

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority Annual Progress Report 2006 - 2007

This report template includes a number of self assessment questions regarding implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties from **1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007**. Please enter information at the relevant part of each section and ensure that it is submitted electronically (by completing this template) and in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive to the Commission by **31 August 2007**.

Name of public authority

Belfast City Council

Equality Officer

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Executive Summary

- What were the key policy/service developments made by the authority during this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations?

EQUALITY

▪ Disability Issues

The DDA group, chaired by the Director of Corporate Services, meets monthly to assess the Council's arrangements for meeting the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

The Council formed a partnership with Disabledgo, a company that provides a national access guide on the Internet, to produce a Belfast specific guide. This will give disabled people, their families and friends, detailed information on the accessibility of certain venues.

The Disabledgo Belfast web guide was launched on the Belfast city website, in the City Hall at the annual disability event on 24th April 2007.

▪ Disability Action Plan

Under the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006, two new duties took effect from 1 January 2007 which requires public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- encourage the participation by disabled people in public life.

Subject to these duties, action plans must be submitted to the Equality Commission by 30 June 2007.

The Council's disability action plan is complete and was submitted for consultation from 18th March to 18th May 2007. All consultees received an invitation to attend a special consultation event on 26th March 2007 at Disability Action and at the Council's annual consultation event on 24th April 2007.

▪ Consultation

All consultees have received information concerning our policy screening process and new and developing policies. In addition, we have revised and updated our consultee list.

The third Consultative Forum to discuss Council policies, in line with the equality scheme, was held on October 2006.

A consultation meeting was held at the Zoo on 19th September 2006 to discuss issues for disabled people in relation to the Zoo's pricing structure. This work is ongoing.

- **Training**

Equality related training remains high on the employee development agenda. All staff have been trained in disability awareness. The Human Resource section continues to update courses for new staff on equal opportunities, equality and good relations.

- **Five Year Review**

The Council received an excellent report from the Equality Commission on our Five Year Review of the Equality Scheme. The report commended the Council for the excellent progress made in implementing the Equality Scheme. They particularly highlighted a number of areas of good progress and good practice on which they based their commendation. These include:

- Top level commitment
- Mainstreaming of Equality and Good Relations
- Good Relations training initiative.

- **Welcome Guide**

A Welcome Guide, designed to assist people who are new to Belfast such as visitors, employees or new residents. We have particularly attended to the needs of migrant workers in Belfast by translating the guide into a variety of language: Irish, Polish, Arabic, Czech, French, Lithuanian, Russian, Chinese, Hindi, Portuguese, and Slovak. The guide was successfully launched in the City Hall on 8th November 2006 during Anti-Racism week. The welcome guide provides information on Council services and signposts readers to other key agencies. It is also available on our website.

- **WINS**

The Wins project (Women into Non-traditional roles) is progressing well. The project had set a target of 40 women trained by 2007. To date 43 women have been trained, 15 women have found employment and we are currently recruiting new trainees for an eight week programme. The project is due to be completed in June 2007.

- **Bin Video**

The Council produced a training video highlighting the need for bins to be placed as close to the property as possible to avoid difficulties for disabled people, older people and parents with buggies. The bin video will be shown to cleansing operatives at induction and refresher training.

- **Internal focus group (general focus group, disability, sexual orientation)**

Improvements to employee monitoring has provided us with more information about the composition of our workforce.

Following the employee monitoring exercise we have introduced three internal equality focus groups focusing on general equality, disability and sexual orientation. The first series of internal equality focus group meetings were held in November and December 2006.

GOOD RELATIONS

- **Good Relations Plan**

The Council's Good Relations Unit led the development of a Good Relations Plan for the city of Belfast, in association with the major statutory agencies in the city - the relevant health board, trusts and hospitals; Belfast Education & Library Board; Belfast Institute for Further and Higher Education; Department for Social Development; NI Housing Executive and the Police Service of NI.

This initial Good Relations Plan was developed in preparation for the new arrangements envisaged following the Review of Public Administration. This will become one strand within the future community planning process for Belfast.

