

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**FRIDAY, 12th NOVEMBER, 2010****MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**

- Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman); and
Councillors Crozier, C. Maskey, McCarthy and Stoker.
- External Members: Ms. S. Bhat, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum;
Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Rev. L. Carroll, Presbyterian Church;
Mr. R. Galway, Bombardier Aerospace/
Confederation of British Industry;
Ms. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. M. Marken, Catholic Church;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church; and
Ms. M. de Silva, Voluntary/Community Sector.
- Also attended: Ms. K. McErlean, Community Relations Council.
- In attendance: Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Good Relations Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Ms. A. Chada, Mr. P. Mackel and Ms. E. Wilkinson.

Councillor Crozier

The Chairman reported that Councillor McCausland had resigned recently from the Council and that he had been replaced on the Good Relations Partnership by Councillor Crozier.

Accordingly, the Partnership welcomed Councillor Crozier to his first meeting.

Rev. Lesley Carroll

The Chairman, on behalf of the Partnership, welcomed Rev. Carroll to the meeting, following a lengthy absence due to illness.

Date and Time of Future Meetings

The Partnership agreed that, from January, 2011, its meetings be held, where appropriate, at 12.00 noon on the Monday immediately following the first monthly meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Peace III – Implementation Update

The Partnership considered a report which provided an update in respect of the Peace and Reconciliation Plan. The report provided an overview of the various programmes and projects, together with a summary of expenditure under each of the four themes of the Plan, and included a summary of monitoring activity both actual and planned for October till December. The Peace III Programme Manager drew the Partnership's attention to the following issues:

Forthcoming Events

Information and Networking Session

An event to review the funded projects under the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan would be taking place in the Park Avenue Hotel on 25th November. The event would be facilitated by staff from the Workers' Educational Association, Mediation Northern Ireland and the Belfast Interface Project and all Members of the Partnership were invited to attend.

Mediation Capacity Building Programme

A conference was being organised by Mediation Northern Ireland in order to highlight the progress achieved to date in respect of the Mediation Capacity Building Programme. The event would be held in Malone House on 18th November and an invitation would be extended to all Members of the Good Relations Partnership.

Contract Extensions

The Peace III Programme Manager reported that a number of partner organisations, which had been contracted until 31st December to deliver larger programmes under the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan, had sought to have their contracts extended until 31st March, 2011. He explained that the extended period would allow for the completion of final reports and the evaluation of the programmes and enable a number of final showcase and celebration events to be undertaken. He pointed out that there would be no additional costs associated with the proposed extensions, and that the requests had been made following consultation with the Special European Union Programmes Body. He recommended that the following projects be extended until 31st March, 2011 and that the associated payment schedules be revised accordingly:

- Divercity Programme (Shared Space Training for the Voluntary and Community Sector);
- Belfast Citizenship Programme;
- Mediation Capacity Building Programme; and
- Our Space (Cultural Diversity in Sport).

The Peace III Programme Manager recommended also that the Partnership approve the extension until 30th March, 2011 of the following small grant-aided projects:

- Arts for All (Circa Project);
- Glentoran Partnership (Respect Initiative); and
- South Belfast Integration Project.

Phase II Local Action Plan

The Partnership was advised that, following the submission by the Good Relations Unit on 17th September of the Phase II Local Action Plan, additional information had been requested by the Community Relations Council/POBAL. The Peace III Programme Manager reported that the information had since been provided and that an initial meeting had, on 4th November, taken place with the consultants who had been preparing the economic appraisal element of the Phase II proposal, following which further clarification on various aspects of the submission had been sought. This was in the process of being finalised and would be submitted to the consultants in due course. He reported further that the Terms of Reference relating to the external evaluation of Phase I of the Local Action Plan had yet to be approved by the Special European Union Programmes Body. A high level evaluation of all of the local action plans under Priority 1.1 had been commissioned by the Programmes Body and the final report had just been published, a copy of which would be circulated to the Partnership.

Project Visit

The Partnership was advised that Mr. S. Kelly, M.E.P., and member of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development, the body which oversaw the administration of the Peace III Programme, had, together with the Chief Executive of the Special European Union Programmes Body, visited on 6th November the Small Steps Project in North Belfast.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and approved the foregoing extensions.

