

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY, 7th MARCH, 2011

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

- Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman); and
Councillors McCarthy and Stoker.
- External Members: Ms. S. Bhat, Northern Ireland Interface Forum;
Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Archdeacon B. Dodds, Church of Ireland;
Ms. M. Marken, Catholic Church;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church; and
Ms. E. Wilkinson, Belfast Regeneration Office.
- Also attended: Ms. E. Dargan, Community Relations Council.
- In attendance: Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Senior Good Relations Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Ms. A. Chada, Ms. M. de Silva, Mr. R. Galway, Mrs. J. Hawthorne and Mr. P. Mackel.

Minutes

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

Good Relations Programme – Audit and Evaluation

The Partnership was reminded that the District Council Good Relations Programme, which was managed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, provided 75% of the funding required by the Council to undertake its good relations work. The Good Relations Manager reported that the Council received currently approximately £500,000 towards its programme and certain staffing costs and that, as a condition of funding, it was required to undertake an audit and evaluation of the programme for 2010/2011. She reminded the Partnership that, at its meeting on 7th February, it had agreed to receive a presentation from a representative of Blueprint Consulting who would outline in detail the aims and objectives of the audit and evaluation process which would be undertaken in this regard. Accordingly, it was reported that Mr. J. McVey, representing the consultants, was in attendance and he was admitted to the meeting.

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Mr. McVey outlined the objectives and projected outcomes of the audit and evaluation and indicated that it would seek to measure how the Council's Good Relations Programme had contributed to the development of a safe, welcoming, peaceful and open City through tackling sectarianism and racism. Mr. McVey then provided a detailed overview of the work to be undertaken, viz.,

- to examine the difference which the Programme had made to the individual, communities, society and/or structures. This would be achieved by undertaking a holistic evaluation of the initiatives funded by the Good Relations Programme, focusing particularly on the impact of its grant aid programmes;
- to identify the added value, if any, which had been achieved in terms of the processes and programmes of work and to assess qualitatively the impact made by funding for communities at a local level;
- to highlight the lessons which have been learned and how this could contribute to the development of a wider policy and assist with the mainstreaming of good practice;
- to illustrate the learning achieved from the Programme including structures and Partnership models established and the range of programmes of work;
- to examine how the environment had changed at a strategic, policy and political level and how this change had impacted upon the development of the programme, in line with the Governmental themes of cohesion, sharing and integration, linking these to the Council's strategic themes;
- to examine the extent that the expectations of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and its partners had been met through the leadership, development and delivery of the Programme;
- to identify what learning, approaches and tools which had been developed and which could be captured and adopted to create an effective monitoring and evaluation framework; and
- to make recommendations as to how the audit could identify the allocation of future resources to support a further relevant Good Relations programme in Belfast.

Mr. McVey concluded by confirming that he would be willing to meet with the Partnership or, if requested, with individual Members, to outline further the aims and objectives of the audit and evaluation.

After discussion, during which Mr. McVey answered a number of questions from Members, the Partnership agreed to note the information which had been provided and noted also that a presentation in respect of the findings of the audit and evaluation review would be provided by Mr. McVey in due course.

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 gave an overview of the various themes and actions set out within the Plan, together with a summary of expenditure under each of its four elements. The Peace III Programme Manager drew the Partnership's attention to the following issues:

Request for Project Extensions

The Peace III Programme Manager requested the Partnership's authority to extend, until 31st March, the following four projects, which had been funded under the Peace III Small Grants Programme. He added that this would enable additional work to be undertaken which would assist in closing formally the projects and that no extra cost would be incurred by the extensions:

Ref. 3703	Diversionsary Youth Officer	Forthspring InterCommunity Group
Ref. 3313	Rising Stars	Peace Players International (Northern Ireland)
Ref. 1093	REAL Good Relations Project	Ashton Community Trust
Ref. 3881	Actions Speak Louder than Words	Manor Street Cliftonville Community Centre

Forthcoming Events

Belfast Divercity Project and Belfast Citizenship Programme

It was noted that celebration events to mark the completion of the aforementioned projects would be held in the City Hall on 23rd and 29th March respectively. It was reported that both events would include contributions from programme beneficiaries and that all Members of the Partnership would be invited to attend.

