

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY, 10th SEPTEMBER, 2012

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

- Members present: Councillor Kyle (Deputy Chairman);
Alderman Stoker; and
Councillors Attwood, McVeigh and Reynolds.
- External Members: Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Archdeacon B. Dodds, Church of Ireland;
Mr. R. Galway, Confederation of British
Industry/Shorts Bombardier;
Ms. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast and District Trades Council;
Mr. B. McGivern, Belfast City Centre Management;
Mr. M. O'Donnell, Belfast Regeneration Office;
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church;
Ms. M. De Silva, Voluntary/Community Sector; and
Mr. U. Tok, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum.
- Also attended: Ms. D. O'Loan, Community Relations Council / Pobal.
- In attendance: Mrs. H. Francey, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. I. May, Peace III Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Senior Good Relations Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from the Chairman (Councillor Hendron), Ms. O. Barron, Mr. P. Bunting, Ms. A. Chada and Ms. M. Marken.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th August were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

Mr. S. Brennan declared an interest in respect of agenda item 6, viz., Annual Review of the Bonfire Management Programme, in that he was seconded currently to Groundwork NI, which was managing the Programme on behalf of the Council, and took no part in the discussion.

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Local Area Network Programme

The Partnership welcomed to the meeting Ms. D. Crawford and Mr J. Read from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Unit who, together with Ms. J. Hawthorne, had been invited to provide an update on the Executive's Local Area Network Programme.

Ms. Hawthorne informed the Partnership that the Programme sought to:

- establish a mechanism to provide an integrated and co-ordinated approach to support areas where diversity was welcomed and celebrated;
- mainstream good relations within and between communities in order to contribute towards a more shared community;
- provide real opportunities for people who wish to live in a shared neighbourhood;
- develop a community engaged in meaningful dialogue towards mutual understanding; and
- draw out best practice to inform and influence a social policy framework.

She reported that the first phase of the initiative, which had concluded in July, 2011, had been delivered in Inner East Belfast and Inner South Belfast. She reviewed the main successes within each of those areas which, in the case of Inner East Belfast, had included the production, in line with the Community Cohesion Unit's Race Relations Strategy, of a welcome pack for residents and the provision by the Housing Executive of space to Habitat for Humanity for the development of a habitat scheme at the Madrid Street Interface. In relation to Inner South Belfast, funding had been provided to the Markets Development Association to undertake a feasibility study and economic appraisal in connection with the Tunnels Project and support had been given to three communities involved in a project to deliver shared services in Coyle's Place.

She stated that an evaluation by the Belfast Interface Project of Phase 1 of the Programme had indicated that a firm foundation for promoting community cohesion in both Inner East Belfast and Inner South Belfast had been laid and that it had been shown consistently that the relationships formed were genuine and that the groups involved had shared goals for promoting the quality of life. It had indicated also that the tangible outcomes of the projects undertaken within the Programme were visible in, for example, the legacy of the re-imaging programmes and the DVD which had been produced and in the continued co-operation of residents and group leaders. Genuine skills had been developed in terms of the training delivered and social mixing was promoted in the dialogue projects and, in many cases, the wide scope of activities had been instrumental in attracting new participants. Finally, the Programme had gained awards and had attracted media attention, both of which had brought positive attention to the area and reinforced the constructive work taking place on the interface.

Ms. Hawthorne reported further that Phase 2 of the Local Area Network Programme had now commenced in West Belfast and that it would be delivered through the Black Mountain Shared Space Project. A Black Mountain Local Area Network, whose membership was comprised of both communities, had now been established and

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a Partnership Agreement had been signed in March. She confirmed that the initiative was in line with the Programme being undertaken in the Black Mountain and Upper Springfield areas by the Building Relationships in Communities Programme and that the Network had submitted an application for funding under the International Fund for Ireland's Peace Walls programme. In terms of North Belfast, she explained that initial discussions had taken place with the Wishing Well Family Centre and the Ardoyne Women's Group and that there was now a willingness to establish an Ardoyne/Upper Ardoyne Local Area Network. Wider discussions were taking place also with key community stakeholders and there was a general commitment to developing partnerships and working to sign up to a partnership agreement. She confirmed that, as had been the case with Phase 1 of the Programme, £50,000 would be provided from the Good Relations Partnership to undertake the Programme within each of the two Local Area Networks.

After discussion, the Partnership noted the information which had been provided in relation to the Local Area Network Programme and approved the progression of Ardoyne/Upper Ardoyne as the Local Area Network for North Belfast.

Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012-2015

The Partnership was advised that Ms. C. Mathers, Tourism, Culture and Arts Development Officer, and Ms. J. Smith, Tourism, Culture and Arts Assistant Manager, were in attendance in order to provide an update on the Councils Cultural Framework 2012-2015 and they were welcomed to the meeting.

The Tourism, Culture and Arts Assistant Manager informed the Partnership that the culture and arts scene had developed rapidly in Belfast over the past number of years and that the Council funded currently over 70 organisations. She explained that £8 of income was generated for every £1 spent by the Council and that creative and cultural industries were worth £582 million to the economy each year. She explained that, in addition to the economic benefits, culture and arts improved also the quality of life in so far as it developed self-confidence, pride and well-being and pointed out that, since 2007, 550,000 people had participated in both areas.

