

## **MEETING OF HISTORIC WORKING GROUP**

**Thursday, 3rd August, 2017**

Members present: Councillor Heading (Chairperson);  
Councillors Dudgeon, Hargey, Kyle,  
and McReynolds.

In attendance: Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager;  
Mrs. C. Mullen, Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts  
Development Manager;  
Mr. R. Heslip, Tourism Cultural Heritage  
and Arts Development Officer; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Election of Chairperson**

Moved by Councillor Hargey,  
Seconded by Councillor McReynolds and

Resolved – that Councillor Heading be elected to serve as  
Chairperson to the Historic Working Group.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Draft Terms of Reference**

The Working Group considered the following draft Terms of Reference as  
outlined in the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 24th  
March, 2017:

#### **“Establishment of Historic Working Group**

***The Committee was reminded that, as part of the review of the  
Diversity Working Group, it had been agreed that that group would  
be replaced by a Historic Working Group to priorities historic events  
and related issues. That would mean a move away from a Good  
Relations focus, with Good Relations primarily being discussed by  
Party Leaders and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.***

***Draft terms of reference had been developed for the working  
group and these are set out as follows:***

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- ***to consider how the Council can maximise and promote the historic richness of legacies and assets of Belfast;***
- ***to develop a long term plan to celebrate, promote and commemorate our historic assets and events;***
- ***to apply the agreed core set of principles established to commemorate any events;***
- ***to advise on the detailed decade of centenaries programme once agreed via Party Leaders and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and***
- ***to make recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee regarding the issues above.***

***It was proposed that the membership of the Historic Working Group would comprise of one nominee from each of the six main political parties.***

***The Committee approved the proposed terms of reference and the membership of the Historic Working Group.”***

During discussion, the Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer explained that the Decade Round Table was a non-decision-making body set up by the Community Relations Council and Heritage Lottery Fund which met quarterly in order to think critically about the decade and how it should be marked. He advised that attendees included academics, historians, cultural and heritage agencies and organisations, departments, and non-governmental organisations.

He reported that the Decade Round Table was currently reviewing its principles for marking commemorations, which included widening its remit for a longer period. However, with permission of the Chairperson, he tabled copies of the Council's current principles for marking anniversaries and highlighted that they were considered to be robust.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to the Terms of Reference as outlined in the report and that the Working Group be kept up to date with the Decade Round Table's review of its principles.

The Working Group also noted that a Good Relations Officer might be invited to attend meetings of the Working Group, if required.

**Discussion on external expertise and potential partnerships with  
Organisations**

The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer suggested that it may be helpful if the Working Group had access to external historical expertise in an

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advisory capacity, such as the Ulster Commemorative Society for Irish History Studies. He advised that they would be in a position to provide expert advice as well as suggest specific events relevant to Belfast over a long period of history.

During discussion, the issue of budget allocation was highlighted and it was pointed out that no specific budget had been allocated to the Working Group. Any proposal that would require a budget would be agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It was also suggested that research for possible future events to commemorate should go beyond academia and explore other perspectives such as local historians and community connections. A Member also highlighted the importance of reviewing all events not just the larger, more prominent ones, together with those likely to attract tourism.

The Working Group agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting regarding a list of potential historical events that could be commemorated over the next few years and the Group would forward any events they wish to be included in this list for discussion to Democratic Services.

**European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018**

The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Officer provided an overview of the report regarding the background of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, 2018.

He informed the Group that in 2015, the European Parliament designated 2018 as European Cultural Heritage Year, conscious that it marked both the 400th anniversary of the start of the Thirty Years War and the centenary of the end of World War I.

He advised that a national co-ordinator had been appointed from the British Council and the Republic of Ireland had appointed a person to a similar role from the Heritage Council. He informed the Working Group that the aim of the Heritage Year was to:

- Promote social cohesion through highlighting cultural diversity , dialogue and heritage education;
- Support cultural and creative industries , promoting sustainable tourism to generate long-term employment;
- Promote cultural heritage abroad, exporting and monetising expertise; and
- Promote the value of cultural heritage in conflict zones.

