

**MEETING OF THE JOINT GROUP OF THE PARTY LEADERS
FORUM AND HISTORIC CENTENARIES WORKING GROUP**

Minutes of the Meeting of Friday, 27th January, 2012

Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman);
Aldermen Browne, Ekin, Rodgers and Smyth; and
Councillors Attwood, Hanna, Kyle, Maskey,
McVeigh and Reynolds.

In attendance: Alderman Stalford;
Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;
Mr. C. Quigley, Town Solicitor and
Assistant Chief Executive;
Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager;
Ms. C. Wilson, Project Officer; and
Ms. S. Robinson, Lord Mayor's Principal Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Aldermen Newton. It was noted that Alderman Stalford was attending on Alderman Newton's behalf.

**Equality Impact Assessment Report
on the Flying of the Union Flag**

The Chief Executive reminded the Working Group that, at its meeting on 13th January, it had agreed to receive at the meeting today a presentation from Ms. Denise Wheatley in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment Report on the Flying of the Union Flag.

It was reported that Ms. Wheatley was in attendance to present the report and she was welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman.

Ms. Wheatley reminded the Working Group that an Equality Impact Assessment had originally been carried out in 2003 and that the current document updated the work which had already been undertaken at that time. The new report focused on the updated opinions of the Equality Commission, the Human Rights Commission and Senior Counsel and also included a reference to a recent survey of visitors to the City Hall.

Ms. Wheatley went on to explain the additional information which had been ascertained from the above-mentioned groups which would impact upon the assessment report.

She explained that the draft report would require to be approved by the Council and then would need to be issued for public consultation. In relation to the assessment of the impact which the current policy may have, it would be necessary to examine the impact in terms of:

- the good and harmonious working environment
- access to services
- promoting good relations

In relation to the impact on a good and harmonious working environment, the conclusion was that continued operation of the current policy could result in an adverse impact on employees from a Catholic and/or Nationalist background. In this regard, she stated that it should be noted that the Equality Commission was of the view that it was acceptable and appropriate for a local Council to fly the flag at its Civic Headquarters but that this rationale would not extend to every Council location. Additionally, legal opinion suggested that the risk of the policy in respect of the City Hall being successfully challenged in a discrimination claim by an employee of the Council was low but that there was a higher risk of a successful discrimination claim being brought in relation to the display of the flag at other locations.

In relation to the impact of the current policy with regard to access to services, Ms. Wheatley stated that she had concluded that there was no adverse impact. There was no direct evidence that people with a Catholic and/or Nationalist Community background were using the Ulster Hall, the City Hall or its grounds less than people from any other background.

In relation to the impact of the policy on promoting good relations, Ms. Wheatley concluded that the policy may give rise to an adverse impact on residents, visitors and employees with a Catholic and/or Nationalist community background. In addition, legal advice suggested that it might be difficult for a complainant to maintain a successful challenge in law against the Council under Section 75 provided that the policy decision gave proper weight to the desirability of promoting good relations.

Ms. Wheatley stated that, after conducting the research, her suggestions to the Council with regard to the options for the policy on the flying of the Union flag were as follows:

- there should be no flag flown at the Ulster Hall and the Duncrue Complex
- with regard to the City Hall, the following options were offered in descending order of effectiveness -
 - (a) fly the flag on designated flag days only
 - (b) fly the flag on designated days plus specified additional days
 - (c) no flag to be flown or a neutral flag to be flown
 - (d) both the Union flag and the Tricolour to be flown

Ms. Wheatley indicated that these suggestions were her own professional opinion based on the evidence which she had gathered. She acknowledged that others may look at the evidence and draw different results and that there was always a possibility that there was other evidence available which she had not been able to locate and take into consideration.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Wheatley for her informative presentation.