She explained that the vision of the Cultural Framework stated that, by 2020, everyone in Belfast would experience and be inspired by the City's vibrant and distinctive culture and arts and that arts and heritage were valued for enriching quality of life and creating wealth, and that the City's culture and creativity would be renowned throughout the world. She explained that the Council had identified a number of key commitments to be covered within the Framework and that corresponding activities had been prioritised under the themes of Distinctly Belfast, Inspiring Communities, Attracting Audiences and Strengthening the Sector. She provided a brief overview of each of the themes, which included positioning culture and arts at the heart of Belfast's narrative, removing barriers to participation, promoting Belfast as a diverse and dynamic cultural city and providing opportunities for organisations to develop and diversify their income streams. Various levels of funding which would be made available under the Framework for core work, one-off projects, community festival activity and large-scale cross-cutting partnership projects.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Peace III – Implementation Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Purpose of Report

To update the Partnership on implementation of the Belfast PEACE III Plan.

Progress on Phase II projects

Shared City Space

The Arterial Routes East Project (037808) is progressing with a revised timescale of August 2012 to March 2013. The Community Cohesion Local Area Networks (034228) project has completed the scoping study and identified project partners for the North Local Area Network. The Partnership is requested to approve the commencement of this Local Area Network as part of the project.

Transforming Contested Space

The Interfaces Programme (037807) has commenced with initial consultation underway. The Tension Monitoring Programme (034052) has recruited project staff and has commenced a procurement exercise for intervention and advocacy services. The interim evaluation of the Promoting Positive Expression of Cultural Heritage Project (034050) has recently been prepared and is the subject of a separate report.

Shared Cultural Space

Eight contracts are underway as part of the City of Festivals project (034060), with £160,000 committed. The project promoter (Council’s Tourism, Culture & Arts Unit), mindful of the tight timeframe for delivery have requested a change in approach to allow for commitment of the balance of the project budget (approximately £40,000). The intention is to conduct an additional procurement exercise to identify up to a further four projects to deliver festival related audience development activity in 2013. The proposed change would help achieve the target of supporting 14 large festivals with 1,500 participants as well as furthering the cross border dimension of the project.

Procurement of delivery partners for the Creative Legacies Project (034064) was due to commence on 7th September.

Shared Organisational Space

All letters of offer have been issued under the Strategic Grants Programme.

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Meeting of all Projects

19 of the 22 Phase II projects attended a meeting on 29th August. Issues discussed included:

- The new procurement regime in effect from 1st August;
- The Aid for Peace methodology and the monitoring and evaluation framework for Phase II. This session considered the needs addressed by the projects, relevance of project activities, approach to risk management and assessment of project impact;
- Developing links with Good Relations Partnership Members.

Communications Activity

A new edition of the Belfast PEACE III Newsletter has been prepared and circulated. This includes information on the Strategic Grants Projects, the Investment Programme and the Growing Respect Project.

Consortium Update

The Community Relations Council and POBAL are planning a meeting for PEACE III Partnerships on 2nd October at the Maze Long Kesh site. Agenda Items will include exchange of best practice, possible extension of Phase II period, and discussion of potential for a PEACE IV Programme.

Consultation on EU Structural Funds 2014-2020

A public consultation on the European Territorial Co-Operation Programmes for 2014 – 2020, was launched by the Special EU Programmes Body on 28th August, 2012. These programmes are:

- EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2014 – 2020 (PEACE IV) and;
- EU Programme for Cross-Border Territorial Cooperation (Ireland / Northern Ireland / Scotland) 2014 - 2020 (INTERREG V).

The public consultation is to obtain the views of key stakeholders and members of the general public on the content, implementation and delivery mechanisms for the new programmes. An information event is being held on 18th September at the Europa Hotel, Belfast commencing at 10.00am. Members wishing to attend are asked to confirm by email to consultation@seupb.eu. The consultation period will close on 20th November, 2012.

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Resource Implications

Financial Implications

None at present

HR Implications

None at present

Equality Implications

None at present

Recommendation

The Partnership is requested

- (i) to note the information provided relating to implementation of the Belfast PEACE III Plan.**
- (ii) approve the procurement exercise relating to the City of Festivals Project (034060).**
- (iii) The Partnership is requested to approve the commencement of activity on the second Local Area Network under the Community Cohesion Project (034228)."**

After discussion, during which it was confirmed that information on those projects which had been completed under Phase I of the Belfast Peace III Plan would be included within a future edition of the Belfast Peace III Newsletter, the Partnership adopted the recommendations.

