

Report to: Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Subject: International Conference – “Combating Hate Crime in Europe”

Date of Meeting: Friday 12th December 2014

Reporting Officer: Nicola Lane, Good Relations Manager, Ext 6020

Contact Officer(s): Alison Allen, Safer City Manager, Ext 3780

1.0	Purpose of report / Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that Council has been providing strategic co-ordination of efforts in addressing hate crime across Belfast and in particular racist hate crime.
1.2	This work has involved a range of statutory, community and voluntary partners across the city and delivering on the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Support Services</u>: to include the development of a single resource of support services, agreed referral pathways and to consider the accessibility of this information to minority ethnic communities. 2) <u>Communication and Messaging</u>: to include examining the potential for a media campaign, to develop appropriate positive messages and securing support for this campaign. 3) <u>Community Activity</u>: to include developing a co-ordinated platform for existing community activity around racist hate crime, along with identifying good practice and how to sustain this good practice
1.3	In further supporting this work, Belfast Good Relations Partnership, Belfast PCSP, Queens University Belfast and the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building commissioned an in-depth analysis of the social and economic contribution of migrant workers. This research has provided for the first time a robust platform upon which to challenge myths and misconceptions.

2.0	Key Issues
2.1	As part of its 14/15 Strategic Action Plan, Belfast PCSP has committed to delivering a regional conference to raise aware of all forms of hate crime and to promote local good practice in promoting tolerance and inclusivity.
2.2	Belfast PCSP was later approached by the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building with a view to working in partnership with Wilton Park to widen the scope of the conference to include an international dimension which would provide the opportunity for stakeholders in Northern Ireland to learn from international best practice. This would mean potentially bringing in 80 international delegates for 2-3nights.
2.3	Wilton Park is a not for profit independent organisation which has over 50 years experience in working at an international level to facilitate strategic discussions about change. They have strong relationships in Northern Ireland having been involved in supporting the peace process over a number of years.

2.4	<p>The objectives of the international conference would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To further improve collaboration and co-operation among stakeholders, especially cross-border interaction - To facilitate an exchange of best practice between civil society and government organisations - To learn from the successes and shortcomings of existing partnership strategies, training programmes and interfaces among stakeholder groups and organisations - To formulate more effective strategies at all levels to reduce prejudicial attitudes driving hate crime
2.5	<p>The conference had been provisionally scheduled for the last week in March 2015 with Belfast PCSP and the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building providing match funding of approximately £7,000. This match funding is specifically to ensure the conference is accessible to communities by arranging satellite sessions across Belfast and opportunities for the wider community to engage with the international delegates.</p>
2.6	<p>Wilton Park normally secures their own funding to deliver their conferences from philanthropic organisations or governments. However, Wilton Park have recently advised Belfast PCSP and the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building that they will not be able to access the required funding to cover their costs this financial year. However this position may change if the conference took place post March 2015.</p>
2.7	<p>At the December Council Cllr Colin Keenan suggested that Belfast City Council should consider providing financial assistance to allow the conference to take place this financial year.</p>
2.8	<p>Extensive engagement has taken place with central government on the development of the conference with OFMDFM and DoJ actively supporting the conference. Both departments are particularly interested in ensuring that communities in Belfast benefit from the international learning and that the conference provides a platform for Belfast to showcase local good practice in this field.</p>

3.0	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>Belfast PCSP and the Centre for Democracy and Peace Building have committed approximately £7,000 specifically to support the roll out of the conference into communities across Belfast in this financial year.</p>
3.2	<p>The estimated cost of Wilton Park delivering the main 3 day international conference in Belfast is £20,000 - £25,000. This does not include the figure of £7,000 mentioned above. Exploratory work is ongoing with local partners to secure other match funding but none has been confirmed to date. Up to £10,000 may potentially be secured.</p>

4.0	Recommendations
4.1	<p>It is recommended that Members consider whether they wish to support the delivery of the international conference “Combating hate crime in Europe: optimising the comprehensive approach” this financial year and if so whether they agree to make a further financial contribution to a maximum of £25,000 to enable this to happen. The costs would be met by realignment of resources within the Health and Environmental Services Departmental Budget</p>

5.0	Equality and Good Relations Implications
5.1	There are no equality or good relations implications at present; however, due to the nature of the work this will be continually monitored.

6.0	Key to Abbreviations
6.1	PCSP – Policing and Community Safety Partnerships OFMDFM – Office of First and Deputy First Minister DoJ – Department of Justice