- **Good Relations Grant Aid Fund**

We recently revised the whole Good Relations Grant Aid Fund grant aid scheme to ensure a more robust assessment process and that we are targeting more challenging projects. Earlier in the year, we had commissioned independent research on community engagement and best practice; the findings and recommendations of this work now underpins our new grant aid scheme. During the year we approved and distributed over £250,000 to a range of community and voluntary groups all over the city, to support their local good relations activities.

- **St Patrick's Day 2006 – Outdoor Event**

The Council organized a second major outdoor event for St. Patrick's Day in 2007, building on the lessons learned in its pilot event of 2006. In previous years, this event had been contentious and had been perceived as being largely nationalist. The recommendations in the 2006 evaluation report regarding planning, media coverage and the use of symbols were taken into account in planning the 2007 event.

Good Relations Unit staff worked pro-actively with local community groups, particularly those from protestant areas, encouraging them to become involved in the St. Patrick's Day event and the carnival parade. The Council also promoted a positive message that the event was inclusive and welcoming for everyone, regardless of community background. Eight of the 18 groups that took part in the parade this year were from protestant areas and there was a high proportion of people from protestant backgrounds at the event. Media coverage this year was very positive.

- **Successful Peace II Extension funding applications**

The Good Relations Unit made 3 successful applications to the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership under the Peace II Extension Fund. The 3 successful bids, totalling £750,000, were made under the theme of Building Civil Society and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and will run until the end of June 2008.

- **City Hall Centenary – cultural diversity programme**

As part of the Council's overall programme to mark the Centenary of the City Hall in 2006, the Good Relations Unit organised a series of fourteen events to explore our shared history and heritage.

- **Language policy**

The Good Relations Unit prepared a language policy providing guidance for Council staff. This was widely consulted on, both internally and externally, and adopted by the Council in September 2006.

- **Mainstreaming good relations issues within the Council**

The staff from the Good Relations Unit made significant input into a variety of practical Council initiatives during the year, including the bonfire project, the Re-Imaging Communities Programme (removal/ replacement of aggressive paramilitary murals) and the Council's Youth Forum, which established a Good Relations Sub-Group. The Unit also assisted with a number of good relations awareness and training events, which will be further developed in the coming year.

- What are the main initiatives planned in the coming year to ensure the authority improves outcomes in terms of equality of opportunity and good relations for individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75?

- Review Year 1 Equality and Good Relations Training and Learning Strategy Action Plan
- Develop Year 2 Equality and Good Relations Training and Learning Strategy Action Plan
- Continue to mainstream equality issues within the Council and in partnership with others within the city
- Continue to deliver assistance and support to Departments in relation to screening, consultation and policy development
- Continue to hold meetings of the Consultative Forum, to meet at least twice
- Continue to develop a corporate equality management guide
- Coordination of the implementation of the Disability Action Plan
- Continue to develop internal and external monitoring systems incorporating equality consideration
- Establish regular meetings of the internal employee and external forums to discuss issues relevant to employment in the Council
- Revise concessionary pricing at the Zoo and the Waterfront Hall
- Further development of the Good Relations Plan for Belfast
- Further development of the Peace II funded projects on Conflict Transformation
- Leading a major bid for Belfast under the Peace III Programme
- Designing and delivering a good relations training programme Council-wide
- Continuing good relations inputs into a range of council initiatives

Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

- Outline evidence of progress made in developing and meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets in corporate and annual operating plans during 2006-07.

Please refer to Appendix 1

Section 2: Screening

- Provide an update of new/proposed/revised policies screened during the year.

