

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**MONDAY, 12th SEPTEMBER, 2011****MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP**

- Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman);
Alderman Stoker; and
Councillors Attwood, Maskey and Reynolds.
- External Members: Ms. S. Bhat, Ethnic Minority Group
Ms. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast & District Trades 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 Councillor Kyle, Reverend Dodds, Ms. A. Chada and Mr. O'Donnell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th August were taken as read and signed as correct.

Belfast Interface Trust – Update re: Work at Interfaces

The Partnership was informed that Messrs. McConville and McKinney, representing the Belfast Interface Trust, were in attendance to provide a presentation in respect of the Trust's work in addressing the continued existence of interfaces throughout the City.

Mr. McKinney outlined the aims and objectives of the Trust and gave an overview of the methodology used to identify peace-building opportunities. He reported that the project had sought initially to analyse the root causes of the conflict within the context of the ongoing peace process and to assess the extent of intervention required to address needs at a local level. He added that the project aimed to engage with key individuals within all local communities in order to enhance relationships and develop Action Plans through a staged approach. He outlined the range of statutory bodies and agencies which the Trust had worked with and provided a summary of the Trust's achievements to date within North, South, East and West Belfast.

Mr. McKinney then outlined the principal aspects of Action Plans which had been formulated to address the economic, social, environmental and political causes of conflict at interface areas. He reviewed the successes to date of the Trust and emphasised the need within interface areas for sustainable economic development, together with equality of access to education, health and local support services within the context of a good quality built environment. He concluded by pointing out how the Trust would seek to consolidate on its progress within the forthcoming phase of the project.

The Chairman (Councillor Hendron) congratulated the Trust for the work which it had undertaken. A further Member pointed out that the Council, at its meeting on 1st September, had considered a Notice of Motion which sought to address the issue of the removal of "peace walls" throughout the City. The matter had been referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration and it was suggested that the group could work in conjunction with the Council at a later date to address the issue.

In response, Mr. McKinney commended the Council for taking such a step and emphasised the need for a joined-up approach to the issue of addressing the existence of interfaces. He suggested that there had been a reluctance by statutory bodies and agencies to address the issue and added that the Council, in taking a leading role in this matter, should be congratulated for showing civic leadership.

After discussion, the Partnership agreed to note the information which had been provided.

Presentation by Intercomm – Engagement Capacity Building

(Councillor Maskey declared an interest in this item in that he was employed by Intercomm.)

The Chairman welcomed Messrs. Byrne and Loughran to the Partnership and they provided a presentation in respect of Intercomm's Community Engagement, Capacity Building and Mentoring Programme. Mr. Loughran gave an overview of the theme of the Programme which sought to 'transform contested space within the Belfast Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan'. He provided figures on the number of individuals who had been trained through the Programme, together with an outline of the various areas they represented across the City. Mr. Loughran then summarised the future objectives of the Programme and how it would be enhanced to address the specific needs of additional communities. He pointed out that a key aim of the next phase of the Programme would be to market and promote the services available, in conjunction with a variety of partners, to address the needs of communities on a city-wide basis. He concluded by outlining the principles which had overseen the Programme and how those had served to strengthen and sustain local communities.

In response to a Member's question regarding the levels of engagement with local communities, especially those within the Village area, Mr. Loughran explained that Intercomm would seek to learn from past experiences and undertook to address any concerns raised in that regard. He assured the Member that Intercomm sought to engage with all 'named partners' within the Programme to a meaningful degree, under an agreed memorandum of understanding, in order to achieve its aims and objectives.

After further discussion, during which the representatives from Intercomm answered various questions which were put to them by the Members, the Partnership agreed to note the information provided and congratulated Intercomm on its progress to date.

Peace III – Phase I 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 reviewed the progress to date of the various projects contained within each theme of the Plan, including expenditure up to the end of August, together with claims outstanding, the current status of each project, key risks and any actions to be undertaken. The Peace III Programme Manager informed the Partnership that priority had been afforded to closing Phase I projects and, to this end, an urgent meeting had been sought with the Special European Union Programmes Body to ensure that all associated expenditure was included in the final claim, which was due to be submitted by 30th September. In addition, he reported that the anticipated meeting would explore the possibility of extending project end dates, as deemed necessary, together with vouching and verification issues in the transition stage to Phase II, which would address also any additional anticipated programme costs.