**Peace III – Growing a Shared City:
Community Planning Seminars and Members' Visits**

The Good Relations Manager reminded the Partnership that the Growing a Shared City project was funded through the Peace III theme which sought to develop the key institutional capacities required for a shared society. She reported that the project was due to end in December, 2012 and that it had attained a number of notable outputs, including the facilitation of workshops on topics related to partnership working, equality and efficiency, the holding of seminars exploring diversity and engagement and the development of a diversity e-learning package. The context for the project, which had focused upon engagement and collaboration, had contributed to the organisational development of the Council in preparation for community planning, which the Northern Ireland Executive had indicated would fall under the remit of local Councils.

She reported further that, in order to build on the work which had been achieved under the Big Lottery Fund project, three breakfast seminars would take place in the City Hall in October and November to discuss issues around the project and community

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planning. This would complement a best practice study visit by the Reference Group on Community Planning to Edinburgh and Dundee Councils in Scotland which was taking place in October. The Good Relations Manager pointed out that the visit would be beneficial in so far as the Scottish Government had, in 2003, introduced a formal duty of community planning and there had, subsequently, been significant developments in best practice and learning in both policy and implementation. She stated that invitations to attend the breakfast seminars had been extended to the Partnership and confirmed that both events would be in line with the overall aim of the Growing a Shared City project, in terms of developing key institutional capacity for a shared society. The cost of holding the breakfast seminars would be met in full from Peace III funding, and that it would partially fund the study visit to Scotland.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Annual Review of the Bonfire Management Programme

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

1 Members will be aware of the Council’s work around the issue of bonfires, which has been undertaken in the past eight 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**
- **paramilitary displays at bonfire events 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, early collection of material**
- **greater awareness about environmental issues such as the burning of tyres.**

There was also a desire within a number of communities to address many of the negative elements around bonfires and create better bonfire management as a positive form of expression of cultural heritage on the 11th July. In addition, the programme currently supports communities to develop alternatives to internment bonfires on the 8th August. An interim independent evaluation of the 2012 programme has been undertaken by the Institute for Conflict Research, who have undertaken previous evaluations that have contributed to the strengthening of the programme over the years. A copy of the evaluation has been forwarded to the Partnership and is available on the Modern.gov website.

2 In 2012, 38 bonfire groups participated on the 11th July programme (with an additional 4 communities being supported to run a festival event *instead of* a bonfire). 8 communities

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participated on the 8th August programme. Over the last 8 years, the programme has made significant inroads into all of the issues of concern when the work around bonfires first began in 2005. The current programme centres on two distinct elements:

- How to support communities in the positive celebration of their cultural heritage through better bonfire management on the 11th July
- How to support communities to provide alternative activities to bonfires on 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%
2012	72	42	58%

In relation to support for communities to develop alternatives to bonfires on the 8th August, the number of groups has increased steadily from 1 in 2005, to 4 in 2009, to 7 in 2011 and up to 8 in 2012.

- 2 **Overall programme impact**

The independent evaluation highlights that:

‘The programme continued to have a positive impact in relation to how communities celebrate their culture. There is a growing awareness within communities of the environmental impacts associated with the lighting of bonfires. In response, materials are being gathered later, tyres are no longer being burnt, and bonfire committees are taking ownership and responsibility for the appearance of their bonfire sites. There is an increasing sense that the fun days are more inclusive and have encouraged more local families in particular to attend the events. The funded events have also encouraged more local residents to become engaged in the process of positively promoting cultural heritage’.

PSNI and NIFRS Statistics

There have been continued reductions in the number of bonfire related incidents reported to the PSNI. This year the PSNI reported 'the quietest 11th July in years' according to media reports. There has also been a steady reduction in the number of NIFRS call outs to bonfires on the 11th night.

Specifically, the evaluation report notes on page 13: 'According to representatives from BCC, the PSNI and the NIFRS, the 2012 programme has largely been a success. The NIFRS reported almost a 50% reduction in 999 emergency calls for the night of the 11th of July compared to 2011. The officers maintain that this reduction in calls was due to the work of Fire Safety Officers and Fire Crews of Eastern Area Command meeting with local communities, community representatives and the bonfire builders giving advice and encouraging people to 'think safety first' – a process facilitated through the Council's programme'.

Paramilitary flags, emblems and displays

As has been the case for the last number of years, in 2012 none of the bonfires participating on the programme were bedecked with paramilitary flags/trappings.

Community Development, Volunteering and young people

This year's independent evaluation has highlighted one area of the programme's impact not featured in previous years – volunteering. Through the programme, more local people are volunteering their time to run and organise local fun-day events, develop better relationships with statutory agencies and support their local community. There is even new evidence that local groups are connecting with local churches and businesses to develop activities that involve the whole community. The role of women and young people becoming more involved in running events and activities has been particularly highlighted (see 2012 Evaluation p.18)

Burning of flags and emblems

The Partnership will be aware of media coverage of the burning of flags and an election poster. The independent report (p.11) highlights:

'The issue of burning flags, emblems and symbols at bonfires remains contentious and problematic. Although there is positive incremental progress annually now on this issue, as well as a growing awareness within communities surrounding the negativity of the practice, (where around half

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of the sites have refrained from participating in the act), a large number of sites continue to engage in it. This is a persistent and negative manifestation of cultural celebrations which has the potential to be challenged more actively through the cultural networks’.

