

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

MONDAY, 11th DECEMBER, 2017

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson);
Alderman Sandford; and Councillors Attwood,
Johnston and Walsh.

External Members: Ms. O. Barron, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Mrs. G. Duggan, Belfast City Centre Management;
Mr. K. Gibson, Church of Ireland;
Mr. P. Mackel, Belfast and District Trade Union Council;
Mr. M. O'Donnell, Department for Communities; and
Mr. P. Scott, Catholic Church.

In attendance: Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director;
Mrs. M. Higgins, Senior Good Relations Officer;
Miss. N. Lane, Good Relations Manager;
Mrs. D. McKinney, Programme Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor Nicholl, Mrs. A. Chada, Mrs. J. Hawthorne and Mrs. M. Marken.

Minutes

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

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Sandford declared an interest in respect of agenda item 3, viz., Presentation by the East Belfast Community Development Agency as he was a Member of its Board but had no pecuniary interest.

Items Withdrawn from Agenda

Review of Events and Festivals and Update on Review of the Shared City Partnership

The Committee noted that the above items had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Presentation by Northern Ireland Community for Refugee and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS)

The Partnership was reminded that it had agreed to receive a presentation from the Northern Ireland Community for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS).

Accordingly, Mr. J. Kouame was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. Kouame commenced the presentation by advising that NICRAS had been established in 2002. It was the only refugee and asylum led organisation in Northern Ireland which worked for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers by providing advice, support and a community for people in situations of extreme vulnerability. NICRAS was a membership-based charity which now had around 600 adult members, as well as around 365 young people and children, from 39 different countries.

The representative advised that NICRAS mission was to “inspire and enable refugees and asylum seekers to break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so that they can achieve their full potential”. Its vision was of “a vibrant, welcoming, just and inclusive society, which promotes diversity and equality, and effectively respects the human rights and dignity of refugees and asylum seekers”.

The Partnership was then appraised of the objectives and some of the activities offered by NICRAS. The organisation offered support and advice in the form of:

- a drop in service staffed by qualified Advisors to give advice on all issues, including poverty and homelessness;
- it attempted to address isolation by giving information to asylum seekers and refugees in need and helping them to find social opportunities;
- it organised programmes to help develop access to education, employment and healthcare;
- it provided references for accommodation, school and job applications and referred members for volunteer placements; and
- assisted people with administrative tasks.

The representative advised that the organisation undertook extensive work with the local community and stated that the longest running activity provided was the homework club.

Mr. Kouame concluded the presentation by highlighting NICRAS numerous accomplishments, as follows:

- 2010 – English for speakers of other language classes made free of charge for asylum seekers;
- 2010 – obtained access to leisure centres in Belfast for refugees and asylum seekers at the same concession rate as for people on benefits;
- 2015 – successfully campaigned for free access to healthcare for all asylum seekers, including destitute asylum seekers whose asylum claims had been refused;
- July 2015 – got the NI Assembly to recognise the migrant crisis in a debate in the Assembly;
- the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency changed their application procedure to allow refugee I.D. cards to be accepted as a primary form of identification;
- it had partnered with UNISON to provide free IELTS classes for refugees and asylum seekers with medical qualifications who wished to work in the medical profession;
- Family Reunification – it had successfully championed with other organisations to ensure that Legal Aid for Family Reunification was not cut;
- in December 2015 and January 2016 - it had successfully campaigned the Minister of the Department of Education and Learning on behalf of its members to extend free ESOL classes to all refugees;

- in 2015 it published a report on The effects of Destitution on Asylum Seekers and a second policy focused report 'Home Sweet Home'; and
- it had developed links with senior politicians.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, commended the excellent work undertaken by NICRAS in the local community.

A Member highlighted the plight of families who had been settled in one area of the City only to be relocated to another area within a short space of time by the Home Office and he outlined the disruption and stress that this caused.

Discussion ensued, during which it was noted that refugees and asylum seekers did not have a Health Worker specifically assigned to them to help address their health needs whilst members of other communities, for example, the Roma community had such a provision. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust representative on the Partnership advised that there was a New Entrants Service, however, she undertook to update the Board accordingly.

During discussion it was also highlighted that the only Political representative that the Home Office would liaise with was a Member of Parliament (MP). It was noted that this was very restrictive and officers undertook to investigate if the Council could assist in this respect.

