

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY, 9th MARCH, 2015

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman); and
Councillors Attwood, Kyle and Mac Giolla Mhín.

Also attended: Councillors Beattie, Garrett and B. Groves.

External Members: Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Ms. A. Chada, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Mr. K. Gibson, Church of Ireland;
Mrs. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Mrs. M. Marken, Catholic Church;
Mr. B. McGivern, Belfast City Centre Management; and
Mr. U. Tok, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Lead Operations Officer/Head of
Environmental Health;
Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. S. Lavery, Programme Manager;
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. L. Francey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Dr. C. Hughes, Mr. P. Mackel and Mr. P. Scott.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th February were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declaration of Interest

Ms. A. Chada declared an interest in relation to the item which had been tabled at the meeting, namely "Good Relations Grant Aid Funding – Tranche 1", in that Springboard Opportunities, with which she was associated, had been named in a funding application from the Carrick Hill Residents Association.

Expression of Thanks

The Partnership was reminded that this would be the last meeting attended by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Hendron), the Chairman of the Partnership, as she would be leaving the Council at the end of the month.

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Several members paid tribute to the Deputy Lord Mayor for the work which she had undertaken during her term on the Partnership to promote Good Relations across the City and wished her well in the future.

The Chairman thanked the members of the Partnership for their kind words.

Quarterly Screening Outcome Report

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 required public authorities, in undertaking their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across a range of categories as set out within the Act. In terms of the Council, it was committed to having in place appropriate internal arrangements for ensuring its effective compliance with the statutory duties contained within Section 75 and for monitoring and reviewing its progress.

She explained that the Council met its statutory obligations in a number of ways, one of which involved the publication of a quarterly Screening Outcome Report setting out the policies which had been screened under its Equality Scheme and which were likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations. She confirmed that, during the period from October till December, 2014, screenings had been undertaken in relation to policies for, amongst others, the advertising of applications for Entertainments Licences, the use of Social Clauses in Council contracts, the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Plan, the implementation of online grant applications and the Council's Procurement Strategy.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and that a copy of the Screening Outcome Report was available in full on the Council's website.

Good Relations Grant Aid Funding – Tranche 1

The Members considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

1.1 The first tranche of funding under Good Relations and Summer Intervention Grant Aid for activities taking place between 1st April 2015 and 30th September 2015 closed on 21st January 2015. The application pack also included other small grants across Council as part of the Corporate Grants project.

2 Key Issues

2.1 By the closing date of applications, the Good Relations Fund had received 94 applications totalling approximately £550,000. and the Summer Intervention Fund had received 70 applications to be scored a later date.

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The Good Relations Fund is co funded by OFMDFM (75%) and Belfast City Council and the Summer Intervention Fund is fully funded by OFMDFM at 100%.

- 2.2 As the grants under the Good Relations Fund are aimed at activities taking place between 1st April 2015 and 30th September 2015, these have been assessed first and have been scored against set criteria by Good Relations Officers as outlined in the guidance notes. Following this, an independent assessment panel was set up to review a sample of applications. This was chaired by the Good Relations Manager, attended by 3 other Officers independent of the Good Relations Unit and facilitated by CGU.
- 2.3 The role of these panels is to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification of sampled applications and the overall process. The Independent panel was satisfied with the scoring and application of the criteria and agreed to recommend the Officer's recommendations for awards and these are attached.
- 2.4 Members should note that the recommendations for awards for the Summer Intervention Fund will be brought to a future meeting of the Good Relations Partnership for approval.
- 2.5 An application via the Good Relations Action Plan as approved by Council on 3rd March 2015 has been submitted to OFMDFM asking for a total of £688,500.00 which is 75% of the cost of the Plan. This includes £360,000 towards grant aid costs. This plan was drawn up in accordance with the Council's estimates for 2015/16.
- 2.6 However, Members are reminded of the experience last year when the Council was informed late in the year after estimates were drawn up, that the budget had been significantly reduced which produced a shortfall in the budget. OFMDFM have also advised that initial indications of the Department's 2015/16 budget suggest an opening position that is lesser than their opening position last year.
- 2.7 Members are reminded that an all party delegation met with the Junior Ministers in OFMDFM on 9th February where the Members outlined the Partnership's eagerness to work with OFMDFM on the Together Building a United Community Strategy and the Belfast agenda. However, they raised concerns around the resourcing of this work, long-term sustainability and the need for timely communication around funding, as the current situation impacts on business

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planning and service delivery. Members also asked the Junior Ministers to take into account the additional residents coming into the new Belfast Council boundary and the accompanying good relations issues when allocating funding to the Good Relations Programme this year.

<p>Options: In the meantime, however, Members are being asked to consider options to inform a recommendation to the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee in relation to Tranche 1 of the Good Relations Fund 2015/16 in the absence of a Letter of Offer from OFMDFM and no confirmation of the potential budget.</p>		
<p>Option 1: Await confirmation from OFMDFM regarding budget allocation for 2015/16</p>	<p>Pros: Council is protected from not proceeding at risk</p>	<p>Cons: Confirmation from OFMDFM may not be received until late in the year. Projects are meant to have commenced from 1 April. Relationship with groups is damaged and work on programmes over the summer will be impacted.</p>
<p>Option 2: Allocate awards as laid out in the submitted Good Relations Action Plan at up to a maximum of £360K for the year - £180K in first tranche</p>	<p>Pros: Groups are able to commence projects from 1st April. Positive relationships with applicants are maintained</p>	<p>Cons: Council would be proceeding at substantial financial risk as given the information provided, there it is unlikely that the full amount will be received from OFMDFM and Council would be liable for the cost incurred over what could be claimed back. Funding for Tranche 2 which covers activities from October 2015 - March 2016 would be severely compromised. The programme costs which amount to 30% (£280K) in the overall Action Plan would be impacted upon significantly.</p>