This issue continues to present ongoing difficulties within the programme. There is growing public and media concern as to the practice among some groups in relation to this, although much incremental progress has been made on this issue to date.

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%
2012	42	18	43%

The burning of Polish flags as well as an SDLP poster of a Polish candidate in parts of East Belfast generated a lot of media and community commentary. The Partnership should note that only one of these sites was a participant on the programme this year. Staff have since already addressed these issues directly with the group concerned but it is clear that this issue requires sensitive but firm engagement in order to continue the progress made over the years. The programme will continue to engage with groups on ultimately eradicating this practice from the programme and has specifically sought engagement with bonfire groups and representatives of the Polish Association in the autumn.

One of the recommendations contained in the 2012 independent evaluation states that:

- A review of whether it is appropriate to introduce penalties for the non-compliance of specific guidelines which underpin the programme – there was a sense of frustration from some participants that those groups which flaunted guidelines were rewarded in equal measure with those who participated in all elements of the programme. Participants may want to explore options in relation to implementing measures for those groups that are reluctant to fully participate in the workings of the programme.

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Previous experience suggests that this issue is best addressed within the overall Cultural Networks process.

In addition to the above, the 2012 independent evaluation highlights the success of the internal Council bonfire officers group (see p.14) 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. This ensured a coherent approach by Council, particularly when dealing with complaints from members of the public.

Overall, the Council's intervention on bonfires has had a positive impact on participating communities, agencies and the city as a whole; the PSNI and the NIFRS highlighted one of the quietest 11th July nights ever in the City.

3 Going forward – creating change

Better bonfire management is a developing 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. This has proven to be the case in relation to use of tyres, paramilitary trappings and for a number of communities, the burning of flags and emblems. This engagement needs to be sustained in order to consolidate this and to encourage more groups to participate in the process of change.

The current project *Promoting the Positive Expression of Cultural Heritage* will continue until the end of 2013 within Phase 2 of the PEACE III Plan. The major focus is on work around the transformation of bonfires, providing additionality to the Council's own intervention, which seeks to build on the progress made to date on bonfires within the City.

This 2012 Review indicates that we continue to deliver the programme in 2013 in the same manner; i.e.:

- The Good Relations Unit continues delivery of the programme with support from the internal Council 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 and relevant Council Departments along with statutory agencies in a coordinated manner.
- Support as many traditional 11th July bonfire sites through better bonfire management as possible.

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- Continue the diversionary approach in communities on the 8th August.
- Submit a list of all proposed funded groups for either bonfire festival or diversionary programmes to the Good Relations Partnership in June 2013 for Council approval
- Complaints regarding sites on the programme will be addressed by the managing body while land-owners manage complaints regarding other bonfires on their land – eg Parks/NIHE/DRD.

In addition, adopting the recommendations contained in this 2012 independent Evaluation Report will help strengthen the programme as it moves into its final year as part of the Council's PEACE III programme.

4 Financial elements

Phase 2 of PEACE III will continue to support the delivery of the cultural networks process and the funding of community events and activities. It is proposed that the Council takes account of two essential additional elements:

1. To enable the Council to develop work with new groups on bonfires.
2. To assist with those elements of the programme that have proven to be successful over the last 8 years, that cannot command the financial support of Peace III as listed below:

Additional areas of work	Cost
A dedicated cleansing contractor	£15,000
Installation/filling/removal of beacons plus safety reports	£19,500
Bonfire frames	£3,000
Fencing	£2,500
Developmental work with new groups	£10,000
Total	£50,000

The Partnership should note that this sum of £50,000 has remained unchanged since 2005.

Resource Implications

Financial

- £300,000 under Phase 2 of the Peace III Programme (over two years - £150,000 per year) will be 100% funded by SEUPB.

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- **The continued funding of £50,000 per year (amount unchanged over the past 6 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 officer bonfires group under the Safer Cities theme.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

The programme seeks to support all communities in the positive expression of their cultural heritage where bonfires present an issue within local communities. In addition, the programme will seek to support better community relations through tackling negative cultural manifestations such as the burning of flags and emblems.

Recommendation

The Partnership is requested to:

- (a) recommend the adoption and implementation of the recommendations contained within the 2012 Independent evaluation report**
- (b) recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the continuation of the present level of Council annual funding of £50,000 in 2013 to support elements of the programme that fall outside Peace III funding**
- (c) recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the proposed delivery mechanism outlined above."**

During discussion, a Member expressed concern at the fact that some participants in the Programme had engaged in burning flags and emblems on bonfires and stated that the Council should give consideration to penalising in some way those involved. However, the point was made that the Council should continue to engage fully with the relevant groups in order to resolve the issue and that it should find some way of recognising those participants which had adhered to the conditions laid down within the Bonfire Management Programme, including the burning of flags and emblems.

In response, the Senior Good Relations Officer highlighted the significant progress which had been made since the inception of the Bonfire Management Programme and stressed that every effort was being made to extend the Programme to include other groups. He explained that the issue of burning flags and emblems would be raised at forthcoming meetings of the six Cultural Networks which managed the participating groups and undertook to submit to the meeting of the Partnership in

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November a report detailing the outcome of those discussions, together with the guidelines governing each Network's participation in the Bonfire Management Programme, and suggested ways of incentivising those groups who did not burn flags/emblems on bonfires.

