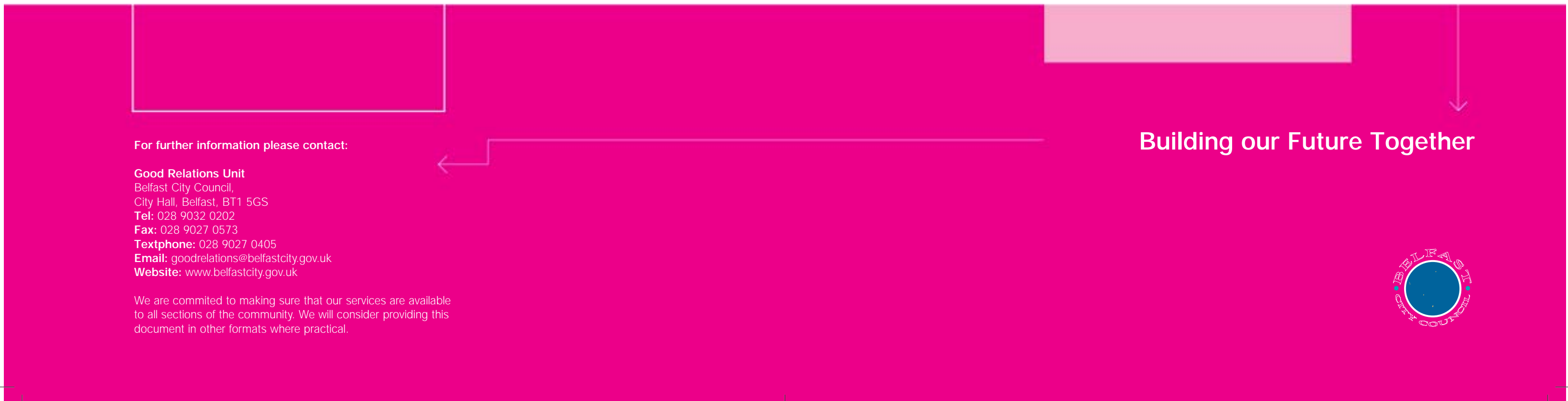


Belfast City Council Good Relations Strategy

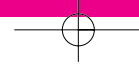
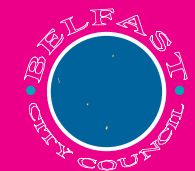


For further information please contact:

Good Relations Unit
Belfast City Council,
City Hall, Belfast, BT1 5GS
Tel: 028 9032 0202
Fax: 028 9027 0573
Textphone: 028 9027 0405
Email: goodrelations@belfastcity.gov.uk
Website: www.belfastcity.gov.uk

We are committed to making sure that our services are available to all sections of the community. We will consider providing this document in other formats where practical.

Building our Future Together





CONTENTS

	Page
Message	3
Introduction	5
The Belfast Context	9
The Northern Ireland Context	15
Benefits of a Good Relations Strategy	21
Methodology	23
Summary of Internal Audit	27
Analysis of Action Required	29
The Four Themes of our Strategy:	
■ Promoting Community Relations	32
■ Celebrating Cultural Diversity	39
■ Promoting Equality through Service Delivery	45
■ Promoting Equality through a Representative Workforce	51
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Equality Impact	58
Appendix B: Good Relations Steering Panel	60
Appendix C: Good Relations Working Group	61
Appendix D: Results of Internal Audit	62
Appendix E: Bibliography	72

Message



MESSAGE

In January 2001, Belfast City Council demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of life of people in the City by adopting "Promoting Good Relations" as a corporate objective. In our Equality Scheme, we promised to produce a Good Relations Strategy which would integrate equality, community relations and cultural diversity within the Council.

Our new Good Relations Strategy, "Building our Future Together", is the result of an intensive period of work by a number of people. It was produced by a Panel which includes Councillors from all the political parties in the Council, representatives from the churches, the trade unions, the business sector, the Community Relations Council and minority ethnic groups. This strategy received unanimous support from the whole Council.



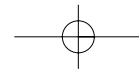
"Building our Future Together" sets out our Vision for "a stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist City, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner". This strategy emphasises our commitment to this Vision.

We look forward to "Building our Future Together" by working with public and private sector bodies, with community and voluntary groups, with trade unions and the business sector and with all the people of Belfast to make the City a better place for everyone.

COUNCILLOR TOM EKIN
Chairman
Good Relations Steering Panel

PETER McNANEY
Chief Executive





Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Decision of Council to adopt Promoting Good Relations as a corporate objective

In January 2001, the Council adopted a fourth corporate objective of Promoting Good Relations to complement its existing objectives of Providing Civic Leadership, Delivering Best Services and Improving the Quality of Life. The impetus for this new objective was derived partly from new statutory duties set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 but was based primarily on work on community relations and cultural diversity, which had been initiated and developed by Sub-Committees within the Council.

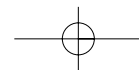
Together these corporate objectives shape the future direction of all Council services and activities. The Promoting Good Relations objective integrates and develops our current work in the areas of equality, community relations and cultural diversity and demonstrates our commitment to their underlying principles.

“The Council’s corporate objectives together shape the future direction of all our services and activities.”

Equality Legislation

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without. The Act also requires the Council, in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

In April 2001 the Equality Commission formally approved our Equality Scheme which details how we will fulfil our duties. A fundamental element of our Scheme is the production and implementation of a Good Relations Strategy.



Community Relations

The Council had a Community Relations Programme for a period of three years in the early 1990s. However, this Programme was discontinued in 1995.

A Working Group of both Councillors and staff, set up in 1998 to examine the possibility of re-establishing a Community Relations Programme, achieved considerable consensus and produced a discussion paper during 2000. This noted the change in the political climate in Northern Ireland and proposed that the Council draw together its work on community relations and cultural diversity with the new statutory duties relating to equality contained in the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Cultural Diversity

A Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee, established in March 1998, received presentations from a range of groups which helped to shape its approach. The Sub-Committee appointed consultants, who produced a draft Cultural Diversity policy, with a number of recommendations. Although the policy was not formally adopted, we acknowledged that many items agreed on the 'list of priority actions' were also relevant to the promotion of good relations.

When Promoting Good Relations was adopted as a corporate objective in January 2001, we agreed that the work of the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee had evolved to the stage where it could be subsumed within that of the Good Relations Steering Group. This approach ensured that cultural diversity issues are centrally co-ordinated and mainstreamed within the Council.

Development of the Good Relations Strategy

In line with the concept of 'growing as a community' as outlined in the Programme for Government, we established a Steering Group, on which all the political parties were represented, to direct our Good Relations work. In addition, an inter-Departmental Working Group of staff was set up, to support the Steering Group and to develop a Good Relations Strategy, based on the following principles:

- to promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities, taking into account the needs of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, of men and women generally, of persons with a disability and persons without and of persons with dependants and persons without
- to promote tolerance and understanding throughout the City by providing support, including the equitable use of available budgets, for appropriate initiatives which celebrate the cultural diversity of Belfast
- to promote good relations between people of different religious and political beliefs and different racial groups in every aspect of Council activities
- to use the Council's influence as a democratically elected body, providing civic leadership to the City, to promote good relations throughout society.



Vision

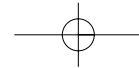
Our Corporate Plan 2003-2006 states that we "will encourage and support good relations between all citizens, promoting fair treatment, understanding and respect for people of all cultures".

Our Vision in terms of this Good Relations Strategy is for a stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist society, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner.

Although legislation can be an important driver for change, used alone it can hinder the growth of trust and openness. We intend to go beyond compliance with the equality legislation and are determined to demonstrate our commitment to the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence in a pro-active manner, with the aim of mainstreaming these into all of our work - our policies, structures and procedures.

"Our Vision in terms of this Good Relations Strategy is for a stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist society, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner."





The Belfast Context

THE BELFAST CONTEXT

Social Divisions

Although social divisions are prevalent throughout Northern Ireland, they are most evident within Belfast. The segregated¹ patterns of life in the City are marked at all levels - on the whole, people live in separate residential areas, go to separate schools, to different churches and social clubs and celebrate different traditions. These divisions dominate the landscape and the nature and scale of the problem is evident, often being expressed in physical form - through for example flags, gable end murals and kerb painting.

Despite recent political developments, demographic evidence shows progressively higher levels of residential segregation and it is estimated that less than a third of the population of Belfast now lives in areas which are mixed.² This polarisation is particularly apparent in public sector housing. The Housing Executive estimates that while throughout Northern Ireland around 70% of estates are segregated, within Belfast, estates are almost wholly segregated.³

“An interface may not even be noticeable to others but local people know exactly where it is. It can be crossed simply by crossing a street, passing a landmark, or turning a corner”.

Interfaces

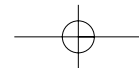
There are at least 17 purpose-built ‘peace-lines’ in Belfast, marking an interface with a solid wall or a steel fence, however there are many more interfaces which are less visible to strangers. “An interface may not even be noticeable to others but local people know exactly where it is. It can be crossed simply by crossing a street, passing a landmark, or turning a corner”.⁴

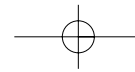
¹A segregated area is defined as one where the minority group constitutes less than 10% of households

²Prof. Fred Boal, *Belfast: Frontier City, Economic Outlook and Business Review*, November/December 2001

³Northern Ireland Housing Executive, *Towards a Community Relations Strategy*, Consultation Paper, May 1999

⁴The Belfast Interface Project, *Interface Communities and the Peace Process*, March 1998





There is no doubt that Belfast's interface communities have been most affected by the Troubles of the last thirty years and have consistently high rates of social, economic and environmental disadvantage. These communities are most affected by the continuing tension and sporadic eruptions of violence and their access to facilities and services perceived as being 'on the other side' is restricted.⁵

Community division is more entrenched in North Belfast than anywhere else in Northern Ireland and during the Troubles over a quarter of all deaths occurred here. With the Protestant population declining and the growing Catholic community seeking more housing, tensions run high and public disorder is frequent. Half of Belfast's peace walls and three-quarters of the locations deemed as 'flashpoints' in the City by the Police Service are in North Belfast.

