

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**MONDAY, 10th JANUARY, 2011****MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**

Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman); and
Councillors Attwood, Crozier, Maskey and J. Rodgers.

External Members: Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Rev. L. Carroll, Presbyterian Church;
Ms. A. Chada, Minority Ethnic Groups;
Mr. R. Galway, Bombardier Aerospace/
Confederation of British Industry;
Ms. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast and District Trades Council;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church; and
Ms. E. Wilkinson, Belfast Regeneration Office.

In attendance: Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager;
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Local Area Networks Programme

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Partnership viewed a short DVD highlighting the success of the East Belfast in Bloom Interface Project which was being delivered as part of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Local Area Networks Programme.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Kyle, McCarthy and Stoker and from Mr. P. Bunting, Archdeacon B. Dodds and Ms. M. de Silva.

Expression of Sympathy

The Partnership was informed that the funeral of Councillor Stoker's mother had taken place earlier that day and, accordingly, it agreed that a letter expressing its condolences and deepest sympathy be forwarded to him.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd December were taken as read and signed as correct.

Peace III – Implementation Update

The Partnership considered a report which provided an update in respect of the implementation of Phase I of the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan. The report provided an overview of the various themes and actions set out within the Plan, together with a summary of expenditure under each of the four elements of the Plan. The Peace III Programme Manager drew the Partnership's attention to the following issues:

Forthcoming Events

“Are Youth Missing Peace?”

A conference which would address the key issues of Young People and Peace would be taking place in the Ulster Hall on 11th January. The event would be facilitated by young people participating in the Youth Intervention Programme which was being delivered by the Scoutlink Trust and all Members of the Partnership were invited to attend.

“Speak Your Peace”

An event was being organised by the Community Relations Council and POBAL in order to discuss primarily issues of particular relevance to the promotion of peace-building initiatives. The conference would be held in the Armagh City Hotel on 24th February and an invitation would be extended to all Members of the Partnership.

Cultural Networks Review Session

The Partnership was advised that the Good Relations Unit, in conjunction with Groundwork NI, would, on 28th January, be facilitating an event in order to review the 2010 Cultural Networks Programme and to provide an update on the proposed Programme for 2011. The review session, which would be held in the offices of Groundwork NI, would involve community, statutory and other organisations and all Members of the Partnership were invited to attend the session.

Respect Through Sport Programme

An event to celebrate the success of the Respect Through Sport Programme, which was being delivered by the Council's Parks and Leisure Department, would be taking place in the City Hall at 7.00 p.m. on 18th January. All Members of the Partnership were invited to attend.

Project Extensions

The Peace III Programme Manager reported that a number of partner organisations, which had been contracted until 31st December, 2010 to deliver projects under the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan, had sought to have their contracts extended beyond that date. He explained that the extended period would allow for the completion of project activities. He pointed out that there would be no additional costs associated with the proposed extensions and

recommended that the following projects be extended until no later than 31st March, 2011 and that the associated Letters of Offer be revised accordingly, subject to the agreement of revised action plans and expenditure forecasts with the PEACE III Team:

- Belfast Interface Project (Supporting Sharing Project);
- Falls Community Council (Sharing Contentious History);
- Intercomm Ireland (Shaping a Shared Future);
- LINC Resource Centre (Life Beyond Prejudice); and
- Mount Vernon Community Development Forum
(Concilium in Skegoniel and Glandore).

“They Served with Us”

The Peace III Programme Manager tabled for the information of the Members a booklet entitled “They Served with Us” which had been published recently by the North and West Belfast Parades and Cultural Forum. The publication, which had been funded under the Peace III Programme, contained accounts from Members of the Armed Forces who had direct experience of serving alongside individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, particularly from Commonwealth countries.

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

Peace III – 70th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz Commemorative Project

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, included within these had been a project to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz. She explained that, following consultation with a number of stakeholders and the Special European Union Programmes Body, the following proposal aimed at marking the 70th Anniversary had been formulated:

“Belfast City Council Peace Plan Proposal

Blitz Commemorations 2011

Introduction

The EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland 2007 – 2013 (the Peace III Programme) is a distinctive European Union Structural Funds Programme aimed at reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promoting reconciliation.

It will promote social and economic stability in the region by supporting actions to promote cohesion between communities. It will assist Northern Ireland and the Border Region and specifically focus on reconciling communities and contributing towards a shared society. The Programme will carry forward key aspects of the previous Peace Programmes (Peace I and II) and will have a continued and renewed emphasis on reconciliation. The programme has a strong emphasis on addressing sectarianism and racism.