The Partnership agreed, in principle, to adopt the recommendations contained within the report and agreed also that further consideration would be given to the issue of the burning of flags and emblems at its meeting in November.

**Consultation on Proposals for the Future of the
Minority Ethnic Development Fund**

The Partnership was advised that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister had issued a consultation document setting out proposals on the future of the Minority Ethnic Development Fund for the period from October, 2012 till March, 2015. The Good Relations Manager reported that the proposals had been informed by the 2011 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's evaluation of the Fund.

She explained that, until now, the Fund had been used to support work which contributed to the promotion of good relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds, the building of community cohesion and the facilitation of integration. The new proposals would focus upon the term 'integration' and whether the Minority Ethnic Development Fund was inter-cultural or multi-cultural in nature. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister had, within its consultation document, noted the need to strike a delicate balance between diversity and unity at a regional level.

Accordingly, it had proposed that the Development Fund be used to finance activity which contributed to building a sense of community and community infrastructure for people from similar cultural backgrounds. However, the proposal had noted that that activity must take place within a context which recognised the need for relationship building with the wider community.

The Good Relations Manager explained that funding totalling £1 million would be made available and that it would be distributed in line with the following three categories:

- **Tier 1: Pathfinder MEDF**: Up to £15,000 would be available annually for the development and provision of services and projects in line with the funding aims. Funding could be awarded to established community groups which were working in collaboration with minority ethnic communities.
- **Tier 2: Standard MEDF**: Up to £45,000 per annum would be made available to self-help groups and advocacy organisations which provided a level of service and integration activities. It would apply normally only to those organisations whose services were targeted at people from minority ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland.
- **Tier 3: High level MEDF**: Up to £75,000 per year would be awarded for large scale service provision for Departments and a number of large scale integration activities.

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She explained that the demand for funding would be competitive and that it would be likely to exceed the resources available, and that, in making decisions, the Selection Committee would seek to avoid funding projects which duplicated work being undertaken by other organisations. The receipt of funding from Government Departments, European Programmes or the International Fund for Ireland or from other charitable sources would be a factor also in the Committees decision-making process. It would have regard also to the geographical spread of funding and the extent to which it covered Northern Ireland.

Accordingly, she recommended that the Partnership endorse the following comments for submission to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on the future of a Minority Ethnic Development Fund 2012 – 2015:

- the Council welcomes the fact that funding is being made available from October, 2012 to March, 2015, as this longer funding timeframe will allow for greater sustainability of work within the sector;
- the Council welcomes the increased flexibility of the funding stream, allowing quarterly applications from organisations and access for smaller short-term projects;
- the Council notes that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is working on the revised Racial Equality Strategy and welcomes its forthcoming release, as it will inform the future work of the Good Relations Unit; and
- the Council urges the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to consider further the recommendations contained within the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's evaluation of the Minority Ethnic Development Fund for the inclusion of a crisis fund element and the delegation of its administration to a third party.

The Partnership endorsed the foregoing comments.

**Request from Northern Ireland for Children and Young People –
Participation Policy Statement of Intent**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

The NI Commissioner for Children and Young People has written to the Chief Executive requesting that the Council, along with all public bodies in NI, should consider and endorse a Participation Policy Statement of Intent. The Statement of Intent is aimed at including children and young people in decision-making and ensuring that they have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

The Commissioner's letter notes that there have been recent positive developments at NI Government level, including the production of the 10-year Children's Strategy and the appointment of Children's Champions in each Government Department.

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The Commissioner refers to her intention ‘to support and work towards participation practice within the public sector’; to ‘develop participation policies and mainstream them into practice’; and to include children and young people “in the planning and delivery of services that affect them.’

She attached three case studies as examples of good practice, copies of which have been circulated to the Partnership, and had requested that the Council consider and endorse her draft Participation Policy Statement of Intent.

Key Issues

Consultation and Engagement

The Council places fundamental importance on listening to and responding to the views of all Belfast residents. We undertake regular public consultation exercises to find out what people in the city think about living in Belfast. The findings from these surveys help us to renew our service commitment and shape our priorities for the future.

The Council is committed to effective consultation in general and conducts its consultation in accordance with the guidelines set out in our Equality Scheme. Our consultation list is up-dated annually and lists over 200 groups and organisations with whom we consult.

Establishment of the Youth Forum

The Council was aware of the specific need to ensure that the views of young people were taken fully into account and established a Youth Forum in March 2006 so that it could consult directly with young people regarding their views of Council issues. This Youth Forum has continued to provide a platform for young people in the city to consider Council policies and initiatives, as well as highlighting issues that they felt were important and of which the Council should be made aware.