In terms of disadvantage, the situation in North Belfast is equally grim. Levels of long term illness, infant mortality and cancer are higher than average, educational attainment is lower and it is home to a third of the City's long-term unemployed.

Social deprivation

In spite of various Government initiatives over the years (ranging from the Belfast Areas of Need, Belfast Action Teams, Making Belfast Work and the Belfast Regeneration Office to the current Partnership Boards) social and economic deprivation continues to have a significant impact on the City. The recent Noble report, which measures deprivation using a wide variety of existing statistics, ranks Belfast as the most deprived Council area in Northern Ireland in four out of the six measures used.⁶ The worst ten wards in Northern Ireland in terms of health and eight out of the ten most deprived wards in terms of education, skills and training are all in Belfast.

Links between deprivation and health are well documented. Put simply, if you are poor in Northern Ireland you are likely to be sicker and to die younger than if you are well off. Within Belfast, the contrast is even more stark: on average, a person born in the most affluent area will live over four years longer than a person born in the most deprived area.⁷

Evidence from social attitude surveys throughout Northern Ireland indicates that Catholic, Protestant and minority ethnic communities continue to portray low levels of tolerance or appreciation of diversity.⁸ In Belfast, a major recent survey suggested that increased community polarisation and worsening sectarian divisions have been accompanied by intensified tensions between neighbouring interface communities.⁹

While both communities accept that relations are likely to improve in future, there is a disparity in the extent to which they welcome opportunities for cross-community contact. There is evidence of a growing sense of alienation and marginalisation within the Protestant community, with a degree of suspicion that community relations involves a hidden agenda and making political concessions.



⁵Brendan Murtagh, *Ethnic Space and the Challenge to Land Use Planning: a Study of Belfast's Peacelines*, Centre for Policy Research, University of Ulster, May 1994

⁶Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *Measures of Deprivation in Northern Ireland*, (Noble Report), June 2001

⁷Director of Public Health Medicine, *Public Health Matters: Fifth Annual Report 1992/3*, Eastern Health & Social Services Board

⁸Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, *Ten Years of Social Attitudes to Community Relations in Northern Ireland*, J. Hughes and C. Donnelly, August 2001

⁹Paper presented by Dr. Peter Shirlow of the University of Ulster at the Annual Conference of the Royal Geographical Society and the Institute of British Geographers at Queen's University Belfast, January 2002

“There is a common misconception that racism is not a problem in Northern Ireland, as there are so few minority ethnic residents.”

Minority ethnic groups in Belfast

While not as cosmopolitan as many large UK cities, as a capital city and headquarters of many regional bodies, Belfast has attracted more resident minority ethnic groups than other local authorities in Northern Ireland. Census figures for 2001¹⁰ show that Belfast is home to almost one-third (over 1300) of the total Chinese community of Northern Ireland, almost 30% (almost 450) of the Indian community, 25% (around 150) of the Pakistani community and an Irish Traveller group of around 250. According to the Census, minority ethnic groups make up only 1.37% of the total inhabitants of the Belfast area, although it is claimed that the official figures underestimate the size of this growing population.

There is a common misconception that racism is not a problem in Northern Ireland, as there are so few minority ethnic residents. However, recent research indicates that minority ethnic people have problems accessing some mainstream services. Racism also appears to be much more significant than sectarianism in influencing people's attitudes. For example, Northern Ireland people seem to be twice as unwilling to mix with members of minority ethnic communities than with members of the other main religious tradition to themselves (i.e. Catholic or Protestant).¹¹

Racial harassment has increased over recent years; the number of reported racist crimes in Belfast rose from 39 in 1996 to 195 in 1999, a five-fold increase.¹²

Northern Ireland has been more or less isolated by the Troubles of the last thirty years from the wider demographic changes taking place across Europe as a result of immigration and mobile workforces. With peace, Northern Ireland will become an increasingly attractive place to settle and work and Belfast must be prepared to become more diverse in future.

Improved circumstances in the Council

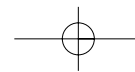
In the late 1980s, relationships among the political parties within the Council were very strained. Following the Hillsborough Agreement, there was a difficult period within which adjournments and suspensions of Council business were common. Since that time, however, there have been significant improvements in political relationships within the City Hall, which reflect those that have taken place at a regional level in Northern Ireland.

The concept of proportionality has become firmly embedded in the past decade since its first introduction in 1993 in relation to the allocation of seats on Committees and Sub-Committees to reflect the overall political composition of the Council. All positions of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees and Sub-Committees have been allocated according to the d'Hondt system of proportionality since June 1999 and the d'Hondt principle has been extended to representation by Councillors on outside bodies since June 2001.

¹⁰Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *Census 2001*

¹¹Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *Racial Attitudes and Prejudice in Northern Ireland*, Paul Connolly and Michaela Keenan, February 2000

¹²RUC, *Statistics and Community Affairs Branch*, January 2001



The composition of the Council itself has become more finely balanced and there is increasing recognition of the need for all parties to work together on major issues in a more business-like way to improve the position of all our citizens. Joint cross-party delegations are common, both in attendance at conferences and when lobbying on behalf of the Council. Joint cross-party working groups have also helped to foster inclusivity.

These political developments and the growing interest in community relations and cultural diversity within the Council have mirrored the major changes that have taken place at the Northern Ireland level. Although there will always be political differences among Councillors, and argument and debate is healthy and natural, there is a broad measure of support for the Council's corporate objectives and the associated priorities.

New approach by the Council

In Belfast's highly segmented social pattern, there are no quick fixes and even discussion about religion, politics or race becomes a very sensitive issue. People are very unwilling to raise issues of division and conflict when unsure of the background and views of others.

Public bodies, including the Council, have largely accepted this reality and have developed a systematic response to living with division, creating a neutral work environment and providing services according to traditional community boundaries. This, however, inevitably results in the embedding of these divisions in an institutional form.

We acknowledge that many individuals, groups and organisations have been working for many years, often behind the scenes, to improve community relations and reduce tension and mistrust.

Social and political changes in our environment mean that the time is now appropriate for us to make efforts to tackle the challenges of our divided society and make a positive and more effective contribution towards becoming a more stable, diverse and equitable society. We will begin to address these difficult topics by openly exploring issues of division and adapting our culture to encompass the realities of diversity and interdependence.

However, we recognise that we cannot effect such change in society on our own and will co-operate with other public and private agencies in the City in addressing wider policy issues and in examining the issues that cause division and exclusion. The Council is not only a substantial service provider and employer in its own right, with an annual gross expenditure of over £100 million and a workforce of over 2,400, but is also in a position to exert considerable influence over other organisations in the City. For example, in the spring of 2003, eleven Councillors were also Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly and four of these were Ministers.

The Council itself is formally represented by Councillors on over 80 outside bodies and has informal links and partnerships with a great deal more. We are consulted on a wide range of issues and as a democratically elected body, are in a prime position to demonstrate civic leadership and promote good relations throughout society.



The Northern Ireland Context



THE NORTHERN IRELAND CONTEXT

Changing Situation

Over the past decade, there have been many profound political, social, legislative and policy changes across Northern Ireland. These changes may be summarised as follows:

- The peace process, political developments and the Belfast Agreement
- The devolution of government in Northern Ireland and the establishment of the Assembly
- The Programme for Government which contains major commitments for action to reduce divisions in our society

“Over the past decade there have been many profound political, social, legislative and policy changes across Northern Ireland.”

- The introduction of a raft of legislation on equality including:
 - Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine specified groups and to have regard to the promotion of good relations within their communities
 - The introduction of the Human Rights Act requiring public authorities to act in compliance with the European Convention
 - The introduction of the Single Equality Bill, which will harmonise and extend anti-discrimination legislation as far as possible
 - The establishment of the Equality Commission
 - The establishment of the Human Rights Commission



- The introduction of substantial new funding programmes which were explicitly linked to supporting reconciliation and healing community divisions, including:
 - The major involvement of the European Union through its Structural Programme and particularly the establishment of the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation
 - The introduction and development of District Partnerships at a local level, each with a peace and reconciliation agenda
 - The International Fund for Ireland's Community Bridges Programme
- The introduction of the New Targeting Social Need initiative which requires public bodies to tackle disadvantage by directing their efforts and resources towards individuals, groups and areas in greatest need
- The current review of public administration and local government in Northern Ireland.

Following the Belfast Agreement and its subsequent endorsement through a referendum, power was devolved to a locally elected Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998.

Central to the Belfast Agreement is the principle of equality and a commitment to "the promotion of a culture of tolerance".¹³ The importance attached to these values is underscored by the location of a Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister and by a commitment within the Programme for Government to have in place "a new policy and strategy on good relations" with "an over-arching Executive strategic plan with associated actions and targets".¹⁴

On a wider level, the Executive's Programme for Government commits the Executive to addressing directly the religious and political divisions in Northern Ireland and seeking to create greater mutual understanding and respect for diversity among

communities. Throughout, the Programme highlights the inter-related nature of community relations and the promotion of equality and human rights.

