

GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY, 14th October, 2013

MEETING OF THE GOOD RELATIONS PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor Hendron (Chairman); and
Councillor Attwood.

External Members: Mr. S. Brennan, Voluntary/Community Sector;
Reverend L. Carroll, Presbyterian Church;
Ms. A. Chada, Minority Ethnic Groups;
Mr. R. Galway, Confederation of British Industry/
Shorts Bombardier;
Ms. J. Hawthorne, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Mrs. M. Marken, Catholic Church; and
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church.

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 Councillor Kyle, Councillor Mac Giolla Mhín, Ms. O. Barron, Mr. P. Mackel, Mr. B. McGivern and Ms. C. Moore.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th September were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Growing Respect Project

The Partnership was provided with a presentation on the Growing Respect Project which was being funded under the PEACE III Programme and being delivered by the Council's Parks and Leisure Department. The project used outdoor gardening activities and various sports as a means of helping over 200 hundred young people to develop, over the course of seventeen weeks, their cultural diversity, respect and understanding by tackling key issues such as race, sectarianism and inequality.

Noted.

PEACE III – Implementation Update

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th June, it had agreed that a request be submitted to the Special European Union Programmes Body seeking to extend into 2014 activities associated with key projects being progressed within the Belfast Peace Plan's theme of Transforming Contested Space. The PEACE III Programme Manager reported that the Programmes Body had considered the request and that it had, on 3rd October, confirmed that, due to limited flexibility within its accountable departments, it had been unable to extend the projects beyond their current completion date. He confirmed that a meeting was being arranged with the Programme Body's Director of the Joint Technical Secretariat to highlight the need to grant extensions to those projects which, due primarily to a delay in the completion of their initial economic appraisal process, had required additional time to finalise their planned activities and achieve their agreed targets.

The PEACE III Programme Manager drew the Partnership's attention to a list of projects which were being delivered under Phase II of the PEACE III Programme, which included details of key activities and expenditure to date, and highlighted the press coverage which had been afforded to the projects and a number of associated events.

He informed the Partnership that it was proposed that an event be held in the City Hall on 18th December to mark the closure of all PEACE III funded projects. The event would seek to emphasise the impact of that funding, highlight the central role of good relations and equality in the Council's role as a civic leader and provide networking opportunities to help develop innovative approaches to collaboration and engagement. It would complement the Good Relations Unit's Christmas event which had taken place for the past number of years. He confirmed that the costs associated with the closure event would be met from the PEACE III Programme's budget.

The Partnership noted the information which had been provided and approved the hosting on 18th December of the PEACE III closure event.

Annual Review of the Bonfire Management Programme

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“Relevant Background Information

- 1 The Partnership will recall that, at its meeting on 9th September, a report was presented which summarised the Council's work around bonfires. Following a presentation and discussion on the report and the accompanying independent evaluation, the Partnership agreed to defer the report to enable briefings to be provided to the political parties and any external members.**
- 2 Over the past month, briefings have been provided to all of the Parties who had requested them and that has been a positive and useful exercise.**

- 3 The main issues which have emerged within the briefings are as follows:
- Overall, the programme has made great progress on a difficult issue over the last number of years
 - The engagement approach in the programme is very welcome and should be continued
 - Those groups which have made positive progressive changes to their bonfires and events should be rewarded more for doing so
 - The lack of awareness within the general public, regarding who is on the programme and who is not, causes confusion as to the overall impact of the programme
 - The continued burning of flags and emblems by some groups on the programme can no longer be ignored; the current financial penalties are not sufficient to deter this practice
 - The 'carrot and stick' approach to the issue of the burning of flags should contain a greater amount of 'stick' - the Council needs to do more in this regard
 - There is a desire to make further progress on the issue of the burning of tyres
 - External statutory agencies who benefit from the programme should make a contribution towards the costs associated with running it
 - There is a perception that there is a difference in how 11th July and 8th August groups are being treated
 - If the financial amount for the festival element of the programme (currently at £1,500) is reduced (by £500, say), many groups would simply walk away.

Key Issues

- 1 The current bonfire project *Promoting the Positive Expression of Cultural Heritage* is funded under PEACE III; this funding will end in December 2013. There is now no definite funding source or programme structure for the continuation of the work around bonfires.

- 2 Following Party briefings, it is clear that a revised structured programme is required in order to command consensus from the Partnership in going forward on this issue.
- 3 Since 2005, the Council has contributed £50,000 per annum (sum unchanged in eight years and 75% recoupable from OFM/DFM) to support the work around bonfires.
- 4 Based on the 2013 evaluation and the discussions within the Party briefings, officers believe that there are currently a number of options available to the Partnership regarding how a future programme could be structured and resourced. Detailed costings of all of the programme options been forwarded to the Partnership.