Title of policy subject to screening	Was the <u>F</u>ull Screening Report or the <u>R</u>esult of initial screening issued for consultation? <i>Please enter <u>F</u> or <u>R</u></i>	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Yes/No</u>	Is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Yes/No</u>? If yes indicate year for assessment.
Corporate Identity Guidelines	R	No	No
Good Relations Plan	R	No	No
5 Year Equality Review	R	No	No
'Scores on the Doors' Policy	R	No	No
Belfast: Capital City 2006-2010	R	No	No
Local Economic Development Plan	R	No	No
Integrated Cultural Strategy	Currently out for consultation	Currently out for consultation	
Attendance Policy	R	No	No
Value Creation Map	R	No	No
Home Safety Check Scheme	Currently under review	Currently under review	
Pest Control Charging Policy	R	No	No
Advice on Illegal Eviction	R	No	No
Charging for training provided by the Health & Environmental Services Dept	R	No	No
Provision of Consumer Advice	R	No	No

Section 3: Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

- Provide an update of policies subject to EQIA during 2006/07, stage 7 EQIA monitoring activities and an indicative EQIA timetable for 2007-08.

EQIA Timetable – April 2006 - March 2007

Title of Policy EQIA	EQIA Stage at end March 07 (Steps 1-6)	Outline adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals, and the relevant equality & good relations categories due to be affected.

Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities April 2006- March 2007

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased

2007-08 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2007 – March 2008	Existing or New policy?	Please indicate expected timescale of Decision Making stage i.e. Stage 6

- Where the EQIA timetable for 2006/07 (as detailed in the previous annual S75 progress report to the Commission) has not been met, please provide details of the factors responsible for delay and details of the timetable for re-scheduling the EQIA/s in question.

Not applicable

Section 4: Training

- Outline training provision during the year associated with the Section 75 Duties/Equality Scheme requirements including types of training provision, numbers attending, and conclusions from any training evaluations.

Training Provision.

The number of courses delivered and delegates trained from April 2006 to March 2007.

Course Title	No. trained	No. Courses
Disability Awareness for Front Line Staff	338	20
Disability Awareness for Managers & Supervisors	42	4
Equal Opportunities	175	14

Section 5: Communication

- Outline how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the statutory duties during the year and evidence of the impact/success of such activities.

5.1 The work of the Good Relations Unit which comprises both Equality and Good Relations work is directed by the interdepartmental working group the Good Relations Working Group (GRWG). The GRWG meets every two months. The GRWG monitors budgets and work plans and advances policy. In addition a

Good Relations Steering Panel comprised of Councillors and representatives of the main Churches, Trade Unions, the CRC, the business sector and the minority ethnic groups meets monthly.

- 5.2 The Equality Officer and Good Relations Officers report on the progress of the implementation of Section 75 at a more strategic level on a quarterly basis to the Good Relations Working Group, Good Relations Steering Panel, and Chief Officers' Management Team. These reports reflect progress against the detailed action/work plans.
- 5.3 These progress reports are also submitted to the meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee biannually before adoption by full Council. The minutes of these meetings are available to the public via public libraries, the Council's website and at City Hall.
- 5.4 The Chief Executive was called upon regularly to deliver talks on the Council's work on good relations and related equality issues. His willingness to contribute to these seminars, conferences and events, both internal and external, highlights a commitment to equality at the highest level of the Council's business.
- 5.5 On occasions the Good Relations Unit staff are interviewed by external agencies in relation to the Council's Equality and Good Relations work. As evidenced by the Corporate Plan, the Council is committed to civic leadership and promoting equality and good relations.
- 5.6 Opportunities are taken where possible to communicate the Council's commitment to equality and good relations. These include speeches given by the Lord Mayor and Chairmen of Committees and Sub-Committees and introductions to the Council's public documents such as the Corporate Plan. On a more informal basis, the Equality Officer and Good Relations Team give advice to various Departments on a range of issues.
- 5.7 Internal Council newsletters are used as a vehicle to provide up-dates to inform employees of equality/good relations developments and future issues. A decision has been made to increase the internal newsletter to six editions a year. The website is continually updated on equality matters.
- 5.8 The external Council newsletter – *City Matters* – includes articles and up-dates to inform the wider population about developments in the field of equality and good relations. *City Matters* is currently circulated to 120,000 households in Belfast and we promote the fact that it is available in Braille and audio; production in other formats is also available on request. As feedback from

readers has been very positive, we plan to increase the frequency of editions in future.

