointed out that officers from the Unit also worked with new groups to assist them in developing their work and in obtaining adequate finance from a range of sources, including the Council.

After discussion, the Partnership adopted the recommendations of the Good Relations Manager in relation to the reopening of the fund with immediate effect, the maximum grant being £10,000 and an adjustment to be made in the assessment process, subject to details of the amendments being provided at the next meeting of the Partnership.

**Audit of Good Relations Work in Neighbourhoods
Located at The Interface – Update**

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that, at its meeting on 10th October, it had received a presentation from Dr. N. Jarman, Institute of Conflict Research, and Mr. T. MacAulay, Independent Consultant, in relation to the potential removal of interface barriers in the context of a broader regeneration initiative. It had been agreed at that meeting that a further audit/mapping exercise of the groups and organisations working in interface areas be commissioned by the Good Relations Unit.

The Partnership was advised that, in accordance with the Council's and European Union procurement requirements, quotations had been invited from a number of organisations. The quotations received had been evaluated in line with the Council's procurement policy and accordingly Deloitte MCS Limited had been appointed as the successful contractor.

The Good Relations Manager reported that, at a project initiation meeting, it had been agreed that the process for the commission would be:

- (i) an initial scoping/mapping exercise on funded activities located in neighbourhoods at the interface, based on the funders' list (up to the end of March 2009);
- (ii) the undertaking of stakeholder consultation in order to discuss measuring impact/effectiveness and enabling/inhibiting factors in the delivering of activities (up to September 2009); and
- (iii) the development of an impact/effectiveness matrix, based on the stakeholder consultation and a second mapping exercise of activities funded (up to the end of March 2010).

It was reported also that in order to support the delivery of the work a small interagency steering group had been established which included representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Community Relations Council, the North Belfast Community Action Group, the Northern Ireland Office and the Suffolk and Lenadon Interface Group.

The Partnership was advised that stakeholder consultation would include elected representatives, statutory organisations and community and voluntary sector groups. In relation to this, the Council would be co-sponsoring a community consultation on the Community Relations Council report entitled "Towards Sustainable Security Interface Barriers and the Legacy of Segregation in Belfast" in order that the views of people living directly at the interfaces and, in particular, the young people of the areas were taken into consideration prior to any action plans being put into operation.

The Partnership was advised also that the Challenge for Change conference event scheduled to take place on Friday 27th March at the Farset International would be preceded by three facilitated consultation events held at various locations throughout the City and that a report on the consultation discussions would be compiled for consideration at the conference and be presented to the Good Relations Partnership in due course.

Several Members pointed out that it was important to inform the communities living in the immediate vicinity of interface barriers that this was a consultation exercise only and that it was not about the immediate removal of peace barriers throughout the City. The Chairman stated that the consultation exercise was not about taking down peace walls at this point in time, rather it was about seeking the community's views, listening to what local people had to say and that safety and security of local communities was paramount.

After discussion, during which the Good Relations Manager suggested that the consultation was the first step in a long term process and that further reports would be provided for its consideration, the Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Forum for Cities in Transition

The Partnership was advised that correspondence had been received from Professor P. O'Malley informing the Council of a new initiative which was seeking to provide cities experiencing conflict or its aftermath with learning opportunities through the sharing of practical experiences and case studies from other cities in transition in dealing with practical problems of housing, construction, economic development, tourism, transport, joint planning, local services and the generation of a positive image for the future.

The cities which had been identified for participation included Beirut (Lebanon), Belfast, Brussels (Belgium), Kirkuk (Iraq), Mitrovica (Kosovo/Serbia) and Nicosia (Cyprus). An intensive three-day workshop had been planned to be held between the 14th and 16th April in Boston, Massachusetts and Belfast had been invited to nominate four representatives to attend the event. The purpose of the sessions would be to learn the lessons from each other, to draw parallels where appropriate and to discuss the feasibility of establishing a Forum for Cities in Transition. Professor O'Malley stated that to date, five other cities had agreed to participate and the nominated delegates had been invited to draw up the agenda for the workshops. He pointed out that expenses for attendance, including transportation and accommodation would be provided from non-governmental, academic and charitable resources. However, subsequent programmes might emerge, the details and the funding for which would be agreed by the participants at the event to be held in Boston in April.

The Chairman indicated that she was of the view that the proposed Forum might be a good idea in principle, however, there would need to be greater clarity around the proposed programme and its prospective benefits to enable the Council to make a decision regarding the value of Belfast's participation.

Several Members suggested that Belfast had a range of experiences, both good and bad, which should be shared with others and acknowledged the potential value which might be derived from attendance and networking at such an event. However, some Members expressed significant reservations about the level of details available on which to base a formal decision. Members indicated that information was required on a number of issues, including the need for full details of which cities had committed to participate and the proposed members of the delegations from each; the need for a detailed programme for the duration of the conference, including the general issues to be covered in each session and the formal contributions expected from Belfast and each of the other cities; the need for written confirmation to the Council of the proposed

travel arrangements, accommodation and subsistence arrangements and the extent to which these and other necessary costs would be covered by the organisers; the need for more clarity on the organisers' intentions for the future functioning and funding of the network; and the necessity for a budget of the event, including details of any financial sponsors to comply with the Council's legal obligations regarding the source of any financial support for events such as this.

Members expressed reservations about attending an event, at no cost to the Council and outlined their concerns that to do so might then mean that the Council would be under pressure to fund a similar event in the future that would require additional funding which had not been provided for within Council budgets. Members suggested also that the Council had a requirement to defend any decision to incur significant costs in travelling to conferences, and that to travel to this event free of charge, and not participate further may harm the integrity of the Council.

After further discussion, it was

Proposed by Mr. P. Mackel,
Seconded by Mr. S. Brennan,

That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended at its meeting on Friday 20th February to approve in principle, the attendance of four representatives from the Council at the three-day workshop on Cities in Transition to be held in Boston Massachusetts, subject to adequate additional information being provided in advance in relation to those cities taking part, a detailed programme and written confirmation of proposed arrangements, the level of further commitment required, clarity in regard to future events and the Council's legal obligation regarding the source of any financial support required

On a vote by show of hands twelve Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Polish Cultural Event

The Good Relations Manager reported that the Members of the Partnership had been invited to an event to be held in the Lord Mayor's Parlour on the evening of Thursday, 19th February to celebrate Polish Culture in Belfast. This was one of a series of events being held in line with the Lord Mayor's theme of marking diversity in the city.

Racist Attacks in the City

The Partnership noted with concern the recent racially motivated attacks in the city and expressed its condemnation of such actions.