Programme Options

5 Option 1

Continued delivery of the programme in its current format, but with revised criteria for participation, to include increased penalties for the burning of flags/emblems. Total cost estimated around £214,300.

Strengths: This option would ensure that the impact of the programme over the last number of years is sustained. It will demonstrate clearly to participating groups that the Council is providing political and financial support in the support of their cultural heritage. It also allows the Council to implement further guidelines to enable positive change to continue on the issue of the burning of flags/emblems etc. by incorporating an amount paid out only to groups who comply with agreed guidelines. Groups could access funding for a festival event (say, £2,000) under a payment schedule, paid at 70% up front (£1,400), with the final 30% (£600) paid on satisfactory adherence to guidelines which would include a stipulation on the burning of flags/emblems for 11th July participants. (Proposed general guidelines are attached at Appendix 1).

This option would ensure the continuation of the 'wrap-around' engagement and developmental aspect of the programme, supporting communities in the process of change. It would also include the continuation of the beacons element, facilitators, mentoring, training and the deployment of the cleansing contractor – elements which have been highlighted in several evaluations as proving to be positive. It would also have a sanction for the burning of flags. The costs of delivering this would mean that the Council would have to look at options regarding funding, but it would strengthen and

programme further and meet the concerns of Members on the flag issue.

Weaknesses: The increased budget means that there is little likelihood of full funding from within the Council. The Council would therefore have to seek funding actively from partner agencies, which might be difficult in the current climate.

6 **Option 2**

A grants programme for cultural events, open to constituted groups in areas where there are bonfires, with grants of up to £2,000 for community events. This would be paid at 70% up front (£1,400), with the final 30% (£600) paid on satisfactory adherence to guidelines which would include a stipulation regarding the burning of flags/emoles for 11th July participants, as outlined in option 1 above. Total cost estimated around £110,000.

Strengths: It would only be open to constituted groups. There would be clear and significant penalties for the burning of flags. This option would send out a positive Council message demonstrating that the programme has been mainstreamed.

Weaknesses: The programme would omit the current 'wrap-around' elements (detailed in Option 1). Un-constituted groups (sometimes those who need a programme most) would be excluded.

7 **Option 3**

Continued direct delivery by the Council of a similar programme, based on a scaled down version from the current PEACE III funded project. It would incorporate revised guidelines to withhold funding for the burning of flags/emoles, based on a payment schedule detailed in options 1 and 2. Total cost estimated around £172,500.

Strengths: This option will give security to bonfire groups that there is Council political and financial support for their cultural heritage. It also enables the Council to develop the success of the work thus far and implement further guidelines to enable positive change to continue on the issue of the burning of flags/emoles etc. incorporating a payment schedule as detailed above to ensure compliance. This would require additional external resources, should the Council not wish to fund the total programme.

The 'wrap-around' engagement and developmental aspect of the programme would continue to support communities in the process of change and the sanction for the burning of flags would be included.

Weaknesses: It may not attract the required match funding from other agencies, should that be required. This option leaves the Council directly liable for the financial and human resources of the programme. It also omits the community facilitation and the mural elements, which have been highlighted as having been successful in past programmes.

8 **Option 4**

The Council could deliver a programme only on those sites owned by Council, (15 at present, mainly parks) and provide developmental support and funding (£2,000) for community festival events, paid in the form of a grant, to ensure compliance with guidelines. Total cost estimated around £30,000.

Strengths: The Council would continue to deal with bonfire issues on its own land and would have an engagement mechanism that can mitigate against any potential complaint emanating from the vicinity of these sites. There would also be criteria similar to those in options 1-3 to introduce increased penalties for the burning of flags/emblems. This is also the cheapest option.

Weaknesses: This option would see the loss of the civic leadership role that the Council has performed with regard to this issue on behalf of the City, in partnership with other agencies. In addition the programme would lose the 'wrap-around' elements that currently exist as detailed in Option 1. It would also mean that the programme is almost exclusively for 11th July communities (and a small minority of sites at that). In addition, communities and other agencies would obviously be disappointed if the Council was seen to be 'stepping back' from leading on this issue.

9 **Recommended Option**

The Recommended Option is Option 3, since it incorporates both match funding and stronger levels of compliance.

Resource Implications

Financial

At present this stands at £50,000 per year 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.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

Any future programme will seek to support communities in the positive expression of their cultural heritage and will seek to continue to support better community relations through tackling negative cultural manifestations such as the burning of flags and emblems.

Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to:

- (a) adopt the recommendations in the 2013 independent evaluation report regarding ongoing engagement and the funding of future similar programmes;
- (b) consider the various options set out above, with Option 3 as the recommended delivery option for 2014, as being the most viable choice that could command match funding and deal with Partnership concerns, incorporating the proposed guidelines attached as Appendix 1; and either:
- (c) recommend to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee the continuation of the present level of annual Council funding of £50,000 to support the delivery of a programme in 2014, with a mandate to secure the remaining sum from other agencies to make up a total budget of £172,500 or:
- (d) recommend an increased amount from the Council of £100,000, 75% of which could be re-couped from OFM/DFM, subject to the agreement of OFM/DFM. This would mean the total cost to the Council would be £25,000. Additional external funding would still have to be sourced.

Appendix 1

Belfast City Council Bonfire Programme 2014

Programme Guidelines

The Council wishes to see the following outcomes as a result of this programme. These are:

1. The local bonfire committee will be in place by the 1st March
2. Collection of material should not commence before 1st June
3. Tyres and other toxic materials should not be collected or burnt on the bonfire and materials should be restricted to wood
4. Communities should refrain from the displaying of paramilitary trappings and paramilitary flags on or in the vicinity of the bonfire site
5. Greater community involvement through an inclusive family / community oriented festival on or around the 11th July
6. Compliance with any relevant Council health and safety, events management and licensing guidelines (entertainment for example)
7. Participation in a review and monitoring process with a view to further strengthening the programme for the future
8. All groups agree that the burning of any flag or symbol is unacceptable. Participating groups and bonfire committees will use their positive influence and endeavour to prevent the burning of any flags or symbol on bonfires, in accordance with the spirit and aims of the programme. Groups are committed to showing leadership on this issue with a view to eradicating this practice.

Resources for community cultural activities and events

The Council, being responsible for the administration of public funding, is obliged to have agreed criteria and guidelines to work off. The criteria is set out below:

1. **Successfully create a community committee by March 1st that is representative of the key stakeholders in the area and includes a balance of people in terms of age, gender, role within the community and young bonfire builders.**
2. **Having no collection of bonfire materials by the 1st of June**
3. **Consult within the local community and with relevant statutory agencies on the site, location and size of the bonfire. Bonfires should not be located at interface areas.**
4. **Successfully maintain a clean, compact, tidy, tyre-free site, also free from other materials such as plastics and other toxic materials up to and including July 11th**
5. **No burning of any items such as flags, emblems, posters, items of clothing or effigies, or any other item that could be perceived as causing offence to the general public**

Each group participating in the programme will be eligible for up to £2,000 for a community festival event. Groups will be awarded funding as follows: 70% on completion of the application form and approval by the Good Relations Partnership. 30% (final payment) on completion of the programme and successful adherence to all of the guidelines.

**Good Relations Partnership,
Monday, 14th October, 2013**

Commitment of Participation

Following discussions within our community, the _____ community wish to participate in the Bonfire Programme and agree to the conditions of participation set out in this document.

Two contact details are:

Sign: _____ Sign: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Telephone: _____

Mob: _____ Mob: _____

Email: _____ Email: _____

This information will be treated as confidential and will be used for the purpose of contacting each group during the Programme.

Appendix 2

Belfast City Council Alternative to Bonfire Programme 2014

Programme Guidelines

The Council wishes to see the following outcomes as a result of this programme:

1. Alternative activities are put in place to divert people away from any potential bonfire
2. Greater community involvement through an inclusive family / community oriented festival on or around the 8th August
3. Compliance with any relevant Council health and safety events management and licensing guidelines (entertainment for example)
4. Participation in a review and monitoring process with a view to further strengthening the programme for the future

Resources for community cultural activities and events

The Council, being responsible for the administration of public funding, is obliged to have agreed criteria and guidelines to work off.

Each constituted group participating in the programme will be eligible for up to £2,000 for a community festival event as an alternative to a potential bonfire. Groups will be awarded funding as follows: 70% on completion of the application form and approval by the Good Relations Partnership. 30% (final payment) on completion of the programme and successful adherence to all of the guidelines.

Who is doing what: Roles and Responsibilities

Participating communities are the key to the success of the programme. The programme will only succeed if there is a positive relationship between communities and those delivering the programme.

