

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

FRIDAY, 11th SEPTEMBER, 2009

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

- Members present: Councillors Kyle and Stoker.
- External Members: Ms. S. Bhat, Interfaith Forum;
Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Ms. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. M. De Silva, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Ms. M. Marken, Catholic Church;
Rev. J. Rea, Methodist Church;
Mr. L. Reynolds, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church;
Mr. M. Wardlow, Voluntary/Community Sector;
- Also attended: Ms. P. Perry, Consortium of Community Relations
Council and Border Action; and
Mr. D. Clarke, Special European Union
Programmes Body.
- In attendance: Ms. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager; and
Mr. J. Heaney, Committee Administrator.

Chairing of the Meeting

In the absence of the Chair and the Deputy Chair it was agreed that Councillor Stoker take the Chair.

(Councillor Stoker in the Chair.)

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor Hendron); Councillors McCausland and McCarthy and from Ms. A. Chada, Mr. R. Galway, Mr. P. Mackel and Ms. E. Wilkinson.

Good Relations Unit – Current Financial Position

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th June, it had agreed that the grant-aid scheme be closed during the Summer months since it had been temporarily oversubscribed and had agreed also that a report be submitted to a further meeting, outlining the means by which the remainder of the fund could be allocated and used more effectively.

The Good Relations Manager pointed out that the Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister had advised the Council that it would be restricting the increase of funding available to the Council to 5%. She indicated that as a result of the increase, the grant-aid fund for the year 2009/2010 would be £367,500. However, a total of £264,410 had been allocated already, thus leaving an amount available for allocation, during the remaining months of the year, of £103,090.

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She informed the Members that Councillor Long, the previous Chairman of the Partnership, had been elected Lord Mayor in June, 2009. Upon her election, Councillor Long had indicated that she did not wish to receive her personal allowance of £33,800 which she was entitled to as Lord Mayor and she had requested that the Council reallocate this amount to the Good Relations Grant-Aid Fund to be used to support the work of local communities throughout the City on a range of good relations issues. The Council acceded to the request, and, accordingly, the amount now available for allocation during the remaining portion of the current financial year would be £136,890.

The Partnership was advised that, following an examination of the current financial position, procedures and criteria, it was recommended that the following amendments be applied:

- that there should be four calls per year to reflect the higher demand and that the calls be made in February, May, August and November;
- higher levels of grants should be available to those groups scoring highest on the matrix, with “soft” projects, or those that were judged less challenging, such as “fun days”, being “capped” at a maximum of £500 and a total amount for this type of activity to be ring-fenced;
- the level of grant available for emerging groups to be “capped” at £1,000 in order to ensure sustainability of projects;
- a group would, except in exceptional circumstances, be eligible for no more than one grant per year; and
- the commission of plays/music/artistic works would not be eligible for support, however, the fund would continue to support workshops and outreach activities.

The Good Relations Manager pointed out that the ineligibility of play/music/artistic works for consideration for grant referred only to those works undertaken by professional artists and musicians and not to works by schoolchildren, youth or community groups.

After discussion, during which the Good Relations Manager indicated that all application forms, guidelines and associated letters of offer would be amended accordingly, the Partnership noted the information in regard to the Unit’s financial position and agreed to the amendments to the Good Relations Fund as set out above.

The Partnership also agreed to record its appreciation of the Lord Mayor’s very generous contribution to the Fund.

Register of Interest

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 14th August, it had agreed to seek advice from the Director of Legal Services in regard to the declaration of interests at meetings of the Partnership.

The Good Relations Manager advised the Members that the Director of Legal Services was working currently on a review of the Council's constitution, which would include matters such as declarations of interest from Members. She pointed out also that the Department of the Environment was reviewing currently the Code of Conduct for Elected Members and she suggested that it might be appropriate to wait until both reviews had been completed prior to establishing a Register of Interest for the Partnership. She undertook to provide the Partnership Members with any additional information when it became available.

Noted.

**Peace III Procurement - Cross-Border Programme to Support
the Employment Related Needs of Migrant Workers**

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th June, it had approved the invitation of tenders relating to several key actions within the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Plan. The Peace III Programme Manager reported that tenders had been sought in relation to Action 3.5 of the Plan, the Migrant Worker Forum and Advice Support, in order to support the employment needs of migrant workers.

The Partnership was advised that, in response to public advertisement, one tender had been received and had been evaluated against the agreed criteria. The Programme Manager pointed out that the Special European Union Programmes Body had requested that a minimum of 65% quality threshold be used during the tender assessment process.