Following a lengthy discussion on the matter, it was agreed that:

- (a) the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to proceed with the formal consultation process on the Equality Impact Assessment, based upon the best advice available from the Equality Commission and others as to the form which this should take;
- (b) a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group in relation to a number of questions which had been raised in relation to the religious breakdown of the Council workforce and whether a question could be included within the survey of employees asking if staff would be opposed to the removal of the Union flag from the City Hall and other Council properties;
- (c) a further discussion on the Equality Impact Assessment would take place at the meeting to be held on 10th February, to be facilitated by Dr. Duncan Morrow.

Deferral of Business

Councillor McVeigh indicated that he had not expected to be discussing substantive issues in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment on the flying of the Union flag or on other matters on the agenda without the meeting being facilitated by Dr. Duncan Morrow. Accordingly, he proposed that the remainder of the business be deferred until the Working Group's meeting on 10th February. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Maskey.

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

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

The Working Group considered the undernoted report which had been prepared by the Democratic Services Manager:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 18 November, agreed that the Historic Centenaries Working Group and the Party Leaders' Forum should meet for an intensive series of meetings to discuss the establishment of a Council Diversity Strategy. A range of issues were referred to that Joint Group, including consideration of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in June, 2012. The celebrations will take place over the extended weekend of 2-5 June 2011 with the extra Public Holiday taking place on 5 June.**

- 1.2 The Joint Group, at its meeting on 13 January, 2012, decided that consideration of the Council's involvement in the Diamond Jubilee celebrations should be prioritised due to the limited time available before June for arrangements to be set in place.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The Council previously agreed to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002 by way of a Civic Reception and the establishment of a small-scale grants scheme for groups wishing to celebrate the Jubilee by way of street parties etc. In 2002 the Council established a budget of £100,000 for the celebrations. Approximately £30,000 of this was used for the Civic Dinner with a significant amount of this being paid to "celebrities" for their attendance at the event.

- 2.2 It is worth noting the current positions of the Government and Buckingham Palace to the Jubilee celebrations:

- 2.3 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) at Whitehall is responsible for co-ordinating the Government led aspects of the celebrations. At the moment, Government planning centres on:

- A series of visits by the Royal Family including Northern Ireland;
- A competition for the grant of city status to one town in the UK;
- A competition for the award of a Lord Mayoralty (or Lord Provostship in Scotland); and
- A commemorative Jubilee medal which is most likely to be focussed on the armed and emergency services.

- 2.4 In addition, the Big Lottery Fund is expected to announce that its People's Millions Programme for 2012 will focus on Diamond Jubilee projects.

- 2.5 Buckingham Palace has advised that the celebrations will be marked by grass roots community celebrations and national set-piece events. These include:

- The Queen will attend the Epsom Derby on Saturday 2 June;

- A “Big Jubilee Lunch” initiative where communities will be encouraged to celebrate the Jubilee will be organised on Sunday 3 June;
- The Diamond Jubilee Pageant with international cultural displays in Windsor Castle over 10-13 May;
- The Thames River Pageant will take place on 3 June with up to 1,000 boats being led down the Thames by the Royal Barge;
- A televised BBC concert in Buckingham Palace on Monday 4 June will be followed by the Jubilee Beacon Lighting event.
- A service of Thanksgiving at St Paul’s Cathedral will be preceded by a Carriage Procession;
- The lighting of beacons across the UK and the Commonwealth on 4 June.

2.6 Advice from the Government Department and from the Royal Household is that any celebrations should reflect the current economic climate and that wide-spread public involvement is more important than set-piece or special interest events.

2.7 At an Assembly level, OFMDFM have advised that there will not be any regional funding for Jubilee events and that organisations planning for such events must ensure that they are self financing.

2.8 Issues for discussion

The first thing which the Joint Group will have to decide is whether it wishes to recommend that the Council should support the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. If this recommendation is forthcoming then there are a number of actions which have been proposed and which require the appropriate authority.

2.9 Tree Planting – Saturday 2 June

The Jubilee Woods project has been chosen by the Queen as a charity and was launched by the Woodland Trust. The aim is to plant 6 million trees across the UK. As part of the Project, 60 ‘Diamond Woods’ will be planted to mark the Jubilee.