- 5.9 The statutory duty is maintained in relation to communicating with our consultees on the AA list. We consult with user groups, targeted stakeholders and Section 75 groups in the early stages of development of new policies, service reviews or changes to our original EQIA schedule. Screening consultations are conducted with our AA list, focus groups and are presented on our website.
- 5.10 The external communication of the authority's commitment to the statutory duties and communicating progress on statutory duties has been enhanced with the creation of the Consultative Forum.
- 5.11 The Lord Mayor's Office was in frequent dialogue with the staff from the Unit on a range of issues relating to equality and good relations. The Lord Mayor hosted a variety of events during the year including, a celebratory event for Shopmobility and support for the Elder Abuse Campaign for Help the Aged. He also attended a wide range of events for disability and ethnic minority groups.
- 5.12 A Youth Forum has been established in the Council. Thirty six young people from across the city will act as a Shadow Youth Council. This is a great opportunity to consult with young people on an ongoing basis.

Section 6: Data Collection & Analysis

- Outline any systems that were established during the year to supplement available statistical and qualitative research.
 - Outline any research undertaken/commissioned to obtain information on the needs and experiences of individuals from the nine categories covered by Section 75.
- 6.1 Considerable statistical information is held centrally within the Council, e.g. the Baseline Profile of Belfast, which is up-dated annually and used in the development of the Council's Corporate Planning process.
 - 6.2 The Council carries out a major Public Consultation exercise regularly and included a sample boost in its 2004 (update planned for 2007) survey to ensure that they were representative of all nine groups defined in the equality legislation. The results of this survey are used to inform and direct the Council's Corporate Plan. Other external data is also used to inform the

development of both policy and procedure within the Council. These include the Census, workforce profiles, customer surveys and focus groups.

- 6.3 Each Department conducts appropriate surveys and focus groups related to their own requirements. Each section retains this information departmentally.
- 6.4 All EQIA's have reached stage 7. The monitoring and evaluation reports are updated annually. The Council monitors uptake of services as part of its normal procedure but details and standards vary. Consultation with service users is also common with many services having user forums, customer panels etc.
- 6.5 The Council has developed a comprehensive monitoring system for all employees.

Section 7: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- Detail any initiatives/steps taken during the year to improve access to services including provision of information in accessible formats.
- 7.1 The Council is committed to providing information in alternative formats as stated in its Equality Scheme. Links have been made and arrangements are in place with key agencies and organisations to produce work in alternative formats and languages as required.
- 7.2 The Equality Officer has had a series of informal discussions with representatives of Section 75 categories addressing information provision and access to services. We have consulted on making all our documents available in alternative formats and have added plain English, easy read, digital daisy and signed video to our list of alternative formats.
- 7.3 The Equality Officer is a member of the internal DDA Group specifically to progress the equality agenda. The Council has adopted the BS 8300 standard in relation to compliance with the DDA 1995.
- 7.4 The DDA group registered with Disability Action Business Support Scheme. The Business Support Scheme is a partnership between companies and Disability Action in their approach towards good practice on disability issues. The aim of the scheme is to encourage companies to be forward thinking in their approach to disability issues within the workplace, to improve their services for people with disabilities and to acknowledge their efforts. Disability Action has presented the Council with the Employment Support Scheme Award. This award commends the Council for work in relation to Communication, Access, Training, Policy and Procedures and Marketing Initiatives.

