

Extract of Minutes of:

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th November

“Exhibition in the City Hall

In considering the minutes of the meeting of the Memorabilia Working Group of 28th October, a Member drew the Committee’s attention to the decision to stage the Reflections on Internment exhibition in the City Hall. An extract of the minutes in this regard is set out hereunder:

“3.0 REQUEST TO STAGE EXHIBITION from the FAMILIES of the VICTIMS of the BALLYMURPHY MASSACRE

- 3.1 The Good Relations Manager referred to a report, copies of which had previously been circulated, reminding the Group that at the last meeting on 9 September, a letter had been tabled from the families of the victims of the Ballymurphy massacre, requesting an opportunity to stage a photographic exhibition entitled Reflections in the City Hall in August/September 2011 as part of their 40 year anniversary. Copies of images and text used in the exhibition were also tabled.**
- 3.2 The exhibition consists of 12 boards, one for each person that was killed and one panel that set the scene regarding the lead up to the events in August 1971. The exhibition is made up of a group of 11 photographs taken by local photographer Jonathan Porter. The individuals who were killed were all civilians and included a Catholic priest and a mother of eight children; a total of 51 children were left without a parent as a result of the events.**
- 3.3 The Good Relations Manager reminded the Working Group that the families of the victims continue to seek an acknowledgement from the British Government that those killed were innocent of any wrongdoing. The Ballymurphy group had recently met with the Secretary of State and has requested the Attorney General to order a fresh inquest into the deaths.**
- 3.4 A Good Relations Officer met with representatives of the Ballymurphy group who wish their campaign to be given greater prominence within the City. Members noted that the exhibition has already been exhibited twice in Stormont and in Whiterock Library, West Belfast Festival (for several years), the Ulster Museum, the Grand Opera House and in Dublin. A letter of support for the exhibition from Alan McBride, the Co-ordinator of the WAVE Trauma Group, was tabled. He stated that he thought that the exhibition would reinforce the view that the City Hall was a welcoming place for all the citizens of Belfast.**
- 3.5 A Member stated that although he had no problem with the exhibition and had every sympathy with the families, he had concerns around the accompanying text and could not support the staging of the exhibition in the City Hall for that reason. A Member noted that the letter from Alan McBride illustrated how the dynamic had changed within the victims sector and he felt that the City Hall should be open to all these groups.**
- 3.6 The Good Relations Manager suggested that a film from the WAVE trauma centre ‘Unheard Voices’ could be screened for one evening during the time of the Ballymurphy exhibition. This film was made up of a collection of 6 powerful short stories of those who have lost someone as a result of the NI conflict, presenting poignant reflections on a range of experiences. The Working Group agreed that Good**

Relations staff should contact the Ballymurphy group before the next Strategic Policy & Resources Committee meeting to check if they would be happy to agree to this, since they might not wish their exhibition to be diluted.

3.7 The Working Group also agreed that other victims groups should be made aware that the space in the City Hall was available for similar exhibitions. It might be possible at some stage in the future to hold a broader exhibition on victims/violence in the City.

3.8 After discussion, the Working Group voted by 3 votes to 1 to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that the request from the Ballymurphy Group should be approved.”

The Good Relations Manager tabled for the information of the Members a copy of the material which it was proposed would be displayed and the criteria approved by the Committee for exhibitions in the City Hall.

After a lengthy discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Hartley,
Seconded by Councillor Attwood,

That the Committee agrees to accede to the recommendation of the Working Group that the request from the Ballymurphy Group to stage the Reflections on Internment exhibition in the City Hall be approved and that representatives of the Group be requested to meet with those Party Groups who so wished prior to the meeting of the Council on 1st December.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Hendron,
Seconded by Councillor Robinson,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the request to stage the exhibition to enable discussions to be held with representatives of the Group.

On a vote by show of hands six Members voted for the amendment and eight against and it was accordingly declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Hartley and seconded by Councillor Attwood was thereupon put to the meeting when nine Members voted for and five against and it was accordingly declared carried.”