Introduction of the District Council Community Relations Programme

In 1989, at a time when there was still overt conflict and levels of violence were high, the Government recognised the need for work on community relations issues and established the District Council Community Relations Programme. The Programme was introduced along with a comprehensive package of measures designed to promote equality, reconciliation and greater respect between the two traditions and cultures in Northern Ireland. Other measures included Fair Employment Legislation, Targeting Social Need and the Making Belfast Work initiative. At the same time, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland made provision for integrated education, introduced cross-curricular community relations programmes and included the Education for Mutual Understanding scheme within the school curriculum.

The District Council Community Relations Programme's remit was to support projects that would increase cross community contact and promote greater mutual understanding and respect for diversity, specifically between Protestants and Catholics.

The Programme was expressly designed to encourage and support the promotion of community relations at local level, with financial support available at 75% of eligible expenditure, including the salaries of Community Relations Officers.

¹³Belfast Agreement, 1998

¹⁴Northern Ireland Executive, *Draft Programme for Government*, September 2002

Belfast City Council took part in the Programme for three years in the early 1990s, but has not had a Programme since that time, although community relations work has continued to some extent on an informal basis.

In its early days, community relations work concentrated on groups outside formal politics, much of it focusing on children and young people. Groups were often small and consisted of committed pioneers.

The term community relations is widely used and various interpretations have been applied. For some, it is "a harmless niceness... cucumber sandwiches", for others "a sinister attempt at social and political engineering".¹⁵

Often in the past this meant that work was ad hoc and marginalised, with little systematic commitment from government, political leadership or business - "too often associated with entertainment for the underprivileged rather than a non-negotiable commitment of government to equitable pluralism".¹⁶

Cultural traditions in Northern Ireland

In the mid-1980s, the Cultural Traditions Group, an informal group of interested individuals from academic, media, arts and educational backgrounds, was established in Northern Ireland. Its aim was to encourage the acceptance of cultural diversity in society and the Group was influential in discussions with the then newly established Central Community Relations Unit.

When the Government announced the establishment of the new Community Relations Council it was clear that it would include the themes of both community relations and cultural traditions and several different approaches to community relations work emerged, including:

- single identity work - emphasising capacity and confidence building
- cross-community work - awareness raising; anti-sectarian work; networking; projects
- cultural diversity - cultural identity/ local history/ political education

The Northern Ireland Programme for Government recognises that "prejudice is not confined to religious sectarianism and that ethnic and other minority groups are often the victims of intolerance. We will work to reduce all forms of prejudice... We will respect, support and celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity".

There are links between cultural activities and the development of good citizenship, with a growing recognition of their value in bringing people together and promoting social inclusion and positive community relations. Some funding programmes have been specifically targeted at increased cross-community education and understanding and Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage have been part of the Northern Ireland curriculum since 1989.

In its Guidance to District Councils, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure emphasises the positive impact made by culture, arts and leisure on a community and their contribution towards a better quality of life.

Cultural diversity forms part of many of the community relations programmes of other Councils in Northern Ireland. In Belfast, cultural diversity issues have been dealt with separately in recent years, due to the lack of a community relations programme and because of the larger numbers of minority ethnic groups within the City.

¹⁵Future Ways Programme, *A Worthwhile Venture?*, K. Eyben, D. Morrow and D. Wilson, University of Ulster, 1997

¹⁶Future Ways Programme, *A Worthwhile Venture?*, K. Eyben, D. Morrow and D. Wilson, University of Ulster, 1997

Recognition of the value of community relations

After the ceasefires, community relations and reconciliation work ceased to be marginal and became a subject of national and international interest. The European Union offered considerable funding for social and economic initiatives, with the aim of maintaining the momentum for peace and reconciliation and reinforcing progress towards a peaceful and stable society. The Clinton administration backed up its direct political involvement with support for economic investment and social change, especially targeted at women and community development. The reconciliation sector emerged as a key player with substantial financial backing.

Those involved in community relations work in Northern Ireland have always been aware that community divisions cannot be considered in isolation from other social problems and that it might be more profitable to tackle some of the underlying issues such as relative deprivation.

Political developments in the late 1990s, especially since the establishment of the Assembly, have meant that community relations work has changed its emphasis from encouraging cross-community contact and addressing the symptoms of conflict, such as division and segregation, to tackling the root causes of disadvantage and discrimination. Current community relations best practice models now stress the need to promote religious, political and cultural pluralism.

Equity, diversity and interdependence

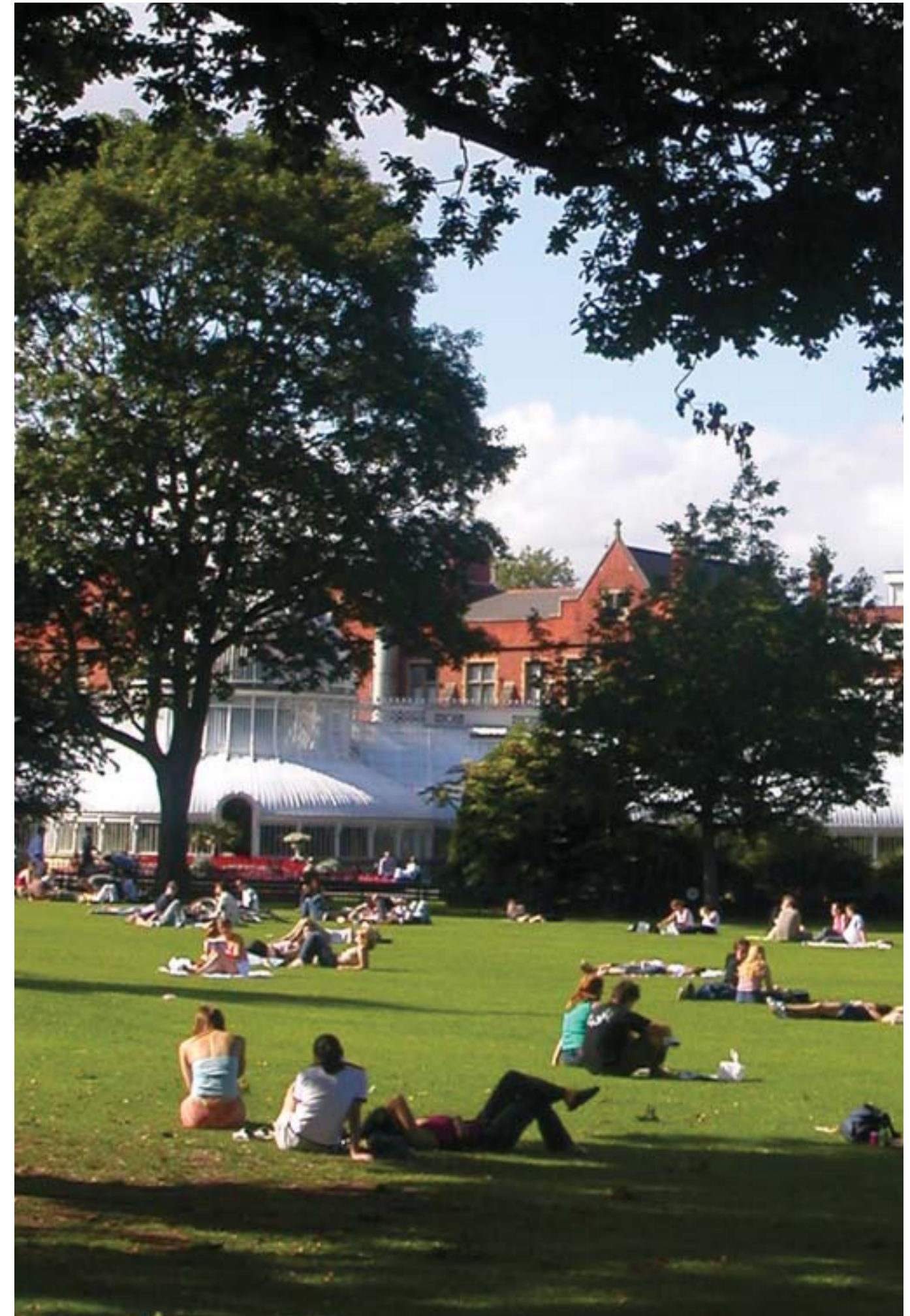
This approach has led to a fundamental change in the way in which it is recommended that community relations work is undertaken, moving towards broader models which emphasise the integration of the principles of equity, diversity and interdependence within the policies, programmes and delivery mechanisms of organisations. These are defined as follows:

- "equity is about ensuring that all sections of society have equal opportunities to participate in economic, political and social life through redressing inequalities arising independently from people's choices
- diversity is about acknowledging how our differences as individual human beings and as members of groups can improve the quality of our lives
- interdependence is about recognising that we are shaped by our relationships and that our potential as human beings and as a society is dependent on the quality of our relationships with one another."¹⁷

Recently there has been an acknowledgement that the aims of community relations and its underlying principles - support for equity, diversity and interdependence - must lie at the heart of the policy framework for the divided communities that make up Northern Ireland. These principles must be integrated into all our institutions, both public and private, to support the changes in structures and practices which are required.

In moving to a culture based on these three key elements, the Council will need a long term strategic approach to dealing with division and improving community relations. Good relations principles must become mainstreamed into all aspects of Council life - its decision-making or policy levels, its structures and procedures and its training programmes, for both Councillors and employees. This framework will ensure that considerations regarding good relations are integrated into the Council's business processes and ensure effective implementation.

