

**GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP  
SPECIALMEETING  
MEMORABILIA WORKING GROUP  
TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2009**

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	Councillor Hendron Councillor Kyle Councillor C. Maskey Councillor Stoker	Chairman
<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	Hazel Francey George Wright Anne Deighan Mark McCloskey	Good Relations Manager Head of Facilities Management Good Relations Officer Good Relations Unit (minutes)

<b>1.0</b>	<b>ROUTINE MATTERS (MINUTES OF MEETING OF 14 AUGUST 2009)</b>
1.1	The minutes of the meeting of 14 August, which had been printed and circulated, were taken as read and correct.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Memorabilia in the City Hall</b>
2.1	<p>The Good Relations Manager referred to the undernoted report:</p> <p><b>“Relevant Background Information</b> Members will be aware that the issue of memorabilia in the City Hall was raised at last month’s Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee meeting and at the September Council meeting. This report seeks to set out the relevant background information and clarify key points in relation to this subject so that current concerns are met and our move back to the City Hall can be carried out in a harmonious manner.</p> <p><b>Advisory Panel</b> Members may be aware that in 2002 the Council established an independent Advisory Panel of external experts who provided an informed view on the issue of displays in the City Hall.</p> <p>All of the Council’s work around memorabilia since that time has been based on the recommendations of that Advisory Panel, which were adopted by the previous Policy &amp; Resources Committee in February 2003. The opening paragraph of this report stated clearly that <i>“the items which form part of the fabric of the City Hall – stained glass windows, plaques, sculptures and war memorials – have important historical overtones and should be retained”</i>. The report went on to state that <i>“As the principal public building in Belfast, it is important that the City Hall is as welcoming, appealing and interesting as possible. Symbolism is extremely important and the current display could be augmented to achieve a better balance and more inclusive representation of the history and heritage of the City. The contributions of the working class, women and minority communities to life in Belfast should be more adequately represented in future displays”</i>.</p> <p><b>Principles</b> In summary, the principles that have guided our approach in working towards a more balanced and inclusive display are that the City Hall should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• welcoming</li> <li>• attractive</li> <li>• interesting</li> <li>• representative of the history and heritage of Belfast</li> </ul>

- representative of the diversity of the city.

It follows also that the displays should be of good quality and in accordance with the status of the City Hall setting.

### **Progress made**

Many of the short-term recommendations of the Advisory Panel have been implemented. The displaying of all the Lord Mayors' portraits, the re-naming of the Committee Rooms, the installation of works by Conor and Lavery, the commissioning of the Mary Ann McCracken bust, the *No Mean City* photographic exhibition and the installation of the Dockers' Strike stained glass window all represent actions taken to "balance up" the current displays.

Following the closure of the City Hall for refurbishment in 2007, a large number of artworks and artefacts were removed from the City Hall and put into storage. Members should note that not all items were removed i.e. stained glass windows, plaques, large statues and the biggest artworks/portraits were left in situ and cased in for protection.

### **Report to Committee November 2008**

The first report referring to the replacement of the artworks was submitted to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in November 2008 (copy attached Appendix A). This pointed out that since the City Hall was now a major tourist attraction with over 56,000 visitors taking public tours annually, we should capitalise on our success and use the closure of the City Hall to our best advantage by rationalising the tours and introducing a number of themed areas.

These were:

1	History of the City Hall	Marble area
2	'Freedom of the City' recipients	Rotunda
3	Belfast in the 2 World Wars	Rotunda
4	Notable Belfast citizens	Reception Hall
5	Titanic & Belfast's Lord Mayors	Banqueting Hall
6	Civic regalia	Robing Room
7	Display of gifts received by the city	East Entrance

This report explained that some artefacts and pieces of artwork would have to be relocated to optimise the tour themes and identified and listed the most significant of these. It specifically referred to the recommendations of the Advisory Panel, stating that "*the re-displaying of items will give an opportunity to work towards the achievement of a more balanced and inclusive display which represents all aspects of former and contemporary life in Belfast*".

The report pointed out that over 1300 art and artefact items had been removed from the City Hall and the closure provided an opportunity to clean and restore these where necessary, collating an updated inventory. It was not considered necessary for the report to list all items individually along with their future location.

The report also proposed that "*the six elected Members of the Good Relations Partnership act as a cross-party reference group in any future discussions regarding the display of City Hall memorabilia in the longer term. This will ensure that the City Hall is as welcoming and as representative of our community as possible, in line with previous Council decisions*". (This Group was known as the Memorabilia Working Group).