Forthcoming Events

The Partnership noted that the Consortium would be hosting the undernoted workshops for PEACE III Partnerships throughout the autumn period. Each event would take place from 10.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.:

- 21st September - Monitoring & Evaluation – Omagh;
- 4th October – Forum for PEACE III Chairpersons & Managers – Dungannon;
- 19th October – Cross Border Networking Event – Belfast; and
- 23rd November – Peace Building & Reconciliation – Monaghan.

In addition, the Partnership noted that invitations had been received in respect of the undernoted events:

- the unveiling of a mural celebrating 'Peace Day' at the International Wall in Northumberland Street at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 21st September; and
- the official handover of the Belfast Open Cities Local Action Plan and the signing of the Eurocities Integrating Cities Charter, which would take place at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, 22nd September in the City Hall.

Peace III – Assessment of Phase II Partner Delivery Projects

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of paper

To present recommendations on Phase II of the Belfast PEACE III Plan.

Background

A bid for PEACE III funding for Phase 2 of the Belfast Peace & Reconciliation Action Plan (PEACE III Plan) was submitted to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) on 17th September 2010. A Letter of Offer has been issued to Belfast City Council as Lead Partner with the overall administrative and financial responsibility for implementation.

Assessment of Partner Delivery Projects

While the overall project proposals have been considered by the PEACE III Monitoring Committee following a thorough economic appraisal carried out by Cogent Consulting it is a requirement that all projects in the Phase II plan are further considered by the Good Relations Partnership prior to implementation. In order to facilitate this, an overview of the assessment process was held for Partnership Members on 23rd August and an assessment panel convened on 1st September supported by council staff. Representatives from SEUPB and the consortium were also invited to attend as observers. Conflicts of interest were noted. Following a presentation on the project each proposal was assessed in line with the Project Selection Guidance issued by SEUPB namely: PEACE III Programme and Priority Fit (60%) and Efficiency, Effectiveness and Cross Cutting Themes (40%). The assessment papers and reports are attached as appendices to this report.

Recommendations

Following assessment it is recommended to the Partnership that the following projects proceed to implementation:

	Shared City Space	Budget
2	City of Neighbourhoods - Health & Wellbeing	£150,210.00
	Transforming Contested Space	
3	Promoting Positive Expressions of Cultural Heritage	£300,000.00
4	Belfast Tension Monitoring Project	£601,473.00
5	Youth Engagement Programme	£847,286.00
	Shared Cultural Space	
6	Migrant & Minority Ethnic Project	£150,000.00
8	Creative Legacies Programme	£300,000.00
9	Roots of Empathy	£106,668.27

It is recommended that the following general conditions are applied to the Phase II projects in addition to project specific conditions:

- All projects must maintain a meaningful focus on Peace & Reconciliation outcomes and this should be kept under continual review by project promoters.
- All projects should seek to identify appropriate mainstreaming opportunities. Where there is significant potential for mainstreaming the project partners should develop a specific mainstreaming strategy.
- The potential for Phase II Projects to impact on poverty needs to be assessed for the programme as a whole. Projects should seek to link in with Council's anti-poverty strategy wherever possible and there should be clarity around use of terms such as social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal in all project documents.
- All projects should seek representation from Members of the Good Relations Partnership on respective Steering Groups/ Project Boards.

The Partnership is requested to note that Projects 4 & 5 (Tension Monitoring & Youth Engagement) are subject to full economic appraisal as they are over the £500k threshold. The appraisals are currently being considered by SEUPB.

It is further recommended that the following projects be resubmitted for assessment with a view to bringing a recommendation to the next meeting of the Good Relations Partnership:

Project 1 – Community Cohesion Networks
Project 7 – City of Festivals II

Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to note the summary assessment reports for Phase II Projects by the Good Relations Partnership.

