

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**MONDAY, 8th AUGUST, 2011****MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**

- Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman); and
Councillors Convery, Maskey and Reynolds.
- External Members: Rev. L. Carroll, Presbyterian Church;
Archdeacon B. Dodds, Church of Ireland;
Mr. R. Galway, Bombardier Aerospace/
Confederation of British Industry;
Mrs. M. Marken, Catholic Church;
Mr. B. Nelson, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mr. M. O'Donnell, Belfast Regeneration Office;
Mr. R. Puri, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum; and
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church.
- Also attended: Mr. F. Murphy, Community Relations Council/POBAL
- In attendance: Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Senior Good Relations Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apology

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Ms. A. Chada.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th June were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to the amendment of the list of attendees to reflect that Archdeacon Dodds represented the Church of Ireland on the Partnership and not the Presbyterian Church as indicated.

New Members

The Chairman reported that Alderman Crozier had resigned recently from the Council and that he had been replaced on the Good Relations Partnership by Councillor Reynolds.

Accordingly, the Partnership welcomed Councillor Reynolds, together with Messrs. Nelson, O'Donnell and Puri, to their first meeting.

Mediation NI

The Partnership was advised that Mr. P. O'Reilly, Director, and Mr. M. Gaston, Project Manager, representing Mediation NI, were in attendance in order to provide information on the Local Mediation Capacity Building Programme and they were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. O'Reilly reported that Mediation NI, in partnership with a number of agencies, including the North and West Belfast Parades Cultural Forum, the Belfast Reconciliation Network and Tides Training, had been working with the Council to deliver a Mediation Capacity Building Programme in the City. He explained that the initiative was a key action under the theme of "Transforming Contested Space" within the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan and that it was being funded under the Peace III Programme and supported by the Council's Good Relations Unit. The Programme had been developed in order to promote and facilitate dialogue, mediation and inter-community engagement, particularly surrounding issues of division such as flags, parades and derelict sites.

Mr. Gaston reviewed the main elements of the Capacity Building Programme. He stated that sixty-four participants, of which 25% were female, had been recruited from across the City and had received introductory training in understanding conflict and mediation. Advanced mediation training had been delivered to fourteen participants and ten persons had been appointed to provide them with specialist mentor support. Other elements of the Programme had included the organisation in November, 2010 of a City-wide conference to celebrate the success of the initiative and to share learning experiences and the undertaking of a study visit to view a similar project in County Cavan.

He pointed out that the Programme had resulted in an increase in interface mediation capacity within Belfast, mediation alliances being generated across interfaces and valuable partnerships being formed between Belfast and border areas in the Republic of Ireland. Mr. Gaston concluded by stating that the Programme would, in future, seek to develop a new broad culture of systemic mediative practice in order to support dialogue processes with residents and agencies located at interfaces and that Mediation NI was investigating the possibility of drafting a directory of mediators to be used during times of heightened interface tensions.

Messrs. Gaston and O'Reilly then answered a number of questions which were put to them by the Members and, having been thanked by the Chairman, retired from the meeting.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Peace III – Implementation Update

The Partnership considered a report which provided an update in respect of the implementation of Phase I of the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan. The report reviewed the progress to date of the various projects contained within each theme of the Plan, including expenditure up to the end of June, together with claims outstanding, the current status of each project, key risks and any actions to be undertaken. The Peace III Programme Manager informed the Partnership that priority had been afforded to closing Phase I projects and to ensuring that all associated expenditure was included in the final claim, which was due to be submitted to the Special European Union Programmes Body by 30th September. He added that a project progress report would, on a quarterly basis, be submitted to the Programmes Body, which would review progress against output, results and impacts, letter of offer conditions and expenditure.

Past/Forthcoming Events

Peace III Conference

A conference and showcase event for projects which had been supported under Phase I of the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan had taken place in the City Hall on 21st June. The event had been held in conjunction with the Growing a Shared City programme of events, which was being funded under Priority 2.2 of the Peace III Programme. It had sought to emphasise the impact of Peace III funding, celebrate the success of projects delivered under Phase I of the Belfast Peace III Plan, promote networking and collaborative working and share learning on strategic approaches to conflict management. The event had been attended by more than 140 delegates, representing a wide range of organisations from across the City.

