

Statement on Diversity

Good relations and equality are central to Belfast City Council's vision for the city, underpinned by fairness and respect. We want Belfast to be a dynamic and diverse city that belongs to everyone but is bigger than any one of its parts. Only by recognising and respecting the individuality of our citizens can we maintain the city's unique qualities while ensuring both our citizens and the city achieve their full future potential.

Our vision is for a stable, tolerant, fair and inclusive society, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner. The Council understands 'diversity' to be an inclusive concept and is about recognising, respecting and valuing difference, between both individuals and groups.

We welcome diversity and strive to manage it effectively. It enhances our reputation as an organisation and, importantly, as a city. By respecting and valuing diversity we are more likely to attract talent and fresh perspectives, nurture creativity, innovation and flexibility as well as developing new opportunities and sources of support, so that we remain a dynamic, shared, outward-looking city and organisation.

Principles to be used in assessment of applications for the use of City Hall for events linked to the Decade of Centenaries 2012- 2022

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. The Council has already agreed a set of principles which are to be applied to events being organised by the Council which are in keeping with the statement on diversity set out above. It is now important to establish some broad principles which will be applied to requests for the use of the City Hall by outside organisations for events linked to the Decade of Centenaries.

These events should assist the Council in its aim to broaden understanding of the past and respect for the complexity of our shared history.

As a shared city in the twenty-first century, the Council acknowledges that 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 organised by outside organisations will be supported by the Council where, so far as is practicable, the organisers have demonstrated that the event complies with the following principles:

- The event should be based on historic accuracy, robust academic expertise and critical analysis and provide opportunities, where appropriate, to include a range of different perspectives and aim to increase understanding and appreciation of other perspectives and identities.

- The interpretation of events should be in a broad historical context and understanding of the national and European setting of the time.
- The event must not be triumphalist in nature nor should it give rise to offense to any section of the community. It should not serve to deepen or harden existing divisions or belittle or demonise other groups
- The event must seek to be inclusive and should be welcoming to all sections of our increasingly diverse community in Belfast. In order to demonstrate this, the invitations to the event should include all Members of the Council (where the size of the event permits) or representatives of all political parties on the Council as well as representatives of all churches and minority ethnic groups in the city.
- Organisers must ensure that at the event there are no commemorations or displays relating to recent paramilitary activities or organisations, cloaked in broader identity issues.
- The Council has a duty of care to our staff employed to work in supporting and servicing such events. Therefore, organisers of private events in the City Hall should avoid actions, behaviours or displays which would fall within the definition of harassment as outlined in Article 3A of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.
- The organisers should be aware of the Council's agreed statement on diversity and ensure that the event is consistent with it.