The recommendations in this report were adopted without amendment. Following this, the Head of Facilities Management proceeded to develop the plans for the 7 themed areas as described above.

### **Memorabilia Working Group**

This Working Group has met monthly since Christmas 2008 and has considered various options but, despite much discussion, received very few proposals.

It agreed to invite suggestions from the general public (through *City Matters*, *Interlink*, our website and a media release, Feb 2009). This resulted in a number of proposals, some of these were impractical, e.g. to use the City Hall as an art gallery. Some related to items already underway e.g. display the original Charter in a more prominent position; establish a café/coffee shop; set up a display showing Belfast's industrial past and its famous citizens.

The Working Group considered recent Equality Commission guidance on *Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment* and agreed that in the return to the City Hall, as general principles, the major public areas – the marble, Great Hall, Banqueting Hall, Reception Hall and Rotunda etc - should be kept free of any permanent memorabilia that could be construed as being partisan in nature. However, temporary exhibitions or installations in these public areas and function rooms should be permitted, to allow for diversity of expression e.g. emblems, flags or banners which are expressions of cultural identity and form key elements in a particular event/exhibition; such objects are to be removed immediately after the event/exhibition.

The Working Group received regular up-dates from Civic Headquarters staff on the progress being made in relation to the City Hall refurbishment, the tour themes and the new interactive *No Mean City* exhibition.

### **Moving of artefacts**

At its meeting on 29 May 2009, the Head of Facilities Management reminded the Group that the Council had agreed to the rationalisation of the City Hall displays into 7 main themes and stated that work was now at the stage of designing and installing relevant furniture and display cases etc. He said that although the vast majority of the artefacts would be replaced in their original position or moved to a more appropriate location to fit in with the themes, a small number of items did not "fit" easily within the themes. Since the acquisition and/or commissioning of new items and disposal of existing items was a matter for Members, he referred these to the Memorabilia Working Group.

The Memorabilia Working Group agreed that 2 items could be made available on long-term loan to other organisations, rather than be put into storage. These were:

- a large flag in the Banqueting Hall which had been presented to Sir Crawford and Lady McCullough, who had a close association with the Guide movement; this is to be offered to the Girl Guide Association.
- the *Accounts of the Paymasters General of 1690*, being offered on a long-term loan basis to the Grand Orange Lodge.

### **Irish language suggestions**

The Memorabilia Working Group also had a lengthy discussion at this meeting on a range of requests from the Irish language community. The Working Group noted that some suggestions made were already in place:

- tour information is already available in Irish and will be up-dated and reprinted on return to the City Hall; the Group acknowledged that there was a need for wider publication of the fact of its availability
- tours for Irish medium schools have been and can be facilitated
- the Welcome Guide has already been translated into Irish and can be downloaded from the Council's website.

The Working Group also agreed to proceed with the following new proposals:

- Irish will be included in the multi-lingual Welcome Sign at Reception

- Irish will be included in the *No Mean City* exhibition information
- a 16th century Irish manuscript presented to Cllr. Alex Maskey, as Lord Mayor, can be displayed in the 'Gifts to the Lord Mayor' section as an illustration of Irish heritage
- an Irish language event can be included in the official City Hall re-opening programme, to be designed in association with Pobal.

The Working Group considered the request for bi-lingual signage but, after discussion, re-affirmed its current policy on language and signage. The Group rejected the suggestion that the ability to speak Irish should be included as an essential recruitment criterion for tour guides and reception staff, given current employment legislation.

These Working Group recommendations were reported to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 19 June.

Discussions with groups from the Irish language community in Belfast around a possible artwork to represent the contribution of that community are continuing.

At its meeting on 14 August, the Memorabilia Working Group agreed a final list of 68 names to be included in the newly up-dated interactive *No Mean City* exhibition.

### **New artwork agreed**

The Working Group also agreed that the Council should commission 2 pieces of artwork, on the themes of boxing and young people, to improve the overall balance within the City Hall, to be located in the newly re-furnished East Entrance area. This was agreed by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 21 August and will be commissioned in line with standard procurement guidelines. Also at that meeting, the Head of Facilities Management submitted another report on Memorabilia (Appendix B) which gave further information regarding the 7 themes and locations of art and artefacts.

### **Equality implications**

Members are reminded of their equality obligations and of the advice of the Senior Counsel engaged in 2002-3; the QC stated that:

"The City Hall was built in the Victorian era. It is typical of civic buildings which were constructed .....at that time. It is inevitable that the style and decoration of these buildings will reflect the social and cultural views and aspirations of those who built them.....Over the years such buildings have inevitably become the repositories of various artefacts and memorabilia of local significance. Thus they perform a function....similar to that performed by a museum or archive...with particular reference to the City's own history.