The Partnership is requested to approve the following projects to proceed to implementation:

<u>Project No.</u>	<u>Project Title</u>
2	City of Neighbourhoods - Health & Wellbeing
3	Promoting Positive Expressions of Cultural Heritage
4	Belfast Tension Monitoring Project
5	Youth Engagement Programme
6	Belfast Migrant Forum
8	Creative Legacies Programme
9	Roots of Empathy

The Partnership is requested to consider resubmitted proposals for the following projects at its next meeting:

<u>Project No.</u>	<u>Project Title</u>
1	Community Cohesion
7	City of Festivals

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.

After discussion, during which the Peace III manager answered a number of Members' queries in respect of the criteria utilised in the assessment of the applications, the Partnership adopted the recommendations. It was noted that figures in respect of the percentage of work which was outsourced to local contractors by the successful applicants would be submitted for consideration in due course.

Bonfire Management Programme

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

- 1 Members will be aware of the Council's Bonfire Programmes which have been running for the past 6 years. This work was initiated in 2005 in response to a number of public concerns:
 - 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
 - greater awareness about environmental issues such as the burning of tyres

There was also a willingness within a number of communities to address many of the negative elements around bonfires and create better bonfire management as a form of positive expression of cultural heritage on the 11th July. In addition, the programme supports communities to develop alternatives to internment bonfires around the 8th August. An independent evaluation of the 2011 programme was undertaken by Jonny Byrne, who has undertaken previous evaluations that have contributed to the strengthening of the programme over the years.

In 2011, 38 bonfire groups participated on the 11th July bonfire programme (with an additional 4 communities being supported to run a festival event instead of a bonfire). 7 communities participated on the 8th August programme. (2011 evaluation, p.2) Over the last 6 years, the programme has either met, or made significant inroads into all of the issues of concern when the work around bonfires first began. The current programme centres on two distinct elements:

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

Key Issues

- 1 There has been a reduction in the number of 11th July bonfires in Belfast over the last number of years and the table below tracks these figures over the life of the programme, the number of participating groups and a percentage of the total:

Year	No. Bonfires	No. Bonfires on programme	As a % of total
2005	108	8	7%
2009	84	33	39%
2010	77	42	55%
2011	73	38	52%

In relation to support for communities to develop alternatives to bonfires on the 8th August, the number of groups has increased from 1 in 2005/2006 to 4 in 2009/2010 to a total of 7 in 2011. (see 2011 evaluation report p.4)

2 Programme impact

In addition to the overall reduction in the number of 11th July bonfires, where bonfires in areas such as Woodvale and Sydenham amalgamated as part of the programme, there have also been improvements in a host of other areas as well:

PSNI and NIFRS Statistics

There have been year-on-year reductions in the number of bonfire related incidents reported to the PSNI. PSNI analysts are unable to provide a statistical report for this year, however they have reported fewer call-outs to bonfire sites in Belfast in general, and to sites on the programme in particular. There has also been a steady reduction in the number of NIFRS call outs to bonfires on the 11th night. In 2007 there were 200 call-outs in the greater Belfast area reduced to 2 in 2010. In 2011 there were 60 call-outs, which is roughly the same figure as recorded in 2009.

Environmental issues

As was the case in 2010, just one of the sites participating in the programme burned tyres on their bonfire in 2011. In relation to overall complaints received from the cleansing call-centre, these have fallen from 39 in 2009, to 32 in 2010, down to 25 in 2011. In addition, the number of tyres disposed of by the Council has also decreased from 4,799 in 2010 to 774 in 2011 (city-wide). There has been an overall improvement in environmental issues across the whole city, but in particular with regard to sites participating on the Council programme. (see 2011 evaluation, p.5)

Paramilitary flags, emblems and displays

As has been the case for the last number of years, in 2011 none of the bonfires participating on the programme were bedecked with paramilitary trappings.

Burning of flags and emblems

This issue continues to present ongoing difficulties within the programme. There is growing public concern as to the practice among some groups in relation to this, although much incremental progress has been made on this issue. In 2009, a financial penalty was introduced into the programme to withhold an amount of funding (set at £100) from groups to incentivise them to not burn such items.