Information and Networking Event

It was reported that a networking event for all projects funded under Phase I Plan had been scheduled for the afternoon of Thursday, 14th April at the Wellington Park Hotel. It was noted that a number of presentations in respect of the projects funded would be provided at the event and that all Members of the Partnership would be invited to attend.

Showcase Event

The Partnership was advised that a conference and showcase event for projects supported under Phase 1 of the Plan would take place on 21st June at the Waterfront Hall. The Peace III Programme Manager indicated that further information would be submitted to the Partnership in due course.

**Creative Legacies –
Conference and Showcase**

The Partnership was advised that the Council would be hosting a conference and showcase to mark the end of the Creative Legacies Programme. The event would be hosted by the BBC's Marie-Louise Muir and the programme would explore the impact which the programme had had on local communities. All Members of the Partnership would be invited to attend the event which would take place in the City Hall on Thursday, 24th March.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and agreed to extend until 31st March, 2011 the aforementioned projects to enable them to be completed.

Peace III – Phase 1 Financial Position

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of report

To update the Partnership on the financial position regarding Phase I of the Peace & Reconciliation Action Plan.

Key Issues

Expenditure incurred but not defrayed by 30th June, 2011

Council's Letter of Offer from the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) dated 26th September, 2008 stated that the period of assistance runs from 1st July, 2007 completing on 31st December, 2010 with all claims for payment to be submitted no later than 30th September, 2011. An addendum to the Letter of Offer issued in July 2010 extended the period of assistance to 30th June, 2011. The date for all claims for payment remains 30th September, 2011.

An email issued by SEUPB on 10th February 2011 has stated that all project related payments must be made by 30th June 2011. The email further states that, in exceptional circumstances, extensions can be granted on a case by case basis. There are a number of individual projects that have been approved by the Good Relations Partnership which run to 30th June and for which expenditure is unlikely to be fully defrayed by this date. The value of this expenditure is estimated at approximately £600K. Following this email, there is now a risk that expenditure incurred but not defrayed by 30th June would be deemed ineligible with a resulting liability for Council.

This issue has been discussed with SEUPB and the Peace III Programme Manager has requested an extension to cover expenditure incurred but not paid by 30 June. A number of other Peace III Clusters have also raised this issue with SEUPB. At meetings with SEUPB staff on 22nd February and 28th February, it was proposed that BCC will continue to provide updates on anticipated payments post 30th June 2011. This will include quantifying amounts per project and on actions to mitigate against expenditure, taking steps to ensure prompt invoicing/increasing frequency of claims etc. On this basis SEUPB has indicated that expenditure defrayed after 30th June can be included in the final claim. Written confirmation of this point has been sought from SEUPB as a matter of urgency.

Anticipated Underspend

Estimated levels of underspend for projects under each of the four themes and for the grants programme are as follows:

Theme	£	% of Theme Allocation
Shared City Space	51,890	4%
Transforming Contested Space	162,527	13%
Shared Cultural Space	156,005	9%
Shared Organisational Space	2,490	1%
Grants Programme (Calls 1 & 2)	148,950	14%
Total	521,862	8% (of total allocation)

Underspend arises due to a number of factors often interlinked e.g. slow programme start, complex implementation procedures, too few or low quality project applications; too many small programmes with low levels of spend; procurement delays; slow submission of claims for payment; organisational issues and external political factors impacting negatively upon project scope and feasibility. The Partnership is asked to note that staff of SEUPB have stated that the expected level of underspend for EU Structural Funds programmes generally is in the region of 5%-8% and that because of the way the programme has been structured funding will not be lost in the event of underspend in Phase 1.

To date SEUPB has approved virement between projects under each of these four themes and this has enabled identification of additional projects not contained within the original March 2008 submission and for changes in implementation approach i.e. partner delivery to grant aid or public procurement.