¹⁷Future Ways Programme, *The Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Framework: a Framework for Organisational Learning and Change*, University of Ulster /International Fund for Ireland Community Bridges Programme, January 2002



Benefits



BENEFITS OF A GOOD RELATIONS STRATEGY

We believe that “Building our Future Together”, our Good Relations strategy, reflects the changes in the wider political, social, economic and legislative environment. This strategy demonstrates our practical contribution towards the strategic aims and priorities of the Northern Ireland Executive, as outlined in the Programme for Government, of creating a “peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society.”

This strategy is essential for the following reasons:

Contribution towards the Council’s Vision

- it encapsulates the Vision and clearly illustrates our civic leadership role
- it sets a direction and priorities for the Council and other agencies and organisations
- it brings good relations issues - community relations, cultural diversity, equality in the delivery of services and a representative workforce - centre stage in the business of the Council, setting out the positive contribution each can make to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the City
- it addresses our legislative requirements under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and demonstrates our commitment to the wider equality agenda
- it provides a locally relevant framework for addressing sensitive issues which can lead to controversy and confrontation within the Council, for example, flags and emblems, symbols, language diversity

Integration with other Council plans and strategies

- it links to other Council strategies and promotes effective partnerships
- it assumes a holistic Council viewpoint, rather than a Departmental perspective
- it provides a framework for more detailed Departmental and Service Plans and informs the work of individual staff, Departments and other agencies
- it illustrates best practice
- it will ensure that detailed Action Plans for implementation, with associated monitoring and review measures, are drawn up

Social and economic benefits

- it addresses directly the divisions and diversity which exist within the City
- it takes account of the needs, demands and aspirations of all the communities which the Council serves¹⁸
- it forms the basis for meaningful consultation with a wide range of organisations and local people, since this is central to the strategy¹⁹
- it acts as a rationale and lever for attracting additional funding from other agencies
- it helps to enhance the image and profile of the City and encourage investment

¹⁸As reported in the Council’s Second Public Consultation Survey in 2001

¹⁹The Steering Panel intends to use the list of groups identified in Appendix AA of the Council’s Equality Scheme for Consultation purposes but recognises that this will require to be augmented by a range of relevant local religious and political organisations

Methodology



METHODOLOGY

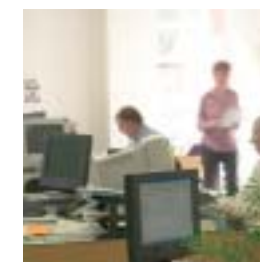
Structures

Following the adoption of Promoting Good Relations as a corporate objective, the Policy and Resources Committee established a joint Councillor/staff Steering Group, on which all political parties were represented, to direct our work on good relations.

The Good Relations Steering Group agreed a project plan and terms of reference for the Good Relations Working Group, which was set up at staff level and made up of representatives from all Departments. The Working Group supported the work of the Steering Group and reported to it.

Development of the Good Relations Strategy

Both the Community and Leisure Working Group and the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee had been comprised of Councillors from all political parties within the Council. The Good Relations Working Group used the work undertaken by these cross-party groups as the foundation for the development of this strategy. This was supplemented by reviews of both the internal and external environments.



“We established a joint Councillor/staff Steering Group, on which all political parties were represented, to direct our work on Good Relations.”



Internal audit

One of the first activities of the Good Relations Working Group was to undertake an internal audit to identify and assess the amount of work already being undertaken within the Council, which might have an impact on, or contribute to, good relations in Belfast. All Departments were requested to return details of such work and the wide range and scope of those activities and projects reported in the internal audit was encouraging.

Audit of external information

There is an extensive range of literature available on each of the issues considered in this strategy. Information from a wide variety of other public bodies and organisations was collated and desk research undertaken to review these publications. Among other items, these included reports and documents from the Community Relations Council, organisations and individuals involved with community relations, cultural diversity, diversity in the workplace and policies from other District Councils in Northern Ireland. (A Bibliography is included as Appendix E to this report).

Relevant information has been included in the Chapters of this Report as appropriate. A summary of the background to each of the four themes is given as evidence to support the Council's case for a Good Relations Strategy.

Good Relations Strategy Review Team

In the autumn of 2001, the Council's Directors undertook a Council-wide review of all corporate strategies, to assist with the preparation of the next Corporate Plan. As part of this review, a Good Relations Strategy Review Team was established on a short term basis. The work of this Team was useful in informing and directing the work of the Good Relations Working Group.

Consultation

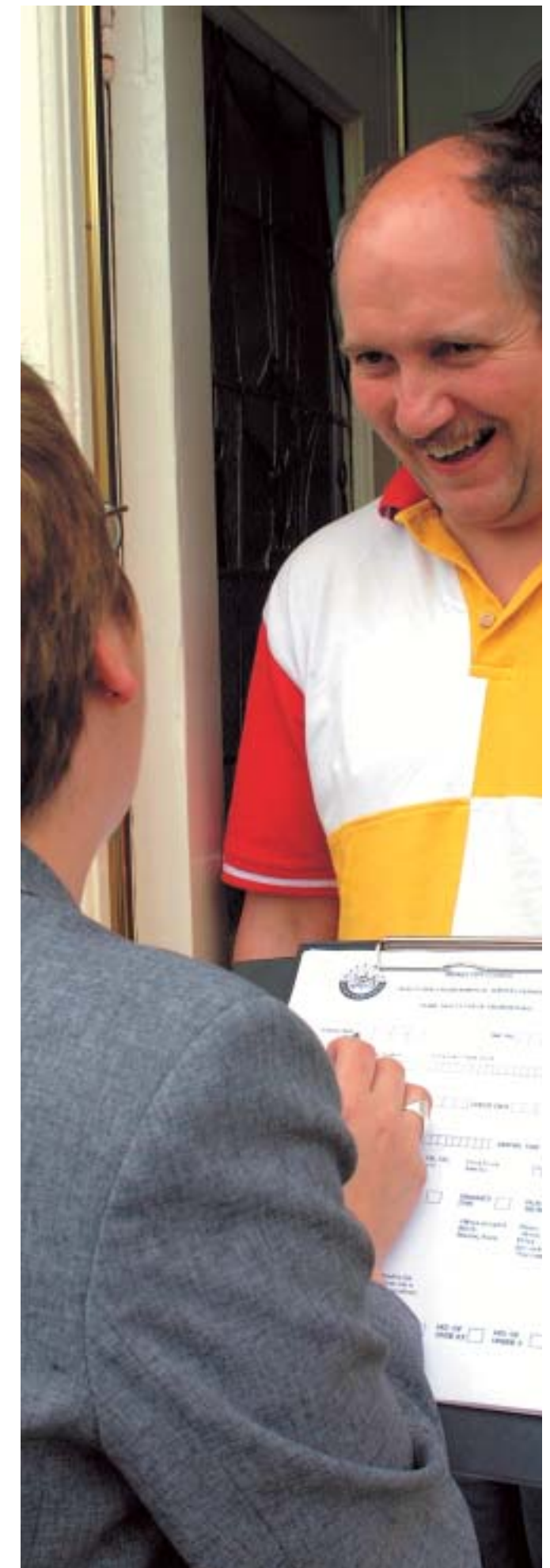
The Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee had consulted with relevant interest groups in determining its approach to the subject. When the Good Relations Working Group was starting its work in early 2001, it was clear that many groups in Belfast were suffering from 'consultation fatigue' as a result of the large number of equality schemes being developed and consulted upon.

"It was clear that many groups in Belfast were suffering from 'consultation fatigue' as a result of the large number of equality schemes being developed and consulted upon."

Although the Working Group did not undertake any direct consultation, it ensured that the Council's Public Consultation Survey in 2001 included specific questions to gauge public perceptions of the state of community relations in the City. Relevant information from the public survey, which indicated sound support for the Council taking a more pro-active role in the promotion of community relations in the City, has been included in the development of this strategy.

In the autumn of 2002, the Good Relations Steering Panel undertook a wide ranging series of consultation meetings with representatives from various sectors within the City, including churches, faiths, minority ethnic groups, trade unions, business, statutory bodies, voluntary organisations, community organisations and community relations specialists, advisors and academics. Although the sessions focused primarily on the role the Council could play in attempting to address sectarianism in the City, the meetings were also used as part of an informal consultation process on the draft strategy, to gauge opinions and views about the role of the Council in good relations. This series of consultation meetings was well attended, discussions were lively and the reactions to the Council's proposals were very positive.

We have taken account of the views expressed and have incorporated them into this strategy.



Summary of Internal Audit



SUMMARY OF INTERNAL AUDIT

As one of its first tasks, the Good Relations Working Group carried out a comprehensive Internal Audit to identify and assess the amount of work already being done within the Council which had an impact on, or was contributing towards good relations.

As the concept of good relations was new, there was some variation in its interpretation as Departments found it difficult to restrict returns to the three categories specified in the legislation, namely persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial groups.

Since the links between religious belief and political opinion in Northern Ireland are very close and well documented, these two categories were considered together and most good relations activities were centred on these. Most Council contacts with minority ethnic groups have developed only recently and tend to concentrate on Travellers and the Chinese community.

The audit results were very encouraging, with many examples of relevant Council activities, ranging from a number of central personnel policies on equal opportunities and sectarian harassment to cross-community projects and work with Travellers.

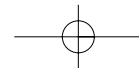
The results of the audit may be divided into those policies/functions which relate to the Council as an employer and those which relate to the Council as a provider of services.

Although all Departments pointed out that they provided services to all communities in Belfast on a fair and equal basis, the two Services dealing most directly with the issues of religion, politics and race are Human Resources and the Recreation & Community Development Section.