Belfast City Council is the commissioner of the programme with strategic oversight. Its key responsibilities are:

- Providing financial resources, expertise and support through policy and good relations

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- Procurement, monitoring and evaluation of the programme
- Managing all external communication of the Programme and preparing progress reports for Council Committees
- Engaging directly with all the participating communities and other organisations and agencies to ensure effective delivery of the programme

Commitment of Participation

Following discussions within our community, the _____ community wish to participate in the Alternative to Bonfire Programme and agree to the conditions of participation set out in this document.

Two contact details are:

Sign: _____ Sign: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Telephone: _____

Mob: _____ Mob: _____

Email: _____ Email: _____

This information will be treated as confidential and will be used for the purpose of contacting each group during the Programme.”

After discussion, the Partnership adopted recommendations (a) and (d), as set out within the report, and, in terms of recommendation (b), agreed Option 3 as the delivery option for the Bonfire Management Programme for 2014.

Holocaust Memorial Day – Northern Ireland Regional Event

The Partnership was advised that Holocaust Memorial Day was an internationally recognised event which sought to honour and remember the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides in other countries across the world. The event was held annually on 27th January, as that was the date on which the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp had been liberated. The Good Relations Unit organised several awareness-raising activities, including a Holocaust exhibition in the City Hall, in the week preceding Holocaust Day.

The Good Relations Manager reported that the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister organised annually a Northern Ireland Regional Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration and had requested that Belfast host that event in 2014, the theme of which would be 'Journeys'. She confirmed that the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister would meet the majority of the costs associated with the event, with the Council providing the use of the Great Hall and some small-scale hospitality.

The Partnership agreed to host the Northern Ireland Regional Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration, subject to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee granting the use of the City Hall for that purpose. It agreed also that, should that approval be granted, the Committee be recommended to approve the use of the LED lighting system at the City Hall for the purposes of marking, in two shades of purple, Holocaust Memorial Day.

Centralisation of the Administration of Good Relations Grants

The Partnership was advised that the Central Grants Unit had, in 2012, been established within the Council's Development Department. The Unit had undertaken subsequently a pilot study of the administration of the processes and procedures associated with four grants streams within the Culture and Arts and Community Safety Units. None of the grants which were administered by the Good Relations Unit had been included within the study.

The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that a review of the pilot initiative had now been completed which had found that a centralised system for administering grants was advantageous insofar as it would improve the experience for customers/grants recipients by reducing the need to produce multiple copies of documentation for submission. In addition, operational staff would be afforded more time to focus on developmental work and building relationships with organisations, since the routine tasks associated with the processing of funding submissions would be undertaken by the Central Grants Unit. The system would offer also a safeguard against allegations of bias in the award of funding, due to the fact that applications would be assessed at different stages in the process by more than one officer. Finally, the centralised system would create efficiencies for the Council in terms of advertising and administration costs and would generate improved information around the levels of funding being awarded to organisations and their geographical location and enable duplication or the overlap of funding to be detected.

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The Good Relations Manager reported that, based upon the findings of the review, it was now proposed that the administration of the Good Relations, Summer Intervention and St. Patrick's Day Grants transfer, at the beginning of 2014, to the Central Grants Unit. She pointed out that, under the revised arrangements, applications for funding under the Good Relations Grant-Aid Fund would be invited twice per annum. Applications would, in future, be requested only once a year for Summer Intervention and St. Patrick's Day Grants, however, the application process would commence earlier in the year, which should be welcomed by groups. She added that the assessment of funding applications would continue to be undertaken by officers from the Good Relations Unit and that the Partnership would still be provided with details of all grants awarded under the delegated authority of the Chief Executive.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the Good Relations, Summer Intervention and St. Patrick's Day Grants transfer to the Central Grants Unit, as outlined.

Request to Address Committee – Evangelical Alliance

The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the Evangelical Alliance, which had been working for the past twenty-five years in Northern Ireland, was an organisation which sought to unite Christians across denominations and to influence public policy. She reported that the organisation had written to the Council commending the way in which Members had, on 2nd September, supported a Notice of Motion which had condemned violence and reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of dialogue and respect for difference. The Evangelical Alliance had suggested that Members consider designing a Good Relations Commitment in which they might agree to refrain from personal attacks and to treat each other with common civility, dignity and respect and had requested an opportunity to address the Good Relations Partnership in that regard.

Accordingly, the Partnership agreed that representatives of the Evangelical Alliance be invited to attend its meeting on 11th November and that a copy of its letter be forwarded to all Members of the Council for their information.

St. Patrick's Day 2014 – Small Grants Scheme

The Partnership noted that the application process for community groups seeking to hold small-scale events under the Small Grants Scheme to celebrate St. Patrick's Day would open on 4th November and close at 12.00 noon on 22nd November.

Chairman