

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY, 5th NOVEMBER, 2012

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

- Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman);
Alderman Stoker; and
Councillors Attwood, Kyle and Reynolds.
- External Members: Archdeacon B. Dodds, Church of Ireland;
Rev. L. Carroll, Presbyterian Church;
Ms. A. Chada; Minority Ethnic Groups;
Mr. R. Galway, Confederation of British
Industry/Shorts Bombardier;
Ms. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast and District Trades Council;
Mrs. M. Marken, Catholic Church;
Mr. B. McGivern, Belfast City Centre Management; and
Ms. M. De Silva, Voluntary/Community Sector.
- Also attended: Councillor M. Jones; and
Ms. D. O'Loan, 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;
Ms. M. Hand, Good Relations Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Mr. Bunting, Mr. O' Donnell and Mr. Tok.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th October were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentation on Community Planning

(Ms. K. Walsh, Project Leader, attended in connection with this item.)

The Partnership was advised that Ms. K. Walsh, the Council's Project Leader in Community Planning, was in attendance to provide a presentation in respect of the project.

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Ms. Walsh explained that Community Planning was one of the key responsibilities which would be assumed by local government under the Review of Public Administration. She pointed out that councils would be responsible for working with a range of statutory bodies and agencies to coordinate and deliver themed plans which would be tailored to suit the needs of local communities. Such plans, she reported, would seek to address local priorities by using the following principles:

- by undertaking genuine engagement with people and communities;
- by incorporating and setting shared visions and strategies; and
- by providing the basis for partnership working at a strategic level.

Ms. Walsh reported that a pilot initiative, which had been sponsored by the Big Lottery, had been undertaken to establish a Community Planning Model for Belfast. She explained that further work on the Belfast Model would be carried out to build on partnerships which had been established with the voluntary and community sectors. She indicated that benchmarking exercises on the Belfast Model would be undertaken and that, in this regard, a Member/officer study visit to Scotland would take place in November. She provided an overview of the content of the learning seminars which would take place in the autumn and highlighted how such seminars would provide the Council with an opportunity to showcase its work in the development of community planning. She concluded by indicating that the Model established through the pilot initiative would form the basis for further debate and consultation prior to its introduction, which would ensure that services would be able to be adapted to respond to the specific needs of local areas.

During discussion, a number of Members welcomed the proposals for the introduction of community planning in Belfast and emphasised the view that effective partnership working would be fundamental to its successful implementation. The point was made that any Model introduced by the Council should not overlook the importance of the city centre as an economic driver and acknowledge also the role played by the business community in this regard.

After further discussion, during which Ms. Walsh clarified matters regarding the evaluation processes which would be built into the Community Planning Programme, together with the scope for further consultation which would be undertaken prior to its establishment, the Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Peace III – Implementation Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Review Session

A review session was held on Wednesday 17th October at the Mount Conference Centre. Agenda items included:

- **Consideration of Draft Phase 1 Post project evaluation report;**
- **Progress review of Phase II**

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- **Monitoring & Evaluation Framework Update;**
- **Partnership Development; and**
- **Communications.**

A summary report on the session is attached as an appendix to this report. Key actions arising include requesting additional time for programme activity from SEUPB to allow sufficient time to ensure that the impact of the peace building investment to date is maximised and the significant benefits of the local action plans are fully realised and reported effectively. There is a strong value for money and sustainability case for extending the programming period in line with other elements of the PEACE III Programme and to minimise the gap between the close of this programme and the opening of any future programme. In addition this additional time will allow for the changes associated with the Review of Public Administration to be implemented. It was further noted that there are challenging expenditure targets set for the Programme and all projects are required to provide accurate and timely financial information and claims documentation to enable these targets to be met.