Belfast City Council has brought together a Good Relations Partnership to manage and deliver the Peace III Programme Priority 1.1, Building Positive Relations at a Local Level. The objective of Priority 1.1 is to challenge attitudes towards sectarianism and racism and to support conflict resolution and mediation at the local community level.

The Good Relations Partnership of Belfast City Council has developed the Belfast Peace & Reconciliation Action Plan to meet this objective.

The four key themes of the Plan are to promote:

- Shared city space
- Transforming contested space
- Shared cultural space
- Shared organisational space

Organisations represented on the Partnership include elected Members from all the six political party groups on Belfast City Council; representatives from the major statutory agencies in the city - NI Housing Executive and Department of Social Development's Belfast Regeneration Office; business and the trade unions - Confederation of British Industry, Belfast City Centre Management, Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Belfast Trades Council; the churches and minority faith groups; and representatives from the voluntary and community sector.

Further details are available on www.belfastcity.gov.uk/goodrelations

Belfast City Hall

Belfast City Hall is a key feature of the urban landscape of our capital city. Since its inception local people have made it their own through the erection of statues, protest marches and celebrations. The City Hall reflects the city's unique political, social and economic experiences.

The Council aims to make the City hall environment more balanced and inclusive, reflecting the cultural perspectives of all of the citizens of the city and to demonstrate that our principal civic building is a City Hall for All. Peace III funding will bring clear additionality to this aim.

Background to Belfast Blitz

When World War II began in 1939 Belfast was woefully unprepared. Despite the fact that Belfast was a prime target for the Luftwaffe, because of its shipyards, aircraft and munitions factories, defence preparations were far from adequate and amongst the poorest in the UK. There was a general belief that Belfast was simply too far away. The city had no fighter squadrons, no barrage balloons and only 7 anti-aircraft batteries. By the beginning of 1941 there were only 4 public air-raid shelters made of sandbags round the City Hall; the Government had paid more attention to arranging camouflage for Parliament Buildings and protecting Carson's statue.

The Blitz in Belfast in April and May of 1941 caused massive damage, both to the city's densely populated inner city housing stock and to its industrial heartland. Almost 1,000 people were killed in the raids and thousands injured. Outside London, no other city in the UK suffered as much loss of civilian life in a single night. More than half the city's housing stock was damaged, leaving around 100,000 people homeless.

Fire bombs and incendiary devices resulted in a huge inferno and fire crews came from Scotland and the north of England. The Irish Government agreed to send help and fire crews from Dublin, Drogheda and Dundalk sped north to help their fellow countrymen.

As the Irish Times recorded: 'Humanity knows no borders, no politics, no differences of religious belief.....Yesterday the hand of good fellowship was reached across the Border. Men from the South worked with men from the North in the universal cause of the relief of suffering'. The Belfast Presbytery recorded its thanks to the southern firemen and De Valera expressed his public sympathy with the victims of the Belfast attack.

The mortuary services had emergency plans to deal with only 200 bodies. In the event, the Falls Road and Peter's Hill public baths and Saint George's market (all Council properties) were used as mortuaries. The many unidentified bodies were buried in mass graves in Milltown and City Cemeteries.

In partnership with community and voluntary based organisations throughout the city, Belfast City Council is keen to organise events in and around April 2011 to mark the 70th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz and the biggest single loss of life in one night in the city's history.

The programme of events will focus on the Blitz as an experience shared equally by the protestant and catholic communities. Such events have a strong potential to reconnect communities that suffered grief and death together and provide an opportunity for them to come together in joint remembrance of this atrocity as a part of our shared history.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

1. The following community groups have been funded by the Council's Good Relations grant aid in relation to their Blitz related activities:

Small Steps Education Group – adding 3 chapters to 'Bodies in our Backyard' a book about the Blitz and conducting workshops about the Blitz in catholic and protestant primary schools. Award = £1,720

The Hub (the only civic defence building remaining in Belfast) a shared history programme about the Belfast Blitz. Award = £3,200

Both these projects will be linked with the Council's plans to commemorate this period in the city's shared history.

2. Intercomm proposal

Intercomm is proposing is to reallocate the resources noted below towards Shaping a Shared Future programme activity. The proposal, outlined below will fit neatly into the wrap around programme that the Council is developing.

The programme would have two phases:

Phase 1: To convene a series of recorded discussions with Third Generation Leaders to engage in the Shaping a Shared Future Programme. The programme would elicit their memories of the Belfast Blitz and how these memories and experiences traversed traditional community boundaries. Story-telling and memory sharing (and importantly how they are heard) are the core building blocks for building tolerance and promoting trust.
6 Days: £250 per day = £1,500

Phase 2: A workshop that seeks to engage and raise awareness among 100 Third Generation Leaders about their role in recounting memories of the Belfast Blitz.

