

## **GOOD RELATIONS STEERING PANEL**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**FRIDAY, 4th APRIL, 2008**

- Members present: Councillor Long (Chairman); and  
Councillors C. Maskey, Humphrey (nominee of  
Councillor McCausland) and Stoker.
- External Members: Canon B. Dodds, Church of Ireland;  
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church;  
Mr. Galway, Bombardier Aerospace; and  
Dr. D. Morrow, Community Relations Council.
- In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;  
Ms. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;  
Miss C. Wilson, Conflict Transformation Project Manager;  
Miss E. Brough, Good Relations Officer; and  
Mr. J. Heaney, Committee Administrator.

#### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Hanna, Kyle, McCausland and Ms. H. Smith.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 7th March were taken as read and signed as correct.

#### **Special European Union Programmes Body – Peace III**

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Steering Panel that, at its meeting on 7th March, it had agreed that an invitation be forwarded to Mr. P. Colgan, Chief Executive of the Special European Union Programmes Body, to attend a meeting of the Steering Panel in order to discuss the Members' concerns in relation to the Council's Peace and Reconciliation Plan. She reported that Mr. Colgan was in attendance and he was welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman.

Mr. Colgan advised the Steering Panel that he had considered the Council's Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan and was confident that it had met all the requirements. Accordingly, he indicated that he looked forward to working with the Council in the coming years in regard to the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan. He stated that on the 12th and 13th May the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) would be considering the action plans received from all Councils and he was confident that all outstanding matters could be addressed at that time. He suggested that a letter of offer could be made by May/June which would permit the Council to start the recruitment exercise in respect of the additional staff required for the implementation of the Plan as soon as possible thereafter. He stated also that he wished to put on record his appreciation of the work carried out by the Council in relation to the preparation of the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Chairman indicated that there were still a number of concerns to be addressed, namely, that no Good Relations Partnership was yet in place and she stated that staff should not be put in the position which would necessitate them making decisions which should properly be made by the Good Relations Partnership. Furthermore, she stated that the requirement for the Council to identify those groups which would be in a position to receive funding could create the perception in the wider community that they were being treated in a more favourable manner.

In response, Mr. Colgan stated that the SEUPB was trying to achieve a balance in that there was a need to develop a sound rationale for the allocation of the funds which, therefore, would require an economic appraisal to be undertaken by all applicants. He stated that the Plan would need to indicate specifically where the funding would be allocated and what were the objectives and outcomes which were expected to be achieved. However, he indicated that this would not be restrictive and that any letter of offer from the Programmes Body would be flexible and would permit the Partnership to redistribute funds. He indicated further that the description of the Partnership contained within the Plan was very good and could be built upon in a flexible manner in order to allow issues to be addressed as they arose.

A number of Members indicated that they were concerned in relation to the differences in the level of financial resources which the Panel had been working towards when developing its Plan and the levels which were now being indicated as being available from the Programmes Body.

Mr. Colgan explained that, whilst he was aware that there were a number of problems specific to Belfast, he was constrained by the European Union budget which had been allocated to the Project. However, he indicated that he would work closely with the Panel in regard to the level of funding which would be made available to the Council.

The Chairman pointed out that the Panel was of the view that there was a very significant case for Belfast to receive additional money, since the City was unique, not only because it had suffered a disproportionate share of violence over the past 35 years, but in so far as it had a good record on good relations issues and had, in the past, demonstrated its capacity to deliver specific projects. She stated that there was currently a high degree of stability within Belfast City Council, compared with other organisations, which would be of vital importance in delivering the Plan's objectives.

The Chief Executive indicated that there was a firm foundation for the framework of the Plan which had been developed by both Members and officers of the Council. He indicated further that the Council was working with other statutory and voluntary bodies, in a partnership approach, in order to promote good relations throughout Belfast. He suggested that the launch of the Peace and Reconciliation Plan and, indeed the forthcoming visit by Members of the Council to Chicago, would be an ideal opportunity to instigate a wider dialogue about good relations and community cohesion issues.

Mr. Colgan thanked the Committee for receiving him and he retired from the meeting.

The Chief Executive suggested that it would be important for the new Partnership to commence work as soon as possible and, accordingly, he recommended that a provisional date be agreed for the first meeting of the Partnership to be held during the week commencing 16th June, 2008.

After further discussion, the Steering Panel noted the information which had been provided and adopted the recommendation of the Chief Executive.

### **Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan – Peace III**

The Good Relations Manager advised the Members that a number of the concerns which had been expressed by the Community Relations Council and Border Action in relation to the Plan had been addressed and further information had been included within the revised Plan, including indicative actions, outputs, targets and expected results. She indicated further that the final decision on specific funding allocations would be taken by the new Partnership, when established.

She advised the Panel further that, in relation to Church representation on the proposed Partnership, letters had been forwarded to all churches advising them of the increase in the level of representation and she informed the Members that it was hoped that the various Protestant denominations would agree on a method of selecting the two representatives for the Partnership.

The Steering Panel noted the contents of the revised Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Plan and the comments of the Good Relations Manager thereon and noted also that a copy of the plan would be available for inspection in the Members' library.

### **Peace III – Proposed Methodology for the Appointment of Representatives from the Voluntary, Community and Minority Ethnic Sectors for the Good Relations Partnership**

The Steering Panel considered a report in relation to the recruitment of the five representatives from the voluntary, community and minority ethnic sectors for inclusion on the Good Relations Partnership.

The Good Relations Manager outlined the proposed methodology for the recruitment exercise, which involved a two-stage process. The first stage would include the advertising of the positions and the long-listing of candidates. Following this, at an assessment centre, AS Associates would also administer a short written exercise and interview for applicants to demonstrate their abilities against the required competencies. AS Associates would then prepare a report and short-list recommending applicants for the next stage.