- 7.5 A signage group has been established as a sub group of the DDA group. This group is concentrating on all types of way finding and signage for the Council in an attempt to be innovative and proactive.
- 7.6 All Departments have been requested to include the Council's textphone number on their stationery and other publications where their phone number is included.
- 7.7 All the Council's major public documents – e.g. the Corporate Plan, City Matters, EQIA Executive Summaries – are made available in alternative formats on request, i.e. in other languages, on disc or audio cassette, large print or in Braille, plain English, easy read, digital daisy and signed video.
- 7.8 Signers have been employed at focus group meetings, seminars, interviews and launches as appropriate.
- 7.9 The Council is committed to increasing our representation of people with disabilities in the workforce. It has successfully implemented the Disability Strategy – action plan for 2005-2006 and has facilitated at least 32 work experience placements. Development work is ongoing.
- 7.10 The Human Resource team is continuing to develop community outreach initiatives to increase participation of women in non traditional roles. The team has visited both boys' and girls' schools in relation to the craft apprenticeship scheme and sent mail-shots to all schools within the Belfast Education and Library Board in relation to the gardening apprenticeship scheme. Belfast City Council has also achieved the Opportunity Now 'Gold' standard in respect of gender equality.
- 7.11 The Council is the lead partner in an EU funded project known as the WINS (Women into Non Traditional Roles) project. The aim of this project is to attract women from across all sectors to consider non traditional work. The work is ongoing.
- 7.12 The Human Resources team has attended meetings with ethnic minority groups to improve networks and relationships in a bid to increase our representation of ethnic minorities in our workforce.
- 7.13 The Council is aware of the need to continue developing more robust monitoring systems. To this end we are committed to improve our monitoring systems. A comprehensive monitoring system to monitor our employees across all the Section 75 groups was introduced. We have established internal equality groups as a result of this monitoring system. We will conduct the monitoring of

all employees on a two yearly basis.

- 7.14 A welcome pack outlining contact details for services and signposting to other key agencies was launched in November 2006. It is currently available in 12 languages.

Section 8: Complaints

- Identify the number of Section 75 related complaints:
 - received by the authority;
 - resolved by the authority (including how this was achieved);
 - which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - which were referred to the Equality Commission.
- 8.1 One complaint was received during this reporting period. The Equality Commission is aware of the complaint.
- 8.2 The complaint is currently being addressed. The Chief Executive has responded to the complainant and the Equality Officer has met with the complainant to discuss the way forward. Further meetings are being arranged.

Section 9: Consultation and Engagement

- Provide details of the measures taken to enhance the level of engagement with individuals and representative groups during the year.
- 9.1 The Council is committed to effective consultation and conducts its consultation in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Council's Equality Scheme which contains over 200 groups and organisations on the AA list with whom the Council consults during the EQIA Process.
- 9.2 Consultation with Section 75 groups is a major element of the Council's commitment to the equality agenda. In addition some Belfast City Council departments and services are now using a collaborative process with the Section 75 groups and other affected groups to inform and develop new Council policies. For example, in the recent Public Consultation Exercise, conducted every two years, a number of focus groups comprised members of the nine equality categories.
- 9.3 The Council has developed its own set of Consultation Guidelines, informed by a consultation exercise with Section 75 groups to determine how they wished to

be consulted. The Council continues to conduct consultation in accordance with the guidelines. The major methods of engaging with Section 75 groups include focus groups, stakeholders groups, section 75 group panel, disability organisations, youth organisations and surveys.

9.4 A group of Equality Officers from District Councils continues to meet to discuss relevant equality matters.

9.5 Consultation processes during this current year included

- face to face meetings with section 75 groups
- focus groups with stakeholders groups across departments
- documentation circulation (section 75 screening forms, policy documents)
- disability action plan consultation exercise (at Disability Action and at the City Hall)
- Annual disability event
- internal employee equality groups (general, disability and sexual orientation)
- consultation forum (twice a year)
- youth forum consultation

Section 10: The Good Relations Duty

Provide details of additional steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.

Good Relations 2006 - 2007

10.1 Good Relations Steering Panel

The Council's work in the areas of equality and good relations is directed by the Good Relations Steering Panel, made up of one Councillor from each of the party political groups on the Council, plus representatives from the main churches, trade unions, business sector, minority ethnic groups and the Chief Executive of the Community Relations Council.

The Good Relations Steering Panel met monthly and in addition to its own normal business, received presentations from the following bodies:

- The NI Council for Integrated Education
- The Parades Commission
- FAIR (Families Acting for Innocent Relatives)

- Belfast Local Strategy Partnership
- Healing through Remembering.

10.2 **Good Relations Working Group**

At officer level, an inter-Departmental Working Group manages the Good Relations programme; this Working Group is chaired by the Director of Legal Services.