The table below indicates this progress over the last three years:

Year	No. bonfire groups on programme	No. groups not burning flags/symbols	As a % of total
2005	8	0	0%
2009	33	6	18%
2010	42	14	33%
2011	38	14	37%

Unfortunately, 2011 saw a halt in this progress with a general rise in tensions in the city, generated largely by the political unrest in East Belfast; this resulted in a proliferation in flag flying in general and election posters in particular became symbolic targets on bonfires.

Going forward, this issue requires sensitive but firm engagement in order to continue the progress made over the last few years and to continue to engage with groups on ultimately eradicating this practice from the programme. The independent evaluation recommends developing a suitable engagement programme to seek to address this issue (see 2011 evaluation, p.13). This will be incorporated into the Peace III element of the programme as a priority.

Also in 2011, 7 communities delivered programmes as alternatives to 8th August bonfires. However, there were roughly 4 bonfires that still took place. (see 2011 evaluation, p.14) The evaluation suggests that the Council may need to consider a separate way to engage with those organising these bonfires as a means of assisting communities in seeking to have these bonfires ultimately eradicated.

3 Overall impact

Overall, the Council's intervention on bonfires has had a positive impact on participating communities, agencies and the city as a whole. In a separate piece of recent research undertaken as part of Phase 1 of Peace III, a cost benefit analysis undertaken by the Institute for Conflict Research assessed the savings made on the investment in the programme for the year 2010. The research highlighted that in 2010, statutory agencies spent approximately £103,077 less on call-outs and clean-ups to bonfires within the programme than to those sites which were not part of the programme. In addition, the report particularly highlights the environmental, health and social capital benefits reaped from the programme, the actual financial costs of which are unable to be quantified.

The report also argues that the programme has been a positive investment in supporting communities in the positive expression of their cultural heritage. It concludes that 'the investment made by the Council and Peace III to date has been one which has been surpassed by the total benefits of the programme' and to this end it contributes to a safer, cleaner and more peaceful city during a traditionally tense period.

In addition, the 2011 independent evaluation highlights the success of the newly formed internal Council bonfire officers group (see p. 8 – 10) which facilitated greater collaboration on bonfire issues across all Council departments and developed action plans and intervention strategies for bonfires in both July and August.

4 Going forward – creating change

Developing better bonfire management is an ongoing process that requires sustained and patient engagement with participating communities. Experience has shown that once positive change happens within communities, it is unlikely that these changes will be undone (see 2011 evaluation report, p.15 – summary). This has proven to be the case in relation to use of tyres, paramilitary trappings and for 14 communities, the burning of flags and emblems. Therefore, the progress that has been made needs to be continuously supported and the engagement within the programme sustained in order to consolidate this and to enable more groups to participate in the process of change.

Within Phase 2 of Peace III, Project 3, Promoting the Positive Expression of Cultural Heritage, proposes that engagement around bonfires continues to be a central element of the Belfast Peace Plan, with a budget from now until 2013 of £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'.

Ultimately, the programme seeks to build on the progress made to date on bonfires within the context of creating Belfast as a Shared City. Following the 2011 review, it is proposed to members that the programme be delivered in 2012 as follows:

- Good Relations continue delivery of the programme with support from the internal bonfire officers group. It will work with communities willing to participate; for those groups not participating (and where there are difficulties), these will be addressed through the internal officers group.
- Support as many traditional 11th July bonfire sites through better bonfire management as possible.
- Continue the diversionary approach in communities on the 8th August.
- Procure an external 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 the Good Relations Partnership in June 2012
- Where bonfires are not part of the Council programme, relevant officers within the internal officers bonfire group 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 body while land-owners manage complaints regarding other bonfires on their land – e.g. Parks/NIHE/DRD
- Consider appropriate ways to engage with those who are still having bonfires over the 8th August (to be agreed by the GRP)
- Through the Peace III element of the programme, develop a mechanism to seek to address the ongoing issue of the burning of flags/embles at bonfires (to be agreed by the GRP)

5 Financial elements

The investment under Phase 2 of Peace III will support the delivery of the cultural networks process and the funding of community events and activities. 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 7 years, that cannot command the financial support of Peace III
2. To enable the Council to develop work with new groups on bonfires.

