

Minute of the Joint Group of Party Group Leaders Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group
Friday 1 March 2013

Present: Cllr Attwood, Ald Ekin, Cllr Hanna, Cllr Hendron (chair), Cllr McVeigh, Cllr Reynolds, Ald Rodgers and Ald Stalford.

In attendance: Peter McNaney, Chief Executive; Duncan Morrow, independent facilitator; Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager; and Caroline Wilson, Programme Manager (note-taker).

Agenda Item 1 – Routine Matters

1. An apology for inability to attend was reported from Ald Browne, Ald Humphrey, Cllr Kyle, Cllr Maskey and Ald Smyth. Ald Stalford was attending on behalf of Ald Humphrey.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting Friday 18 January were agreed.
3. No declarations of interest were made.

Agenda Item 2 – Presentation on City Hall displays draft action plan

4. Cllr Hendron welcomed Victoria Kingston, independent advisor, to the meeting and invited her to give a presentation on her proposals in relation to the next steps for displays in the City Hall.
5. Ms Kingston outlined the overarching approach as previously agreed by the Joint Group, for the development of new interpretation within and around City Hall, in-keeping with the recommendations from the EQIA report. It was as follows:
 - **Represent:** to represent all the people of Belfast through the prism of Belfast City Hall and its history
 - **Re-present:** to ensure that all the interpretation presented to visitors within City Hall is balanced and inclusive
 - **Reach Out:** to attract new visitors to City Hall, and to re-engage and enthuse existing ones
 - **Re-vitalise:** to take the best of what is currently offered to visitors to City Hall and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Ms Kingston's PowerPoint presentation outlined a number of proposed exhibitions and the rationale.

6. Members broadly welcomed the proposals and recommended that there needed to be further political discussion on the proposals, in order to determine a prioritised action plan for implementation. To prepare this, it was **agreed** that the following issues needed to be addressed:

- Resources (inc. finance, staff accommodation and asset implications)
 - Phasing and priority actions
 - Communications and engagement (inc. media and focus groups e.g. youth)
 - Development of design brief for exhibitions and ensure balance/accuracy
7. A programme for this work to be completed was **agreed** as:
- Party group briefings and further political discussions (*Mar/Apr*)
 - Action plan to Joint Group for agreement (*May*)
 - Agreed action plan to SP&R for inclusion in capital programme (*end May*)
8. The Joint Group thanked Ms Kingston for her work and she left the meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – Operation Banner

9. Consequent to the Council's agreement at its meeting on 1 November 2012, in relation to a memorial for Operation Banner, H Francey presented design sketches for the modification of the existing UDR window and a granite bench for the Garden of Remembrance at the City Hall.
10. Cllr Attwood stated that it would be preferable for this memorial to be considered within the overall City Hall displays action plan. Cllr McVeigh asked that it was noted that Sinn Fein opposed the memorial and took no part in the discussion.
11. Other Members welcomed the designs and agreed that work on these two items should proceed in advance of the main action plan. It was noted that the window design should be amended to include the ribbon of the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross medal.
12. After discussion the Joint Group **agreed** that the proposal should be forwarded to SP&R Committee for their consideration.

Agenda Item 4 – Cenotaph Equality Screening

13. H Francey gave an overview of the estimated timeline in relation to the equality screening process.
14. Members noted the report and **agreed** that further discussion was needed in due course, in order to proactively manage the timing and communication of the resultant decision.

Agenda Item 5 – Approach to multiple equality complaints - updated advice from Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

15. H Francey updated Members on recent advice from the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI), on how best to deal with multiple complaints received in respect of the EQIA on the flying of the Union Flag.

16. ECNI has stated clearly that the current legislation and the Council's Equality Scheme were never intended or designed to deal with this type of multiple complaint. The Equality Commission has stated that it is a matter for the Council to ensure that its response balances the need to engage with and respond to complaints, along with the adoption of a reasonable and proportionate response to multiple complainants.
17. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Council issue a press release and place information on the website on this subject, referring any complaints received after the date of the Equality Commission's latest correspondence (20 February), to that information..
18. In discussion, Members raised concern about the potentially fraudulent complaints and advised to officers to proactively and sensitively manage this.
19. It was **agreed** that the Joint Group would recommend to SP&R Committee that the approach outlined was adopted.

Agenda Item 6 – Peace IV Programme – pre-approved bids

20. The Chief Executive outlined recent officer discussions with the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) on the Peace IV Programme. He highlighted that they are in the process of defining the next operational programme, to be finalised by the end 2013. SEUPB are currently scoping potential projects of regional importance/critical mass.
21. It was **agreed** that a paper was prepared for future consideration by the Joint Group, to ensure that the engagement with SEUPB was politically-driven.
22. Cllr Hendron thanked Dr Morrow for his contribution and closed the meeting.

Chief Executive