Whilst the Council would not have the available land to plant a wood, Andrew Hassard has confirmed that the Parks and Leisure Department could organise the planting of commemorative trees in each part of the city to mark the Jubilee. Small, local community events could be arranged at each of these plantings.

Costs for this could be covered through the Parks and Leisure departmental budget.

2.10 Tea Dance(s) in City Hall/Ulster Hall – Saturday 2 June

A Tea Dance could be organised in the City Hall – 500 maximum using both the Great Hall and the Banqueting Hall. This would include limited hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and traybakes. These are always popular with older people. We could organise the event in the Ulster Hall but this is both more costly and has reduced capacity.

Approximate cost - £5,600.

2.11 “Big Sunday Lunch” Event – Sunday 3 June

Nationwide “Big Sunday Lunch” events are being encouraged across the United Kingdom for 3 June. If the Council wishes to mark this it could do so by arranging an event at the City Hall. It should be noted that the Continental Market will be in operation in the City Hall grounds over the Bank Holiday weekend which effectively rules out the holding of a Jubilee event in the grounds at the same time. However, it is suggested that an event inside the City Hall could be arranged on the following basis:

- Main focus inside City Hall where all space would be utilized, similar in operation to Titanic Festival Weekend held over Easter period. All function rooms accessible as well as Marble and Rotunda. Rolling type events.
- Nostalgia, ‘trip down memory lane’ themed events mixed with activities for young people.
- Footage of Coronation could be shown on screen in Reception Room or Great Hall. Also possible to provide communications link between a large screen in Great Hall and what BBC showing on screen in grounds of City Hall.
- Stage in Great Hall could include Galaxy Showbands playing 1950’s type music with likes of George Jones/Max Bygraves type compere. Pete Snodden to appeal to younger audience.
- Actors circulating in period costume.
- Historical drama performances.
- Story telling about history of the era.
- Street entertainers, juggling, walking on stilts – internal and in grounds.
- Tours of City Hall to focus on royal portraits and artefacts.
- ‘Crown’ making and other art type workshops for kids.
- * Option of community type stalls – Fire Service, PSNI, RNLI charitable orgs locally based and in existence longer than 60 years to link in with jubilee theme: key charities identified with Diamond Jubilee.

In 2002 when the Council was celebrating the Queen's Golden Jubilee, the Council held a major Civic Dinner costing £30,000. Such dinners, no matter how they are shaped in terms of the guest list, are always seen as being selective.

The suggestions set out above would not be as costly as a civic dinner, would allow open admission to any member of the public wishing to attend and would undoubtedly attract greater support at a community level.

Approximate costs - £15,000.

2.12 Jubilee Beacons – Monday 4 June

The Council has been requested to take part in a UK-wide Beacon Lighting event on 4 June 2012. Discussions have been held with Events Unit and they advise that this could be arranged using the experience within the Council under the Bonfire Management Programme. The event location would need to be determined but one suggestion might be Cave Hill. The lighting of the Beacon would be co-ordinated with the lighting of other similar beacons in neighbouring Council areas.

The estimated cost of this is £6,000.

2.13 Small-Scale Grants – Ongoing over the Jubilee Weekend

Community Services have indicated that they could administer a small grants scheme. We would need to establish the levels of the grant available and whether grants would be open only to groups registered with the Council. Grants will only be paid on receipted expenditure.

A budget provision of £50k has been made in the Council's estimates for potential Diamond Jubilee events. If the above recommendations are accepted this would leave an amount of £23k available for small grants.

Experience of administering small grant schemes shows that the vast majority of grants are below £500 and the total amount paid out tends to be about £10k less than the amount approved. This would allow a potential grant pool of £30k if the committee is minded to approve such a proposal.

As part of the grant-aid, groups would be asked to evaluate the impact of the events and provide a short report to the Council on their programme. This would allow the Council to consider the contribution of these individual events to its stated aim regarding Belfast as a 21st century city which is shared, open and tolerant.