The representative circulated copies of the Refugee and Asylum Seekers in NI – An Essential Guide. He advised that it would be useful if this could be translated into other languages, particularly Arabic but this would be very expensive. Following discussion, it was agreed that officers would liaise with NICRAS to investigate possible options to have the Guide translated.

The representative thanked the Partnership for the opportunity to present and stated that NICRAS would welcome any support and financial assistance that the Council could offer.

The Chairperson thanked the representative and he left the meeting.

Presentation by East Belfast Community Development Agency

The Partnership was advised that Mr. J. Currie, Community Development Director, representing the East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA) was in attendance to present to the Committee and accordingly he was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Currie commenced by advising that the EBCDA's Mission was that it 'exists to provide resources, support and capacity building programme for community groups that are based on partnership, equal opportunities and sustainable outcomes'.

He explained that EBCDA's job was to add value to the activity undertaken by groups in local areas and to work with key organisations to ensure the continued development of a community sector in East Belfast that was recognised, valued and effective. The organisation sought to support successful community development, encourage reflective practice and promote co-operation and locally based solutions.

He then drew the Members' attention to the organisation's work specifically in respect of Race Relations in East Belfast and the work that the EBCDA had undertaken

to counteract hate crime through the hate crime response plan. He advised that race relations research had been undertaken and reported that the main nationalities living in East Belfast were Polish, Sudanese, Somali, Romanian, Slovakian (Slovakian Roma), Lithuanian and Nigerian.

He then provided details on the main barriers that people faced and the services and various programmes that were offered to try and help them to acclimatise.

The representative concluded by stating that there was a demonstrable need for a race relations co-ordinator in East Belfast. He outlined that this position would play a key role in supporting communities in the following ways:

- to promote cultural diversity, reduce racism and to become more inclusive;
- to promote a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to race relations work in East Belfast, to ensure the skills and effectiveness of local community groups were delivered and that no-one is left behind; and
- to promote the development of the (i) East Belfast Race Relations Forum and (ii) the East Belfast Support Plan for Victims and Communities Affected by Hate Crime.

The Partnership welcomed the work undertaken by the EBCDA in East Belfast and noted that Officers were currently exploring how this work could potentially be supported.

The Senior Good Relations Officer reminded the Partnership of the forthcoming Good Relations Networking Event on 30th January 2018 which would focus on issues of race relations and hate crime. In addition, she undertook to liaise with other relevant departments and agencies regarding potential support for the issues highlighted during both presentations.

Update on Peace IV Programme

The Partnership considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report with respect to the PEACE IV Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are requested to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

As detailed in previous reports to the Shared City Partnership in March and June 2017, Council submitted a redrafted application form and revised business plan to SEUPB in February 2017. The SEUPB Steering Committee considered the Belfast PEACE IV Action Plan on 13 September 2017 and has approved an indicative funding allocation to the Council, with *varying degrees of conditions*.

3.2 Programme Update

Letter of Offer

All updates and information associated with the QA of PEACE IV Plan on the electronic Monitoring System (eMS) has been submitted to SEUPB. A final sign off is underway and will be completed by 6 December 2017.

All approval conditions are currently being finalised and will be submitted to SEUPB by 13 December 2017. Following this the projects will be formally contracted on eMS and a Letter of Offer issued to BCC.

3.3 PEACE IV Awareness Session

An awareness session on the PEACE IV Local Action Plan took place on 28 November 2017. The session was aimed at organisations, community and voluntary groups, to enable them to prepare for and avail of opportunities through the programme. Details of the PEACE IV presentation is attached and via Council website.

The awareness session was followed by two workshops delivered through Economic Development on Successful Tendering (28 November 2017) and Consortia Building (4 December 2017). Both sessions were well attended with 40+ attendees and feedback from the training sessions was very positive.

3.4 PEACE IV Programme Launch

Details of the programme launch are currently being finalised, subject to the Letter of Offer being received. The provisional date is Friday 19 January 2018.

The launch will outline the content of the programme, opportunities for communities, organisations and individuals to get involved in peace building programmes and will also highlight the opportunities for external organisations / parties to deliver services across a range of projects within the programme.