A commentary on the underspend by theme is provided below:

Shared City Space

The bulk of the identified underspend is attributable to the proposed Musgrave Therapy Garden (£50k). This project was approved by the Good Relations Partnership in November 2010 subject to final approval from SEUPB, a number of project revisions were made following consultation with the Consortium and SEUPB. Subsequently the SEUPB raised the issue of the anticipated completion date of August and have requested that expenditure is profiled and assurances given that work will be completed within the anticipated timescale. They are considering a possible extension to the period allowed for programme activity.

Transforming Contested Space

The majority of this theme has been implemented through contracted delivery agents identified through public procurement. The value of let contracts differs from the overall resource allocation approved in the letter of offer, while achieving the same level and quality of outputs and outcomes, there is a variance of approximately £70,000 between the resource allocation for this work and the actual budgets, effectively savings made through competitive procurement. The Partnership will recall that it has previously identified, in consultation with SEUPB and the Consortium, scope for additional activity under this theme. This has allowed for citywide coverage of the interface dialogue initiative.

An underspend has been identified of approximately £80K from savings through procurement and costs for related community programming being lower than anticipated. The Partnership is requested to consider a separate report has been tabled relating to a proposal to deliver additional community programming through the cultural networks established under the Dealing With Physical Manifestations Programme.

It is proposed that, subject to the approval of the SEUPB and in consultation with the Consortium additional work is commissioned from current contractors to build upon work complete in Phase 1, for example additional activity commissioned for young people around interfaces in line with the citizenship model developed through the youth intervention programme and around mainstreaming the mediation practice completed as part of the mediation capacity building programme in Phase 1. Activity would need to be related to the original contract scope and in line with regulations governing public contracts.

Shared Cultural Space and Grants Programme

Underspend in the Shared Cultural Space theme is primarily due to turnover of staff; proposed programming being delayed or not approved and larger projects like the planned festival resource not being progressed. Savings have also been made from lower than anticipated facilities and transport costs.

There have been four open calls for grant aid in Phase 1 including specific calls to identify inter-faith initiatives and appropriate festival programming. Projects were approved for these later calls by the Good Relations Partnership in June and August 2010 with activity planned to run up to 30 June 2011. Aside from a small amount of advance funding projects are paid in arrears following completion of monitoring returns and vouching and verification on 100% of expenditure. This vouching activity will continue over the summer period with all project related payments made prior to submission of final claim by 30th September. A potential underspend of approximately £148k has been identified across the 44 small grants and potential underspend of approximately £13k has been identified in the inter-faith small grants programme but work is continuing with project promoters to identify remedial action and minimise the eventual underspend.

There is significant scope for additional appropriate festival related activity to be delivered by those organisations currently in receipt of a Letter of Offer under the city of festivals grants programme which has an identified underspend of approximately £64,000. It is proposed that, subject to the approval of the SEUPB and in consultation with the Consortium proposals would be sought for additional activity aligned to their existing programmes to develop shared cultural space.

Proposals would be assessed against criteria based on the added peace and reconciliation outputs, value for money, fit with original project proposal and feasibility within timeframe etc. This would allow for an effective response to local needs that could be coordinated within the strategic aims of the local action plan. A restricted call is justified by the time constraints and the fact that these organisations have undergone the extensive pre-contract checks and requisite training on compliance issues related to use of European Regional Development Funds. Those organisations would be invited to submit proposals for activities with a focus on events in April, May and June 2011. Expenditure would then be claimed in the final grants monitoring round for inclusion in the final phase 1 claim on 30th September.