Community Relations Council/POBAL Workshops

The above-mentioned consortium would be holding a series of workshops for Peace III Partnerships between 10.30 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. on the following dates:

- 17th August – Partner Delivery of Projects – Belfast City Hall
- 21st September – Monitoring and Evaluation – Tara Centre, Omagh
- 4th October - Forum for Peace III Chairpersons and Managers – Community Relations Council Offices, Dungannon
- 19th October – Cross-Border Networking Event - Belfast (venue to be confirmed)
- 23rd November – Peace Building and Reconciliation – Monaghan (venue to be confirmed)

The Consortium would, at the meeting of the Good Relations Partnership being held on 12th September, outline its role and the support to be made available in the implementation of Phase II Plans.

Financial Risk

The Peace III Programme Manager informed Partnership that the Special European Union Programmes Body had stressed the need for projects to incorporate rigorous and robust financial controls, particularly around the area of procurement. The matter had been highlighted in the context of changes to the claims verification process and increased scrutiny of Peace III expenditure generally. The Programmes Body had stated that there was a high risk that levels of ineligible expenditure would rise with the resulting recovery of funding being disallowed. It had stated also that there would be a decrease in the support being made available to lead partners, with less time being allocated by staff to provide guidance and evaluate documentation.

He provided an overview in relation to changes in the process used by the Financial Control Unit within the Special European Union Programmes body to verify claims for reimbursement of Peace III expenditure. That Unit had stipulated that all items of expenditure must, in future, be claimed by the lead partner within six months. The Peace III Programme Manager explained that this, in turn, would have a knock-on effect on funded projects, which would be required to claim expenditure from the

Council and be reimbursed within that timeframe. He added that these measures would place an added onus upon the Council to ensure that all expenditure was eligible prior to claims being submitted, including that relating to funded projects, and would expose the organisation to a substantially increased level of financial risk, as it would be required to fund any deficits in Peace III claims and/or proceed with recovery of funding.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Peace III - Phase II Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of Report

To update the Partnership on Phase II of the Belfast PEACE III Plan.

Background Information

As the Partnership will be aware, a bid for Peace III funding for Phase II of the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan (PEACE III Plan) was submitted on 17th September, 2010 to the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Key Issues

A Letter of Offer has now been received from SEUPB (dated 20th June 2011), offering funding of £4,491,417, including management support costs for Phase II of the Belfast PEACE III Plan. The Letter of Offer has been issued to Belfast City Council as Lead Partner with the overall administrative and financial responsibility for implementation.

The proposed Phase II projects included in the Letter of Offer are as follows:

<u>Shared City Space</u>	<u>Budget</u>
1 Community Cohesion Networks	£150,000.00
2 City of Neighbourhoods - Health & Wellbeing	£151,400.00
<u>Transforming Contested Space</u>	
3 Promoting Positive Expressions of Cultural Heritage	£300,000.00
4 Belfast Tension Monitoring Project	£601,500.00
5 Youth Engagement Programme	£827,947.00

Shared Cultural Space

6	Belfast Migrant Forum	£150,000.00
7	City of Festivals	£300,000.00
8	Creative Legacies Programme	£300,000.00
9	Roots of Empathy	£165,000.00

Shared Organisational Space

10	Grants Programme	£1,000,000.00
	Management Support	£545,570.00
	Total	£4,491,417.00

Projects 4 and 5 (Tension Monitoring and Youth Engagement) are subject to further economic appraisal as they are over the £500k threshold. The recommended option for Project 4 is to proceed on the basis of the proposed activities and budget. Approval has been sought to proceed from SEUPB on this basis. The appraisal for Project 5 has not been completed.

It is proposed to bring a report to a future meeting of the Partnership regarding the implementation of Project 10 – the strategic grants programme.

A summary of each of the proposed projects has been forwarded to the Partnership.

Letter of Offer Conditions

The conditions of the Letter of Offer are as follows:

An additionality Statement must be prepared which includes a detailed audit of current Council; partner and key stakeholder activities. Additionality must be kept under review throughout the life of the Plan.

Cross Border Activity must be actively promoted with a view of ensuring that the 30% cross border target is met.

A detailed Implementation and Communications Plan must be prepared and agreed with SEUPB.

Annualised SMART Project Outputs must be agreed by the Good Relations Partnership with an explicit peace & reconciliation focus.

Project and Programme expenditure is to be profiled and monitored for the eligible period with monthly updates provided. SMART Targets must be set which match the detailed monthly Spend Profiles.

Monitoring and Evaluation must be in line with the Aid for PEACE methodology and reported to SEUPB. Real time evaluations are encouraged. The proposed evaluation mechanism and performance monitoring framework must be reported to SEUPB. All lessons learnt must be recorded and reported to SEUPB.

Greater attention must be paid to the cross cutting themes of Sustainable Development and Impact on Poverty.

There must be ongoing consultation with, and a concerted effort to engage with, all target groups and key stakeholders. The focus should be on identifying new participants or else providing justification why the same target groups are to be a focus.