Human Resources ensures compliance with legislation and codes of practice in promoting the Council as an equal opportunities employer and has responsibility for all central personnel policies and procedures.

The Recreation & Community Development Section provides grant-aid to community and voluntary groups, many of which are involved in community relations work or work with minority ethnic groups. Some groups were involved in projects in difficult interface areas and others were working to raise awareness of cultural and social issues. There were various examples of activities that were directly focused on work with Travellers and the Chinese community in South Belfast.

Of particular importance are the major seasonal public events, for example those at Hallowe'en and Christmas, which attract large audiences from all parts of the City and beyond, creating a positive image for the City and raising the profile of the Council. Other Council examples worth noting are the cross-community concerts and events held in the Ulster Hall and Waterfront Hall, various initiatives supported by the Culture and Arts Unit and the provision of food hygiene advisory information in Chinese, Urdu and Turkish. (The full Audit report is attached as Appendix D).



Analysis of Action Required



ANALYSIS OF ACTION REQUIRED

Our definition of Good Relations

The Council has a responsibility not only as a service provider for those who live and work in Belfast, but also as an employer of a substantial workforce. In the absence of any official definition of good relations, we have interpreted the theme as widely as possible and taken it to mean all working relationships, both internal and external.

We recognise that it is in everyone's interest to promote good relations between our employees, between Councillors, between employees and Councillors, between employees and management, between the Council and all those who use our services and facilities and between the Council and those who provide supplies for it.

We also aim to promote good relations in a broader sense, indirectly, between people from all the differing communities within the city, by using our influence as a civic leader with our partners and other leading agencies in Belfast.

This Good Relations Strategy therefore has four separate themes. The first three of these refer to our services and influence in the wider community and the fourth to our own workforce. They are all equally important. All four themes are inter-related and fundamental to the overarching principle of good relations.

“The Council has a responsibility not only as a service provider for those who live and work in Belfast but also as an employer of a substantial workforce.”

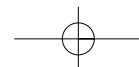
The four themes of the strategy are:

Promoting Community Relations

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Promoting Equality through Service Delivery

Promoting Equality through a Representative Workforce



The following chapters give details of each of the four themes of promoting community relations, celebrating cultural diversity, promoting equality through service delivery and promoting equality through a representative workforce. In each case, background information, best practice in the area and the current position within the Council are given, concluding with a summary of actions we propose to take.

High Level Objectives

The high level objectives for each of these are as follows:

Promoting Community Relations

To contribute to a more stable, tolerant society by establishing a community relations programme.

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

To contribute towards an inclusive pluralist society, by establishing a cultural diversity programme, which acknowledges and respects the cultural diversity within the City, and to promote and support the celebration of such diversity in an inclusive manner which avoids offending those with different views.

Promoting Equality through Service Delivery

To ensure equality of opportunity in the delivery of our services, in a manner which will respect and cater effectively for the needs of different users.

Promoting Equality through a Representative Workforce

To create a welcoming and supportive employment environment that will help us to attract and retain a workforce which is broadly representative, at all levels and in all occupations, of the community we serve.

Conclusion

The UK Government's vision for modernising government is of "a fairer, more decent society, underpinned by stable economic growth, environmental sustainability and social justice for all". It recognises that as local, directly elected bodies, Councils have a special status and authority and "are uniquely placed to provide vision and leadership to their local communities".²⁰

"a fairer, more decent society, underpinned by stable economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social justice for all."

At a regional level, the Northern Ireland Executive is fully committed to the principle of equality and to the promotion of a culture of tolerance. The Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government recognises specifically "that we have to deal with the very deep and painful divisions in our society after decades of conflict and that we must tackle the scourge of sectarianism, racism and intimidation".²¹

We are committed to achieving a better quality of life for everyone in the City, now and for future generations. In our 2001 public survey, the majority of people interviewed named the level of violence, sectarianism and poor community relations as the worst things about living in Belfast.

This Good Relations Strategy aims to promote a fairer, more equal society where people from all communities are treated with tolerance, and where diversity is respected and celebrated.

We have already made good progress in the implementation of our Equality Scheme. "Building our Future Together", our Good Relations Strategy, represents the second stage of this Scheme and will build on this progress, ensuring that equity, diversity and interdependence become core values of Council policy and that good relations principles are given due weight in all our activities.

We have already implemented one of the key recommendations of this strategy by establishing a Good Relations Unit within the Chief Executive's Department, to integrate and co-ordinate the Council's work in the promotion of equality of opportunity, the promotion of good community and racial relations and the celebration of cultural diversity. This will enable us to deliver effectively on the contents of this strategy.

"We have already implemented one of the key recommendations of this strategy by establishing a Good Relations Unit within the Chief Executive's Department"



²⁰Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People*, HMSO 1998

²¹Northern Ireland Executive, *Draft Programme for Government*, September 2002

Promoting Community Relations



PROMOTING COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Our aim in relation to promoting community relations is:

To contribute to a more stable, tolerant society by establishing a community relations programme.

Evaluation of the District Council Community Relations Programme

The District Council Community Relations Programme has been evaluated approximately every three years since it began in 1989. The most recent evaluation in 2000²² drew attention to the fundamental changes in context since the Programme's inception (as discussed in Chapter 4), pointing out that these changes called into question

whether the Programme's aims were the most appropriate in today's peace building context. It also stated that a greater emphasis should be placed on mainstreaming community relations and on organisations working together on issues of common concern.

Since the development of sustained community relations work requires stability and continuity, the current three year funding cycle was criticised, as it contributed to a high turnover among community relations staff which hampered the Programme's success.

This evaluation noted that there had been marked improvements in cross-community contact and in the quality of single identity work, using new and innovative approaches.

²²Community Relations Unit, *Evaluation of District Councils Community Relations Programme*, by Research and Evaluation Services, November 2000

It commented on the increased awareness within Councils generally of the need for, and value of, community relations training for Councillors, employees and community leaders. However, the report noted that there was still an over-reliance on high profile activities and an ad hoc approach to evaluation. In particular, it noted that there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the relationship between community relations and current policy and legislative changes.

The evaluation noted that Councils must take account of the extent to which community conflict and division underlies and exacerbates social exclusion and develop inclusive approaches to the promotion of tolerance and the acceptance of diversity.

It stressed too that if the aims of the Community Relations Programme had changed, the delivery mechanism should also be reviewed. Another review of Community Relations policy, led by Dr. Jeremy Harbison, was completed in 2001. The Draft Programme for Government confirmed that it would provide support "to District Councils, working in partnership to facilitate the development of co-ordinated local plans to promote good relations".²³

The Draft Programme for Government affirms its belief that District Councils have a key role to play in community relations and goes on to state that "our experience in North Belfast and other areas has shown us that improved community relations across communities in Northern Ireland can only develop when elected and community representatives work together, especially at local level in those areas which have experienced the most serious effects of conflict".²⁴

Audit of other District Councils' community relations policies

As part of its background research, the Good Relations Working Group carried out an analysis of the community relations policies and procedures of other local authorities in Northern Ireland.

We wrote to all the other local District Councils, requesting a copy of policies on community relations/good relations, with the aim of setting up a database of relevant information and best practice. Thirteen Councils replied.²⁵

Generally, the Councils who responded carried out community relations work with local groups and had grants policies. The activities supported varied from tea dances to sports coaching, most had events driven programmes and some had incorporated cultural traditions work. Some Councils admitted that they concentrated on events and promoting cross community contact and had tended to avoid challenging controversial issues such as sectarianism and prejudice.

In 1998, the then Central Community Relations Unit (now the Community Relations Unit, within the Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister) had requested that each Council prepare a community relations plan in accordance with new guidelines.

²³Northern Ireland Executive, *Draft Programme for Government*, September 2002

²⁴Northern Ireland Executive, *Draft Programme for Government*, September 2002

²⁵The Council acknowledges and appreciates the responses and policies received from the following Councils - Ballymena, Ballymoney, Banbridge, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Coleraine, Cookstown, Craigavon, Down, Fermanagh, Lame, Limavady & Moyle

Community relations work had to be part of a wider and longer term planning process, linked to the Council's Corporate Plan.

While most Councils followed the traditional Departmental structural model, where community relations was based in, for example, the Leisure Department, some recognised the need to mainstream community relations into a central unit to ensure maximum impact on Council business and services.

Some Councils recognised the strong links between community relations and Best Value, as 'efficient and effective public services are an essential part of the fabric of a healthy democratic society.' Both the Equality obligations of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Best Value guidance require Councils to consult with local people on policies and services. Ballymena Borough Council was re-locating its Community Relations function to a central Equality Unit, which would not only equality proof all policies and services, but have responsibility for Best Value. In addition, their Community Relations Officer is a full member of all existing and future cross-Departmental teams so that the aims of the community relations programme can be reflected in all aspects of the Council's business.

One Council suggested incorporating community relations within its Best Value service review programme, noting that this would also assist in mainstreaming it, as consideration of the community relations function would take place alongside, rather than after, the considerations of other Council services. It also proposed that a strategic approach to consultation should be adopted, rather than undertaking separate consultation processes for each dimension of its services.

Most other Councils were involved to a greater extent in the preparation of District Partnership plans/strategies for their areas and recognised the need to integrate community relations into this process.

Some Councils recognised a clear need to address the manner in which divisions among Councillors had a negative impact on the image of their District. Among other recommendations, Ballymena Borough Council specifically stated that its aim regarding Councillor relationships was "to become a model of civic leadership by developing a culture and practice of mutual respect within and outside the Chamber, sharing a common purpose (which is to serve the whole community) and by managing the media".²⁶ The concept of civic leadership was widely identified as a major way in which a local authority can make a difference in the promotion of community relations, creating a positive image within the Council.