The Youth Forum is an important vehicle through which we engage regularly with young people in the city to gauge their views and ensure their involvement in the work of the Council. The Youth Forum provides an established platform from which to promote positive, appropriate participation in decision-making and, following on from Council’s decision in June to mainstream the work of the Youth Forum, we will continue to promote best practice in civic engagement with and through children and young people.

Belfast City Council's Current Youth Forum 2010 - 2012

The Community Services Section of the Development Department co-ordinates the work of the Youth Forum.

- 1. The current membership of 36 young people will serve until 30 June 2012. Four members are drawn from each of the 9 electoral wards of the city and reflect the diversity of the city in regard to all Section 75 categories including religion, race, social background, sexual orientation and political opinion. Recruitment of a new cohort of 36 young people to serve as members of the Youth Forum will be initiated in the autumn 2012.**
- 2. Notably, each of the Political Parties within Council has a designated 'Youth Champion' who assumes a leading role within their Party Group on matters affecting young people. More specifically, each Youth Champion acts as a first point of contact for the members of the Youth Forum and plays an active role through taking part in regular participative events involving Youth Forum members. Crucially, it is this systemic connection that sets the operation of the Youth Forum apart as a mechanism that offers direct access for young people to a process of political engagement on issues of importance to them.**
- 3. With the imminent completion of the term for the current cohort of members, recent consultation with the Youth Champions has elicited a clear political consensus in regard to the proposed future work of the Youth Forum, based on a vision of an enhanced role for the Council, using the Youth Forum as a preferred mechanism, for civic engagement across the city with young people. In examining the future of the Youth Forum, Youth Champions and their political colleagues regard it as vital that a long term commitment should now be operationalised to enable the potential of the mechanism to be realised fully.**
- 4. In breaking new ground with the setting up of the Youth Forum in 2006, the Council has led from the front in terms of local authority and statutory initiatives promoting themes of participation, inclusion and citizenship, and in offering 'voice and choice' to young people. The operation of the Belfast Youth Forum has served as a model of good practice and, as such, has brought significant recognition to Council as well as attracting widespread interest, including that of the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers in regard to the setting up of a NI Youth Assembly.**

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- 5. Since its establishment in 2006, the Youth Forum has been involved in a wide range of developmental, participatory and representative activities. Learning from each cohort has been applied through a process of ongoing improvement and reflective practice to create a model tailored to the particular needs of Belfast.**
- 6. In discussions with political Youth Champions and other stakeholders, it is clear that a shared sense of opportunity exists to further develop a model of civic engagement, extending beyond the individual participation of 36 young people, that reaches out to young people in communities and groups across the city, in a two-way interactive process that connects felt needs at neighbourhood level with the formal political process within the Council as a means of addressing those needs.**
- 7. Three key workstreams, proposed by the Youth Champions and officers on the basis of the lessons learned from operational experience, are to be implemented over coming years. In short, the model seeks:**
 - to build the developmental competences of individual members**
 - to make systematic the process of engagement and political discourse with elected Members of Council**
 - to promote a process of structured engagement with individual young people, groups, and communities across the city on issues of importance to children and young people.**
- 8. A summary of the many achievements by the Youth Forum 2010 – 2012 includes:**
 - Participation in a range of Council consultation exercises and focus groups around proposed service provision including, most recently, the Council's Draft Investment Programme; this included helping to create a young people's version of the plan to facilitate discussion and, along with other youth groups, taking part in an engagement exercise on the Draft Programme.**
 - Submission of formal responses to external consultation exercises including those of the NI Arts Council, the Council for the Homeless and the Department for the Environment.**

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- **Organisation in the Council Chamber of 'Question Time' style debates with political Youth Champions on topical issues including mental health and Travellers. Eighty participants from across the city were involved on each occasion.**
- **Organising and delivering the 3rd 'Belfast - How We See It' event in City Hall which gave young people and special interest groups the opportunity to share their opinions on the issue of Hate Crime. The event was opened by the Lord Mayor and Mark Carruthers, BBC, chaired the panel composed of the Council's 6 political party Youth Champions.**
- **The 'POP' Playing Our Part Project was an intergenerational partnership between the Healthy Aging Strategic Partnership, Belfast City Council Youth Forum, Linking Generations NI and Brookvale Fold. The programme has been chosen under the Local Communities category and will be featured as a good practice example at the Public Health Annual Scientific Conference in June 2012.**
- **Discussion in sub-groups on a range of issues of interest; in the past year these have included: Titanic the Legacy; Young People's views on Public Artwork; Teen Parents; Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Young People; Young Travellers; and Homelessness and Young People.**
- **The organisation of a clothes drive for The Welcome Centre in December 2011 as part of the work of the homelessness sub-group; after collecting and sorting 66 large bin bags over £2,640 was raised.**
- **The contribution of 7849 hours of volunteering.**
- **The organisation of events attracting over 2,000 young people.**
- **Completion of accredited training including suicide awareness and prevention, conflict resolution, and alcohol and drugs awareness.**
- **The Youth Forum continues to sponsor a category of the annual Community Safety Young People Awards and established a small project team that contributed towards the planning.**

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- **Assembling a working group to work closely with the Children & Young People's Co-ordinator towards organising the annual outdoor summer event 'Party in the Park' in August 2012. This inclusive event is aimed at young people aged 12-17 from youth organisations, clubs and summer schemes operating across the city. The theme this year is 'Celebrate Youth Culture'. This positive event attracts over 650 young people each year into one of Belfast's finest parks.**
- **Continued involvement with the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly panel and supporting the proposal for the establishment of a Northern Ireland Youth Assembly at Stormont.**

Resource Implications

None.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

Any implications from the Council's endorsement of this *Policy Statement* would be positive.