10.3 **Good Relations Plan**

At a strategic policy level, the main output of the Unit during the year 2006-07 was the production of a Good Relations Plan for the city. Discussions were held with all the political party groups within the Council on a report from Dr Mike Morrissey, suggesting shared public values and a framework for a Good Relations Plan for the city, which will be required under the *Shared Future* policy. The report was also considered at officer level by all the Council's Departmental Management Teams and met with general consensus from both Members and officers.

An inter-agency Good Relations Plan for the city was developed, based on 4 themes:

- securing shared city space
- transforming contested space
- developing shared cultural space
- building shared organisational space.

The Council developed the plan in partnership with the major public agencies in Belfast and acknowledges their assistance and co-operation in this. The Plan includes the good relations actions planned for Belfast by the Council along with those of the following main statutory bodies in the city:

- the relevant Health Board, Health Trusts and Hospitals
- Belfast Education & Library Board
- Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
- Department for Social Development
- NI Housing Executive
- Police Service of N Ireland
- Belfast Local Strategy Partnership.

The Council is aware that the implementation of *A Shared Future* presents our city with a real opportunity to build a shared and inclusive society. Our Good Relations Plan for Belfast 2007 represents an initial effort to co-ordinate activities across the public sector in line with government policy on good relations in Northern Ireland. It was adopted by the Council in February 2007.

10.4 **Good Relations Grant Aid Fund and Review**

The Council operates a good relations grant-aid scheme to support local community and voluntary groups in appropriate community relations and cultural diversity projects across the city. 75% of the funding for this grant-aid scheme is drawn down from the Community Relations Unit, within the OFM/DFM.

The Good Relations Steering Panel considers applications for grant-aid at its monthly meetings. During the 12 months in question, 87 applications were approved at a total of over £400,000.

A substantial review of the Unit's grant-aid scheme was undertaken and revised criteria with a more robust scoring matrix were introduced. These will be used in assessing all applications with effect from 1 April 2007 and seek to reward more challenging projects.

10.5 **Guidelines on community engagement**

The revised grant-aid scheme is based on a set of new guidelines on community engagement.

In September 2006 the Council commissioned Gráinne Kelly, an independent consultant, to undertake research and prepare principles and guidelines on community engagement, good relations and good practice. Her report was well received and adopted by the Council in November 2006; these guidelines now underpin the Unit's revised grant-aid policy and criteria.

10.6 **St Patrick's Day 2006 – Outdoor Event**

The Council had agreed to host an outdoor event for St. Patrick's Day for the first time in 2006. The 2006 event was run as a pilot and an independent evaluation report on the event was prepared by Dr. Dominic Bryan from Queen's University. Dr Bryan made a presentation to the Policy and Resources Committee in June 2006 and the Council agreed in July 2006 to proceed with a major outdoor event on St. Patrick's Day 2007.

In previous years, this event had been contentious and had been perceived as being largely nationalist. The recommendations in the 2006 evaluation report regarding planning, media coverage and the use of symbols were taken into account in planning the 2007 event.

In the run-up to the March 2007 event, Good Relations Unit staff worked pro-actively with local community groups, particularly those from protestant areas, encouraging them to become involved in the St. Patrick's Day event and the carnival parade. The Council also promoted a positive message that the event was inclusive and welcoming for everyone, regardless of community background.

A Carnival Parade and outdoor concert, featuring an international pop act, Ulster Scots and Irish musicians and dancers and local ethnic minority communities, was held on Saturday 17 March 2007 in Custom House Square, organised by the Council's Events Unit and the Beat Initiative. Eighteen community groups took part in the Parade, of whom 8 were from protestant areas; this signified a huge change in participation from previous years. In addition, a group of young people from An Munia Tober, the support group for Irish Travellers also took part, as well as older people and people with disabilities – making the carnival parade a very inclusive event.

Media coverage this year was notable for its positive approach and some of the headlines included:

- *Parade Bridges Belfast Divide* – Sunday Times
- *It's A Paddy's Day of Peace for Belfast* – Sunday World
- *It's A St Patrick's Day To Remember* – Belfast Telegraph
- *St. Patrick's weekend marked by good-natured festival fun* – Irish News.