These items...placed in the City Hall over the years....are clearly *part* of the cultural history and heritage of the city. However, no-one would claim that they are representative of *all* aspects of the cultural history or heritage of Belfast."

Although some progress has clearly been made in this area, more could be done and the re-opening of the City Hall provides an opportunity to move this forward and achieve a more favourable balance of artefacts with greater representation of all the communities in the city.

### **KEY ISSUES**

The development of the *Bobbin* coffee bar and exhibition space, which focuses on the contribution of the workers of Belfast and its industrial past, is another example of the Council's commitment to the principle of greater balance as it addresses directly the themes of the contribution of the working class, women and mill girls.

Members will be aware that the portraits of Lord Mayors themselves provide an indication of the

political spectrum in Belfast and reflect the change in the city's political dynamic. There will shortly be 2 Sinn Fein, 3 SDLP and 3 Alliance Lord Mayors' portraits on view in the re-opened City Hall (next year 4 Alliance).

### **Possible short term actions**

To address current concerns, it appears that the Reception Hall, with its theme of *Belfast Citizens*, is the most promising location for any additional displays, although a significant amount of other wall space is currently unused in other areas within the City Hall and could be used to add balance.

The portraits in the Reception Hall at present are not of former civic dignitaries but of former officers/Town Clerks; these could be re-located in less high profile areas. This would allow future displays, when selected and commissioned, to be placed there.

As an immediate action, a wall-hanging of the ancient Irish poem, the Blackbird, currently hanging in the Lord Mayor's offices, could be hung in a more central location.

In the meantime, we have been having recent discussions with a number of other organisations, including the Ulster Museum and Linen Hall Library, regarding the possibility of borrowing items on short or long-term loan. There is an abundance of material on Belfast within local archives.

### **Current suggestions include:**

"Ready-made" exhibitions which have already been collated and which could be hired on a short term basis e.g. from the Linen Hall Library include those on the United Irishmen; Posters and Images of the NI Conflict, which reflect all sides in the conflict; A Cartoon History of Ulster in the Twentieth Century, which covers the home rule crisis, partition and the Troubles.

Other possible exhibition themes, drawing on a range of archival material, which could be expanded over time, include:

*Caring and Sharing* - looking at the tradition of charitable and voluntary work on the part of philanthropic individuals, churches and voluntary organisations, hospitals etc over the decades e.g. the RVH, the Mater, St Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army etc.

*Creating the Way* - a celebration of Belfast's artists, writers, painters and musicians.

*Famous Women of Belfast* - from Ruby Murray, Mary O'Malley, Mary Peters, Sister Genevieve to Mary McAleese.

The pictures on display in the Conor and Lavery Committee Rooms are high quality reproductions of originals and this method could be repeated for other artworks. There are available many landmark and landscape paintings; portraits of e.g. United Irishmen, writers; extensive photographic collections; and images of old Belfast, reflecting all traditions and ways of life in Belfast across the decades.

### **Possible future exhibitions**

The East Entrance area is to be reserved for temporary community exhibitions/displays. These could be very varied, demonstrating the diversity of life in Belfast and assist in providing cultural balance.

Applications already been received include the following proposed exhibitions:

- 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the School of Art & Design, from the University of Ulster, which would showcase the work of their students/young people; pencilled in for Oct/Nov 09