Any process for resource allocation to local groups must be clearly defined and agreed by the Partnership for purposes of accountability and transparency.

Tenders should be assessed by the whole Partnership in order to ensure open and transparent tendering procedures.

State Aid should be considered at project level assessment.

An up to date organisational chart detailing the PEACE III Staffing and Governance arrangements, including partners external and reporting mechanisms in place is to be provided.

It is recommended that the Consortium has input into Partnership meetings and to the roll out of Phase II. This is to provide an objective viewpoint and so that lessons from other clusters can be shared with the Partnership in a timely manner and to identify common approaches within each cluster action plan.

An Integration Strategy including an additionality statement must be developed.

Interventions must clearly demonstrate need in advance of offer.

Peace Building Needs Assessment must be updated to reflect all new research. All PEACE clusters must assess how the plan conforms with either Individual Change Theory and Healthy Relationships and Connections Theory.

Risk Assessment Guidance must be amended to include the following points:

- Robust list of peace and reconciliation risks
- Mitigating actions
- Assessment of likelihood
- Reporting frequency
- Identification of Senior Responsible Officer.

A Sub-Partnership Steering Group Model may be considered.

Assessment of Partner Delivery Projects

While the overall project proposals have been considered by the PEACE III Monitoring Committee following a thorough economic appraisal carried out by Cogent Consulting, it is a requirement that all projects in the Phase II plan are further considered by the Good Relations Partnership prior to implementation. In order to facilitate this it is proposed that an assessment panel is established to consider the detail of those projects included in the Phase II Plan with a view to making a formal recommendation to the September meeting of the Good Relations Partnership. Proposals will be assessed in line with the Project Selection Guidance issued by SEUPB namely: PEACE III Programme and Priority Fit (60%) and Efficiency, Effectiveness and Cross Cutting Themes (40%).

It is proposed that the assessment is carried out by members of the Good Relations Partnership supported by council staff. A similar process applies for the assessment of applications for grant aid. Representatives from SEUPB and the consortium will also be invited to attend as observers. The proposed timescale is as follows:

23rd August – Room 203 City Hall – Training Session and Overview of Assessment Criteria.

1st September – Learning and Development Centre – Assessment of Proposals. (Note the 2nd September has also been booked in case additional time is required for the assessment.)

12th September – Consideration of recommendations by the Good Relations Partnership.

Partnership Members wishing to participate in the assessment are requested to indicate their availability by Friday 19th August. Attendance at the training session on the 23rd August on the PEACE III criteria is recommended for any Partnership member wishing to participate on the assessment panel.

It is further proposed that additional assessment sessions will be scheduled in the event that any proposals cannot be brought forward for assessment within the timeframe.

Resource Implications

Financial Implications

None at present.

HR Implications

None at present.

Equality Implications

None at present.

Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to:

- (i) note the foregoing report on the Phase II Letter of Offer and the summary of those projects which are included in the Letter of Offer;
- (ii) note the process for the assessment of Phase II Projects by the Good Relations Partnership; and
- (iii) indicate their availability to participate in the assessment session for the proposed Phase II Projects.”

The Partnership adopted the recommendations.

Composition of the Good Relations Partnership

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the remit of the Good Relations Partnership extends beyond the management of the Peace III Programme. However, the current composition of the Partnership was determined in June 2008 at the commencement of Phase 1 of the Peace III Programme. The original Partnership Agreement was formally approved by the Good Relations Partnership at its meetings on 20th June, 2008 and 16th January, 2009.

The composition of the Partnership is twenty-two members consisting of:

6 elected Members, one nominated from each political party group on the Council;

2 representatives from the statutory sector (one nominated by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and one by the Belfast Regeneration Office of the Department for Social Development);

2 representatives from the Trade Union sector (one nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and one by the Belfast and District Trades Council);

2 representatives from the private sector (one nominated by the Institute of Directors and one by Belfast City Centre Management);

2 representatives nominated by the Catholic Church;

2 representatives nominated by the Protestant Churches;

1 representative from the minority faith sector (nominated by the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum);

1 representative from the minority ethnic sector (selected after interview);

4 representatives from the voluntary/community sector (selected after interview).

A list of the original membership has been forwarded to Members.

In addition, the Consortium (Community Relations Council and POBAL- formerly Border Action) have attended as observers in relation to PEACE III agenda items.

The Partnership will further recall that it has already agreed, at its meeting on 5th April 2011, that a representative of the Belfast Health Trust should be co-opted to assist in the future design, development and management of the Roots of Empathy project under the next phase of the PEACE Plan and to facilitate the successful conclusion of the pilot phase.