2 Day Planning: £250 per day = £500; 100 people @ £12 delegate rate: £1200; Room Hire: £300 – TOTAL £3,500

The programme outcomes would be:

- * Enhanced capacity among third generation leaders to engage in good relations work
- * Raised awareness among third generation leaders about their role and responsibility to shape a better future
- * An understanding of the good relations agenda and the impending decade of significant historical anniversaries

3. BCC's Blitz original proposal to Peace III

In an earlier draft Peace III proposal regarding the Belfast Blitz programme £3,000 was requested in relation to the cost of music, visuals and hospitality; £15,000 costs in relation to an exhibition and £1,000 to organise a lecture and discussions events. Dr Brian Barton has just confirmed that he is available in April 2011 to give a lecture on the Blitz. He has written a book on the Belfast Blitz and is currently acting as a historical advisor to the BBC in relation to a documentary on the subject.

On reviewing the £3,000 element of the proposal relating to music, visuals and hospitality, we would request reprofiling this element and request that the successful contractor in relation to the exhibition would be awarded this £3,000 to manage a citywide community involvement programme of activities.

The successful contractor would be required to involve communities from north, south, east & west of the city e.g.

North of the city was badly hit during the bombing raids so there should be a rich source of material in relation to the Blitz. We envisage partnering with community groups already working in cross-community partnership e.g. REAL project (includes Mount Vernon, Tigers Bay and New Lodge); the schools listed in the GR funded 'Small Steps' project; the Synagogue etc.

South Belfast Roundtable could be involved in working with new communities such as Polish, Roma and Chinese.

Working with East Belfast Mission staff would ensure wide community involvement. Clare Hackett, from Falls Community Council previously worked with Duchas which has a rich archive of Belfast history including citizens memories of the Blitz.

In West Belfast Clonard Monastery crypt was used as a shared community air raid shelter during the Blitz.

Each area could be given £700 to carry out local projects, perhaps using music or film footage to set the scene for storytelling and reminiscence. The remainder of the £3,000 could be used for hospitality.

The Council is actively exploring the possibility of acquiring one of the fire engines from Dundalk, Drogheda or Dublin to come up to Belfast in April 2011. The Dublin Fire Authority has agreed to investigate this possibility and have recorded their willingness to become involved in some way with this project. If this proposal becomes a reality, we would explore the possibility of the fire engine journeying to the four areas of the city highlighted above to bring a small number of people from each of the areas into the city hall on the evening of the launch of the exhibition.

Rationale

These proposals would add to Peace III objectives around promoting cohesion between the two communities and provides meaningful focus on peace & reconciliation. Most of the initiatives outlined above have the capacity to provide a lasting legacy & we could work up the cross-border nature of the project (fire engine from ROI). We would ensure that the communities we partner with are stakeholders & fully involved in the programme of activities. We would also commit to reaching out to other communities such as those involved in the Peace III funded cultural network element of the bonfire management programme.

By including the cultural network participants and NSEW communities we are clearly identifying communities that have been affected by the conflict and have experienced problems of segregation, marginalisation and isolation. It also highlights the collaborative nature of the proposal & has a bottom-up approach.

Good Relations Officers involved in delivering training on ending hate crime, migrant awareness training and good relations training could offer this package of learning to groups involved with the programme. This element would help meet the PIII objectives of challenging attitudes towards sectarianism & racism.

The Council has contacted QFT regarding their availability to show a film about the Blitz in April 2011 and they have confirmed they would be happy to show some complementary material, yet to be confirmed, but likely to be old Ministry of Information wartime short films.

Commissioning of 2011 Exhibition

Belfast City Council wishes to commission a qualified and experienced contractor to design, construct and install an exhibition to mark the 70th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz and the biggest single loss of life in one night in the city's history.

The exhibition should primarily centre on the fact that the Blitz was an experience shared equally between the protestant and catholic communities. The Luftwaffe did not distinguish between protestant and catholic in dropping bombs and the anguish and grief that followed was city wide. The Council believes that such an exhibition has a strong potential to reconnect communities that suffered death and grief together and provide an opportunity for them to come together in joint remembrance of this atrocity as part of our shared history.

Media coverage

The events will be publicised in advance within the Council's own City Matters magazine. Other media will also be used to maximise the opportunities in which the events are publicised to local communities and

will contain references to other Blitz related events in the city, such as displays in the City Hall and Central Libraries and in the Ulster Museum and any community organised events. The Council's Corporate Communications team would help with promoting a communication plan to ensure as wide publicity as possible."