We have taken note of the comments made in the evaluation of the District Council Community Relations Programme and of the various examples of good practice available locally and have addressed the issues raised during the development of this strategy.

Community Relations within Belfast City Council - background

As stated, the Council had a Community Relations Programme for a three-year period between 1992 and 1995. Three full-time Community Relations Officers were employed, based in the Community Services Section of the Client Services Department. Around £180,000 in government funding was received each year and a wide programme of activities was undertaken. However, the programme was not continued after 1995, following failure to achieve agreement on future staffing.

A Councillor/staff Community and Leisure Working Group was established to examine the possibility of re-introducing a Community Relations Programme. This cross-party Working Group achieved considerable agreement, noting that the major changes in the political climate in Northern Ireland had been reflected in substantial changes within the Council.

The Working Group agreed that to achieve real progress, community relations needed to be located centrally within the Council, be given strong direction and be seen to apply to all Departments. During the period the Community Relations Programme had been in operation there had been limited support from some parties for the concept of community relations. The fact that community relations had been located within the Community Services Section had reinforced its perception as peripheral to the main work of the Council.

The centralisation of the community relations function was regarded as vital to its long-term effectiveness if its principles were to become mainstreamed within the Council. The Working Group recommended that the precedent set by the Environment Strategy be followed. In this case, the Environment Strategy Manager was located centrally within the Chief Executive's Department and reported to the Policy & Resources Committee. Assisted by an inter-Departmental Group, he provided support to ensure the implementation of the strategy in all Departments and had responsibility for awareness raising and training Council-wide.

The Working Group was clear that all political parties should be seen to support a new community relations programme, which had to be seen as a long-term strategy that was not afraid to tackle hard or contentious issues. They recognised that community divisions with the associated duplication of resources were not only wasteful and contrary to Best Value principles but also have a clear impact on

the City's potential for development and investment. The Councillors acknowledged that their relationships and their behaviour in the Council Chamber should provide role models for both employees and the wider community and that an enhanced profile for community relations would improve the Council's image.

Around the same time, the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee had noted the strong links between its work, Section 75 duties and the promotion of good community and racial relations. The social and political context had changed and, in December 2000, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed that the Council's work on community relations and cultural diversity should be combined with the new statutory duties relating to equality. This would allow the three themes to be integrated and co-ordinated within a new corporate objective of Promoting Good Relations and assist the development of an integrated approach to the co-ordination, management and policy formulation roles in relation to these areas. The Council formally adopted Promoting Good Relations as a corporate objective in January 2001.

Community Relations work within the Council - current position

The Internal Audit carried out by the Good Relations Working Group identified the fact that community relations work was continuing unobtrusively within the Community Services Section, although there was neither a formal programme nor a budget allocation. Community Development staff support a wide variety of community relations activities, ranging from cross-community children's music workshops and work with Irish Travellers to local history projects.

Within the Recreation & Community Development Section, the change in approach to area-based strategies and focus on the development of community infrastructure beyond Council Community Centres, means that Community Development Workers could take on a more extensive community relations remit, with appropriate training and support. (The full audit report is attached as Appendix D).

Expansion to form the Good Relations Steering Panel

Following a Council resolution which condemned sectarian violence, the membership of the Good Relations Steering Group was expanded in the late summer of 2002 and now includes representatives of the wider community in Belfast, from the Churches, Trade Unions, the business sector, the Community Relations Council and minority ethnic groups.

One of the first actions of the enlarged group, known as the Good Relations Steering Panel, was to commission an audit of anti-sectarian activities and initiatives which were going on in the City. This audit, which was carried out in partnership with the Community Relations Council, will be used to inform the development of the good relations policy and practice in the future, and make recommendations on practical proposals on the way forward.

The Good Relations Steering Panel is encouraged to learn that the Draft Programme for Government states that it is particularly important "to support the capacity of local communities to deal with matters of dispute or division, including the proliferation of sectarian graffiti, unauthorised flag flying and the erection of memorials that can lead to sectarian tensions".²⁷

Conclusions

The three themes of cohesion, inclusion and justice underpin all the policies and programmes of the

Northern Ireland Executive. The Executive is committed to addressing the divisions in our society and improving community relations, recognising that a range of hard issues must be tackled.

The past decade has seen profound changes in Belfast, both in the City and within the Council. We are committed to the concepts of equality, good relations and sustainable development, all of which mean social progress and improving the quality of life in the broadest sense. There is no doubt that social change of this nature will contribute to a more stable and peaceful environment, which will be for the benefit of all.

There is also a public desire from the City's own residents for the Council to take action in relation to community relations. In our Public Consultation Survey in 2001, 46% of those interviewed stated that the worst things about living in Belfast were the Troubles and the level of violence, while 8% named sectarianism and bad community relations. When asked (without prompting) what the Council's main priority should be, 14% stated that it should be community relations. This was the top response.

Recommendations

In this more positive environment, we will introduce a new Community Relations Programme clearly based on the three key principles of equity, diversity and interdependence. We are determined to support these principles and display this support in all our services and functions. We recognise that we cannot deliver peace and reconciliation working on our own and will demonstrate civic leadership by working in partnership with other agencies to promote and encourage good community relations throughout the City.

The Community Relations Programme will be funded 25% from rate-borne expenditure and will lever 75% funding from the Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister/Deputy

First Minister. This will enable the Council to draw down substantial funding from central government for community relations, which we were previously unable to access.

We have already established a Good Relations Unit, centrally located within the Chief Executive's Department for maximum effect, and we have appointed two Good Relations Officers to lead and co-ordinate our community relations work.

Research has shown that the most effective community relations work is achieved through community development. We will use our own well established structure of Community Development Workers and Community Centres and access to Belfast's very active and effective community group network to spearhead an externally focused community relations programme. We have agreed Grant Aid criteria for supporting local projects and activities which encourage and advance good community relations in the City.

We will also draw up an action plan to promote good community relations internally, both for our Councillors and our own workforce. Although the Trade Unions have taken a strong and consistent stand against sectarianism, we recognise that in general, politeness and unwillingness to discuss issues of divisions and differences in background are deeply rooted in our culture and that addressing these issues requires skill and confidence.

In the past, employees have had to balance the realities of working in a divided community with the Council's promotion of a neutral working environment. In the future, the aim may be to encourage dialogue about difference. Councillors will face particular difficulties, since they have been democratically elected to represent a particular community and a distinct political viewpoint, so any change process must be sensitive to their need for enhanced training and support.

We will take the following actions:

- establish a Good Relations Unit within the Chief Executive's Department to integrate and co-ordinate the Council's work in the promotion of equality of opportunity, the promotion of good community and racial relations and the celebration of cultural diversity
- recruit two Good Relations Officers for Community Relations and Cultural Diversity work, to be responsible for strategy/policy with close links to Departments, in particular Human Resources and the Recreation & Community Development Section, who will have operational responsibility
- lever 75 % support funding from the Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister /Deputy First Minister (25% rate borne)
- by April 2004, establish a Community Relations Programme which will support and promote good community relations within the City. The programme will contain the following elements:
 - undertake relevant consultation
 - set up budgets for dedicated staff
 - agree criteria for supporting local projects and activities which encourage and advance good community relations
 - agree a communication plan
 - agree a training plan, which will include awareness training for employees, Councillors and local communities and specific training for relevant employees and managers
 - ensure provision for monitoring and evaluation of projects and overall programme
 - ensure provision for review of the overall programme within a 3 year timescale
- establish an inter-Departmental Good Relations Working Group to manage the Programme and direct the work of the Good Relations Unit; this will report to the Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis, initially
- formulate an action plan, by April 2004, to promote good community relations within the Council workforce
- during 2003, commence the implementation of the agreed recommendations in relation to the anti-sectarian resolution of the Council

²⁷Northern Ireland Executive, *Draft Programme for Government*, September 2002

Celebrating Cultural Diversity



CELEBRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Our aim in relation to celebrating cultural diversity is:

To contribute towards an inclusive pluralist society, by establishing a cultural diversity programme, which acknowledges and respects the cultural diversity within the City, and to promote and support the celebration of such diversity in an inclusive manner.

Background

In Belfast, the differing historical experiences and aspirations of the two major communities has resulted in the development of different forms of culture, evident to varying degrees and expressed in the form of lifestyle, music, sport etc. The identification of 'culture' with a particular religious and political ideology has reinforced community divisions and encouraged a tendency to perceive them as being in conflict with each other. Perception differs according to background. What may seem a valuable expression of cultural heritage to one person may be regarded as offensive and threatening to another. These perceptions are reinforced by lack of contact, 'selective cultural and historical amnesia',²⁸ mistrust and fear.

We are committed to the principle of equality and to the recognition of human rights for all our citizens. Although the distinctions between the two main communities are the most obvious, Belfast is made up of many groups which are distinguished by their religious, political and racial backgrounds. A growing number of minority ethnic groups have settled in

Belfast and racism appears to be an increasing problem. We intend to recognise and celebrate the diversity of the City and all its different cultures in ways which are neither offensive or threatening. We will encourage the appreciation and expression of cultural diversity and enable our own citizens to become aware of other cultural identities and traditions and to participate positively in a range of cultural activities.

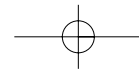
Cultural diversity will form an important integral part of our Good Relations Programme. Challenging one's own cultural identity is a necessary element in making people aware of their own prejudices and raising awareness of other cultures can assist in reducing stereotyping and intolerance.