Peace III – City of Festivals and Creative Legacies Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

City of Festivals

The Partnership will recall that at the meeting on 10th September, it agreed in principle to the procurement of a shared-resource marquee ('PEACE Tent'), the preferred option for

spending the £75,000 under-spend from Action 3.1. City of Festivals under the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan. This was subject to a more detailed project plan being presented to the Partnership for consideration and approval.

Creative Legacies

Creative Legacies is an enhanced development and outreach initiative which contributes to the development of Belfast as a shared cultural space. The programme enhances quality of life through arts provision in areas of multiple deprivation and helps to promote Belfast as a peaceful, vibrant and open city. It is being delivered by the Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit.

Creative Legacies is a multi-strand programme consisting of ten partnership projects; six community-based public art projects; a research paper; an independent evaluation; and a conference and exhibition. The nineteen lead organisations involved in the delivery meet quarterly as the Creative Legacies Forum. The total programme budget is £350,000.

Key Issues

City of Festivals

The Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit engaged FGS McClure Watters to carry out a feasibility study on the PEACE Tent. This included consultation with festival and marquee providers. A copy of the study's findings has been circulated to the Members of the Partnership.

The feasibility study concludes that the preferred option is to maintain the status quo and not proceed with the procurement of a shared-resource marquee. This is on the basis that:

- substantial ongoing costs have been identified. As PEACE III funding is not secured beyond June 2011, these costs would have to be borne by the ratepayer; and
- there are substantial risks associated with the project with limited opportunities for mitigation. These include legal action, liability and breach of SEUPB regulations

Creative Legacies Shared Public Art

On 16th April 2010, the Partnership agreed to fund six pieces of community public art in the North, South, East, West and Shankill areas of Belfast. As no applications were received for the city centre, it was agreed to fund the next highest scoring applicant, Donegall Pass Community Forum, a second piece in South.

Donegall Pass Community Forum's proposal was to erect an artwork at the Coyle's Place building on the corner of Ormeau Road and Donegall Pass. This was subject to the purchase of the building by the Forum, the Markets Development Association and the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group.

Unfortunately, a shortfall in funding means it is no longer feasible to purchase the building within the timescale of the Creative Legacies programme, and the public art project for the site can not proceed. It is therefore recommended that the £5,000 for Donegall Pass Community Forum's artwork be reallocated to the Creative Legacies end-showcase conference.

Creative Legacies Conference

The City Hall has been booked on 24 March 2011 for the Creative Legacies showcase. It is anticipated that 400 people will take part in the conference, which will run from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The conference will bring together participants and groups from all fifteen Creative Legacies projects to share learning and knowledge and to disseminate their experience and the findings of the research and evaluation papers among community leaders and other dignitaries. The Creative Legacies Forum is keen, in particular, to ensure that the conference be used as a platform to showcase the programme and peace-building throughout Europe.

Accompanying the conference will be a four-week exhibition in the exhibition space in the East entrance of the City Hall. This will display the outputs of the programme, including art work, photography, film and animation.

In addition to the £5,000 reallocation from the public art budget, it is recommended that an additional £10,000 from the Action 3.1. City of Festivals budget be reallocated towards the conference and exhibition, which will enable the procurement of a professional events manager and ensure that the impacts of the programme are fully realised and publicised. This brings the total budget for the conference and exhibition to £26,554. The revised programme budget has been circulated to the Members of the Partnership.

Resource Implications

Financial

PEACE III expenditure will be recouped from the Special European Unions Programmes Body.

Human Resources

None

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Partnership agrees:

- (i) the findings of the Marquee for Festivals Feasibility Study;
- (ii) the reallocation of £5,000 from the Creative Legacies Public Art budget towards the conference and exhibition; and
- (iii) the reallocation of £10,000 from the Action 3.1. City of Festivals budget be reallocated towards the conference and exhibition.”

The Partnership adopted the recommendations.

**Peace III – Musgrave Park
Therapy Garden**

(Ms. S. Donald and Ms. L. McCreery, Parks and Leisure Department, attended in connection with this item.)

The Partnership was reminded that, at previous meetings, it had considered the issue of uncommitted funding and had identified four potential projects as being suitable for financial assistance under the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan. The Peace III Programme Manager reviewed each of the four projects, one of which related to the development within the Musgrave Park of a peace-themed therapy garden.

