

MEETING OF SPECIAL HISTORIC CENTENARIES WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting of Monday, 14th November, 2011

Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Hanna, Kyle, Maskey and Reynolds.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. J. Walsh, Legal Services Manager;
Ms. E. Boyle, Policy and Business Manager;
Ms. A. Deighan, Good Relations Officer;
Mr. R. Corbett, Records Manager; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland – Request to Use Strangford Avenue Playing Fields

The Working Group was reminded that the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland had, on 10th October, written to the Council's Director of Parks and Leisure requesting that it be granted the use of Strangford Avenue Playing Fields for the holding of a demonstration, on Saturday, 29th September, 2012 to mark the centenary of the signing of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant. It was pointed out that the Parks and Leisure Committee had, at its meeting on 10th November, noted that the aforementioned request would be considered, in the first instance, by the Working Group with a view to it making a recommendation for consideration by that Committee at its meeting on 6th December. It was reported that Mr. D. Hume, Mr. J. Mattison and Mr. G. Chittick, representing the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairman (Councillor Hendron).

Mr. Hume provided the Working Group with an outline of the proposed demonstration and indicated that the Grand Orange Lodge believed that the Strangford Avenue Playing Fields (Playing Fields), rather than the Ormeau Park or Barnett Demesne, would be the most suitable venue for the holding of the event. He reminded the Members that the Playing Fields had been the venue in September, 1990 for the demonstration to commemorate the tercentenary of the Battle of the Boyne and, on that occasion, there had been approximately 50,000 people in attendance. He added that the location of the Playing Fields would, given its proximity to Boucher Road and the M1 Motorway, assist in the prompt dispersal of participants after the event, especially for those lodges from outside Belfast.

In respect of the plans for the event, Mr. Hume explained that the Belfast-based lodges would, in accordance with the annual 12th July demonstration, depart from Clifton Street Orange Hall at 10.30 a.m. on the morning of 29th September. The other County Grand lodges would assemble in the Sandy Row area and depart at 10.45 a.m., proceeding via Great Victoria Street to meet up with the Belfast lodges at approximately 11.00 a.m. at Donegall Square. The demonstration would then proceed along Donegall Square West, Bedford Street, Dublin Road, Bradbury Place and onwards to the Playing Fields via the Lisburn Road and Balmoral Avenue. Mr. Chittick indicated that he anticipated that upwards of 40,000 people would take part in the parade and confirmed that the Belfast-based lodges would proceed through the City Centre on the return leg of the event and onwards to their local districts.

Regarding arrangements for the Grand Orange Lodge's demonstration to coincide with an anticipated re-enactment of the signing of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant in the City Hall on the morning of 29th September, Mr. Hume indicated that he was aware of the Joint Unionist Centenary Committee's plans in this regard. However, he added that, whilst the Orange Order might consider incorporating this event within its own demonstration, he was, at this stage, unsure of the actual logistics for the re-enactment on the morning of 29th September. He indicated that further discussions would be undertaken with the Centenary Committee and pointed out that the potential existed for moving the re-enactment event to Friday, 28th September, which was the actual centenary of the signing.

A Member pointed out that the scale of the event anticipated might contribute to community strife at a number of recognised flashpoint areas in the City, specifically at Ardoyne, the Lower Newtownards Road and the Whiterock area. He stated that it was now anticipated that three major demonstrations would take place during 2012 and that this could create additional difficulties for communities affected by the demonstrations.

The deputation from the Grand Orange Lodge thanked the Working Group for receiving them and they retired from the meeting.

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Working Group that intensive work would be undertaken over the forthcoming weeks to create an agreed Council diversity policy. She tabled for the information of the Members a report in this regard which would be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18th November. She outlined the principal aspects of the report and pointed out that it was anticipated that the Working Group, in conjunction with the Political Party Leaders, would work to develop a commonly-agreed policy, or 'charter of principles', which could be applied to all the Council's activities, including the work of the Historic Centenaries Working Group.

Concern was expressed by a number of Members in respect of the proposals outlined for the establishment of an over-arching Council diversity policy. The point was made that the Working Group had already agreed and adopted its own set of principles, which had been endorsed by the Council on 1st November, and the proposed diversity policy could impact upon those principles and serve to undermine the work of the Members thus far. A further Member indicated that there was little or no rationale for the Council to proceed in this manner and subject the Grand Orange Lodge to a further delay in respect of its request to use Strangford Avenue Playing Fields. He added that, given the Council's current governance arrangements, it would be feasible to suggest that any new policy would not be adopted formally until, perhaps, March or April 2012. He pointed out that, should such a delay be encountered, it would impact logistically on the Grand Orange Lodge's plans for the September event.

However, other Members welcomed the fact that the Political Party Leaders would work in conjunction with the Working Group in the formulation of a diversity policy. It was suggested that such a development would be positive and would add authority and a higher level of political guidance to any forthcoming discussions.