Recommendation

It is clear that the Council is well placed to endorse the *Participation Policy Statement of Intent*. We will continue to support the Youth Forum and to work through and alongside other public bodies in promoting best practice in matters relating to children and young people.

The Partnership is requested to recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that it approve the attached proposed draft response and that the Council sign up to the *Participation Policy Statement of Intent* as requested.

PARTICIPATION POLICY STATEMENT OF INTENT

Participation of children and young people is not a tick box objective; it is a process through which Belfast City Council uses to achieve its objectives;

What does this document do?

This document outlines our commitment to involve children and young people in the work that we do. It pays due regard to current local, national and international legislation/ conventions and will provide the foundation for Belfast City Council to be an example of good practise when involving children and young people in its decision making processes.

Context

Article 12 UNCRC states that:

‘States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.’

The OFMDFM Ten year strategy for children and young people 2006-2016 ‘our children and young people our pledge ‘has made a pledge in relation to the participation of children and young people

‘In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we will be proactive in obtaining the views of children in matters of significance to them” (pg 20)

This places an emphasis on all Executive Ministers to ensure that their department is seeking and listening to the views and opinions of children and young people when developing policies and services

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland act places a statutory obligation on designated public authorities to have due regard to promote equality of opportunity and regard to good relations. Age is included as one of the nine specific categories. In accordance with its Equality Scheme, such designated public authorities should consult with relevant stakeholders including children and young people when, for example, developing policies or legislation on matters which may have an impact on their lives: Consultation can take place at any time but should take place with relevant stakeholders to inform the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).

Commitments

Belfast City Council is committed, wherever possible in our work, to listen to the views, concerns and opinions of children and young people in an open and inclusive manner, enabling their voices to be heard by engaging with them in meaningful and creative ways.

Belfast City Council is committed to develop existing policies and working practices to embed participation into our department/agency

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Actions

Belfast City Council creates a culture of participation through:

- **Respect**
- **Listening**
- **Working practices**

This means:

- **Developing the capacity to offer opportunities for children and young people to be involved in our work**
- **Giving appropriate weight to children and young people's judgment**
- **Being aware that children and young people have more experiences in some areas than adults**
- **Asking children and young people their opinion when our work affects them**
- **Feeding back the results of children and young people's input to them**

Belfast City Council:

- **ensures that the Article 12 of UNCRC is one of the fundamental principles of our work.**
- **listens to CYP by being alongside them, hearing their concerns and promoting their rights**
- **is striving to be an example of best practice in implementing children's and young people's right to participation**
- **will create an environment for children and young people to participate in policy and decision making and express their opinions freely**
- **will give appropriate weight to the opinions of children and young people**

Outcomes

To make real this intent, our participation of children and young people will be supported by giving regard to existing publications that outline standards and guidance for participation, such as:

- **'Let's Talk, Let's Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people' ECNI (2008)**

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- **Big Deal's Guidance for Effective Youth Councils (2009)**
- **'ASK FIRST – Northern Ireland standards for children and young people's participation in public decision making' The Participation Network (2010)**

Belfast City Council will evidence our good practice, providing a benchmark to measure our levels of participation against in the future.

This policy is a working document that will be periodically reviewed."

After discussion, the Partnership adopted the recommendation.

Update on the Council's Work to Assist in Addressing Human Trafficking

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

"Relevant Background Information

The Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DSHHPS) have recently issued a joint consultation document entitled 'Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Protection of Adult Victims of Human Trafficking'. Both the DOJ and DHSSPS recognise that the PSNI and H and S C Trusts have the leading roles in the investigation of trafficking and the protection of victims and, given the limited remit of the Council in this area, a formal corporate response from the Council is not required.

However, this up-dated guidance states that 'all practitioners, agencies and public facing service providers have an important role in identifying and securing help for victims of trafficking'. This report outlines for the information of the Partnership some of the work that has been done within the Council on this issue.

Human trafficking is defined as 'the forced removal of people from their communities and exploiting them using violence, deception, coercion, the abuse of power or the abuse of someone's vulnerability'. It is an international crime with victims being brought into the UK via numerous transit countries. It is undertaken for a variety of purposes, including sexual exploitation, forced labour for little or no wages, domestic servitude, enforced criminal activity or benefit fraud.

The ease of passage across the land border between NI and the Republic of Ireland is known to be used by traffickers and presents particular difficulties to authorities in both jurisdictions. Human trafficking has been identified as a growing problem in Belfast and is highly profitable for the organisers.