He informed the Partnership that the Council was committed to developing on a pilot basis a new shared space model and to using its existing and planned assets to achieve social outcomes based around reconciliation, community cohesion, attractiveness and competitiveness. He explained that the proposed peace-themed therapy garden would build upon the significant relationship-building work which had been undertaken through the Peace Programmes and would create a new shared space in order to address the specific needs of disadvantaged groups, whilst at the same time encouraging the wider public to support proactively relationship-building and increasing interaction between communities.

Ms. McCreery and Ms. Donald outlined the nature of the project and explained that it would be delivered by the Council, in conjunction with a range of external organisations, including Fleming Fulton, Glenveagh and Harberton Schools. They pointed out that the project sought to:

- provide a permanent resource for stimulatory and interactive play for both local, relevant organisations and the wider community, which would contribute to shared space, and was designed specifically to encourage interaction between children from all sections of the community and of all abilities and to promote interaction with the outdoor environment;
- provide features aimed at strengthening the sensory systems of children using the therapy garden in order to develop body and spatial awareness, particularly in children with physical disabilities and severe learning difficulties; and
- provide an opportunity for the local community to contribute directly to the design and development of an attractive shared space in the City, which would be situated within a neutral area and owned by its users, thus encouraging effective inter-community interaction.

They explained that initial work had been undertaken within Musgrave Park in order to landscape and develop the horticultural elements of the garden. This had included the provision of beds for planting activities, including facilities designed specifically for disabled access, in addition to providing access to adjacent allotments set aside for use by children, creating an open resource for all parts of the community and, particularly, a healthy play environment for children.

After discussion, the Partnership expressed its support for the peace-themed garden within the Musgrave Park, particularly since it had been designed for use by children with special needs, and approved its development, at a cost not exceeding £48,300, subject to the project obtaining final approval from the Special European Union Programmes Body.

Peace III – Approval of Specification for Stained Glass Window in the City Hall

The Partnership was reminded that, at previous meetings, it had considered the issue of uncommitted funding and had identified a number of projects as being suitable for funding under the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Plan. The Good Relations Manager reported that one potential project related to the installation on a public corridor within the City Hall of a permanent stained glass window, based on an appropriate theme, in order to promote peace and reconciliation and to build positive relations. She explained that one of the Council's primary objective was to make the environment within the City Hall more balanced and inclusive and for it to reflect the cultural backgrounds of all of the citizens of the City and that the undertaking of this project would be an appropriate way in which to demonstrate that the building was a "City Hall for All".

She reported that the window would be based around the theme of Celtic myths and legends and that artists would be invited to submit expressions of interest for the project. She outlined the main elements of the artist's brief, which set out the commissioning process, the role of both the artist and the Council and the associated

selection and evaluation criteria. A selection panel comprised of the Chairmen of the Good Relations Partnership and the Strategic Policy and Resources and Development Committees, together with two external Members of the Partnership and appropriate officers would be established. The successful artist would be required to ensure that the window would be in place in the City Hall by April, 2011. The total cost of the project would be £25,000, which would be recouped in full from the Special European Union Programmes Body.

After discussion, the Partnership approved the specification for the stained glass window within the City Hall and agreed that Ms. J. Hawthorne and Ms. M. Marken represent it on the selection panel.

Peace III – Dealing with Physical Manifestations 2.5

Bonfire Management Programme

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware of the Council’s Bonfire Management Programme which has been delivered for the past number of years. This work was initiated in 2005 in response to a number of public concerns, namely:

- **an increase in the number of bonfires across the city;**
- **significant paramilitary displays in some areas;**
- **considerable media coverage around issues such as dumping, fly-tipping and the general state of land on which bonfire sites were located; and**
- **a greater awareness about environmental issues such as the burning of tyres.**

There was also an emerging desire and willingness within a number of Loyalist communities to address many of the negative elements around bonfires and create better bonfire management as a form of positive expression of culture and heritage. As the programmes proceeded, there was also a growing concern within the wider community as to the continued practice of the burning of nationalist and republican flags and symbols.