Key Issues

Since Phase 2 of the Peace III Programme is now underway, it is considered timely to review the membership and formal Partnership Agreement between the Council and the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) in order to best manage the delivery of the projects included in the next Phase of the Peace Plan.

The Operational Programme for the PEACE III programme emphasises the implementation of strategic models of collaboration between the public, private and community sectors. SEUPB guidance on this issues states that central to this process is a community planning partnership which will comprise statutory representatives, the private sector, trade unions, local government elected representatives and the voluntary and community sector. It suggests that the guiding principles needed to underpin an open, inclusive and effective partnership might include the following:-

- participation
- openness
- shared ownership
- representative
- mutual respect

Furthermore, the conditions of the PEACE III Programme require that each Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan must be accompanied by a partnership agreement which at a minimum includes:

- the composition of the partnership and its origins;
- a statement of agreement of the respective responsibilities of the partners;
- commitment to empowerment within the partnership and in favour of its clients;
- a partnership composition which should accurately reflect the orientation of the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan, through co-option if necessary;
- a code of conduct;
- an equality statement;
- detail on the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Over the past three years, there have been some changes in membership and attendance from some sectors has been erratic. We have had two resignations – Michael Wardlow and Lee Reynolds. Some organisations have had changes of personnel – Mark O'Donnell has replaced Elaine Wilkinson within the Belfast Regeneration Office. Neither Leanne Coates, nor her later replacement Amy McKenna, still works in Belfast; Sharada Bhat has indicated that she is stepping down and we are currently seeking replacement nominations from both Belfast City Centre Management and the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum.

The (previous) Good Relations Steering Panel had agreed at its meeting on 6th June, 2008 that the representation from the Protestant Churches on the newly established Good Relations Partnership would be on a rotational basis for the next period and

current Members will be aware that there have been several changes of personnel in that regard. In view of the fact that the Council has now set up a Faith Forum, at which representatives of all faith communities are welcome, it is considered advisable that the current representatives from the Protestant Churches be invited to remain on the Good Relations Partnership in advance of a formal review, to provide some continuity.

A completed Partnership Agreement will be required in advance of the first claim against PEACE III Expenditure for Phase II of the Programme – anticipated for January 2012.

Proposals

In view of the delivery options available to the Good Relations Partnership, it is recommended that the composition of the Partnership be reviewed as part of the development of a comprehensive partnership development and skills building programme. The review will consider the following issues:

- role and remit of the partnership
- progress and performance to date
- review of composition
- working arrangements
- rationale for inclusion on the partnership
- attendance patterns
- administrative and technical support
- potential for co-option of new members
- training needs of partnership

Resource Implications

The costs of the Partnership Review will be met under the current Letter of Offer for Phase II of the PEACE III programme.

Equality Implications

None at present.

Recommendations

The Good Relations Partnership is requested to note the foregoing report and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the composition of the Partnership be reviewed and that the current representation of Protestant churches continue until the review is completed.”

The Partnership adopted the recommendations.

Good Relations Programme – Audit and Evaluation

The Partnership was advised that the District Council Good Relations Programme, which was managed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, provided 75% of the funding required by the Council to undertake its good relations work. The Good Relations Manager reported that, as a condition of funding, it was required to undertake an audit of good relations in Belfast and an evaluation of the work being undertaken as part of the current programme. She reminded the Partnership that, following a procurement process, Blueprint Development Consultancy had been appointed to undertake this work and that Mr. J. McVey, representing that organisation, had, at the meeting on 7th March, outlined the objectives and projected outcomes of the audit and evaluation. She stated that Mr. McVey was once again in attendance in order to outline the findings of the audit and evaluation review and he was admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman.

Mr. McVey outlined the background to the formulation of the Council's current Good Relations Programme and explained that the review had sought to identify how the Programme had contributed to the development of a safe, welcoming, peaceful and open City, through tackling sectarianism and racism. He reviewed the approach which had been used in undertaking the review, which had combined desk research, online questionnaires, internal and external consultation and workshops, all of which had yielded a broad cross-section of information and views.

He informed the Partnership that the research and consultation had highlighted the perception of positive change in Belfast over the past ten years and, in particular, the contribution which had been made by the Council, through its good relations work. The Council's inclusive partnership approach had allowed other statutory and community partners to become more actively involved and its success in addressing controversial issues such as the St. Patrick's Day Festival and bonfire management had been highlighted.