He reminded the Working Group the Council was making a bid to become joint European Capital of Culture in 2023 and that engagement with the existing European cultural programmes would be seen as supporting this bid and demonstrating cultural capacity in the city. He suggested that Heritage Week, coordinated by The Heritage Council in the Republic of Ireland, was a good example of how to promote a broad programme of heritage events for tourists and citizens and that events connecting with new communities that had settled in Belfast could also be a considered.

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The Tourism Cultural Heritage and Arts Development Manager advised that Tourism NI had expressed an interest in the tourism potential of a possible programme of events for the European Year of Cultural Heritage, 2018 and discussions would take place over the coming months.

The Working Group noted the contents of the report and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting regarding an update on officer discussions with Tourism NI and potential funding streams together with information on what type of events could be considered and how proposals the Council had already received in this regard could be encompassed in the European Year of Cultural Heritage, 2018.

**Blitz War Memorial (Cllr. Dudgeon to Raise) and  
Winifred Carney Statue (Cllr. Hargey to Raise)**

The Working Group agreed to consider the two aforementioned items together.

Councillor Dudgeon reminded the Working Group that he had originally proposed a Belfast Blitz Memorial - 75th Anniversary Commemoration as a Notice of Motion and it had subsequently been referred to the Diversity Working Group by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22nd May, 2015. He provided an overview of the discussion that had taken place in the former Diversity Working Group since then. He highlighted that, at the last Diversity Working Group held on 9th June, 2016, it had been reported that information had been received from the Northern Ireland War Memorial Committee, in that it believed that a full size memorial was required and they would be prepared to fund 50 - 75% of the total cost of the project with a cap of £100,000 with Council or another body funding the remainder.

He suggested that the development of a Blitz Memorial should be reactivated in the form of a scoping exercise to provide options regarding the type of monument and possible locations for a Blitz Memorial in the city.

Councillor Hargey advised the Group that a request for the Winifred Carney Statue from the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTUNI), had also been discussed at the Diversity Working Group in the form of life size bronze in the grounds of City Hall, however, this had also not been taken forward. She suggested that there were possible funding constraints for any new memorial and no additional commemorative artefacts should be brought forward until it had been discussed by the Party Leaders, as previously agreed.

During discussion, the Democratic Services Manager advised the Group that both of the items had been deferred by the Diversity Working Group, at its meeting on 9th June, 2016, to allow a series of discussions to take place by Party Groups regarding a review of the grounds of the City Hall. He highlighted that as this decision had included both of these items as part of that discussion, it would be inappropriate to supersede this decision until such discussions had taken place.

During further discussion, the Working Group raised concerns regarding the forthcoming Cenotaph access works, other potential memorial and commemorative

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proposals, the resources available for such artefacts, and the pending review of the City Hall Grounds.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Party Group Leaders' Forum to progress its discussion on the review of the grounds of the City Hall, in particular the Blitz War Memorial and Winifred Carney Statue proposals, at its next meeting. It also agreed that the draft booklet on the City Hall Ground Monuments would be circulated to the Group.

**Schedule of Meetings**

The Working Group agreed that its meetings would be held on the following dates, at 12.30pm, for the remainder of 2017, if required:

- Thursday, 7th September;
- Thursday, 5th October;
- Thursday, 2nd November; and
- Thursday, 7th December.

**Additional Item – Archive access of Previous Belfast City Councillors**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Dudgeon advised the Working Group that he had received numerous requests for information regarding previous Members of Council, such as their years of service and party affiliation. He suggested that a database with this information could be published online for Members of the public to access.

During discussion, it was noted that the Council had previously produced a booklet and exhibition celebrating Women in the Council and held a successful launch event. The Group noted that this type of event could also be considered if the database was established.

The Working Group agreed that advice should be taken from the Records Manager on the potential for this database and a report be submitted to a future meeting in this regard, to include resource implications and availability of the historical data required.