Consultation on EU Structural Funds 2014-2020

Further to the public consultation on the European Territorial Co-Operation Programmes for 2014 – 2020 undertaken by the Special EU Programmes Body as previously considered by the Partnership. The EU regulations that will cover these programmes are at draft stage, and have yet to be approved by the European Council and European Parliament. The draft regulations may be amended during this process. The overall EU budget has not yet been agreed, and therefore there can be no certainty as to the budget allocation to any programme at this time. In addition, whilst there is provision within the draft regulations for a future PEACE programme, the two Member States (UK and Ireland) are required to formally request the inclusion of the programme. This programme planning will run in parallel with final negotiations on the regulations and budget.

A further statutory public consultation will provide an opportunity to comment on the draft operational programmes, as well as the strategic environmental assessments and the equality impact assessments. This is likely to be held in the spring / summer 2013.

During the conflict, Belfast saw some of the most intensive violence and suffered disproportionately as a result. This should be reflected in the development of any new PEACE IV Programme.

Potential activities that could be covered in any PEACE IV Programme include:

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- Actions to create and promote use of shared public space, promote mobility within and between communities.
- Actions to develop and deliver integrated interface regeneration strategies. It is essential that local communities are involved in the process of re-developing contested spaces,
- Actions to promote inclusive cultural expression and celebration.
- Actions to align good relations/peacebuilding and conflict transformation activities with the processes of existing policy development in areas such as education, regional strategic planning, urban and rural regeneration and community development and culture, arts and leisure provision.

Young people should remain a priority focus for any new Programme. Match funding should be provided centrally by one accountable department for any future PEACE IV Programme. The time taken for the project assessment and appraisal process should be reduced. Reporting and monitoring arrangements should be streamlined with an enhanced role for local authorities.

Forthcoming Events

08 November 2012 – Launch of Creating a Cohesive Community Project 5.30pm Shaftesbury Recreation Centre.

08 November 2012 – Growing Respect’s ‘Winter Warmer’ event for senior citizens 1.30pm to 2.30pm at Ballysillan Leisure Centre.

13 November 2012 – Creating Trust, Overcoming Division – the local authority approach to Peace Building.

**Proposed Seminar 24 January 2013 -
International Perspectives on Conflict Resolution.**

Following on from discussion at the review session the opportunity to hear from Donna Hicks, a leading Harvard academic on conflict resolution has been identified. It is proposed to hold a seminar on 24th January 2013 at Belfast City Hall which will consider international perspectives on conflict resolution. The seminar would be open to Partnership Members and key stakeholders including other PEACE III clusters across the region.

Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to note the information provided relating to implementation of the Belfast PEACE III Plan.”

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The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and agreed also that a letter be forwarded to the Special European Union Programmes Body requesting that consideration be given to extending the period of activity for Phase II of the Belfast PEACE III Plan into 2014 in line with the rest of the PEACE III Programme.

Peace III – Interfaces Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The Partnership will be aware that following Alderman Tom Ekin’s Notice of Motion in September 2011 calling for the Removal of Peace Walls, the Council developed a strategy and framework for action focused on interface areas. This has been incorporated into the corporate planning process and will be taken forward by the Good Relations Partnership in conjunction with the Safer City Thematic Group, chaired by the Director of Health and Environmental Services.

Key Issues

Update on Progress

Since last autumn, the Good Relations Unit has secured funding of £421,538 through the theme of ‘Transforming Contested Spaces’ under Phase II of the Peace III Peace and Reconciliation Plan to deliver a programme that aims to ‘transform or remove’ up to 14 interface barriers (identified in association with and owned by DoJ) across the city. This project will work closely with local communities to develop an inclusive community approach toward the regeneration of the identified interface barriers, which are:

- Cluster 1: Inner North - Duncairn Gardens
- Cluster 2: Outer North – Ardoyne/Woodvale
- Cluster 3: Inner West – Lower Falls/Lower Shankill

Following a procurement exercise, in line with Council and SEUPB guidelines, Groundwork NI have been appointed as the managing agent for the delivery of the programme. The Groundwork NI bid included named community partners to assist with the delivery of the project by the spend deadline of December 2013. The process is one of three stages:

- Consultation
- Visioning
- Physical/environmental improvement works

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An Advisory Group, comprising of statutory and community partners (BCC; DoJ; NIHE; DSD/BRO; Intercomm; NBCD&TG; NBIN) has been established and the first meeting was held on Friday 5th October in the offices of Groundwork NI.