Mr. McVey outlined a number of current issues and priorities which could impact upon the future success of the Good Relations Programme, such as continued and deepening segregation in the City, the consequences of the current economic downturn, the growth of new and emerging communities and the need to ensure that the good relations concept played a central role in the work of all Council Departments.

He then outlined several recommendations arising from the review of the Good Relations Programme. He explained that the Council, through its updated Good Relations Plan, should not only continue to support a number of existing themes of work but supplement those by developing related actions and new areas of work. This would include the equipping of Council staff with enhanced skills to deliver services in an increasingly diverse City, training Elected Members and Council staff in good relations work and related issues and supporting training for the community and voluntary sectors, either directly by the Council or through recognised training agencies.

New initiatives which could be developed could take the form of drafting a calendar of diversity events to examine the potential for organising an annual flagship event focusing on equality, diversity and good relations, the hosting of more events for

the purpose of sharing good practice and providing network opportunities, the formulation of a training quality standard in conjunction with organisations such as the Community Relations Council and the opening, where possible, of lines of engagement with organisations working outside the current political/peace process.

It was recommended also that the Good Relations Unit develop an appropriate evaluation and monitoring framework to enable the Council to establish baselines, set appropriate indicators and reporting mechanisms and identify good practice. Such a framework would support improved financial management, particularly in relation to grant-aided projects. In view of the economic benefits to be derived from good relations work, Mr. McVey suggested that it would be useful to obtain the views of the private/business sector in terms of the Council's role and contribution in building good relations. That work could, he suggested, be undertaken by the Council's Economic Development Unit, in anticipation of the Government's revised Cohesion Sharing and Integration Strategy and focusing upon best practice models.

The Partnership commended Mr. McVey on the production of such a comprehensive and informative document and, having been thanked by the Chairman, he retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Partnership noted the outcome of the audit and evaluation of the Good Relations Programme and agreed that the recommendations arising therefrom be considered for inclusion within the Good Relations Programme.

Annual Report to Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Good Relations Manager reported that the Council's Equality Scheme and Good Relations Strategy had stated that reports on progress were to be submitted regularly to both the Good Relations Partnership and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. She reminded the Partnership that the Council was required to submit to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland an annual report on the progress which had been achieved in respect of the implementation of equality and good relations duties imposed under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Accordingly, she submitted for the Partnership's consideration a copy of the annual progress report which would be presented for consideration to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. She added that the Council had submitted its Annual Monitoring Return as at 1st January, 2011 to the Equality Commission and that a copy of that document was available from the Council's Human Resources Section.

Noted.

Diversity Champions in Local Councils

The Partnership was advised that the Local Government Staff Commission had, in recent years, been working in partnership with councils and other stakeholders on two important equality initiatives, namely "Women in Local Councils" and "Disability in Local Councils". The Good Relations Manager reported that both initiatives had been highly successful in raising the profile of women and people with disabilities in councils and that this could be attributed largely to the work of the Gender and Disability Champions. She pointed out that Councillor Hendron had, in October 2009, been nominated as the Council's Elected Member Disability Champion.

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She explained that, in order to build upon that success and to avoid duplication of effort, the Commission now wished to establish a single Equality and Diversity Group to encompass its work on gender and disability issues and which would include also other equality and diversity work being undertaken in councils. One of the key elements of the initiative would involve the appointment of a network of Diversity Champions in order to promote equality and diversity. The Commission had requested councils to support the initiative and appoint both an officer and an Elected Member to act as Diversity Champions, whose role would include attendance at key events and conferences, encouraging staff and Elected Members to promote the initiative, sharing best practice and driving positive actions and developing networks.

The Partnership agreed, in view of the fact that the areas of equality, disability and diversity fell within its remit, that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to nominate the Partnership's Chairman, namely, Councillor Hendron, to the Local Government Staff Commission's Equality and Diversity Group.

Sandy Row Artwork

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that the Council had, over a number of years, been working with local communities, through the Brighter Belfast Initiative and the Arts Council's Re-Imaging Communities Programme, to remove and replace murals. She explained that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had been liaising closely with the Belfast South Community Resources organisation to promote and support within Sandy Row the delivery of the Neighbourhood Renewal Agenda for Change, with a view to creating a positive cultural identity for the area. As part of this work, discussions had taken place in relation to the re-imaging of the area and, in particular, the iconic paramilitary mural located at Linfield Road which had had a negative impact on the much-needed generation of private investment. Belfast South Community Resources had, following engagement with a private investor, secured recently the building of an ice rink on Linfield Road, however, this had only been made possible on the agreement that the paramilitary mural be re-imaged in the near future.