Two initial pilots ran in 2005 and 2006, with 8 and 12 groups respectively participating. From 2007 – 2009, 14 groups participated in a 3-year programme with 19 additional groups involved in a developmental capacity. Support was also provided during this period for diversionary activities and specific alternatives to bonfires within a number of Republican areas in and around the 8th August. This engagement with communities over the last 5 years has either met, or made significant inroads into, all of the above issues that were of concern when the work around bonfires was first instigated.

Since 2009, work on bonfires was funded under Peace III, with additional Council support, and run through a series of local 'cultural networks'. There were 4 Loyalist Networks and 2 Republican. 42 communities participated from within the Loyalist community and 4 Republican areas participated. The table below tracks the overall number of bonfires over the years of the programme, the number of participating groups and a percentage of the total.

Year	No. Bonfires	No. groups	As a % of total
2005	108	8	7%
2009	84	33	39%
2010	77	42	55%

The current Peace III funded programme has centred on two distinct elements:

- How to support communities within Loyalism in the positive celebration of their cultural heritage through the better bonfire management process over the 11th July and
- How to support communities within Republican areas to provide alternative activities to bonfires over the 8th August.

Programme Impact

An independent evaluation of the programme has been carried out by the Institute for Conflict Research (ICR), a copy of which is has been circulated to the Members of the Partnership and is available on the modern.gov site. A number of aspects of this report are highlighted below:

- 42 sites within Loyalist areas participated in the programme in 2010, out of a total of 77 recorded bonfires. This is 55% of the total number of sites and compares with 7% of sites in 2005 (8 out of 108) and 39% of total sites in 2009 (33 out of 84)
- Call-outs recorded by the Police Service of Northern Ireland were again down on previous years. Less than a quarter of incidents (58 or 22.4%) were related to the 42 sites on the programme compared with 65 incidents for 33 sites in 2009 (19%).
- Call-outs from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service were also down again in 2010. Of the 33 calls that were received on the 10th and 11th July, 21 were responded to, but just 2 of these related to bonfires and

- neither required any action to be taken (News Letter, 19th July). This compares with an overall 200 call-outs in 2007 and 80 in 2009.
- Department for Regional Development Roads Service recorded a 50% reduction in clear-up and repair costs in 2010 compared with 2009, reporting a comparable saving of roughly £18,000
- 14 of the 42 sites (33%) participating on the programme did not burn any Nationalist or Republican flags or symbols in 2010, compared with 8 in 2009 (24%)
- Just 1 of the 42 sites contained tyres (2%)
- The structure of the Cultural Networks has proven to be hugely beneficial to participants, with a locally appointed facilitator and wider structure assisting in planning and regular meetings (
- The programme removed and replaced 8 militaristic murals in participating communities (See p.9 of ICR report – mural replacement projects)

The programme has been the single biggest engagement tool for developing good relations work with working class Loyalist communities, one of few investments in the people, culture and traditions of such communities, in areas where the 'peace dividend' is not apparent. Spin-offs from the programme have resulted in increased up-take by these groups in related Council initiatives in good relations/community safety/interface intervention/mural removal work.

Challenges ahead

A number of challenges were identified in the evaluation that will require attention as the programme proceeds:

- Engagement with Republican areas needs to be improved. In 2010, the programme engaged with one bonfire directly as an 'additional group'. Overall, this engagement proved to be a negative experience, despite the benefits reflected by the young people directly involved. However, the report does identify positive hopes for the future.
- There continue to be difficulties in relation to how to engage with groups who are not yet participating in the programme, particularly those on Council land
- The Council, through Peace III and Council funding, is currently the only resource for the delivery of the programme. If the programme were to cease, there would be additional financial burdens on all of the statutory agencies. Therefore ways need to be found to ensure that the savings enjoyed by other agencies also benefit the Council and participating groups.

- Overall, the programme needs to find a better balance between support for Loyalist communities to celebrate with better managed bonfires over the 11th July, and support for the desire of Republican communities to eradicate bonfires in their areas over the 8th August. (See pp.27-28 of ICR report, summary and recommendations)

The independent evaluation indicates that work continues to progress in a positive way. The Council's financial investment is creating an environment where financial and social savings are being made in a number of areas, while the investment in people and in their capacity to facilitate small-scale community festivals is also significant.