After further discussion, the Working Group agreed to defer consideration of the request by the Grand Orange Lodge for the use of Strangford Avenue Playing Fields to enable further information to be obtained regarding its plans for Saturday 29th September, 2012 and to permit work on the development of the Council's diversity policy to be completed. In addition, the following was agreed:

- that the Director of Parks and Leisure investigate the feasibility of Strangford Avenue Playing Fields hosting an event comprising of upwards of 40,000 participants; and
- that a request be made to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that any decisions taken or recommendations made thus far by the Working Group should not be impacted upon adversely by the establishment of a Council diversity policy and that work to develop this policy be completed as soon as possible.

Historic Centenaries Working Group – Current Position

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that there was confusion at the last meeting regarding what had been agreed.

This report aims to set out and clarify what has been agreed to date by the Centenaries Working Group in relation to the Decade of Centenaries 2012-2022 and to clarify what decisions have yet to be agreed.

2.0 Set of Principles

At its meeting on 17th October 2011 the Working Group agreed that the following set of principles should be used in the selection of events to be marked. These principles were agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st October 2011 and adopted by the Council on 1st November 2011.

‘The decade in question marks a number of particularly significant dates that have shaped the history of Northern Ireland and Ireland and therefore our own identities and cultures – see list previously circulated.

The marking of these events provides the Council with an excellent opportunity to broaden our understanding of the past and our respect for the complexity of our shared history.

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As a shared city in the twenty-first century, we should be able to deal with difference in a positive and constructive manner, demonstrating openness on the basis of shared civic values within a democracy and a mature respect for cultural diversity within our heritage.'

- **'Events supported by the Council should provide opportunities to include a range of different perspectives and ideologies, rather than a single viewpoint, aiming to increase understanding and appreciation of other perspectives and identities**
- **They should be based on historic accuracy, robust academic expertise and critical analysis – engagement with universities, museums, libraries, PRONI etc is essential to ensure this evidence base**
- **The interpretation of events should be in a broad historical context and understanding of the national and European setting of the time**
- **The Council should develop strong links with other institutions – i.e. museums, libraries, PRONI and other relevant organisations, to ensure that there is no duplication and that events and programmes are complementary**
- **We will provide/support a range of different types of events – from lectures, discussions, debates to films, drama, activities that attract schools and children/families etc – so that events can not only be educational but participative, creative and enjoyable**
- **We will provide/support events and activities that are not exclusive but are welcoming to all sections of our increasingly diverse community in Belfast.**
- **The Council, committed both to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in the City, will not support events or activities that could be deemed to be triumphalist, to deepen or harden existing divisions, or belittle or demonise other groups*.'**

(*Adapted from the Irish School of Ecumenics, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism* research)

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed that these principles should apply to any key anniversaries being marked by the Council – in other words, they will be applied corporately, across the Council.

The Working Group will be aware that the terms “provide and/or support” include the provision of direct funding, or the use of facilities, premises or public spaces owned or run by the Council, so similarly, will apply across the Council.

3.0 Programme of events

At its meeting on 17th October 2011 the Working Group agreed that the following programme of key events should be adopted. This programme was agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21st October 2011 and adopted by the Council on 1st November 2011.

The programme should be divided into 3 strands in chronological order:

1912 – 1914; 1914 – 1918; and 1918 – 1922.

1. The first period, 1912-1914, would be entitled “Shared History, Differing Allegiances” and would include the following events:
 - the rise of the women’s suffrage movement
 - the rise of the labour movement
 - the emergence of the Gaelic revival
 - the signing of the Ulster Covenant
 - the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)
 - the ITGWU strike (lockout) in Dublin
 - the formation of the Irish Citizen Army
 - the formation of the Irish Volunteers (IVF)
 - gun-running by both the UVF and IVF.
2. The second period, 1914-1918, would cover the period of World War I, including the Somme and the Easter Rising.
3. The third period, 1918-1922, would cover the establishment of both governments in Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State.

4.0 Exhibitions

Major exhibitions would be commissioned for the following 3 key events:

- The Signing of the Ulster Covenant and the Home Rule Crisis and covering all the individual events for that period listed above. The East Entrance area has already been booked from August – December 2012 for this purpose.

- The Battle of the Somme
- The Easter Rising.

5.0 Civic hospitality

The Council has agreed with the recommendation from the Working Group that it should take the lead in hosting a civic dinner to mark each of the three key historical events in the programme round which major exhibitions would be commissioned – i.e. as above:

- the Signing of the Ulster Covenant and the Home Rule Crisis
- the Battle of the Somme and
- the Easter Rising.

In each case, the Council would be responsible for the invitation list and would ensure that this was broadly based and as inclusive as possible. Appropriate civic hospitality would be provided as appropriate for supplementary events in the programme, such as lectures, drama productions and so on.

The Council has also agreed that external organisations that wish to apply for the use of the City Hall for the holding of events or provision of hospitality associated with keynote anniversaries would be encouraged to do so in accordance with the Council's own guidelines for the use of the building and subject to approval in the normal way by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. (The Working Group is reminded that all of this is currently under review).