Next Steps

In order to allow for delivery of appropriate activity as far as possible up to the maximum resource allocation limit as detailed in the current Letter of Offer and ensure that the risk of significant financial liability is kept to an absolute minimum the following actions are recommended:

1. Continue implementation of Phase 1 as planned, keeping expenditure and claims under review with ongoing consultation with SEUPB. To mitigate against financial risk levels of expenditure incurred but not defrayed by 30th June 2011 will be reported on a monthly basis to SEUPB to ensure that this can be captured as eligible expenditure in the final claim. Reporting on underspend levels to the Good Relations Partnership will continue for the duration of Phase I. Consultation will continue with SEUPB on the potential for extending timescale for Phase 1 and/or rolling allocations over into Phase II to ensure that no funding is lost to Belfast.
2. Identify alternative projects to which funding could be diverted subject to the approval of the SEUPB and in consultation with the Consortium. As noted above there is scope for additional outputs that could be commissioned from current contractors to be delivered in April/May under the theme of transforming contested space and for additional festivals programming under the theme of shared cultural space.

Resource Implications

Financial Implications

There is a risk that expenditure incurred but not defrayed by 30th June will be deemed ineligible with a resulting liability for Council.

HR Implications

None at present.

Equality Implications

None at present

Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to note the information provided in this report and the steps being taken to minimise financial risk in closing Phase 1 of the plan.

The Partnership is requested, subject to the approval of the SEUPB and in consultation with the Consortium to:

- (i) approve the commissioning of appropriate additional activity under the theme of transforming contested space for young people around interfaces in line with the citizenship model and around mainstreaming the mediation practice completed as part of the mediation capacity building programme.**
- (ii) approve identification and commissioning of additional appropriate festival related activity to be delivered by those organisations currently in receipt of a Letter of Offer under the city of festivals grants programme.**

Decision Tracking

The Peace III Programme Manager will be tasked with any actions arising from this report and will provide an update on progress at the next Partnership meeting.”

A Member referred to the proposed redistribution of the budgetary underspend and suggested that financial assistance had not been shared equitably across all areas of the City. He requested information on the number of events, together with the financial support, which were relevant to the greater South Belfast area throughout the term of the Project. The Member expressed a view that the Partnership should be more proactive in targeting areas of the City which had not benefited outwardly from Peace III funding. The point was made that there existed a perception that funding was allocated disproportionately to address long-standing issues based on sectarian strife, which, in turn, was to the detriment of areas of the City where no such tension was prevalent. An external Member referred to the criteria used in the allocation of funding and stated that this might require further examination. It was pointed out that the ongoing audit and evaluation would present an opportunity for the criteria to be evaluated.

After discussion, the Partnership adopted the recommendations set out within the report, subject to a further update report in this regard being considered at its meeting on 5th April, and agreed that a report on the allocation of Peace III funding throughout the City be submitted for the Partnership's consideration at the earliest opportunity.

**Peace III – Dealing with Physical Manifestations –
Additional Programme**

(Mr. S. Brennan, External Member, declared an interest in this matter in so far as he was seconded to Groundwork NI and took no part in the discussion.)

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware of the Peace III Council led programme ‘Dealing With Physical Manifestations’ which was approved by the Partnership at its meeting in April, 2009 as part of the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan.

There is an anticipated underspend for the programme of approximately £60,000, as a result of better value for money in the procurement, installation and removal of beacons and a lower than anticipated spend on community events. Following consultation with SEUPB and the Consortium, a number of additional programming ideas have been developed that could take advantage of this underspend for delivery of programmes before the closure of Phase 1 in June this year. This report seeks Partnership approval to:

- re-profile the budget to support an additional piece of work identified by communities that have participated on the programme and
- extend the current specification with Groundwork NI to manage this additional piece of work

2 Key Issues

The overriding aim of this programme was to transform community cultural events and celebrations into greater family orientated occasions. This has been very successful, with 42 communities transforming their bonfire events into small community festivals.

A number of these groups have enquired about the possibility of some funding being used to enable local communities to celebrate the forthcoming Royal Wedding on the 29 April. Participating groups would be able to continue with the aim of creating local events within neighbourhoods to positively express the culture and heritage of their communities. There is an additional significant Peace and Reconciliation theme to be explored amongst communities within the City which also links with the impending Royal visit to Ireland in May.