The challenges identified within the evaluation will also provide the focus for the forthcoming programme. Greater partnership within the Council, between Council, agencies and communities will be the mark of its success, particularly in its delivery for Republican areas.

The way forward

From April 2009 – Dec 2010 the programme cost £298,000 (Peace III) , with an additional £50,000 per annum being provided by the Council itself to support those elements within the programme which fell outside the Peace III criteria, but were essential to its delivery. Within our current bid under Phase II of the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan, the Council has agreed to the continuation of the Cultural Networks process under Action 7, Tackling Sectarianism and Racism, (pages 61 – 68 of the Belfast Peace Plan, issued to SEUPB in September). This action proposes that engagement around bonfires, through the cultural networks process continues to be a central element of this action under Peace III, with an overall budget from 2011 - 2013 estimated at £300,000.

The overriding aim of this action is 'To support communities in the development of Shared Spaces through the positive celebration of their cultural heritage and identity, promoting their neighbourhood as open and welcoming to all visitors'. Through this the goal is to embed a vision of Belfast as a city in which different communities celebrate their culture and heritage in a shared, open and community focussed manner.

Key Issues

In addition to the independent evaluation completed by ICR, a number of consultation exercises have also been carried out. Following the 2010 programme, the Council-led interagency group met to review the summer and Council officers also met to review the challenges that emerged this year. Significant community safety issues had emerged as a result of the direct engagement with one bonfire in the Republican Community as well as issues with those groups within Loyalism who are not participating in the programme. Elected Members also expressed a desire to be more involved and informed about those groups across the city that were participating. It was clear that, as stated above, the main issue that has emerged is how to find a better balance between support for Loyalist communities to celebrate with better managed bonfires over the 11th July, and support for the desire of Republican communities to eradicate bonfires in their areas over the 8th August.

Consultation process and proposals

The Good Relations Unit held a briefing session for Councillors, chaired by the Director of Parks & Leisure, in October to up-date them on consultations held to date and to facilitate their input into the way forward for the programme; 14 Members were present, representing all 6 political groups.

As a result of these consultations, a preferred option has emerged on how future engagement should proceed:

- Over the next 3-years, the Good Relations Unit should continue delivery of the programme with greater Community Safety input. The programme will work with those communities who are willing to participate; for those groups who are not participating (and where there are difficulties), these should be addressed by the Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour units.
- Support as many traditional Loyalist bonfire sites through better bonfire management as possible through the Cultural Networks process.
- Continue to support diversionary approach in Republican communities.
- Procure an external management body to assist in the delivery of the programme.
- Submit a list of all proposed funded groups for either bonfire festival or diversionary programmes to Good Relations Partnership and to Committee in June each year

- Where bonfires are not part of the Council programme, relevant officers within Council departments and statutory agencies will seek to engage constructively with them in a coordinated manner
- Complaints regarding sites on the programme will be addressed by the external management body while land-owners manage complaints regarding bonfires on their land – eg Parks/NIHE/DRD
- Other agencies benefiting from the programme should be encouraged to contribute financially to the costs of the delivery of the programme

By proceeding with the programme in this manner it will have the following impact:

1. Increase further the number of participating sites from within Loyalism
2. Greater support for Republican areas to create alternatives to bonfires over 8th August
3. Coordinated interdepartmental and interagency engagement across the City to support all communities in engaging appropriately on local issues relating to bonfires
4. Continued decrease in incidents at sites and overall reductions in anti-social behaviour
5. Further overall savings to the public purse on the costs of clean up, repair and damage
6. Further reductions in the number of sites engaging in the burning of flags and symbols
7. Further decrease in tensions around bonfires and an increase in the sense of cultural heritage and identity, supporting communities and neighbourhoods
8. Continued use of Beacons and the Bonfire Frame, where requested

Financial elements

The current budget within Phase II of the Peace III Action Plan for this programme is estimated £300,000 from 2011 – 2013. This will support the delivery of the cultural networks process and the funding of community events and activities.

Following the consultations outlined above, it is proposed that the Council also invests in the continued engagement on bonfires to take account of two essential additional elements:

1. To assist with those elements of the programme that have proven to be successful over the last 5 years, that cannot command the financial support of Peace III

2. To enable the Council to intervene in areas that are not part of the Cultural Network programme and where there are difficulties reported through the interagency group around bonfires.