After discussion, during which Members made a number of additional suggestions, including the need to include the experiences of people from Dublin who had been involved in some way in the Belfast Blitz and the requirement to liaise closely with the Northern Ireland War Memorial organisation, the Partnership approved the foregoing proposal. The Partnership noted that all expenditure incurred under the Peace III programme would be recouped in full from the Special European Union Programmes Body.

Peace III – Update on Phase II Local Action Plan

The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that correspondence had been received from the Special European Union Programmes Body indicating that the Council's Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan had now been recommended for approval. She reported that the Peace III Priority 1.1 Steering Committee, which had evaluated the Plan, had agreed to award funding of £3,945,847 towards programme costs. The correspondence had stated that additional funding to meet management support costs would be made available. However, in advance of making that award, the Steering Committee had requested the Programmes Body to undertake an option analysis, which, if completed and approved by the Steering Committee, would lead to a detailed Letter of Offer being forwarded to the Council outlining the total amount of funding being made available for both of the aforementioned elements.

The Good Relations Manager reported further that discussions had taken place subsequently with a representative of the Programmes Body, during which it had been determined that a number of projects submitted within the Council's Peace and Reconciliation Plan had not been approved. She provided details in respect of those projects, together with those for which approval had been granted and stated that she had requested the Steering Committee to forward to the Council a copy of the Economic Appraisal which had been completed in order to determine if there were sufficient grounds for appeals to be submitted in the case of those projects which had been unsuccessful.

After discussion, the Partnership noted the information which had been provided and that a report on the matter would be submitted to a future meeting, once the economic appraisal had been received.

Migrant and Minority Ethnic Support Project

The Committee was advised that the Good Relations Unit had, as part of the Council's Peace III Programme, established a Migrant and Minority Ethnic Support Project under the Peace III objective of Shared Cultural Space. The Good Relations Manager reported that, over the past two years, funding had been made available to support the overall delivery of the project, including salary costs, and that it had now been incorporated into the overall structure of the Good Relations Unit. She explained that it was now proposed that funding which had been set aside for salary costs be used to support the development and delivery of a training programme for post-primary schools.

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She reviewed the work which would be required to be undertaken by the successful applicant and explained that the programme would be designed to provide participants with an understanding of the extent and impact of prejudice and hate crimes in schools and in society at large and to enable them to develop practical skills for intervening at the earliest opportunity in order to address these issues. She informed the Members that the evaluation criteria used to assess tenders would take into account the calibre and competencies of the project team, methodology, value-for-money and ability to work in partnership and to meet requisite timescales. The total cost of the project would be £25,500, which would be recouped in full from the Peace III Programme. Accordingly, she recommended that the Partnership agree to the re-profiling of funding and grant approval for the instigation of a tendering exercise for the delivery of a training programme for post-primary schools.

After discussion, during which Members made a number of suggestions around schools which could potentially be included within the training programme, the Partnership adopted the recommendation.

Application for Support for Chinese New Year Celebrations

The Partnership was advised that correspondence had been received from the Chinese Welfare Association seeking funding from the Good Relations Unit towards the cost associated with the organisation of the 2011 Chinese New Year Celebrations. The Good Relations Manager explained that the event, which would again be held in St. George's Market, had, in 2010, attracted over 7,000 people and had included cultural performances, a Masterchef competition, workshops and stalls. A delegation from Heifei province, which was twinned with Belfast, would be in Northern Ireland over the period of the Celebrations and would be in attendance. She outlined the level of funding and assistance being provided by Council Departments, which included a sum of £500 from the Community Safety Unit and the attendance of Food Safety officers at the Masterchef Competition. She recommended that funding of £2,000 be made available by the Good Relations Unit to the Chinese Welfare Association in order to assist in the organisation of the New Year Celebrations, subject to the Association demonstrating that it was promoting the good relations element of the event.

The Partnership adopted the recommendation.

**Update on Meeting with Department for Social Development Minister
on Peace III Matters**

The Partnership noted the outcome of a meeting which had taken place on 6th January between the Minister for Social Development and a delegation from the Council, which had included the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor and the Chairman of the Good Relations Partnership. The meeting had been arranged in order to share information and to identify opportunities for closer collaboration between the Council and the Department for Social Development regarding the implementation of Phase II of the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan. The Partnership noted also that the Department for Social Development would submit to a future meeting of the Partnership a report outlining areas for increased collaboration and information sharing between the two organisations.