3.5 NILGA PEACE IV Monitoring Committee

NILGA has a number of representatives on the PEACE IV Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC), and recently contacted PEACE IV managers within Councils to advise they are keen to raise issues relating to the PEACE IV Programme on behalf of councils. Collective issues raised through the Regional PEACE IV Managers Forum that have not been resolved by SEUPB will be directed through NILGA representatives.

4.0 Resource Implications

- 4.1 The Project Development Officer is now in post and the Finance and Systems Officer will be in post on 11 December 2017.**

The process of recruitment for other posts, as approved in the PEACE IV Local Action Plan, will continue and staffing associated with programme delivery will be also be recruited on a phased basis, subject to SEUPB regulations.

5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 5.1 The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The development of the local action plan has been screened out with anticipated positive impacts across section 75 categories regarding equality of opportunity and promotion of good relations. Council officers undertook a robust consultation exercise in formulating the proposed projects and format of the forthcoming Peace IV programming period. In line with feedback from this exercise external recruitment will be fully utilised to maximise community interest in advertised vacancies.”**

The Partnership noted the update provided.

St Patrick’s Day Small Grants Review

The Partnership was reminded that, at its meeting on 8th May, it had agreed to commence the process of reviewing the St. Patrick’s Day Small Grants Programme for 2019.

The Good Relations Manager advised that officers had contacted the groups who had been in receipt of the St. Patrick’s Day Small Grant over the previous three-year period, as well as those groups who had been successful in the latest round of applications, to engage them in a consultation exercise. She reported that an on-line survey had been developed with the options that had been considered previously by the Partnership. In addition to the survey, a consultation and engagement event had been held at the Grosvenor House on 13th November.

The officer detailed that, within the survey and at the consultation event, the following options had been considered:

- do nothing - continue with the grants scheme in its current format;
- dispense with the grants and channel the available budget into local groups to deliver programmes in and around St. Patrick’s Day at a local level and to create local hubs for Irish culture, music and heritage;
- dispense with the small grants scheme but use the funding to create celebratory events at a number of local community facilities which would be open to those groups who currently availed of the St. Patrick’s Day small grants scheme. In addition, develop local hubs for Irish culture, music and heritage; and
- dispense with the current grants scheme but channel the existing available budget to deliver a St. Patrick’s Day ceilí in the Ulster Hall for all those groups who had

traditionally availed of the St. Patrick's Day funding scheme, on the afternoon of the 17th March. In addition, develop local hubs for Irish culture, music and heritage for that short period.

The Good Relations Manager then drew the Members' attention to a synopsis of the results of the review and engagement event as follows:

- 16 groups had filled in the survey and 5 people had attended the engagement event;
- two thirds of respondents had indicated that their grant was used to stage events for older people;
- 50% of those who responded had indicated that the amount of funding awarded was insufficient to enable them to undertake all that they wished to do within their project;
- over half of the groups who had responded stated that they organised events for a mix of people from different community backgrounds;
- 75% of those who had responded indicated that they preferred option 1 of the list of options detailed, with no change being sought to the grants scheme in its current format.

In addition to these comments, at the engagement event, all of those present had stated that they felt that the application process was too complicated and disproportionately burdensome given the amount of funding on offer. The Good Relations Manager advised that these comments would be fed into the current review of the Council's grant aid process.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it authorise the continuation of the grants scheme in its current format, given that this had been the preferred option of those who had participated in the survey and consultation event.

Christmas 'Goodwill' Events – Small Scale Grants

The Good Relations Manager reported that every year a number of requests were received for financial assistance from groups living on interfaces to assist in the hosting of cross-community Christmas events during December. She advised that, this year, a resource of up to £3000 had been provided through the District Council Good Relations Programme and it was anticipated that up to a maximum of six groups might approach the Good Relations Unit with requests for funding. The Partnership noted that any awards would be made by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services using his delegated authority.

The Partnership noted that a contribution of up to £3000 had been provided through the District Council Good Relations Programme to support up to six local interface group to deliver the annual Christmas Events.

Update on the 2017 Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme Review Panel – Verbal Update

The Partnership was advised that, unfortunately due to diary commitments of the various Members of the Panel, a meeting of the Review Panel had yet to take place. The Members noted that officers were currently trying to schedule a meeting and it was anticipated that it would take place during January 2018 and that an update report would be submitted to the February meeting of the Partnership.

The Partnership was reminded that the Membership of the review panel would comprise of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive representative on the Shared City Partnership and an Independent Member.

Noted.

Chairperson