6.0 Additional events

The Council has also agreed that in the period 2012-2014, in addition to the exhibition for the period and the civic dinner, there should be additional events to mark:

- the signing of the Ulster Covenant
- the rise of the women's suffrage movement and
- the rise of the labour movement in Belfast.

a The signing of the Ulster Covenant

The Working Group agreed that in view of the important role played by both the City Hall and Ulster Hall in the Covenant signing, that lectures e.g. on the life of Edward Carson or Joe Devlin be arranged. The text of the Ulster Covenant could be compared with that of the Irish Proclamation of 1916 and the parallels between the two examined.

b The rise of the women's suffrage movement

The Working Group had agreed that this theme could be linked to the wider work of the Council, and in particular to the current imbalance within City Hall of memorabilia or items relating specifically to women. A drama production and archive photographs could be displayed, supplemented by details on women in the Council and in broader political and civic life over the period 1971-2011.

c The rise of the labour movement in Belfast

This theme could also be linked to the wider work of the Council within the promotion of the concept of shared history.

In fact, both of the themes b) and c) have been proposed within the broader context of City Hall memorabilia and have received broad political agreement and support.

Without wishing to prejudge the results of the Equality Impact Assessment currently underway on City Hall memorabilia, it is proposed therefore that further work on both themes – of women and the labour movement - be undertaken with a more detailed report and proposals to be submitted to the Working Group early in the New Year.

7.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

The Working Group has agreed that the Decade provides an opportunity for the Council to contribute to a better understanding of the past and to promote respect for the complexity of our shared history.

If the programme is undertaken on accordance with the principles adopted it should have positive implications in terms of the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

8.0 Financial Implications

An estimated budget for the period 2012- 2014 is attached as Appendix A.

I have discussed this with the Director of Finance and Resaources and he has agreed that an appropriate budget stream of approximately £50,000 per year for the period 2012-2014 should be developed to support this work.

9.0 Diversity strategy

I understand that there has been some discussion about the possibility of the principles agreed by this Working Group being extended across the Council in the context of the development of a broader diversity strategy. The party group leaders may attend future meetings of the Centenaries Working Group for discussion on this issue.

10.0 Recommendations

To note the contents of this report

- To agree that an officer based Working Group, consisting of Council officers and representatives from appropriate external partner agencies, be set up to prepare an appropriate specification and invite submissions for the commissioning of an exhibition on the period 1912-1914 – the Signing of the Ulster Covenant and Home Rule Crisis as agreed
 - I.
 - To agree that a report outlining additional events to be held in the period 2012-2014 be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group in January 2012.

Appendix A

**Budget required for Centenaries Working Group –
Decade of Centenaries 2012-2014 period –
anticipated expenditure (over 2 year period):**

**Estimated cost
£:**

Exhibition covering period, including:

the rise of the women's suffrage movement	25,000
the rise of the labour movement	
the emergence of the Gaelic revival	
the signing of the Ulster Covenant	
the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)	
the ITGWU strike (lockout) in Dublin	
the formation of the Irish Citizen Army	
the formation of the Irish Volunteers (IVF)	
gun-running by both the UVF and IVF	

Artwork/drama/lectures to mark key events:

the rise of the women's suffrage movement	10,000
the rise of the labour movement	10,000
Community outreach/educational programme	6,000
DVD, including copyright and production costs	10,000
Publications	6,000

Hospitality

Civic Dinner to mark occasion of Signing of Covenant	20,000
Hospitality to mark other key events/launches	12,000
TOTAL	99,000”

During discussion, a Member made the point that the three significant anniversaries which the Working Group had agreed to acknowledge through the hosting of civic dinners and the mounting of prominent exhibitions viz., the Signing of the Solemn League and Covenant / Home Rule Crisis; the Battle of the Somme; and the 1916 Easter Rising might be interpreted as being somewhat imbalanced. He suggested that the Working Group might consider enhancing the list of significant anniversaries to incorporate a further event which would allay such a perception. In response, Members pointed out that the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, had endorsed the Working Group’s principles and its selection of events to be marked and that it would be inappropriate at this stage to seek to amend it.

The Working Group adopted the recommendations as set out in the report.

**Criteria for the Use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Civic Hospitality**

The Working Group noted the contents of the Council’s criteria for the use of the City Hall and the provision of civic hospitality, copies of which had been requested for information by the Members at the meeting on 26th October. It was noted further that a corporate review was ongoing currently in respect of the criteria.

Parades Commission

The Good Relations Manager tabled for the information of the Members a letter which had been received by the Council from Mr. Peter Osborne, Chairman of the Parades Commission. She explained that Mr. Osborne had indicated that the Parades Commission was conscious of the forthcoming decade of centenaries and was keen to engage with a range of bodies and agencies to ensure that any related commemoration events passed off without major incident. She explained that the Parades Commission had indicated its willingness to meet with Members and officers of the Council to discuss these matters and suggested that it might be appropriate for the Working Group to agree to accept the offer.

The Working Group agreed to invite the representatives of the Parades Commission to attend a future meeting.

Chairman