She explained that Belfast South Community Resources had been working with Mr. Ross Wilson, a respected artist, who had been instrumental in progressing detailed and sensitive community engagement work with key stakeholders in the area, including women's, youth and residents' groups, local businesses, residents of Linfield Road and primary and post-primary schools. Arising from these discussions, he had developed a community agreed programme of work for four art projects to be delivered over an 18-month period, as set out hereunder:

Project	Timescale	Budget
Mural - Blythe Street	August, 2011	£20,000
Community Garden	November, 2011	£37,840
Bronze Statue – Female Weaver	April, 2012	£72,000
Mural – Linfield Road	July, 2012	£55,000

The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was committing funding of £80,000 over a two-year period and that it was seeking support, including additional funding, from other sources to ensure that the re-imaging programme could commence and be completed within the designated timescales. She confirmed that the Council had been working closely with the Executive in this regard and that the Good Relations Unit was supportive of this initiative.

To this end, it was proposed that the Council allocate funding of not more than £5,000 towards the costs associated with the re-imaging of the paramilitary mural on Blythe Street with a hand-painted mural, based on the image of the first Linfield football team, which would coincide with celebrations taking place to mark the 125th year since the establishment of that Football Club.

After discussion, the Partnership approved the allocation of funding in relation to the re-imaging of the Blythe Street mural, subject to ratification by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, and noted that the provision of that amount would assist in leveraging additional funding from other agencies.

Belfast Mela 2011 – Request for Funding

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the Belfast Mela (a Sanskrit word meaning ‘to meet’), held annually in Botanic Gardens since 2007, is a large-scale one-day multi-cultural festival, showcasing high quality music, dance, crafts, food, carnival and circus from more than 30 nations.

The organisers aim to position the Belfast Mela as a flagship festival that fosters understanding and respect for all cultures through excellence in the arts and showcases Northern Ireland as a positive, welcoming and open country. Audience numbers have increased annually, demonstrating the growth in popularity and support for the concept. This year’s Mela will be held on 28th August, Bank Holiday weekend.

Whilst the festival has developed into a major city-wide event, the organisers, ArtsEkta, maintain the community aspects of its design, development and delivery, aiming to provide a platform for the expression of a range of cultural identities, engendering greater understanding and acceptance to enable minority ethnic groups to participate in a more peaceful and tolerant society.

Key Issues

This year's Mela outreach programme will feature the following 3 neighbourhood projects which will be delivered by ArtsEkta's artists and cultural facilitators. The majority of these artists are members of the local minority ethnic communities in Belfast, which enables direct engagement with locally deprived communities in safe, shared and highly creative environment, enabling complex issues to be addressed sensitively and imaginatively:

(1) New Lodge Arts and Fortwilliam Youth Centre

ArtsEkta recently completed a pilot programme with these cross-community groups that involved taster sessions, raising awareness of Indian, Polish and Chinese cultures. The project was very well received and the young people expressed an interest in a longer programme exploring more cultures through the arts. The young people have actually taken the lead on designing the project, a key element of which will involve a Come Dine with Me style approach to exploring foods from across the world. Alongside this there will be music, dance and visual arts activity to continue to challenge perceptions, facilitate dialogue and develop understanding. The participants also recently attended the Festival of Colours and the aim is to ensure connectivity to the Belfast Mela and Diwali & Samhain festivals to continue to heighten essential civic participation.

(2) Alexandra Park Avenue Women's Arts and Crafts Group and Glenbryn Women's United

Through Peace III funding, ArtsEkta has recently completed a 6 week textile project with this North Belfast women's group, the first time the women had completed a project of this nature, which directly engaged them with members of the local Indian, Polish and Latin American communities. The women were introduced to the older skills of stitching and quilting and were actively involved in creating a piece of art which was displayed at a major event in Belfast, the Festival of Colours, which encouraged them to interact with wider communities. The group has expressed their interest in taking part in other events that explore more cultures through music, dance, film and food. They will be joined at the Mela by women from Glenbryn Women's United, ensuring cross-community connectivity in a safe and inclusive space.

(3) Muslim Women's Project

Over the past number of months ArtsEkta has been building relationships with the local Muslim communities in Belfast, Ballymena and Craigavon and has identified opportunities for positive intervention that can create lasting impact. Through consultations with partnership organisations, Belfast Islamic Centre, Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum and Weh Hep Chinese Community Association they have identified that members of the Muslim community, particularly women, feel isolated and believe that there has been an increase in racist attitudes towards them. Community attitudes, stereotyping in the media and perceived/real prejudice prevent their engagement in communities. ArtsEkta aims to work with a number of women from Bangladeshi, Egyptian and Pakistani backgrounds through a sustained, sensitive programme to build their confidence, encourage participation, raise their profile and positively showcase their culture through the arts. The Mela festival has a unique ability to integrate a wide range of organisations and people across a vast number of sectors and backgrounds - including public services such as the Police Service of NI and NI Fire and Rescue Service - enhancing dialogue, facilitating networks and developing relationships that proactively promote positive change at a local level.