It is proposed that the Council continue to support the following additional areas:

Area	Cost
A dedicated cleansing contractor	£15,000
Installation/filling/removal of beacons plus safety reports	£18,000
Bonfire frames	£5,000
Fencing	£2,000
Developmental work with new groups	£10,000
Total	£50,000

Resource Implications

Financial

1. £300,000 under Phase 2 of the Peace III Programme will be 100% funded by SEUPB.
2. The continued funding of £50,000 per year (amount unchanged over the past 5 years) from the Council, 75% 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 on the internal officers' bonfires group under Safer Cities.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

None. The programme seeks to support all communities in the positive expression of their cultural heritage where bonfires present an issue within local communities.

Recommendations

That the Partnership:

- recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the proposed delivery mechanism outlined above subject to further discussion
- recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the continuation of the present level of Council annual funding of £50,000 in 2012 to support elements of the programme that fall outside Peace III funding
- delegate the internal bonfires officers group to develop proposals for engagement with those organising August bonfires and to address the issue of the burning of flags/emblems."

A prolonged discussion ensued in respect of the achievements to date of the Bonfire Programme. A Member expressed concern at the significant increase in the number of flags, emblems and election posters which had been placed on bonfires during the summer, along with the continued existence of bonfires during August. The Member indicated that the Council should seek to address these issues more closely. He added that, prior to the Partnership adopting the recommendations, it might be prudent to consider hosting a workshop with the members of the Partnership along with Council officers on the Internal Bonfire Officers Group to look at how to address these matters for 2012.

Other Members felt that the Partnership should be more pragmatic and consider the report within the context of the significant progress which had been achieved in the past number of years in respect of bonfire management.

After discussion, the Partnership adopted the recommendations, subject to the Partnership and the Internal Bonfire Officers Group agreeing on ways to engage with the organisers of certain bonfires on the issue of the burning of flags and symbols.

Good Relations Grant-Aid Fund

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th April, it had approved expenditure in the sum of £106,997 in the first stage of Good Relations Grant-Aid Funding for 2011/2012. The Senior Good Relations Officer reported that the third call for applications had been made on 1st August, with a closing date of Friday, 19th August. Accordingly, the Partnership endorsed the undernoted recommendations which totalled £99,205 and which had been assessed in accordance with the pre-agreed criteria:

Organisation	Recommended Amount, up to £
Unionist Centenary Committee	1,000
NI Tolerance Educational & Cultural Association (NI-TECA)	2,170
Success Dragon & Lion Dance Association	500
East End Great War Society	1,500
Belfast Urban Sports (BUS)	996
FACES – Family and Children Empowerment Services	1,000
The Vine Centre	1,000
Sandy Row Cultural Society	1,000
Ligoniel Family Centre	500
Farset Youth & Community Group	3,000
Ravenlink Residents Group	1,000
Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG)	3,875
Forthspring	800
North Belfast Play Forum	3,000
First Step Drop-in Centre	3,000
Artillery Youth Centre	3,000

North Belfast Interface Network	3,500
Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	7,240
St. Patrick's College and Boy's Model School	2,000
McGurk's Bar Massacre Group	1,000
Forbairt Feirste	1,000
SOS Bus NI	1,000
Ionad Uíbh Eachach	570
Raidió Fáilte Teo	1,000
C.O.P.E	400
Prime Cut Productions	3,000
An Eochair	1,620
APAC	1,000
Belvoir Somme Association	1,000
Beyond Skin	2,250
Co-operation Ireland	3,000
Culture Night	1,000
EXIT	1,000
Green Shoot Productions	3,000
Habitat for Humanity	3,700
Irish Football Association	4,640
International Brigade Commemoration Committee	1,000
Annadale Haywood Residents Association	5,000
Ballynafeigh Community Development Association	1,000
The Corrymeela Community	3,450
Donegall Pass Community Forum	2,994
The Immaculata Junior Football	1,000
NI Children's Enterprise (NICE)	3,000
Sandy Row Community Forum	1,000
Stadium Youth & Community Projects	1,000
Taughmonagh Community Forum	3,000
Tides Training	2,000
University of Ulster	1,000
West Kirk Community Group	3,500
TOTAL	99,205