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Option 3: Allocate awards for Tranche 1 on a lesser amount which would allow for the Good Relations Action Plan to be reprioritised	Pros: Financial risk to Council is substantially reduced. A proportion of groups can commence projects from 1st April. Programme costs would be reduced but could be prioritised. A proportion of Funding for Tranche 2 would likely still be available for projects from October 2015-March 2016	Cons: Reduced allocation to Good Relations Grant Aid with lesser amount of groups benefitting
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Should Members agree to recommend Option 3 to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, they would need to consider an amount of funding to allocate. The following are options which could be considered:

- a. Fund all 71 groups which have applied to the Scheme and are eligible which would require an amount of £178,326 noting this is what is proposed under Option 2.
- b. Fund 57 groups which have scored 50% and above which would require an amount of £155,946
- c. Fund 43 groups which have scored 55% and above which would require an amount of £126,616
- d. Fund 31 groups which have scored 60% and above which would require a total of £107,816

3 Resource Implications

3.1 Financial:

Good Relations Fund - The total budget for allowance of grants under the 2015/16 Action Plan is £360K for the year. However, as outlined in 2.6 above, OFMDFM have not confirmed their match funding and to grant awards on this amount would place the Council at substantial financial risk. Council is required to match fund the District Council Good Relations Programme at 25%.

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3.2 Human Resources:

The work is covered within the work programme of the Good Relations Unit.

3.3 Asset and Other Implications:

None.

4 Recommendation

4.1 The Partnership is requested to consider the options presented and recommend an option on how to proceed in relation to the Good Relations Fund in the absence of confirmation of match funding from OFMDFM, for consideration at the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee 20th March 2015.”

During discussion, the Partnership was advised that the Letter of Offer for 2014 had not been received from OFMDFM until half way through the year and that it had not as yet been received for 2015. It was pointed out that, should the Partnership be minded to recommend that all 71 eligible applications be funded in Tranche 1, then the programme would be proceeding at a financial risk to the Council.

After discussion, the Partnership agreed to recommend to the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, that:

- a) on the basis that full funding of £178,326 can be confirmed from OFMDFM, that Option 2, as set out within paragraph 2.8 within the report, be the preferred option, which would allow for the delivery of all 71 eligible projects in Tranche 1;
- b) on the basis that the full £178,326 cannot be confirmed from OFMDFM, that advice be sought from the Director of Finance and Resources on potential funding opportunities which could make up any shortfall to allow for the delivery of all 71 eligible projects in Tranche 1; and
- c) should funding of £178,326 be unattainable through both OFMDFM and the Director of Finance and Resources, that the Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to proceed with Option C, as set out within paragraph 2.9 of the report, namely, that funding of £126,616 be allocated to the 43 groups which had scored 55% and above in meeting the Good Relations Criteria.

Review of Bonfire Management Programme

The Programme Manager reminded the Partnership that at its meeting on 8th December, 2014, it had appointed Lindsay Advisory Consultants to carry out an

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independent, comprehensive evaluation of the Council's Bonfire Management Programme 2014. It was agreed that the evaluation would include an analysis of the development of the Programme since 2005, give due consideration to those bonfires which were not currently part of the Programme, provide options for any future Programme based on the review of the current delivery model and consider the impact of Local Government Reform on the Council.

He informed Members that Ms. S. Lindsay, of Lindsay Advisory Consultants, was in attendance in order to provide details on the review and she was welcomed to the meeting. Ms. Lindsay presented to the members the outcomes of the review, which included the history of the programme to date, the outturns, the lessons learned and proposals for a future framework for the programme. She emphasised that the future programme should be outcome-focussed and include a number of recommendations for both short and long term objectives.

After a number of questions from members, the Chairman thanked Ms. Lindsay for her presentation and she left the meeting.

The Programme Manager presented a report to the Partnership which outlined a number of key findings from the review and a range of issues for members to consider. During discussion, a Member reminded the Partnership that it had previously agreed that information should be sought from the relevant agencies in relation to the number of bonfire-related crimes, such as assaults, incidences of hate crime, theft of materials and damage caused to roads and properties in 2014. The Programme Manager explained that these statistics had been difficult to collate but that he would endeavour to bring this information to a future meeting. A number of Members were in agreement that a public space should be set aside for bonfires, which could also be used for other events throughout the year.

After discussion, the issue was deferred to allow consideration of the issues which had been raised within the review and it was agreed that officers would bring a further report with the requested information to a future meeting of the Partnership.

St. Patrick's Day Grants Scheme

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th November, it had agreed that funding be allocated from the St. Patrick's Day Fund to sixty-one organisations to enable them to deliver activities in 2015.

The Good Relations Manager reported that, one organisation, namely, the Link Community Association, had been recommended by officers to receive funding of £350. However, due to an administrative error, the report had recommended that it receive only £150 and that had been reflected within the minute of the meeting. She confirmed that the Link Community Association had since been awarded the correct amount, which would be met from within the Good Relations Unit's current budget.

Noted.

Representation on Steering Group

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The Partnership noted that the Good Relations Manager had been requested to participate in an advisory capacity on a Steering Group for the Belfast Conflict Resolution Consortium. Representatives from OFMdFM, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department of Justice would also sit on the Steering Group.

Small World Event

The Partnership was advised that a Small World event would take place at 6 p.m. on Thursday 26th March, in the Common Grounds Cafe, University Avenue. The event was one of a number of projects which the Council had funded through the Good Relations Plan to address racism. An invitation would be forwarded to members of the Partnership.

Chairman