Resource Implications

The success of Mela is evident through its continued endorsement by and major funding from OFM/DFM; Arts Council of Northern Ireland; Belfast City Council's Tourism, Culture & Arts Unit; and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

This year the Mela organisers are anticipating financial difficulties and have approached the Good Relations Unit for support of some specific aspects of their outreach programme, at a cost not to exceed £3,000.

All funding provided by the Good Relations Unit may be recouped at 75% from OFM/DFM.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

The Council is committed to the promotion of Belfast as an open and welcoming city for all communities and the provision of financial support for this type of positive and inclusive event, which respects and celebrates difference, would be in line with our stated policy of promoting social cohesion.

Recommendation

The Good Relations Partnership is requested to provide funding of up to £3,000 to the ArtsEkta organisation for the outreach elements of the Mela programme as outlined above.”

The Partnership adopted the recommendation, subject to ratification by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership

The Partnership was advised that the Council had, through its Migrant and Minority Ethnic project and the Belfast Migrant Forum, worked to support the integration and inclusion of migrant and ethnic minority communities within the City. The Good Relations Manager reported that the Northern Ireland Executive had, in 2010, agreed that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association be tasked with developing a business plan to establish, in partnership with the United Kingdom Border Agency, a Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership. The Partnership would engage with government agencies and other key stakeholders to ensure that Northern Ireland was a welcoming place for new migrants and to support the retention and integration of people in such a way as to help meet the skills and labour needs required to support future economic growth. It would seek also to ensure that Northern Ireland's needs and concerns in relation to immigration were recognised within the constraints of a United Kingdom-wide strategy.

She outlined the main activities of the Partnership, which would include strategic and policy work, providing and sharing information, addressing awareness and encouraging and supporting organisations within the region to work together on issues and projects relating to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The body would be comprised of one Elected Member from each of the five main Political Parties, together with senior representatives from key organisations in Northern Ireland who were involved in immigration issues. She advised that the Partnership would be launched officially in October and that its Board would meet on a quarterly basis. However, it could appoint time-limited task groups, as deemed appropriate, and consideration was being afforded to the establishment of a Local Government Officers' Group which would add value to the work being undertaken currently by the Good Relations Unit.

The Good Relations Manager reported further that the first meeting of the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership had been held on 8th July. She reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which had included a presentation by the United Kingdom Border agency, an overview of the Partnership's work programme and business plan and updates from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister led-Roma Task Force and the Migrant Impact Crisis Fund. A number of actions had arisen from the meeting, including the establishment of a sub-group to identify and address gaps in the provision of welfare and services to, as well as rights and entitlements of migrants and the production of a document outlining admissions policies for migrants. It was intended that a group would be established to examine the relationship between skills shortages and migration in Northern Ireland and the potential for drafting a regional shortage occupation list. It was anticipated that the new Partnership would support the role of Local Government in planning for and responding to issues around immigration and support for new communities.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Urban Conflicts Conference

(Ms. L. Dennis, Growing a Shared City Project Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Partnership was advised that a multi-disciplinary international conference entitled “Urban Conflicts: Ethno-National Divisions, States and Cities” had been held in the Queen’s University Belfast from 19th till 21st May. The Growing a Shared City Project Manager reported that the event had been organised and sponsored by the University’s Conflict in Cities and the Contested State research project, which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. That project had focused on Belfast and Jerusalem, with supplementary research being undertaken in Beirut, Berlin, Kirkuk, Mostar and Nicosia.

She explained that the conference had been attended by over 170 delegates from fifteen countries, who had addressed the issue of contested cities in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America. She stated that she had delivered at the conference a paper entitled “Work in progress? Belfast – Local Government Discourse and the Transition from Divided to Shared City”, which sought to address the challenges and opportunities facing local government, as presented in the current shift towards localism. It had included a synopsis of the evolution of the Council and how the City Hall had played an iconic and pivotal role in conflict resolution. The attendance and participation of Council officers had been well received by academics and practitioners from within the voluntary and community sectors, all of whom had recognised the importance of promoting good relations in terms of generating social and economic growth within the City.

Noted.