Role of the Good Relations Partnership

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

The Good Relations Partnership was established as the legal mechanism responsible for the management and administration of the funding available through the PEACE III Programme. The partnership consists of 22 members including elected members and representatives from various

sectors across the City. The Partnership meets monthly and primarily makes recommendations on funding matters to the Council's primary committee, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Partnership was established with the following terms of reference:

- to promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities, taking into account the needs of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, of men and women generally, of persons with a disability and persons without and of persons with dependants and persons without;**
- to promote tolerance and understanding throughout the City by providing support, including the equitable use of available budgets, for appropriate initiatives which celebrate the cultural diversity of Belfast;**
- to promote good relations between people of different religious and political beliefs and different racial groups in every aspect of Council activities; and**
- to use the Council's influence as a democratically elected body, providing civic leadership to the City, to promote good relations throughout society.**

The Partnership is formally established as a Working Group of the Council's Strategic Policy & Resources Committee. As such, all recommendations of the Partnership will be subject to the agreement of that Committee and to ratification by the full Council.

A specific Partnership Agreement has been put in place to cover the administration of Peace III funding in Belfast. This states that the Partnership shall have responsibility for endorsing the Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan, for the overall management of Belfast City Council's element of the Peace III Programme, for establishing the criteria to be used in determining applications for funding and for approving funding applications.

Members of the Partnership are required to act as representatives for the various sectors from which they have been nominated or selected and are expected to report regularly to their 'constituents', to ensure good ongoing feedback, consultation, and accountability. In a recent review of the Partnership, a number of issues were identified in relation to the Partnership and its roles and responsibilities, some of the key comments are listed in the following table:

<u>Issues Raised</u>	<u>Suggestions</u>
<p>Lack of clarity of role of members</p> <p>Lack of awareness of knowledge, skills and contacts residing in the Partnership through its members</p> <p>Recognition of the role of all Partnership members</p> <p>The need to extend networks and establish more solid partnerships</p> <p>How the allocation of grants is tracked and assessed and reported, to identify who receives what</p> <p>Build in flexibility to adjust strategy and address gaps as they arise</p> <p>Changing the structure of Partnership meetings to allow for more discussion on issues.</p>	<p>More regular review events to bring members together to discuss the Action Plan / get to know each other</p> <p>Increasing the length of the meeting to 1.5 hours to allow for greater discussion, visiting presentations</p> <p>Change the structure of meetings to quickly ratify routine decisions made by Partnership staff within policy guidelines e.g. small grant awards to allow more time for discussion, review and strategic decisions</p> <p>Add in 'issues of concern' to the Agenda</p> <p>Where emergency issues arise, an emergency meeting of the Partnership should be called (use email, voice mail, text message to alert members)</p> <p>Final wording of press releases issued in relation to good relations should be circulated to Partnership members for comment or at least for information</p> <p>Promote the Partnership through City Matters article, highlight its uniqueness and role</p>

2 Key Issues

Prior to the establishment of the Partnership, the Council ran a Good Relations Steering Panel, which had similar responsibilities to the Good Relations Partnership in relation to the Council's core Good Relations Programme.

In 2006, Futureways, based at the University of Ulster delivered a report on the possible role of the Good Relations Steering panel. The Panel was highlighted as having the potential to provide the following:

1. a space to shift sensitive discussions out of the political arena and give time to sensitively work through issues around memorabilia, symbols and emblems within the Council as well as territory marking within the City and wider cultural events such as St. Patrick's Day.
2. a structure for elected members to engage in discussions one-step removed from the Council Chamber.
3. a first step in locating good relations at the heart of policy making within the Council.
4. an opportunity for civic members to critically engage with the Council on a theme which impacts on the quality of life of all of the City's citizens as well as the future sustainability

The report asserted the primacy of political decision making and accountability in matters of promoting Good Relations in Belfast. However, it also made very clear that this does not preclude the need for spaces to be provided where political and civic interests explore sensitive topics. This is particularly important with regards to sensitive issues such as cultural expression and identity, parades, sectarianism, racism and other Good Relations issues. It also stressed the importance of such a space where public resources are being allocated in supporting initiatives with regard to these issues for the city as a whole.