10.7 **St Patrick's Day Small Grants Scheme**

In view of its continued success, the St. Patrick's Day small grants scheme continued for the third year, using the same good relations criteria and total amount of £30,000, with the upper limit for each grant being £1,000. The scheme again proved very popular this year and the number of applications received from community groups all across the city trebled in March 2007 to 97, allowing community and voluntary groups to organise their own local St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

10.8 **St. Patrick's Night Concert**

The Council once again led in organising a St. Patrick's Night Concert in 2007 in the Belfast Waterfront Hall in association with the BBC, featuring Phil Coulter & Friends and the Ulster Orchestra. There was a balanced and inclusive line-up representing all aspects of local culture. Demand for the concert proved extremely high, with all the public tickets already allocated by the end of January 2007. The Hall was filled to capacity on the night and there was excellent audience feedback and media coverage.

10.9 **Successful Peace II Extension funding applications**

The Good Relations Unit made 3 successful applications to the Belfast Local Strategy Partnership under the Peace II Extension Fund. The 3 projects will run until the end of June 2008 and staff have just been appointed.

The 3 successful bids, totalling £750,000, were made under the theme of Building Civil Society and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and are as follows:

- **Addressing Divisions**

A research project examining the cost of segregated service delivery in Belfast, profiling good practice in promoting inter-community work and building an integrated strategy for communities living and working at the interface

- **Conflict Transformation Learning Consortium**

An inter-disciplinary learning programme across the public sector, promoting dialogue and training on the themes of conflict transformation and *A Shared Future*

- **Towards a Shared City**

The establishment of a Belfast Civic Strategy Forum, to explore the concepts of local area community planning in a divided city, with particular reference to good relations

10.10 **Re-Imaging Communities Programme**

The Re-Imaging Communities Programme is administered by the Arts Council NI and run in conjunction with other organisations such as OFMDFM, DSD and CRC. Local communities are being encouraged to express their identities in more positive ways, replacing offensive sectarian and paramilitary murals with more artistic representations and in a wider form of art work. The Good Relations Unit has been involved with the Council's successful application for initial funding of £24,000, which is being used for an arts-based feasibility study for a citywide re-imaging project. The feasibility study will identify areas suitable for future work and draw up an action plan as a first phase later in 2007.

10.11 **Bonfires**

The Council has established an inter-agency group to promote better bonfire management in Belfast on the traditional 11 July night bonfires. The Good Relations Unit has worked closely with the Community Relations Council and other agencies in developing the cultural traditions element of this work. The Council has commissioned Groundwork NI to manage its bonfires project for the next 3 years and the Good Relations Unit has taken over operational responsibility for this project for the 2007 year, when 14 sites are in the Council programme.

10.12 **Diversity project**

Officers from the Good Relations Unit are working in partnership with officers from the Community Safety Unit on a Diversity Project. This project will commission research to identify good practice across four cross-cutting themes, namely sectarianism, sexual orientation and disability in relation to community safety and good relations. The Good Relations Unit will fund the first two themes listed.

10.13 **City Hall Centenary – cultural diversity programme**

As part of the Council's overall programme to mark the Centenary of the City Hall in 2006, the Good Relations Unit organised a series of fourteen events to explore our shared history and heritage. These included:

- talks by 5 former Lord Mayors, held in association with the Linenhall Library
- a lecture to mark the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme
- lectures on Belfast's industrial history; the life of Lord Pirrie; the VCs of Belfast
- a poetry evening, featuring the work of local poets
- an evening organised by Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency, exploring our joint musical heritage
- an event, held in partnership with the Belfast Institute, entitled *Kneading One Another*, which illustrated the diversity of cultures in present day Belfast and celebrated a theme common to all cultures – bread making. This featured Jenny Bristow as celebrity chef, along with BIFHE's international students and demonstrated breads from around the world. This was a huge success and received much positive media coverage and good audience feedback.

10.14 **National Holocaust Memorial Day**

The Good Relations Unit organised a visit to Auschwitz by Council Members (including 3 former Lord Mayors), officers and representatives from the Youth Forum in September 2006. This was an extremely moving and poignant occasion for all concerned.