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Sports Museum, being collated by Brian Morrison, former Head of Leisure, which will feature a number of sports, with special features on the GAA (including football, hurling, handball and camogie), boxing, rugby and football; pencilled in for Dec 09</li> <li>• Shared History Interpretative Project (SHIP) photographic exhibition illustrating the history and heritage of the Dockers in Belfast.</li> </ul> <p><b>Financial Implications</b> Appropriate artworks could be commissioned through existing budgets.</p>
2.2	<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To note the information in this report</li> <li>• To agree that suitable wall space be made available in the Reception Hall and other areas and designated for appropriate artwork to represent the diversity of the city, to be agreed by the Memorabilia Working Group.</li> <li>• To agree that an Advisory Panel be established of appropriate external advisors, i.e. Maureen Mackin, already commissioned, plus 2 others (to be approached) who would provide expertise and guidance to the Council in this matter; this Panel to have both gender and community balance.</li> <li>• To consider the options outlined above and give direction on the short-term and longer-term proposals possible</li> <li>• To demonstrate the Council's commitment to the principle of greater balance, to agree that a timetable be drawn up, with a detailed report back within 3 months, identifying short-term plans and longer-term proposals to address the issue of balance and better representation within the City Hall displays.</li> </ul> <p><b>Officers to contact for further information</b> Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager, Ext 6020; DDI 90270330 George Wright, Head of Facilities Management, Ext 6232; DDI 90373034"</p>
3.0	The Good Relations Manager outlined the key points in her report and stated that it was important that Members were in possession of all the background material regarding memorabilia so that they could make an informed decision.
3.1	Councillor C Maskey stated that there was some misinformation and inaccurate media speculation regarding his Party's position and he wished to dispel such rumours and make it clear that there was no question mark over their return to the City Hall; they fully intended to do so. His Party's position in relation to memorabilia had not changed; they were still of the view that items should not be removed but that there was a need to continue to redress the imbalance as current displays of memorabilia were top heavy and one-sided. He felt that there was little to portray the community he represented.
3.2	Other Members pointed out that there was little to reflect the working class communities of the city in general.
3.3	Councillor C Maskey referred to the reference in the report that the Memorabilia Working Group had received only a few proposals. He stated that he had made several suggestions, including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that the contribution of Belfast citizens who had fought with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War be marked</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that a 100 year old Trade Union banner could be presented to the City Hall from ICTU</li> <li>• that Winifred Carney, secretary to James Connolly, and a veteran of the 1916 Rising, be acknowledged. He pointed out that although the Covenant Table was on display in the City Hall, there was nothing to mark other historical events of that same period that were of significance to nationalists.</li> <li>• that although the report contained a reference to a temporary exhibition including the GAA, he had submitted information suggesting a permanent exhibition on this subject.</li> </ul>
3.4	In response, the Good Relations Manager pointed out that the Spanish Civil War proposal had been discussed by the Memorabilia Working Group at its last meeting but discounted as there was already a memorial to this in Writer's Square. However, the Group undertook to consider this suggestion again on a future agenda.
3.5	The Good Relations Manager added that she was not aware of the offer of the ICTU flag and the Working Group agreed that it would be happy for this to be presented and displayed. Councillor C Maskey offered to follow this up and suggested that this might be available in time for display on the re-opening date on 17 October.
3.6	The Good Relations Manager agreed that she had received the suggestion for a permanent GAA display but pointed out it had arrived too late for inclusion in her report.
4.0	Councillor C Maskey stated that he felt that there had not been sufficient robustness to date in focusing on the issue of balance. As an example, he pointed to the removal of the name of a key individual within the Irish language community from the proposed <i>No Mean City</i> interactive display list, even though that person had been included in an earlier version of the same exhibition. He expressed his concern that views regarding balance were not being taken seriously enough.
4.1	After discussion, the Working Group agreed that the Head of Facilities Management should adjust his list to incorporate the name of that individual, in the short-term. In the longer term, another screen could be added to the display, to accommodate additional names.
5.0	<p><b>Possible short term actions and future exhibitions</b></p> <p>The Working Group agreed that all of the recommendations within the report on these issues should be considered seriously to determine which options were practicable and could be taken forward. The Working Group particularly supported the draft proposal <i>Creating the Way</i> – a celebration of Belfast's artists, writers, painters and musicians. The Head of Facilities Management noted that this type of display could be incorporated within a rolling display on a plasma screen in the new coffee shop exhibition space. They also supported the idea of the United Irishmen exhibition.</p>
6.0	<p><b>Reception Hall – "<i>Belfast Citizens</i>"</b></p> <p>Councillor C Maskey pointed out that although the list of items to be in the Reception Hall under the theme "<i>Reflecting communities within the city</i>" (Appendix of report to Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee 21 August 2009) contains items from the Islamic, Chinese, Indian and Jewish communities, there is no mention of the Irish speaking community in Belfast. The Group agreed that the red wall-hanging of the Irish <i>Blackbird</i> poem, currently hanging in the Lord Mayor's Office, could also be displayed there, with immediate effect subject to consultation with the Lord Mayor's Office, to reflect the contribution of that community.</p>
6.1	The Good Relations Manager reported that she had met with representatives from the Irish speaking community in Belfast the previous day and that they were very keen to see a substantial piece of artwork within the City Hall to reflect Irish history and heritage in the city. She pointed out that this it would be possible to provide this within existing budgets and the Working Group agreed that such a piece be commissioned, with a total cost not to exceed £20,000.
6.2	The Working Group agreed with the recommendation that wall space be freed up in the Reception