Accordingly, he recommended that the tender submitted by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, which had achieved the 65% quality threshold, should be accepted under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive, subject to a form of contract being drawn up by the Director of Legal Services.

The Partnership accepted the recommendation.

Peace III Procurement – Cultural Diversity in Sport Programme

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of paper

To update the Partnership on the procurement of a Cultural Diversity in Sport Programme under Action 3.3 of the Belfast Peace Plan.

Key Issues

Partnership will recall that they approved the invitation of tenders relating to several key actions within the Peace Plan at its meeting in April. 2 tenders relating to Action 3.3 Cultural Diversity in Sport were received by the deadline on 25th June 2009.

The Partnership is requested to note that SEUPB has requested a minimum 65% quality threshold be used in tender assessment. Tenders were assessed against the following criteria:

- Methodology
- Calibre & Competencies of Project Team
- Value for Money
- Ability to Work in Partnership
- Ability to Meet Timescales
- Complementarity

Submissions were received from Belfast Activity Centre (£227,645) and Belfast Community Sports Development Network (BCSDN) (£266,400). BCSDN scored 65% overall and Belfast Activity Centre scored 27% overall.

It is recommended that the tender of BCSDN is accepted at £266,400. This exceeds the budget agreed by the Partnership in April but it is within the resource allocation for Action 3.3 established in the Plan. In line with the revised Scheme of Delegation this has been deemed an exceptional circumstance requiring Council approval.

Further details on the programme will be brought back to the Partnership following agreement of project initiation documents with the contractor.

Resource Implications

Financial Implications

Eligible project expenditure under the four themes of the Peace Plan was included within the approved allocation of £6.3m and may be reclaimed at 100% from the SEUPB.

HR Implications

None

Recommendations

That it be recommended to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to agree that the tender received from Belfast Community Sports Development Network should be accepted by the Chief Executive, under delegated authority, subject to a form of contract drawn up by Legal Services.”

Several Members expressed concern at the differential in the level of scoring achieved by different groups and enquired if there was a problem with the product proposed being of good quality but the application being poorly completed.

The Acting Chairman advised the Partnership that each organisation would be given an opportunity of availability of a debriefing session in order to assess why it had not achieved a sufficient score to be awarded the contracts. This would assist groups in the completion of future applications.

After further discussion, the Partnership adopted the recommendations contained within the report.

Peace III Procurement – Citizenship Education Programme

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th April, it had approved the invitation of tenders relating to several key actions within the Belfast Peace Reconciliation Plan.

The Peace III Programme Manager reported that nine tenders relating to Action 4.2, Citizenship Education Programme, had been received and had been evaluated against pre-agreed criteria which had included the establishment of a minimum of 65% quality threshold as had been requested by the Special European Union Programmes Body.

The Programme Manager reported that one organisation, GEMS Northern Ireland Limited, had achieved a score above the minimum required in regard to the quality threshold and. Accordingly, he recommended that the tender submitted by GEMS Northern Ireland Limited, being the most economically advantageous tender, be accepted under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive, subject to a form of contract being drawn up by the Director of Legal Services.

The Partnership adopted the recommendation.

Update on Action 1.5 of the Peace Plan

The Partnership considered a report which had been submitted by the Peace III Programme Manager detailing the progress which had been achieved to date in respect of the implementation of Action 1.5 of the Peace and Reconciliation Plan. The Action sought to promote sharing, interaction and tolerance between and across different communities and groups in Belfast through the development and the use of community gardens as a shared space and a cross-generational learning environment.

The project incorporated two main community garden initiatives in areas representing contested space within the City. A series of events aimed at bringing cross-community groups together to learn about and to work on smaller scale community gardening initiatives within the parks in Belfast would be established in order to promote sharing and interaction. The project would seek also to bring interested parties together for a seminar to share experiences and learning on the use of community gardens as a means of developing shared public spaces.

In regard to the delivery approach, the Partnership was advised that a Steering Group of officers had been established to determine the early planning stages of the project. A number of sites had been identified for the location of community gardens, including Glenbank, Glen Community Centre and Suffolk Community Centre. In addition, a draft seminar programme had been developed and key speakers had been identified. The proposed date of the seminar was 21st October.

After discussion, the Partnership noted the progress which had been achieved to date and approved the progression of the project to the implementation stage.

The Partnership also noted its appreciation to staff for the organisation of the Peace III Review sessions; those who had attended had found them very informative and useful.

Chairman