In keeping with the aim of the programme to 'support communities in the positive celebration of their cultural heritage and identity and to promote their neighbourhood as open and welcoming to all visitors', reallocating the funding towards small community events would serve two primary functions:

- It would meet a significant demand within those communities that have been working hard to transform their community celebrations into more family oriented occasions
- It will facilitate outreach to new communities of Belfast
- It will contribute to transforming areas of contested space in the city
- It would be a positive endorsement of the British cultural heritage within PUL communities

There are significant time constraints involved in ensuring that communities are both informed and have appropriate time to plan and organise events, bearing in mind the requirements for compliance with SEUPB procurement guidelines. Therefore options for delivery analysis are provided below.

3 Resource Implications

If the current underspend of approximately £60,000 were to be reallocated to promoting local community events to mark the occasion of the Royal Wedding on the 29th April, there would be no financial implications for the Council, pending approval of eligible spend by SEUPB.

Options for delivery

1. Tender for an outside agency to deliver an open call for a series of small grants to mark the occasion of the Royal Wedding
2. Council use the funding to administer a small grants programme
3. Groundwork NI won an open tender to provide a mentoring role for the groups participating in the Cultural Networks programme which ran until December 2010. A key element of this tender involved managing the financial elements of the community events and activities budget. Option 3 would be to extend this tender, with an additional resource to manage the process involved in delivering this extra piece of work.

In order to enable communities to have adequate time to develop programmes for the end of April, extending this contract until June 2010, Option 3 is the preferred option for Council.

Option 3 would see a resource of up to £50,000 provided to existing groups on the Tackling Physical Manifestations Programme to develop local community events to mark the Royal Wedding and/or the impending Royal Visit. The maximum cost for each individual event would be up to £1,000. £10,000 of the current underspend would be provided, by way of a variation in the existing contract with Groundwork NI, to administer this additional piece of work.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

Council funding was available in 1981 for communities to host street parties on the occasion of the Royal Wedding in that year. This proposal will enable local communities to celebrate a significant occasion that is important in the heritage and cultural life of the PUL community – in a similar way that the Council supports local events to mark St. Patrick’s Day through its Good Relations Fund.

5 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to approve a re-profiling of the budget as set out above and shown on the attached list, with the recommendation that the underspend for the community events and activities be used to support local community festival events to mark the Royal Wedding on the 29th April. The Partnership is also recommended to approve a variation to the contract with Groundwork NI to administer this piece of work as set out in option 3 above, subject to SEUPB approval.

6 Decision Tracking

David Robinson, Senior Good Relations Officer will be responsible for any decisions arising.

7 Key to Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special EU Programmes Body
ERDF – European Regional Development Fund
PUL: Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist”

The Partnership adopted the recommendations.

Consortium Training Needs Analysis

(Ms E. Dargan, Community Relations Council and Pobol Consortium, attended in connection with this item.)

Ms. Dargan informed the Partnership that, as part of the administrative support provided to Peace III Partnerships, the Consortium had developed a self-assessment exercise which would seek to measure the extent of knowledge and skills possessed by Members. She pointed out that this exercise would, on completion, assist the Consortium to develop support programmes which would be linked to future Personal Development Plans for Members. Accordingly, she tabled for the Members' information, a template of a questionnaire which outlined the types of questions that would be included. She pointed out that the format of the questionnaire would enable Members to indicate areas where it was felt that additional capacity-building might be provided to assist them to fulfil their role in an effective manner.

The Partnership agreed to note the information provided.

Community Relations Week 2011

The Partnership was advised that the Community Relations Council had, since 2003, co-ordinated the holding of Community Relations Week in Northern Ireland. It was pointed out that the aim of the week was to raise awareness of community relations work and to encourage others to become involved in similar initiatives. The Good Relations Manager reported that Community Relations Week in 2011 would take place from 23rd till 28th May and this would provide an opportunity to showcase the work of the Partnership and engage with others working towards a more tolerant, inclusive and shared society. She added that this year one of the aims of the Community Relations Council was to encourage the public sector in Northern Ireland to discuss and explore tackling the cost of division through promoting shared services and provision. It was pointed out that a full programme of events associated with Community Relations Week would be available on the following link: www.nicrc.org.uk

Accordingly, the Good Relations Manager sought authority to host an event in the City Hall, to coincide with Community Relations Week, which would provide an opportunity for groups in receipt of grant aid from the Partnership to discuss and showcase their activities, together with providing a valuable networking opportunity. It was noted that adequate financial provision for this event had been made within the Partnership's budget.