The Unit organised an event in January 2007 to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. This included a small exhibition of photographs which had been taken during the Auschwitz visit. Two young people from the Youth Forum took leading roles in the event and feedback from those who attended, including the local Rabbi, was very positive.

10.15 **Young People and Good Relations issues**

The Unit has initiated work with the Council's Youth Forum around good relations issues and has facilitated conversations around prejudice and tolerance. Good Relations Unit staff assisted with a residential held in Corrymeela for Youth Forum members in November 2006. The residential looked at good relations issues including sectarianism and racism and included a workshop on Travellers' issues. As a result of this, two young people from the Travelling Community have been invited to join the Youth Forum.

10.16 **Language policy**

The Good Relations Unit prepared a language policy providing guidance for Council staff. This was widely consulted on, both internally and externally, and adopted by the Council in September 2006.

10.17 **Parades and protests**

The Steering Panel held several special meetings to discuss the issues of parades and related protests as these can undermine good relations work. In partnership with the Community Relations Council, the Council commissioned research from Dr. Dominic Bryan on the issue of good practice regarding parades and protests, and the management and mediation processes which resulted in the relatively peaceful summer of 2006. The research was largely complete but the report was not presented to Committee during the 2006-07 year.

10.18 **Research commissioned to inform future work**

Dr Neil Jarman from the Institute of Conflict Research was commissioned to undertake research on migrants in Belfast. This examined issues such as numbers, country of origin, religion, language, employment and residential patterns. The research was largely complete but the report was not presented to Committee during the 2006-07 year. It will be useful in informing the work of the Unit and in assisting the Council to meet its obligations under the Race Equality Strategy.

10.19 **Belfast Civic Leadership Group**

This Group was set up in autumn 2005 and had visited Amsterdam in October 2005. In a joint initiative with Newry and Mourne Council, facilitated by Mediation NI, the Group assisted in organising a successful major international conference held in Newry in June 2006, entitled *The Challenge of Change*.

10.20 **Review of Good Relations Steering Panel**

The organisation Futureways was appointed to undertake an independent review and evaluation of the work of both the Good Relations Steering Panel and the Belfast Civic Leadership Group. The Council adopted the recommendations in the report in the autumn of 2006. This review will assist the Council in preparing for increased responsibilities under the *Shared Future* document, and to be best placed to take on additional good relations responsibilities on behalf of the city.

10.21 **Community Relations Week – April 2006**

The Good Relations Unit organised two events as part of Community Relations Week 2006. A discussion forum was held on the participation of ethnic minority groups in democratic life. A social event, entitled 'A Shared City', organised in conjunction with the Community Relations Council, included drama, music and dance performances. Both were positively received.

10.22 **Visits**

During the year, Good Relations Unit staff attended a number of local roadshows, communicating their work. The Good Relations Manager made presentations on the Unit's work to staff of the British Council and students from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations.

The Unit hosted a visit from the UK Commission on Integration and Cohesion in February 2007; the visit was organised by the Community Relations Unit of the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister.

10.23 **Equality and Good Relations Learning and Development Strategy**

Between April 2006 and March 2007 the Council has implemented a number of key elements of this strategy under the aims of awareness, challenge and capacity building:

- Issuing its Key Message leaflet to all staff, to clarify the distinctions between Equality and Good Relations
- Delivering 4 awareness-raising workshops, open to all staff, on the themes of sectarianism in the workplace, migration and migrant workers, the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and awareness of Islam
- Conducting an equality audit of staff in conjunction with a major evaluation of the equality training programme
- Development of a focus group of staff to feed into year 2 of the Equality and Good Relations Learning and Development Strategy
- Producing an action plan for year 2 of the strategy

10.24 **Responses to consultation documents**

The Unit has made responses to various Consultation documents, including three major sets of guidance from the Equality Commission and a recent draft from the SEUPB on the proposals for a Peace III Programme.

Section 11: Additional Comments

- Please provide any additional information/comments