Forum for Cities in Transition

(Ms. L. Dennis, Growing a Shared City Project Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th April, it had granted approval for up to three Elected Members, together with the Good Relations Manager and one officer, to attend the annual conference of the Forum for Cities in Transition in Derry/Londonderry taking place from 23rd till 26th May. The Growing a Shared City Project Manager reported that Elected Members had been required to attend two meetings of the Council during that week, with the result that they had been unable to participate in the conference. However, she, along with the Good Relations Manager, had attended the event, during which she had presented a paper entitled “Belfast, a City Profile”.

She explained that the Forum for Cities in Transition operated on the principle that cities which were in conflict or had emerged from conflict were in the best position to assist others experiencing similar difficulties. Delegates at the conference had included mayors, councillors, municipal officers and representatives of the business, community and voluntary sectors from cities such as Beirut, Haifa, Jerusalem, Kirkuk, Mostar and Nicosia. She informed the Partnership that the emphasis of the Forum was

on attaining practical outcomes on how participating cities could exchange learning and development. Ten Kosovan police officers, both Serbian and Albanian, had undertaken a visit to Northern Ireland, which had been hosted by the Police Service. The visit had assisted them in understanding the role to be played by diverse police forces in post-conflict societies.

The Growing a Shared Project Officer reported further that the Northern Ireland Foundation, which had acted as the Secretariat for the Forum for Cities in Transition, had requested that officers and delegates who had attended the conference support a Call to Action, which had been signed in Boston in 2009 by four participating cities. The document set out basic principles aimed at promoting understanding between member cities, with the aim of encouraging mutual learning, dialogue and resolution of conflict through non-violent methods.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve in principle the undernoted Call to Action.

“Forum for Cities in Transition

CALL TO ACTION

The Forum for Cities in Transition, whose members comprise four cities (Derry/Londonderry, Kirkuk, Kosovska Mitrovica and Mitrovica (South), and Nicosia), at its meeting in Boston between April 14th-16th, 2009, affirmed its commitment to promoting understanding between member cities with the aim of encouraging mutual learning, dialogue, and the resolution of conflict through non-violent methods.

Even though we face different problems, challenges, and contexts, cities in transition can both learn from, and offer lessons to each other. We believe that this learning should be shared, so that cities in transition can use resources and knowledge of others to address these challenges.

People from societies in transition are in the best position to help people in other societies in transition.

Basic Principles

The Forum identified basic principles upon which such positive outcomes can be achieved. We call on leaders to uphold and apply these principles in policymaking and service delivery, and to measure progress against them:

- 1. Respect for the dignity of every individual**
- 2. Respect for the value of leadership in building trust and confidence across and within communities**

3. **Respect for human rights, equality, fairness, and adherence to the rule of law, including fair treatment of minorities**
4. **Respect for the value of dialogue between conflicting parties, according to context**

Agreement

The participating cities affirmed:

1. **That city-to-city workshops of this sort are effective, productive, and valuable**
2. **That learning from each other's successes and challenges is immensely empowering**
3. **That some external actors can act as an obstacle and a barrier to promoting joint working and problem solving**
4. **That they create a Forum for Cities in Transition, with those present becoming founding members**
5. **That the Forum's purpose shall be to address common problems through expanding the pool of knowledge from which to draw practical lessons**
6. **To develop and maintain an active network of individuals and cities present for mutual benefit**
7. **To deepen and broaden the network by taking ownership of the Forum's future, the individual signing here agree to take steps to explore how each of the cities involved can plan to host future Forum annual events in their own territories, in conjunction with civil society and educational institutions**
8. **That the Secretariat for the Forum shall initially be provided by the Moakley Chair and the Northern Ireland Foundation."**

Good Relations Reception and Networking Event

The Partnership was reminded that the Good Relations Unit worked with a wide range of statutory partners and community and voluntary groups throughout the City. In addition to this, the Good Relations Fund supported many creative and innovative projects which had made an important difference to the lives of communities.

**Good Relations Partnership,
Monday, 8th August, 2011**

The Good Relations Manager reported that the Unit was proposing to hold an event in order to bring together a number of groups and agencies with which it was closely involved, in order to celebrate and showcase some of the excellent work which had taken place over the past year. It was proposed that, as in 2010, approximately 200 groups, organisations and individuals would be invited to the event, which would take place in the City Hall during the month of December. It would provide a valuable opportunity to encourage groups to continue their good relations work within the community, whilst fostering links and possible partnerships for the future. Some of the work of funded projects would be presented on the evening, through displays and demonstrations. The cost of staging the event would be approximately £2,000, 75% of which could be reclaimed from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister through the Council's Good Relations Programme.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that authority be granted to hold in the City Hall a Good Relations event.

Chairman