The Partnership granted the authority sought.

International Day of Peace 2011

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that the United Nations' International Day of Peace, which had been established in 1982, took place each year on 21st September. She explained that the day had been founded by resolution which stated, inter alia, that:

'the International Day of Peace shall henceforth be observed as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence, an invitation to all nations and people to honour a cessation of hostilities for the duration of the Day'

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She added that the aim of Day of Peace would be to provide an opportunity for individuals, communities and organisations to highlight efforts to end conflict and promote practical acts of peace. In addition, events would be organised, ranging in scale from private gatherings to public concerts and forums. In Belfast, the Day of Peace was overseen by Springboard, of which Ms. Angila Chada, a Member of the Good Relations Partnership, acted as Director. Springboard would therefore be encouraging Belfast citizens, organisations and governmental bodies to mark the day either privately or publicly and to re-dedicate their commitment to non-violence, reconciliation and peace building. Given the relevance of the Day of Peace to Belfast, the Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that, in 2009, the then Lord Mayor, Councillor Naomi Long, had attended a successful event, hosted by Springboard in the Farset Centre, where she spoke briefly and led a one minute's silence. In 2010, the Partnership had hosted a ceremony in the City Hall, at which the Lord Mayor, Councillor Convery, had led the observance of the Day of Peace and launched the inaugural Inspiration Awards which sought to recognise positive role models.

Accordingly, the Good Relations Manager proposed that the Partnership consider the hosting of an appropriate event in the City Hall on 21st September to mark International Day of Peace. She pointed out that the Partnership's recognition of the day would send out a powerful message that it condemned the use of violence and supported peace-making. She added that information on International Day of Peace would be included on the Council's website and its events calendar. Information on the event would also be circulated to all of the Council's 2,600 employees through the internal *Intercom* magazine.

After discussion, the Partnership granted authority for the hosting of an appropriate event, on 21st September, to mark International Day of Peace 2011. It was noted that appropriate hospitality, provision for which had been made within the Good Relations Unit's budget, would be provided at the event.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association Awards

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that the Northern Ireland Local Government Awards ceremony had been held at the La Mon Hotel on Thursday, 10th February. She reported that the awards ceremony sought to acknowledge the best examples of service provision, new initiatives and personal commitment from both Members and officers in local government across Northern Ireland. The awards sought also to recognise innovation, individual commitment and to highlight the best working practices in local government.

The Partnership was informed that the Council's Human Resources and Good Relations Equality and Good Relations Training Team had been successful in the category of 'Workforce Equality & Good Relations Award' at the ceremony which had been attended by the Chairman (Councillor Hendron) and the Good Relations Manager. It was reported that the criteria used by the judging panel had sought evidence of best practice, innovation and service improvement while providing better outcomes for the service users.

After discussion, during which the Partnership offered its congratulations to all the staff involved in attaining the award, it was agreed to note the information provided.

St. Patrick's Day 2011 – Small Grants Scheme

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 3rd December, it had approved the award of £33,374 to community groups in order to enable them to hold small-scale events to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The Good Relations Manager explained that an application had been received initially from Tearmann Fold Residents Association seeking funding from the scheme to hold an event on that day. However, she pointed out that, due to an administrative oversight, the application had not been assessed and no funding had been awarded to the group.

She pointed out that, following subsequent communication with the Tearmann Fold Residents Association, the application had since been assessed, using the appropriate scoring matrix, and that it qualified for funding under the scheme. Accordingly, she recommended that Tearmann Fold Residents Association be awarded funding of up to £250 to hold a community event to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

The Partnership adopted the recommendation.

Chairman