The report also suggested that there should be a civic space promoted with a wide range of civic groups from business, trade union, voluntary and community, faith, single issue, youth and cultural groups to promote and develop civic life in Belfast. The three areas deemed as being essential spaces for engagement were identified as:

1. The Political where Councillors make decisions and centrally acknowledge that collective political responsibility is essential to future good relations however contentious these deliberations might be.
2. The Public where citizens from political and civic perspectives engage in robust discussions to assist Council to learn about Good Relations
3. The Civic where the Council invites people from diverse public and civic agencies with the will, influence, power and networks to learn together and effect strategic change around the good relations theme across the city.

Current practice

The structures envisaged from previous reports have been well established and the membership of the previous Good Relations Steering Panel and the Good Relations Partnership reflect previous suggestions and recommendations. Therefore the structure and membership of the current Good Relations Partnership are well established and in line with previous recommendations.

However, the current practice of the Good Relations Partnership primarily consists of 3 main areas of focus:

1. To receive reports from Council officers and to make recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the basis of the information provided in the reports. There is scope and time for discussion on each report, with clarification and questioning regularly informing the discussion. Reports are then recommended for approval, deferral or rejection by the partnership.
2. Presentations by funded groups on the progress of their funded project occur monthly to provide the partnership with a flavour of how funding is being used at a project level.
3. Participation by members in review sessions, assessments and training

On occasion over the last number of years, Partnership members have expressed concern at the volume of reports being presented at meetings and the time of the meeting that this consumes. Some have felt that there has been little time for discussion and that the 'business end' of things has become the main function of the meeting. In the recent review detailed above, desire has been expressed to create a more dynamic Partnership that could be the primary voice for Good Relations in the City and that the Partnership could do so much more to be a positive vehicle that would promote Good Relations within wider civic society and comment on Good Relations issues as a collective. In addition, while the Council may have got the structure of the Partnership right on a political and functional level, the business of the meetings has not enabled the public and civic elements recommended in the Futureways report to take shape. Therein lies an important opportunity for the Partnership to develop as envisaged from previous consultations.

3 Resource Implications

None.

4 Equality and Good Relations Considerations

This proposal seeks to advance an effective forum and voice for Good Relations within the City.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the current Good Relations Partnership model should be enhanced to incorporate a wider collective civic space for discussion on Good Relations issues for the City.

Role:

To assist the elected political leadership of the Council, staff, diverse civil society interests and partnering agencies to engage pro-actively on Good Relations issues on behalf of citizens and be a collective voice, promoting a common vision for Good Relations in the City.

Remit and purpose:

- To enable ongoing engagement take place between the members on:
- How Good Relations for the citizens of Belfast could be promoted
- How Good Relations can be advanced through complementary working between members
- How best to use the financial resources of the Council to create maximum positive impact in the promotion of Good Relations

Format:

- Monthly meeting continue
- The first section of the meeting would involve routine matters and consideration of reports and recommendations
- The second section of the meeting would provide a forum for discussion on a specific theme (agreed in advance) with the possibility of a presentation from an external group opening the discussion
- The final section of this discussion element could be devoted to current issues that might require some discussion and advocacy and the development of an agreed position.

Proposed Good Relations Partnership agenda and approximate timescale
1. Minutes of the last meeting, matters arising, routine matters – 10 minutes
2. Partnership formal business – consideration of reports – 45-60 minutes
3. Discussion topic – opening with a presentation – 20 minutes
4. Any other business – open forum – 10 minutes”

The Partnership adopted the recommendations with the additional advocacy task in the promotion of Good Relations work.

Alexandra Park – Opening of Peace Wall

The Partnership noted the receipt of an invitation to the official opening of the Alexandra Park ‘Peace Wall’, which had been erected in 1994. It was noted that the event would take place on Friday, 16th September and would be attended by the Minister for Justice, Mr. David Ford M.L.A. The Partnership welcomed the fact that this event would see the opening, on a trial basis, of the first such ‘Peace Wall’ in Belfast since the calling of the paramilitary ceasefires.

Inner East Local Area Area Network

The Partnership noted the contents of a letter which had been received from the Inner East Local Area Area Network which outlined its concerns in respect of a delay in the confirmation of funding towards the continuation of an interface project within the area.

Chairman