2.14 Consideration of the Diversity Principles

At its meeting on 13 January, the Joint Group agreed to systematically test the principles already agreed and their practical application in relation to the programmes related to key anniversaries. These principles, as adopted by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, are attached at Appendix 1.

However it should be noted that the principles are designed to assess historic centenaries relating to events rather than an anniversary such as the Diamond Jubilee.

It is therefore suggested that the group may wish to consider the issue by referring to the Council's normal criteria for funding cultural events, an overview of which is attached at Appendix 2.

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 A budget within the Civic Hospitality code has been allocated for Diamond Jubilee celebrations and set at £50,000 in the draft estimates.

The costs associated with the proposed events are:

Tree Planting	0 (covered by Parks & Leisure)
Tea Dance	£5,600
Big Sunday Lunch	£15,000
Beacons	£6,000
Small-Scale Grants	£30,000
Total	£56,600

4 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 4.1 The Diamond Jubilee celebrations are being considered in the context of a wider diversity policy for the Council.

5 Discussion required

5.1 The Joint Group is asked to consider the following:

- **Are the proposed actions outlined for the Diamond Jubilee programme satisfactory?**
- **Are the Group happy for the funding to be considered under the Council normal funding criteria for cultural events?**
- **Given the time constraints do the Group agree to make an early recommendation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee?"**

Following a lengthy discussion, the Working Group agreed to the following course of action.

(Councillors McVeigh and Maskey wish to be recorded as abstaining from the decision.)

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to:

- (a) agree that the Council should mark the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen in June, 2012;
- (b) agree that a series of tree planting events would be held in various parts of the City on Saturday, 2nd June and that local community events be arranged at each of the plantings;
- (c) a tea dance being organised in the Ulster Hall on Saturday, 2nd June;
- (d) the holding of the event in the City Hall on Sunday, 3rd June, as outlined in the report;
- (e) agree to the organisation of the beacon lighting event on Monday, 4th June at the Cave Hill;
- (f) agree that a small scale grants scheme be organised, whereby groups registered with the Council could apply for funding for Jubilee events over the Jubilee weekend. The grants would only be paid on the basis of receipted expenditure and groups applying would be required to abide by criteria to be agreed by the Working Group.

Operation Banner

The Working Group noted the contents of a report in relation to the decisions which had been taken previously by the Council regarding a memorial to mark the ending of Operation Banner.

It was agreed that the provision of a memorial would be considered within the context of the wider discussion on memorabilia which the Group was undertaking in relation to memorabilia in the City Hall generally. Which discussion to be concluded by the end of March in accordance with the agreed work programme.

Noted.

**Work Plan for the Development
of a Council Diversity Strategy**

The Working Group approved the undernoted Work Plan for the ongoing discussions in relation to the development of a Council Diversity Strategy.

Date	Agenda items
27 January	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Presentation of draft EQIA report on the flying of the Union Flag2. Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations3. A report on a suitable means for the Council to mark the ending of "Operation Banner".4. Work plan for Joint Group
10 February	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Discussion on EQIA reports x 2 and timescale to proceed – Flags and Memorabilia, including consultation process
24 February	<ol style="list-style-type: none">6. Use of the Irish language7. Use of the Ulster-Scots language8. Use of minority ethnic languages
9 March	<ol style="list-style-type: none">9. Expressions of distinctiveness within local areas and neighbourhoods (i.e. including public art, signage and symbolism10. How the Council deals with homecoming parades11. Update report on the celebration of the Decade of Centenaries
23 March	<ol style="list-style-type: none">12. Discussion on final report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Centenary of the Signing of the Solemn League and Covenant

The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to two letters which had been received recently from the County Grand Lodge of Belfast concerning that organisation's plans to celebrate the centenary of the Signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in 2012. A report on these matters would be prepared for the Working Group's consideration.

Noted.