

MEETING OF DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting of Monday, 3rd October, 2014

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Hendron) (Chairman);
Aldermen Ekin and Rodgers;
Councillors Attwood, Hutchinson, McVeigh and Reynolds.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. G. Miller, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager;
Ms. K. Mullan, Project Sponsor; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Memorabilia in the City Hall - Presentation

The Group was advised that Sara and Michael Lyons, Redhead Consultancy, were in attendance to provide an update on the progress achieved to date in relation to the Memorabilia in the City Hall Project. The consultants tabled for the information of the Members details of the artefacts and memorabilia which could be included in each of the Zones. The Members made a number of suggestions in relation to additional items which might be included and the consultants undertook to include the suggestions prior to the submission of the final report.

After further discussion, during which the Director of Property and Projects outlined a proposed timetable for the project, including the submission of a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in December, the Group noted the details of the presentation. Party Group briefings would take place in the meantime and would cover the main points of contention.

Decade of Centenaries Programme 2016

The Group considered the undernoted report:

“1 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the Council’s ongoing work around the Decade of Centenaries. The Council delivered a number of activities marking a series of historical events covering the period 1912 – 1914 over the past 3 years.**
- 1.2 As we are now into the second strand of the period of commemorations, the purpose of this report is to inform members of what has been agreed, what is planned and to seek the views of members on how to proceed.**

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2 Key Issues

2.1 Activity already agreed:

Members will recall that at its meeting on the 17th October 2011, ratified by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 21st October 2011, it was agreed that the Decade of Centenaries Programme would be divided into 3 strands. Strand one, which covered the period 1912 - 1914 has been completed. Strand two will cover the period 1914 – 1918.

2.2 It was agreed that Strand two would cover the period including World War I, including the Somme, and the Easter Rising. Major exhibitions would be commissioned covering these two events as well as Civic Dinners to mark both commemorations.

2.3 Additional activity already agreed:

At its meeting on the 29th November 2013, the Joint Party Group Leaders Forum and the Historic Centenaries Working Group agreed in principle to hosting the outdoor exhibition 'Fields of Battle – Lands of Peace'. The group agreed to grant approval in principle to the exhibition being displayed in Belfast during 2016, subject to the costs being reasonable and appropriate funding being made available and subject to the agreement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

2.4 At its meeting on the 19th September 2014, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved a recommendation to undertake a study visit to Dublin to view key sites as part of the process to develop the programme to be delivered in 2016.

2.5 In addition, a programme of events was agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on the 19th September for the autumn and spring period.

2.6 The latter two of these activities (Dublin visit and Autumn/Spring programme) are being funded through the Good Relations Action Plan, 75% of which is recoupable from OFMDFM. There is no funding in place for the exhibitions, civic dinners, additional programmes or the Fields of Battle – Lands of Peace exhibition. For strand one, covering the period 1912 – 1914, a budget of £99,000 was set aside by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for a large programme of events. These costs included the exhibition 'Shared History – Different Allegiances', (which also commanded funding from OFMDFM) the Civic Dinner to mark the signing of the Ulster Covenant, a series of events and activities around several other themes and publicity and educational activities.

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- 2.7 As there will be a lot of planning involved in the preparation and delivery of events in 2016, members are being requested to agree a way forward as set out in section 4 of this report.**

3 Resource Implications

- 3.1 Financial: Apart from what has already been agreed for this current financial year's activities, there is no budget for activities beyond March 2015. In order for the proper planning and preparation to be undertaken, members will have to revisit the overall proposals for 2016 in order to set aside the required resources to undertake the activities already agreed.**

- 3.2 Human Resources: None at present**

- 3.3 Asset and Other Implications: None**

4 Recommendation and decision

- 4.1 To make recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources committee on the following:**

- 1. To note the decisions already made to undertake the activity as set out in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3;**
- 2. To agree that the Good Relations Manager work up costings and specifications for the exhibitions for 2016, as well as the Civic Dinners and additional outreach and engagement programmes and costs associated with the staging of the Fields of Battle – Lands of Peace exhibition.”**

The Group adopted the recommendations.

Request regarding Plaque Commemorating Chaim Herzog

The Group was advised that the Blue Circle plaque dedicated to Chaim Herzog at 185 Cliftonpark Avenue had been removed by its owners, the Ulster History Circle, following a request from the occupiers in the building amidst health and safety concerns as the plaque had been the subject of unwelcome attention recently.

Further to its removal, the Lord Mayor's Office had received correspondence from a representative of the Belfast Jewish community on the Board of the Deputies, which was the representative body for the Jewish community in the United Kingdom, with over 400 signatories attached.

After discussion, the Group agreed that the plaque should be replaced on the building as soon as appropriate and that officers discuss with representatives of the Ulster History Circle their plans for replacing the plaque on 185 Cliftonpark Avenue. This would be followed up in correspondence.

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Notice of Motion – Stained Glass Window

The Group was reminded that the Council had, at its meeting on 3rd April, referred the following Notice of Motion, which had been moved by Councillor McCarthy and seconded by Councillor Webb, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration:

“This Council agrees to the installation of a stained glass window in the City Hall to commemorate the sons of our City who fought in support of the democratically elected Government of Spain against the forces of Fascism.”

The Committee was reminded that the Spanish Civil War had been fought from 1936 – 1939 and had involved a range of political factions, but mainly fascist and socialist forces. Most of the Irish volunteers who had fought against Franco’s fascist forces were members of the Fifth International Brigade. Around 80 of those 320 were from Northern Ireland, a significant proportion of which were from Belfast.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 14th March, had agreed that the matter should be referred to the Joint Group of the Party Leaders’ Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group (now known as the Diversity Working Group) for consideration and comment. Thereafter, it would ultimately be a matter for the Committee to determine.

That course of action was in keeping with the methodology used by the Council in 2011, prior to the installation in the City Hall of the “Celtic Myths and Legends” window, which had been referred to the former Memorabilia Working Group for initial comment.

After discussion, the Group agreed that a Working Group, comprising one Member from each of the Political Parties on the Diversity Working Group, be established to give initial consideration to the erection of a stained glass window.

**Council Response to the Racial Equality Strategy
and associated Indicators**

The Group was advised that consultation was currently underway on the Executive’s Racial Equality Strategy and associated Indicators. Following an internal consultation exercise, a corporate response had been developed by the Good Relations Unit which had included consultation with other sections within the Council through the Departmental Equality representatives.

The Group noted the contents of the responses and approved their submission to the Good Relations Partnership on 13th October and subsequently to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Chairman