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In the 2011/2012 year, 33 potential victims of human trafficking were recovered in NI. Their nationalities included British, Czech, Tanzanian, Zimbabwean, Ghanaian, Slovakian, Chinese and Austrian. Eighteen of the victims were female, 17 of whom had been trafficked for sexual exploitation. Seven were males trafficked for labour exploitation and eight were minors.

Key Issues

Staff from the Good Relations Unit have become involved with this issue over the past year when the subject was initially raised at our Migrants' Forum. We have been working with key service providers including the PSNI, the Law Centre, Migrant Help and Women's Aid^[1] to raise awareness of the issue and provide information to stakeholders.

The Good Relations Unit held a preliminary workshop for staff from various agencies involved with the issue last June 2011. Speakers included PSNI, Garda, the UK Borders Agency, the Law Centre, Women's Aid and Migrant Help. The Lord Mayor had expressed an interest and had been due to speak but at the last minute was unable to attend.

A second follow-up seminar for a range of interested agencies was held at the beginning of March, 2012 when the Lord Mayor attended.

A specific awareness session on Human Trafficking for Council staff was held in the City Hall at the beginning of April 2012 under the auspices of the *Growing a Shared City* lunchtime seminar. Several elected Members of Council attended this seminar and expressed an interest in the subject. An article on human trafficking will be included in the next edition of *City Matters* and the Deputy Lord Mayor and Chairman of the Good Relations Partnership are expected to attend a public rally on this in October 2012. Elected Members who sit on the new Policing and Community Safety Partnership structures have also expressed an interest in addressing the issue of human trafficking.

As an organisation that delivers front line services to communities across the city, the Council is well placed to play a role in trying to address this problem, since we have numbers of front-line staff who may be in situations where they witness or hear reports about human trafficking.

Proposal

The Good Relations and Community Safety Units are planning:

- to establish a group to develop internal procedures in relation to reporting human trafficking

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- to develop briefings for key staff to raise awareness of the signs of trafficking and to encourage staff to report any suspicious behaviour.

At present there is no policy or procedure in place in relation to human trafficking. If staff are to be encouraged to report their suspicions a procedure for passing on these concerns to appropriate organisations such as the PSNI has to be established. A policy would also outline the Council's (limited) remit in relation to the issue.

Under the auspices of the Safer City Group, staff from the Good Relations and Community Safety Units will work with HR staff and staff from the PSNI, Migrant Help and the Law Centre to develop internal procedures for reporting any suspicious behaviour regarding possible human trafficking through agreed channels. They will also develop an appropriate briefing for a small number of front-line staff, to raise awareness of the indicators that human trafficking may be taking place.

It is anticipated that this work will be completed by October/November with the first briefings delivered around Anti-Slavery Day on 18 October; feedback will be used to review procedures and inform future needs.

Resource Implications

No external resource will be required to deliver an initial set of pilot briefings, but around 60 staff may need to be released from normal duties for 90 minutes to attend.

Equality & good relations implications

Briefings will highlight the need for staff to be sensitive in their approach to this issue so that they do not assume that all individuals from an ethnic minority background have been trafficked.

Recommendation

The Good Relations Partnership is requested to note the contents of this report.”

^[1] Migrant Help and Women's Aid are contracted by the DOJ to provide physical, psychological and emotional support to victims of human trafficking

After discussion, the Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

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Celebration of Polish Independence Day

The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the Polish Community was now one of the largest new communities in the City. She reported that the Polish Saturday School, which was based in St. Michael's Primary School, Ravenhill Road, was attended by large numbers of Polish parents and children and was supported by local groups and statutory agencies, all of which were working to achieve better integration of that community. She explained that the School was planning to hold an event to mark Polish Independence Day on 11th November, in recognition of the independence gained by that country after World War I, and that it would link into Remembrance Day. She pointed out that the Lord Mayor, the Polish Consulate and Honorary Council would be invited to attend the event, which would take place in the City Hall, and that it was estimated that around one hundred people would be in attendance. The cost of providing small-scale hospitality at the event would be met from within the Good Relations Units budget, 75% could be recouped from the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister. Approval to hold the event would be sought from the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

Rural Community Network Conference

The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the Rural Enabler Programme was a partnership approach between the Rural Community Network, Irish Rural Link, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. She reported that the Programme was hosting in Ballymena on 21st September, which was the International Day of Peace, a conference for political representatives and chief executives of local councils. The event, which was taking place as part of Rural Respect Week, would discuss how they could be supported in leading the way to building positive relations at a local level and sharing learning in terms of addressing issues such as flags, emblems and parades. An invitation to attend had been extended to the Partnership.

Noted.

International Day of Peace 2012

The Partnership noted that Springboard Opportunities Limited would be holding in the City Hall on Friday, 21st September an event to observe the International Day of Peace. The event, which would be hosted by the Lord Mayor, would include the presentation of inspiration awards at youth and community level and the members of the Partnership had been invited to attend.

Update on Decade of Centenary Programme of Events

The Good Relations Manager tabled for the information of the Partnership a programme of events which would be taking place during the period from September to November to mark the Decade of Centenaries.

Noted.

Chairman