Partnership Working

A nominated Good Relations Officer attends the strategic Inter-Agency Group chaired by DoJ which is tasked with the coordination of all statutory activity focusing on interfaces and interface communities. The aim of the Inter-agency Group is to deliver the Programme for Government Commitment 68 to 'Actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of "peace walls"' and the related outcomes set out in the Community Safety Strategy.

The International Fund for Ireland's (IFI) Peace Walls Programme also provides funding for community-led initiatives on interfaces and IFI have agreed to adopt the recommendation that each funded project include on its Advisory Panel the nominated Council Good Relations Officer. This is to ensure that information and best practice is shared across the statutory and community sector to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity across and between a variety of initiatives.

Officers from the Good Relations Unit and the Community Safety Unit also co-facilitate an Internal Interfaces Officer Group, chaired by the Director of Health and Environmental Services, which acts as a key internal point of contact to drive forward work around interfaces in the areas of regeneration, grant aid funding and barrier removal issues. This group will ensure that this work will link with that being taken forward by the DoJ led statutory agencies group."

During discussion, Ms. Hand undertook to circulate information to the Members in respect of Dr. N. Jarman's mapping exercise of interfaces which had been undertaken as part of the Belfast Interface Project.

After further discussion, during which it was agreed that an invitation be extended to attend the Partnership's meeting in December to Dr. Jonny Byrne, University of Ulster, to provide a presentation on his research into the subject of transforming Belfast's Peace Walls, particularly the role of the Council in this regard, the Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Bonfire Management Programme – Participant Criteria for 2013

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, it had considered a report in respect of the Annual Review of the Bonfire Management Programme and had requested that a further report be submitted which would outline the sanctions which could be imposed on participants in the Programme which permitted the burning of flags and emblems on their bonfires. Accordingly, the

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Partnership considered a report in this regard which proposed the following three options for consideration:

- **Option 1 – impose penalties on groups not meeting all of the criteria**

That option would enable the Council to withhold a sum of money from all groups to ensure that they complied with the guidelines of the Programme. That option would be difficult to enforce and would alienate a lot of groups;

- **Option 2 – reward those groups who do not burn flags and incentivise other groups to make similar progress**

That option would permit the Council to provide funding in arrears to those groups who abided by all of the criteria. However, communities had expressed the view that such rewards would be divisive and create rivalry amongst groups. In addition, it would be difficult to evaluate, enforce and administer that proposal in terms of making awards following the events.

- **Option 3 – instigate a specific training programme immediately, to be rolled out between now and July, to facilitate progress on the flags issue**

That option had been suggested by participants themselves and welcomed by communities as being fair and accessible to all groups equally. It would recognise the significant challenge which participants had been presented with on the issue, while also demonstrating through the Programme at large that the issue would be best dealt with by the groups themselves – if given the tools and resources. It would also be viewed as demonstrating an appropriate and concerted effort to address the issues at hand and one which could best achieve the desired outcome.

A prolonged discussion ensued in respect of the three options outlined. A number of Members stated that, as a public body charged with distributing public funds, there was an onus on the Council to impose some form of financial penalty on participants who continued to breach the agreed criteria for the management of bonfires. However, the point was made that, should penalties be imposed on participants who were deemed to have breached the criteria, the likelihood existed that such groups might choose to withdraw from the Programme which would have a negative impact on the progress which had been achieved in the past number of years.

After further discussion, in the absence of a consensus, the Partnership deferred consideration of the report to its meeting in December.

**Good Relation's Grant Aid Fund –
Amendments to Guidance Notes**

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that, at its meeting on 8th October, a Member had highlighted the fact that an application for funding had been

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rejected on the basis of a decision by the Partnership on 8th May, 2012 viz., that no applications would be considered which had been completed by consultants on behalf of applicants. The Member pointed out that such applications were accepted under the Council's Support for Sport Scheme and he suggested that it would be beneficial to obtain a legal opinion on whether the criterion used under the Good Relations Grant Aid Fund could be extended to other Council departmental programme.