Therefore, it is proposed that the Council continue to support the following additional areas:

Area	Cost
A dedicated cleansing contractor	£20,000
Additional communities/sites. Grants, workshops and administration	£20,000
Bonfire frames	£5,000
Contingency budget, fencing	£5,000
Total	£50,000

It has also become a concern to Members, that as a result of the continued roll-out of this engagement, other agencies, such as the DRD Roads Service, Fire Service and PSNI are making significant savings. The cleansing contractor has also been deployed to sites that are on the programme on land owned by other agencies. Therefore, despite the current financial climate, it is being urged that the Council engages with these agencies in order to encourage them to also invest in the programme. The programme has proved that investing to save is now a key element of the engagement around bonfires.

Resource Implications

Financial

- The cultural networks elements of the programme is anticipated to be 100% funded by Peace III (approval pending).
- Additional intervention will require the continuing funding of £50,000 per year from the Council, a proportion of which can be reclaimed by OFM/DFM through the District Council's Good Relations Programme.

Human Resources

Continued Good Relations Unit staff engagement with the programme, along with staff from various Council departments

Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to:

- (a) note the contents of the Independent Evaluation by ICR;
- (b) recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the proposed delivery mechanism to be pursued under Peace III;
- (c) recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the proposal for continuation of the present level of annual funding of £50,000 in 2011/12 to support engagement with 'new' areas and elements of the programme that fall outside Peace III funding; and
- (d) recommend that the Chief Executive of the Council engage with senior staff in partner agencies to look at the cost implications of the programme with a view to seeking additional financial support for its on-going delivery."

During discussion, several Members highlighted difficulties which had arisen, particularly, around those bonfires which had not been included within the Bonfire Management Programme. The point was made that the Council should make every effort to consult with the organisers involved in order to encourage them to participate in the Programme. The need for ongoing engagement with the Roads Service, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other relevant organisations was highlighted also.

In response, the Good Relations Officer explained that he would, early in the new year, be commencing discussions with, amongst others, Elected Representatives based around the delivery of next year's Bonfire Management Programme and that these discussions would seek to address the issues which had been raised.

The Partnership adopted the recommendations.

Consultation Document – Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of report

Members may be aware that in September, 2010 the Department of Education issued for public consultation a draft policy entitled Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education (CRED). Full details are available on their website: www.deni.gov.uk

The closing date for replies is 29th November and this is a proposed Council response to that consultation document.

Relevant Background Information

In June 2008, the Education Minister, Caitríona Ruane MLA initiated a review of the Department of Education's (DE) Community Relations policy.

The review was to examine the current DE Community Relations (CR) policy, with a view to making recommendations to develop a new policy to take account of the ongoing divisions, to promote equality and to work to eliminate discrimination between the two main communities. The review was also to focus on the wider concepts of diversity as well as the issues affecting the two main traditions.

The review was to take account of the revised curriculum, an increasingly diverse society in NI and the key drivers affecting the education system in relation to enhanced collaboration via the curriculum.

A summary of the proposed CRED policy is set out below for the information of Members.

Summary of draft CRED Policy Document

The draft policy recognises that 'community relations within education should help young people to develop a pride in their own tradition, a respect for others, and an appreciation of the importance of equality'. It states that 'our society is still polarised in many areas and sectarianism is still regrettably a widely experienced feature of life here' although it notes that we are moving gradually from suspicion and fear towards increased co-operation and security, from division to sharing.

It notes the increasing diversity in NI and the greater number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, with different languages and cultures, in classrooms and youth settings now than 20 years ago, when the first CR policy was developed. The number of non white pupils, for example, has risen from just over 2,500 in the early 1990s to nearly 7,500 in 2009/10 – an increase of almost 200%.

The policy notes that bullying is cited by children and young people as one of the main issues worrying them in almost every survey carried out in recent years. This bullying is often associated with the victim being perceived as being different to other children, sometimes because they are of a different religion or race.

The draft policy stresses the requirement of all public agencies to promote equality of opportunity and makes reference to the various political and human rights commitments made to promoting reconciliation and mutual trust, e.g. Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, St Andrews Agreement and the Hillsborough Agreement.

The Minister established a Working Group which undertook research and relevant consultation, considered a range of evidence and prepared a draft policy.