Stage 2 would consist of a standard structured interview with questions designed to elicit further information. The panel would consist of two Elected Members and one external Member with AS Associates being present at the interviews in an advisory capacity only. The Good Relations Manager stated that the make-up of the interview panel must have a balance of both gender and community background and participants must have received appropriate training in the Council's recruitment and selection procedures.

After discussion, the Steering Panel approved the two stage process for the recruitment of Good Relations Partnership members and noted that the Special European Union Programmes Body would meet 100% of the costs of the exercise.

### **Good Relations Grant-Aid**

The Good Relations Manager submitted for the information of the Panel a report detailing a summary of applications to the Good Relations Grant-Aid Fund, together with the associated recommendations.

**Good Relations Steering Panel,  
Friday, 4th April, 2008**

After discussion, the Steering Panel agreed unanimously that the recommended grant-aid be awarded under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive to the following organisations:

<u>Reference Number</u>	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Recommendation £</u>
475/1145	North Belfast Play Forum	10,000
681/1148	St. Colmcille's/Gilnahirk Inter-Church Group	600
267/1155	Ulster Scots Heritage Council	1,650
684/1154	Forthriver Royals	5,350
592/1152	Quaker House	2,500
498/1140	Mandarin Speakers Association	2,000
	PROVISIONAL TOTAL THIS MONTH	22,100

**Love Poetry Hate Racism**

The Steering Panel was advised that Di-Verse was a new organisation which sought to celebrate diversity in Northern Ireland by bringing people together using the poetic arts. The Good Relations Manager advised the Panel that a group of poets living and working in Belfast had, in 2007, organised a world-wide event called Love Poetry Hate Racism which had attracted participants from over fifty cities from around the world to celebrate diversity through poetry.

This year, Di-Verse was organising a similar event to be held during the period from 18th till 20th April and approximately fifty cities from all around the world would be participating. The organisers had invited the Council to support their Belfast event, which aimed to use poetry to explore issues around racism and cultural diversity. The event would seek also to promote the message that the mixing of cultures and the cross-pollination of ideas would have a positive influence on our shared future.

After discussion, the Steering Panel agreed to support the event being staged in Belfast by promoting it through the Council's internal and external network and by permitting the use of the Council's logo on promotional material.

**Mitchell Conference, Queen's University**

The Steering Panel was advised that, in order to mark the 10th anniversary of the signing the Good Friday Agreement and the 100 years since Queen's College Belfast had become a University, the Mitchell Conference was being hosted on Thursday and Friday, 22nd and 23rd May by Queen's University in association with the Georgetown University, Washington DC and Co-operation Ireland. The theme of the Conference would be "Moving on from Conflict: Lessons from Northern Ireland" and Senator George Mitchell would be delivering the opening address. The aim of the Conference was to assist others to learn from the conflict in Northern Ireland and to work towards a resolution of conflict. A number of internationally renowned speakers, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr. Mary Robinson, the Right Honourable Shaun Woodward, M.P., Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and BBC journalist, Fergal Keane, would be speaking at the Conference.

The Good Relations Manager indicated that attendance at the Conference would be of benefit to the Council since the sessions would cover topics of interest to the work of the Good Relations Unit and, in particular, the Good Relations Steering Panel. The cost per delegate of attending the Conference would be £195 and an additional charge of £75 would apply to attendance at workshop sessions. She indicated that provision for such expenditure had been made within the Revenue Budget of the Good Relations Unit.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Steering Panel be represented at the Conference by the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Chief Executive and the Good Relations Manager (or their nominees), together with one Member of each of the other Party Groupings not represented by the aforementioned Members.

### **Community Relations Week – Showcasing Event**

Miss E. Brough, Good Relations Officer, reminded the Steering Panel that the Community Relations Council had organised an annual Community Relations Week during which organisations, including the Council, working in the field of good relations held individual events related to community relations. The Council event had been scheduled to be held on 30th April at the Europa Hotel at which a range of community, youth and other groups, supported by the Council's Good Relations Fund, would showcase their work. However, the Council had been made aware recently that the Community Relations Council was planning to hold a major conference on the same day at the same venue and, as a result, it was agreed that the Council's event be postponed and held at a later date.

The Good Relations Officer indicated that the aim of the event would be to foster a greater knowledge of the work of the groups and organisations in the area in promoting good relations. She outlined the proposed agenda for the event and indicated that there were no additional charges incurred a result of the event being postponed and re-scheduled to a later date.

After discussion, during which the Good Relations Manager reported that it was proposed to launch an Equality Reference Guide at the event, the Steering Panel agreed that the event be postponed and re-scheduled to be held at the same location in June, 2008.

### **On-going Items and Updates**

#### **Intercultural Week**

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Panel that, as part of Intercultural Week, the Council, in conjunction with the South Belfast Round Table, would be hosting an information event for migrant workers in Belfast at St. George's Market from 5.30 p.m. till 9.00 p.m. on 9th April.

Noted.

**House of Lords Consultation**

The Panel was reminded that in September 2007 it had submitted a response to the Select Committee on Economic Affairs of the House of Lords in relation to that Committee's investigation on the economic impact of immigration. The Good Relations Manager reported that the committee had now published its findings and tabled an extract of the report. This report had found no evidence that immigration had generated significant economic benefits for the United Kingdom. However, the report had concentrated on economic issues and had explicitly excluded any consideration of cultural or social aspects of immigration. The Good Relations Manager stated that a copy of the full report was available on request from the Good Relations Unit.

Chairman