The Good Relations Manager reported that she had raised the matter with officers responsible for the Support for Sport Scheme and had sought legal advice in relation to the validity of the Partnership's decision to ensure there was a consistency of approach across the Council. Accordingly, she reported that the view of the Council's Legal Services Section had been that the Council, as a funding body, was entitled to determine its own rules in respect of how groups access funding. In relation to the wording within the Good Relation's Guidance Notes, the Legal Services Section had advised that the following wording should be used in order to express more explicitly the intent behind the guidance:

“We require all applications to be completed in their entirety by group(s)/organisation(s) applying for funding, not using third party consultants/advice services. This is to ensure that the group(s)/organisation(s) are fully conversant with the information being detailed on the application(s) being made, which is required by the Council. The Council has a dedicated Good Relations Unit, which will assist group(s)/organisation(s) in the development and completion of applications being made, to ensure that every opportunity to access the funding stream is afforded.

We will also add in the following text to the check-list on the back of the application form:

***I confirm that this application form has been filled in by
(and not on behalf of) the group”***

After discussion, the Partnership endorsed the proposed change to the wording to the Guidance Notes of the Good Relation's Grant-Aid Fund.

International Migrants' Day

The Partnership was reminded that International Migrants' Day would take place on Tuesday, 18th December. The Good Relations Manager pointed out that, given the proximity of that date to the Christmas holidays, a significant number of local migrants would have already returned home and it might, therefore, be impractical for the Partnership to mark the event formally.

However, she reported that a meeting of the local Belfast Migrants' Forum was due to take place on the morning of 10th December, and, given that the Partnership's monthly meeting was scheduled to take place at 1.00 p.m. that day, she suggested that it might be appropriate for that meeting to commence at the earlier time of 12.00 noon, which would enable the Partnership to host an informal event over lunch, to which the members of the Forum would be invited to mark International Migrants' Day.

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The Partnership agreed to bring forward the starting time of its meeting on 10th December to 12.00 noon as suggested and agreed further that the normal business agenda of the Partnership would commence at 1.00 p.m.

Christmas 'Goodwill' Events – Small Scale Grants

The Good Relations Manager reported that a number of requests for financial assistance had been received from groups living on interfaces to assist in the hosting of cross-community Christmas events during December. She reported that the costs associated with each event would be approximately £200 and that it was anticipated that five events would be held prior to Christmas.

The Partnership granted authority to the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive to award small scale grants for the events as outlined.

Forum for Cities in Transition

The Partnership considered the contents of a report, which had been prepared by Alderman Stoker, which provided an overview of the content of the Forum for Cities in Transition, which had taken place in Kirkuk, Iraq, from 6th till 11th October. The Forum had been attended by Alderman Stoker and Councillors Attwood, Kyle and Jones.

Each of the attendees provided an overview of the benefits which had been accrued by attending the Forum. They gave an outline of the topics which had been addressed and an insight into the plenary sessions and the outcomes which had been determined. In particular, the Council's delegates outlined the range of partnerships and contacts which had been established through their participation in the Forum. In addition, the Partnership was advised that a range of actions had been proposed by the Belfast delegation viz.,

- to work with Mr. Hasan Taran from the Kirkuk Provincial Council to establish the feasibility of a delegation from the Kirkuk Police Service participating in the World Police and Fire Games in Belfast in 2013;
- to organise a Policing and Community Relations Seminar for police services attending the World Police and Fire Games in Belfast in 2013;
- to encourage closer economic links between Belfast and Kirkuk by utilising Invest NI's office in Erbil;
- to share good practice in the promotion of equality with cities in transition; and
- to investigate with The Queen's University of Belfast the feasibility of hosting a conflict resolution conference in 2015.

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After discussion, during which the Partnership endorsed the range of actions as outlined and agreed to investigate the feasibility of the Council formalising its future relationships with the Forum for Cities in Transition, the Members noted the contents of the report.

Chairman