



Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Somme Resolution
Date:	Friday 23 April 2010
Reporting Officer:	Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager Ext. 6020

Relevant Background Information

Members will recall that the wording of the Annual Somme Resolution has been the subject of much discussion by the Memorabilia Working Group over the past year. The item was referred to Party Groups but no agreement was reached and a decision was deferred.

At its meeting on 3 December 2009, the Memorabilia Working Group agreed to refer the matter direct to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for a decision, since it was of the view that the matter could not be resolved informally at Working Group level and would have to be determined by a vote.

At the meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 11 December 2009, the Committee deferred a decision on the question of revised wording, to enable an opinion to be sought from the Somme Association in this regard.

Accordingly, the Good Relations Manager and the Chairman of the Memorabilia Working Group, Cllr Hendron, met on Monday 15 February 2010 with 4 representatives from the Somme Association: Dr Ian Adamson, Ms Eileen Bell, Mr John Coghlan and Ms Carole Walker. The Somme Association representatives stressed the cross-community nature of their organisation and said that their primary concern was to maintain an inclusive approach, to reflect the all-Ireland nature of the conflict of the Great War and to promote greater knowledge of it.

The Somme Association have always included the 16th Irish and other Divisions in their work and in any tours or ceremonies to mark battle anniversaries. For example, in 2010 the Somme Pilgrimage will follow the route taken by the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions during their service in the First World War and the Council will be sending official Party Group representatives on both the Somme Tour and the Gallipoli Pilgrimage.

The Somme Association representatives agreed that in their view the 1 July event should be inclusive, as their Association had always been inclusive, representing all sides. However, in relation to the wording to be used, the Somme Association representatives stated that ultimately, the actual text was an internal matter for the Council and would have to be determined by the political parties, since this was a Council resolution.

KEY ISSUES

The current resolution is:

That we, the Lord Mayor and Citizens of the City of Belfast, on the >th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, desire again to record our feelings of gratitude to the brave men of the 36th (Ulster) Division who, by their glorious conduct in that battle, made an imperishable name for themselves and their Province, and whose heroism will never be forgotten so long as the British Commonwealth lasts.

At its meeting on 4 March 2010, the Memorabilia Working Group considered this matter again.

There were some points of agreement - all 6 parties are content with the addition of a reference to the 16th (Irish) Division. Four parties (UU, Alliance, SDLP and Sinn Féin) were content with the wording changed from "Province" to "people."

Councillor McCausland tabled a proposed revised resolution as follows:

That we, the Lord Mayor and Citizens of the City of Belfast on the >th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, desire again to record our feelings of gratitude to the brave men of the 36th (Ulster) Division who, by their glorious conduct in that battle, made an imperishable name for themselves and their Province. We also record our feelings of gratitude to the brave men of the 16th (Irish) Division and Ulstermen who served in other forces. Their heroism will never be forgotten.

The Working Group was of the view that the revised text would need to be discussed among the Party Groups in order to obtain agreement as some Members had a difficulty with the revised wording.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed that the Party Groups would arrange discussions between themselves on this issue and that the issue should not be determined by the Working Group, who had failed to reach consensus, but by the principal Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Financial Implications

None

Decision Required

The Committee is requested to consider and agree a revised wording for the Somme Resolution, for use from 1 July 2010 onwards.

Officer to contact:

Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager, Ext 6020