The consultation paper outlines the development of CR policy in education, dating from 1982, when it recognised that teachers, Board members and others had a responsibility to help children and young people to learn to understand and respect each other, and their differing customs and traditions, and to prepare them to live together in harmony in adult life.

The current CR policy evolved during a prolonged period of violence and civil unrest and was designed to encourage work on community relations. The Department did not make community relations or cross-community contact compulsory, since the 1980s and 1990s were difficult times and schools had to remain a safe and stable environment for children, with a focus on educating young people.

The paper recognises that the vast majority of our children and young people are educated in settings that reflect one or other of the two main religious communities. Young people therefore do not have sustained access to shared learning experiences with those from a different background. Building positive relationships with young people from different backgrounds helps to dispel negative perceptions and images about those who are different from them.

Current Funding Schemes

Until March 2010, the Department allocated approximately £3.573m p.a. for the promotion of equality and good community relations among children and young people in formal and non-formal education. A number of programmes were available and were designed to address the issue of improving the understanding and relationships between the two main traditions here by promoting contact.

In 2009/2010 only around 20% of schools accessed the programmes, and many schools and youth units made their own efforts to develop good community relations by coming together with others. The success of these programmes often depended on the enthusiasm and dedication of key individuals working with

limited resources and support. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) report on community relations recognised the value of contact between young people of the two traditions whilst also recognising that more coherence between the programmes was desirable.

The Department phased out existing CR schemes at the end of May 2010, in preparation for a new funding scheme to support the main areas of the CRED policy implementation as outlined below. This is to be managed by Education and Library Boards and the NI Youth Council pending the establishment of ESA.

Key messages from the review

During the course of the review considerable evidence was gathered to inform the development of the new policy. The key messages are summarised as:

- There must be a renewed emphasis on addressing the preconceptions, distrust and divisions within our society, whilst broadening the scope of children and young people to understand and deal with difference
- Formal and non-formal education can make a vital contribution to improving community relations but it alone cannot carry the burden of change.
- Teachers, especially primary school teachers, are trained in settings that broadly reflect their religious background; modules for community relations may be optional. During their training and in continuing professional development, teachers should be supported to deal with issues of equality and diversity
- Children and young people can be influenced in a variety of ways at home and within their communities; they need to have the opportunity to develop a practical understanding of cultural traditions, equality, diversity and social justice to overcome any prejudice which could act as a barrier to learning.
- Young people's practical understanding needs to be enhanced by experience including meaningful contact between young people from a diverse range of backgrounds including on a cross community basis.

Weaknesses

The review identified a number of weaknesses in the current policy:

- the need for more robust monitoring and evaluation of the quality of community relations provision
- the restrictive nature of funding criteria which did not encourage progression
- the unnecessary complexity of five separate funding strands
- insufficient in-service training for teachers
- reliance on external organisations for delivering training
- the lack of connections between community relations work and other education policies.

The combination of these factors has led to CR work being seen as an add-on rather than integral to the curriculum. To address these weaknesses, the paper states that any new policy should make connections with other major policies and be broader in scope so that CR is seen as an integral part of both formal and non-formal education settings, with a quality standard that will be closely monitored and evaluated.

Given the relatively low uptake rates for the current CR programme, the new policy will advocate and support the integration of this work within the education setting's planning and ethos 'so that all children benefit from this explicit work at some point in their education'. To achieve this, there will be a need to move away from the current dependency on external organisations who deliver most community relations, equality and diversity work to providing this in-house by teachers and youth workers, through encouraging them to develop a strong skills base through training.

Aim of new CRED

The proposed aim of the new CRED policy is to:

contribute to improving relations between communities by educating children and young people to develop self-respect and respect for others, promote equality and work to eliminate discrimination, and by providing formal and non-formal education opportunities for them to build relationships with those of different backgrounds and traditions within the resources available.

The revised policy will apply to children and young people in primary, post-primary and youth settings. It will also seek to promote a whole school approach to engage staff, including ancillary staff, Managers, Boards of Governors, Voluntary Committees, parents and carers, and the surrounding communities in those settings.

The policy will move away from the dependency on external organisations in delivering community relations, equality and diversity by seeking to firmly embed this work within educational settings by providing a strong skills base for educators and teaching resources.