We are also aware of the importance of the image of the City and how its cultural diversity could be developed and presented in an innovative way to attract visitors and tourists, thus contributing in direct and indirect ways to economic regeneration; a Cultural Tourism Strategy was adopted in May 2002. Belfast's rich heritage in the fields of industry, agriculture, medicine, literature, art, architecture and sport is widely acknowledged.

The centenary in 2006 of the City Hall, the most prestigious civic building in the City, will also provide the Council with an ideal opportunity to celebrate its history and culture with a series of events.

We look forward to the production of the Northern Ireland Executive's cultural diversity framework, as outlined in the Draft Programme for Government in September 2002.

²⁸Irish Peace and Reconciliation Platform, *Peace Building in the Republic of Ireland*, Discussion Document, December 2000



Work of the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee

A Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee was established in March 1998. Its remit was "to consider the Council's existing approach to the Irish language, lesser used languages and issues of cultural diversity and to make on-going recommendations to the Council, through the Policy and Resources Committee, as to how to deal with such issues in a positive and inclusive manner". The following year the Sub-Committee appointed consultants who produced a draft cultural diversity policy,²⁹ with a number of recommendations. Although the policy was not formally adopted, the Council recognised that many of the issues discussed were also relevant to the promotion of good relations.

In June 2000, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to divert the sum of £40,000 to the Community and Leisure Services Sub-Committee as a short-term fund for the purpose of funding special projects in respect of racial and minority ethnic groups. This was in response to a request for funding from the Chinese Welfare Association, which represented the largest single minority ethnic group in Belfast. The grant was made in the interests of racial harmony and to develop greater cultural awareness within cultural and ethnic communities.

In November 2000, the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee agreed a list of 'priority actions', which were relevant to the promotion of good relations and which were to be integrated into the subsequent Good Relations Action Plans.

These priority actions included:

- the establishment of a Cultural Diversity Fund, to give practical assistance and financial support for cultural diversity activities and events

²⁹John Edmund and Associates, *Draft Cultural Diversity Policy and Strategy*, for Belfast City Council, October 1999

³⁰From the minutes of the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee, 5 March 2001

- the development of a Council led programme of initiatives to promote the shared history of an increasingly diverse City
- the development of initiatives on citizenship and civic pride, including exhibitions and events to reflect the different traditions in the City
- the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate engagement with minority racial and ethnic groups
- the review of the criteria for the use of the City Hall to ensure equality of opportunity for all groups
- the rotation of entertainment at Civic Functions to reflect the different traditions within the City and the extending of invitations to representatives of minority ethnic groups.

The Sub-Committee had also discussed more difficult, contentious subjects, including memorials and commemorations within the City Hall, languages, festivals and their funding, symbols and flags and emblems. All of these have proved to be acrimonious in the past within the Council. Work on these has continued within the Good Relations Steering Panel and although further work on each of these remains to be done, the views of the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee on these topics are worth reporting here, since there was wide agreement on various aspects.³⁰

Memorials and Commemorations in the City Hall

The Sub-Committee recognised that the existing memorials and other commemorative items on display in the City Hall were part of the history of the building and although they reflected the context of their times, they did not fully reflect the diversity of the City, then or now. There was a general acceptance that simply to seek to remove some or all of these items would be unhelpful, but it was noted that many of them reflected a military history which might better be displayed elsewhere. Others were of no particular value or significance and could be removed without loss.

There was broad agreement that the Council should aim to reflect the diversity of the City through promoting additional displays. These might feature, for example, famous personalities from sport or the arts or reflect working class experience and other aspects of the City's life and history, which are neglected at present.

The Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee felt strongly that the Council should seek to develop the tourist potential of the City Hall, through the provision of improved facilities; for example, an improved range of tourist booklets, which portrayed the history of the City, its citizens and personalities associated with the Council. Other suggestions included encouraging school children to take an interest in the City Hall and the Council, through involving them in environmental issues and through talks on what the Council does, and organising a lecture based on famous City Hall personalities, from the Unionist, Nationalist and other traditions.

In the summer of 2002, the Good Relations Steering Panel considered an audit of the memorabilia in the City Hall and carried out a tour of the building. The Steering Panel agreed that its aim was to maximise the current display in an innovative way and to strive for more balance in the future. The Steering Panel established an Advisory Panel of experts from Queen's University, Stranmillis University College and the Ulster Museum whose terms of reference were to examine the artefacts and memorabilia currently on display within its public areas, keeping in mind the unique character of the City Hall. The Advisory Panel made recommendations to the Steering Panel on how to achieve a more balanced and inclusive display which represents all aspects of former and contemporary life in Belfast. These recommendations were approved by the Council in early 2003.



Languages

The Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee discussed how best to promote linguistic diversity and how the Council should respond in languages other than English, out of 'need' or to facilitate choice. There was a view that it might be better to support the Irish Language and Ulster Scots in ways other than reproducing all Council publications in such languages.

We have introduced new procedures and clear guidelines for managers on the use of Irish in Council business to comply with the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages. In due course, we will develop broader proposals to support and encourage the use of other minority languages used locally.

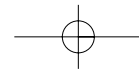
Celebrating Cultural Diversity:

ag ceiliúradh difríocht na gcultúr

celebratein sindrie cultur

慶祝文化多樣性

مختلف ہر زبان و تمدن ملکر خوشی منار ہے ہیں



Festivals

There was a view that in supporting festivals, the Council should consider in particular their aims and how they would increase the confidence of the community, enhance the understanding of the traditions of people from different backgrounds and ensure that each event was enjoyable.

The Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee agreed that the code of practice relating to events seeking support from the Council should lay down standards in respect of early notification, specification of location, scheduling, a definition of how tolerance was being encouraged and details of how the event would be managed.

The implementation of the code of practice would seek to ensure that the events would be non-threatening and that the organisers would have to illustrate that they included an opportunity for input from both the major communities and other groups within the City. The selection of a neutral venue, the availability of safe access and ensuring that there was a planned welcome for all visitors could make the event inclusive.

In considering the provision of grant aid, it was generally agreed that the criteria should specify that any event should be open, inclusive, non-party political and the promoters must be accountable in respect of the outcome. It was suggested that the organisers of smaller festivals might be required to satisfy fewer of any agreed criteria, on a pro rata basis.

The Community Relations Council has produced Guidelines³¹ which suggest 'keys' and Codes of Practice for supporting appropriate projects and events, in relation to their definition, notification, location, management and exclusions.

These principles will be incorporated in the development of a detailed Cultural Diversity Programme for the Council which will be produced by the new Good Relations Unit within the first year of its establishment.

The Council's Arts Sub-Committee is also currently considering a policy and framework for festivals in the City.

Flags and Emblems

The Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee also discussed the problems associated with the display of flags and emblems. It agreed that the current Council logo was non-offensive and should be displayed more prominently on Council properties and suggested that consideration should be given to developing a Belfast flag.

At its meeting on 4th November 2002, the Council agreed that its current policy on the flying of flags on Council properties should be the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment. It is likely that the results of this will assist in resolving what has proved to be a contentious political issue within the Council.

It is beyond the scope of this strategy to provide definitive answers to all of the sensitive and complex issues outlined above, but the Council will attempt to address these within the near future.



³¹Community Relations Council, *Guidelines for a Cultural Diversity Policy: an Advocacy Document*, Maurna Crozier, 2001

Recommendations

Within the Good Relations Unit, the Council has appointed two Good Relations Officers who will have specific responsibility for leading and co-ordinating our work on cultural diversity issues. We will establish a Cultural Diversity Programme to promote the shared history of the City and will support approved projects from a Cultural Diversity Fund.

In particular, we must acknowledge the hurt caused by the Troubles of the past thirty years and provide some memorial for the victims of the Troubles in Belfast, as there is a sense of their being forgotten. "Even when a political settlement is implemented in total - the residual pain, resentment, sense of loss, feelings of injustice etc. which remain will require decades, if not generations, to be acknowledged, addressed and mitigated. The grieving of victims and survivors is only now being acknowledged".³²

On a more general note, we will include cultural diversity issues within a broader good relations awareness training strategy for all Councillors and employees and will promote and encourage the principles of respect, tolerance and diversity in all our activities, in accordance with our stated values.

Few people believe that political accommodation has resulted in real peace. The actual work of reconciliation and building peace is only beginning. In Belfast, this will mean untangling intricate networks of attitudes and behaviour that have caused divisions within our City for generations. We are determined that our work in the celebration of cultural diversity will enable us to deal with our deep-seated divisions in a positive manner and build a new era of trust.

³²Irish Peace and Reconciliation Platform, *Peace Building in the Republic of Ireland*, Discussion Document, December 2000

We will take the following actions:

establish a Good Relations Unit within the Chief Executive's Department to integrate and co-ordinate the Council's work in the promotion of equality of opportunity, the promotion of good community and racial relations and the celebration of cultural diversity

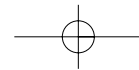
recruit two Good Relations Officers for Community Relations and Cultural Diversity work, to be responsible for strategy/policy with close links to Departments, in particular the Culture and Arts Unit and the Recreation and Community Development Section, who will have operational responsibility

by the end of 2003, establish a Cultural Diversity Fund to support appropriate approved projects which contribute towards an inclusive pluralist society

by April 2004, establish a Cultural Diversity Programme to promote the shared history of Belfast, including Council led initiatives, exhibitions and other events as suggested by the Cultural Diversity Sub-Committee

during 2003, commence the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Panel in relation to the City Hall memorabilia

establish an inter-Departmental Good Relations Working Group to manage the Programme and direct the work of the Good Relations Unit; this will report to the Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis, initially



Promoting Equality through Service Delivery



PROMOTING EQUALITY THROUGH SERVICE DELIVERY

Our aim in relation to promoting equality through the delivery of our services is:

To ensure equality of opportunity in the delivery of Council services, in a manner which will respect and cater effectively for the needs of different users.