	Hall by relocating the portraits of former Town Clerks.
6.3	The Group agreed that the suggestions made by the consultant for exhibitions, themes and artworks should <b>all</b> be investigated and a meeting with the consultant be arranged as soon as possible to identify what should replace these portraits.
6.4	The Head of Facilities Management pointed out that certain items had been bolted into place and there were certain practical considerations to be borne in mind; clearly the City Hall could not be re-opened with empty wall spaces.
6.5	The Working Group agreed that these practicalities had to be borne in mind and that items should be borrowed if possible in time for display on the re-opening date, subject to their being readily available. The Group recognised that practicalities including timescale to arrange for loan of exhibits, copying, re-framing and re-mounting, would restrict this option.
7.0	<b>East Entrance - "Gifts presented to the City" display</b> Councillor C Maskey referred to a previous suggestion that a valuable 16 <sup>th</sup> century Irish manuscript, which had been presented to Councillor Alex Maskey in his term as Lord Mayor, could be displayed permanently within this section as an illustration of Irish heritage.
7.1	Councillor Stoker added that during his own term as Lord Mayor, he had been presented with a beautiful cut glass bowl by the GAA, on a visit to Casement Park. He suggested that this could also be displayed there. The Working Group agreed that both of these suggestions would be helpful.
8.0	The Chairman (Councillor Hendron) said that she had been under the impression that the Council Chamber and Great Hall had been of interest to Councillor Maskey. He assured her that these were not areas of specific concern but that his Party group was concerned about overall balance in displays and the location of future artefacts.
9.0	<b>Advisory Panel</b> The recommendation to establish an Advisory Panel of external experts was considered. The Good Relations Manager advised that since Maureen Mackin had already been commissioned by the Council to carry out work in this area, she should be part of the Advisory Panel. The Good Relations Manager indicated that the other members of the Advisory Panel might include Eileen Black, from the Ulster Museum, who had a good working knowledge of City Hall artefacts, Mark Adair, from the BBC and John Killen from the Linen Hall Library.
9.1	The Advisory Panel's primary role would be to bring back an expert report with specific proposals to introduce greater balance within the City Hall. The Advisory Panel would of course report back through the Memorabilia Working Group, which would act as a cross-party reference group, to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.
9.2	It is important that these proposals would be informed by the availability of items and an indication of the costs of any proposed new displays.
10.0	<b>Equality issues</b> Councillor C Maskey concluded the meeting by requesting that the Council consider its statutory obligations under Section 75 in relation to City Hall displays in view of previous legal opinions on this matter.

11.0	<b>Summary of decisions taken, to be recommended to Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee:</b>
11.1	<p>The Memorabilia Working Group adopted the recommendations in the report, as set out at 2.2 above, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To note the information in this report</li> <li>• To agree that suitable wall space be made available in the Reception Hall and other areas and designated for appropriate artwork to represent the diversity of the city, to be agreed by the Memorabilia Working Group.</li> <li>• To agree that an Advisory Panel be established of appropriate external advisors, i.e. Maureen Mackin, already commissioned, plus 3 others (to be approached) who would provide expertise and guidance to the Council in this matter; this Panel to have both gender and community balance.</li> <li>• To consider the options outlined above and give direction on the short-term and longer-term proposals possible</li> <li>• To demonstrate the Council's commitment to the principle of greater balance, to agree that a timetable be drawn up, with a detailed report back within 3 months, identifying short-term plans and longer-term proposals to address the issue of balance and better representation within the City Hall displays.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 100 year old Trade Union banner should be displayed as soon as available</li> <li>• The name of the individual from the Irish language community should be re-instated in the <i>No Mean City</i> interactive display</li> <li>• The <i>Blackbird</i> wall hanging should be displayed in the Reception Hall</li> <li>• Artwork, not to exceed £20,000, should be commissioned, to reflect Irish history and heritage in the city; this to be displayed in either the Reception Hall or East Entrance</li> <li>• Wall space should be made available in the Reception Hall by relocating portraits of former Town Clerks</li> <li>• The 16<sup>th</sup> century Irish manuscript and presentation crystal bowl should be displayed in the East Entrance</li> <li>• That the primary role of the Advisory Panel, reporting through the Memorabilia Working Group, would be to bring back an expert report with specific proposals to introduce greater balance within the City Hall.</li> <li>• A meeting should be convened as soon as possible with the consultant to identify options and which items could be obtained most quickly</li> <li>• The Director of Legal Services to provide advice to the Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee on the Council's legal obligations under Section 75 of the NI Act on this matter.</li> </ul>
<b>12.0</b>	<b>DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING</b>
<b>12.1</b>	<b>Friday 16 October 2009 at 11.00 am – immediately prior to the Good Relations Partnership</b>