The draft CRED policy proposes 5 key actions:

1: CRED Integrated within Education

The Department will promote the practice of Community Relations, Equality and Diversity and encourage greater sharing and collaboration across and between all educational settings on a cross community basis.

2: Support for Effective CRED Planning in Education

The Department will work with the relevant educational bodies (e.g. Education and Library Boards, NI Youth Council, CCEA and, when established, the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA)) to develop effective plans for the delivery of the new policy at a regional and sub-regional level, including the structures required within ESA to assist and work with education settings to support them to integrate the new policy in a way that is sensitive to their needs.

3: Enhancing Links to the Curriculum in Formal and Non-formal Settings

The Department will issue guidance to each funded education setting, which will detail the outcomes required for young people - this guidance will enable education settings to deliver on CRED outcomes by rooting the work within the formal and non-formal curriculum. Those with responsibility for CRED in an education setting will be identified, appropriately trained and supported to implement the policy.

4: Training for Education Workforce on CRED issues

The Department will work with higher and further education training providers to strengthen community relations, equality and diversity modules so that the qualified education workforce is supported to improve the outcomes for children and young people dealing with issues of equality and diversity.

5: Enhancing Opportunities for Young People – Learning into Practice

The Department will encourage opportunities for young people to come together in a meaningful way based on the needs within that community and will aim to make the best use of existing resources, and to disseminate and share best practice.

Resources

The full cost implications of policy proposals and policy implementation will be developed on the basis of value for money. The budget will be used to cover the training of the education workforce and the dissemination of good practice and relevant CRED materials.

Proposed Council response

The Council agrees with and supports all the intended aims, intended outcomes and core principles as outlined in the consultation document; they are laudable.

However, our key concern is in relation to resources being made available to implement this new policy.

The draft policy states that (my underlining) ‘In addition, and as resources permit, targeted support for meaningful interaction between young people will also be considered, in particular in areas that continue to experience conflict, segregation and disadvantage.’

In view of the disappointing fact that in May 2010 the Minister for Education significantly reduced (by around 70%) the budget for inter-community school and youth work, we have grave reservations as whether sufficient funding will be made available to support and implement this proposed new policy. This is particularly the case in the current economic climate.

At the Belfast public meeting on this consultation document, the DE representative repeatedly emphasised the 'affordability' of this revised policy and stressed that the policy would be implemented 'within the resources available'. He went on, when questioned, to state that resources for CR work within youth organisations might be available from local councils or from the NI Housing Executive.

The Council believes strongly that education can and does play a significant part in shaping attitudes and behaviour and is concerned that such funding reductions will have long-term negative consequences for our children and young people.

Resource Implications

None for the City Council at this stage.

Recommendation

The Good Relations Partnership is requested to recommend that this response be approved by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting in November. The closing date for consultation responses is 29th November, 2010."

After discussion, the Partnership approved the response to the Department of Education's consultation document as set out within the report and agreed that greater emphasis be placed therein on the importance of promoting good relations as a central theme within the educational sector.

Forthcoming Events

Networking Event

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th October, it had agreed that a reception and networking event be held for the Members of the Partnership and the many organisations which the Council funded either through Good Relations Grant-aid or the Peace III Programme. The Good Relations Manager informed the Members that the event would take place in the City Hall on Wednesday, 8th December. She pointed out that the cost of the event had risen slightly from the figure which had been identified initially but that it would not exceed £2,000. Accordingly, she recommended that the Partnership request that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree to the incurring of this expenditure in order to provide appropriate hospitality.

The Partnership adopted the recommendation.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2011

The Partnership was advised that Holocaust Memorial Day was an internationally recognised event which sought to honour and remember the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides in countries across the world.

The Good Relations Manager reported that the event, which had been commemorated in the United Kingdom since 2001, was held annually on 27th January, as that date marked the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz – Birkenau extermination camp. She explained that the theme of the 2011 Memorial Day would be “Untold Stories” and that the Council had been invited by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to mark the event in some way. Therefore, the Good Relations Unit would be facilitating within the City Hall for one week leading up to Holocaust Memorial Day a Memorial Exhibition, which would be advertised on both the Council’s internal and external websites.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Chairman