Background

The pattern of residential segregation in Belfast has been well documented and allows each group to maintain its own social cohesion, social values and networks and support its own institutions, schools and churches. Social divisions become more pronounced in times of increased tensions in response to the need for collective security from intimidation and violence, particularly further down the economic scale where public housing offers a more limited choice.

The Council has not been exempt from the City's conflict and there have been staff tensions at certain times and in certain locations. In one of the worst incidents, two employees from the Council's Cleansing Service were killed in a shooting attack at the Kennedy Way Depot in 1993. Over the years, a number of Councillors and employees have been killed or seriously injured and staff have been attacked or threatened and vehicles hijacked on numerous occasions.

Such deep-seated community divisions have an effect on the planning and provision of public services and in reality can cause practical difficulties in terms of the delivery of services. The Council,

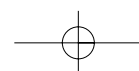
and most other statutory agencies, have made conscious efforts to avoid any possibility of conflict and to continue to provide their services in a professional and impartial manner, encouraging a neutral environment for those who use their services.

Within the public service work environment in Northern Ireland, fair employment policies and practices are vigorously maintained and positive action taken by management if procedures are breached. This neutral work culture, where discussion of sensitive and potentially confrontational topics, like religion, politics or sectarianism, is politely avoided, has provided a coping mechanism, making everyday relationships manageable. This "whatever you say, say nothing"³³ approach has proved successful, keeping Council services going over long periods of severe conflict. However, in reality, such divisions have affected and at times dictated the nature of our delivery of services and some argue that this approach has legitimised the divided nature of our society.

The safety and security of our workforce will always be a priority for management and we recognise the realities and continuing difficulties of operating in a divided community. However, it is an aspiration of the Council that in the longer-term, such divisions will be minimised, with consequent benefits for service provision.



³³Seamus Heaney, *Whatever you say say nothing*, North, 1975



With the recent social and political changes, circumstances have altered and we may now be at the stage where we need to consider a longer-term approach to how we deliver our services, with increased emphasis on efficiency and equality. Avoiding difficult issues actually reinforces divisions and we need to acknowledge that different groups in society have different needs and expectations from the Council.

Equality in service delivery

The Council's past record of fairness and perceived neutrality are important in the public's perception of it as a good service provider in a divided society.

The introduction of the new statutory duties by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 meant that all public authorities in Northern Ireland must prepare an Equality Scheme, stating how they proposed to fulfil their duties. The Equality Commission approved the Council's Equality Scheme in April 2001 and a comprehensive training programme is currently underway to ensure that all employees and Councillors are aware of their responsibilities in the Scheme.

The principles of transparency and accountability in decision making have been built into the statutory framework and as an integral part of the process of policy development, we are now required to undertake comprehensive consultation with those affected by our policy decisions.

One of the key elements of the implementation of the Equality Scheme was the requirement on the Council to screen its existing policies. The purpose of this was to identify those policies which appear to have the most significant impact on equality of opportunity for the nine groups defined in the legislation.

When these policies had been identified, a programme of Equality Impact Assessments was drawn up, which are to be conducted over a four-year period; these are already underway.

Part of the Equality Impact Assessment programme will entail collecting and monitoring data regarding the users of our services. This will help to ensure that the Council is seen as being fair and equitable in the provision of its services and assess whether its policies have a differential impact on any group.

If any policy is found to have an adverse impact, we will consider alternative policies, which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity or seek to mitigate the adverse impacts.

We consider the Equality Impact Assessment programme to be a key driver in our efforts to demonstrate a pro-active approach to the promotion of equality in our services. Consultation with designated groups, an integral part of the process, will increase participation and inclusion.

Facilities and access

It is important that all the Council's facilities are seen as being welcoming, approachable and accessible to everyone, from all traditions and backgrounds. Six-monthly audits of premises are already carried out routinely to ensure they comply with the Council's commitment to a neutral and harmonious workplace.

An inter-Departmental Disability Access Group has been established and work is already underway on an extensive audit to ensure that all Council buildings comply with the Disability Discrimination Act deadline of October 2004. This entails an inspection of all buildings and making reasonable adjustments to overcome physical barriers to customers and employees with a disability.

We will make positive efforts to be seen to be associated with, and support, people from varying traditions and backgrounds, in our links with local communities, events, sponsorship, open days and so on. Employees will be made more aware of diversity issues and will be encouraged to establish better relationships with their customers and provide a more responsive service.

The Council needs to be aware of what people from all backgrounds think of the services it provides. Our public consultation surveys in 1999 and 2001 included sample boosts to ensure that they were representative of the views of the population of Belfast in terms of geographic area, age, gender, socio-economic and racial groups. Such surveys not only increase our understanding of the needs and concerns of our customers, but also raise the profile of the Council among minority groups.

In circulating information, we will make strenuous efforts to ensure that all the different networks that operate in differing communities are used, such as local papers, schools and advertising displays.

We will work in partnership with other agencies in Belfast and use our considerable civic influence to examine the processes that cause social exclusion and address broader policy issues.

Addressing inequality and differentials

The Northern Ireland Executive has committed itself fully to the promotion of equality for all, stating that: "We recognise the inequalities in the life experiences of our citizens in terms of poverty, health, housing, educational and economic opportunity and disability and we are determined to tackle them... We must promote a just society where everyone enjoys equality of opportunity... We are committed to policies, which actively promote equality of opportunity and adhere to international standards of

human rights. We will tackle unjust discrimination through strong and effective laws. Through New Targeting Social Need we will redirect resources and efforts towards people, groups and areas in greatest need; tackling community differentials".³⁴

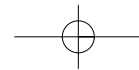
New Targeting Social Need / Promoting Social Inclusion

New Targeting Social Need is part of the Government's wider equality agenda and an underpinning principle of the Programme for Government. It aims to tackle social need and social exclusion by targeting efforts and available resources on the people, groups and areas objectively shown to be in greatest need. Over time New Targeting Social Need should contribute towards the reduction of social inequalities.

Promoting Social Inclusion seeks to develop a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach to tackling the problems of those groups and areas at risk of social exclusion. Councils in Northern Ireland have been encouraged to take account of these principles by skewing resources towards those in greatest social need and considering ways of addressing this issue when drawing up annual budgets and determining spending priorities.

"The Council needs to be aware of what people from all backgrounds think of the services it provides."

³⁴Northern Ireland Executive, *Programme for Government, 2001*



Councils have also been asked to incorporate and give due consideration to New Targeting Social Need as part of economic investment appraisals undertaken for capital projects. A key requirement of New Targeting Social Need is for appropriate monitoring arrangements to be established to measure the impact of policies on those in greatest need.

Belfast has particular reasons for considering those in social need. As noted in Chapter 3, the Belfast Context, the Noble Report³⁵ states that nine of the ten most deprived wards in Northern Ireland in terms of multiple deprivation are in Belfast.

There is a clear correlation between areas with high levels of political violence and social disadvantage in Northern Ireland; the direct costs of violence have largely been borne by the most deprived urban areas.

It is no coincidence that most of the Troubles related deaths and paramilitary activity took place in the poorest areas and only if poverty and social exclusion are tackled will the root causes of violence be removed.

Deprivation is no respecter of politics, religion or racial background. Some argue that the real divide in Belfast is not that between Catholics and Protestants but between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Substantial numbers of both communities are locked into a cycle of deprivation, in an underclass where poverty is increasingly an inherited condition.



"There is a clear correlation between areas with high levels of political violence and social disadvantage in Northern Ireland; the direct costs of violence have largely been borne by the most deprived urban areas."

Within the Council, both the Client Services and Development Departments already give consideration to New Targeting Social Need, taking socio-economic data into consideration in the planning, prioritisation and targeting of activities, for example when allocating revenue grants in Community Services or the Arts. This will be extended to all Council Departments in the near future to meet Government requirements.

By April 2004, the Council will establish Corporate Guidelines for New Targeting Social Need under which all Departments must assess the equality impact of their policies and plans, with positive action planned where necessary to remedy possible inequalities. In the long term, the introduction of New Targeting Social Need should result in a more level playing field for everyone.

³⁵Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *Measures of Deprivation in Northern Ireland*, (Noble Report), June 2001

The Council is aware of its responsibilities under New Targeting Social Need and has already played a part in helping to reduce the number of long-term unemployed through its GEMS project (Gasworks Employment Matching Service) and other similar schemes supported by the Development Committee. In the medium term, we will consider how best to make a contribution towards the reduction of the numbers of long term unemployed in the City.

In providing services in a divided society, in a manner that will respect and cater effectively for the needs of different users, we will clearly demonstrate that we are part of the solution, not part of the problem.



We will take the following actions:

by 2005, complete the Equality Impact Assessments, which commenced in 2001, and other tasks set out in the Equality Scheme's five year Action Plan; the Equality Impact Assessment teams, composed of representatives from the Departments concerned, will be led centrally by the Equality Officer, with external consultancy support, at least until 2004

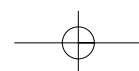
by 2005, complete the detailed five year training plan contained in the Equality Scheme's Action Plan

complete the audit to ensure that all Council buildings comply with the Disability Discrimination Act deadline of October 2004 and establish and implement a programme of physical adjustments to undertake the work required

by April 2004, establish new Corporate Guidelines for New Targeting Social Need / Promoting Social Inclusion

in the medium term, the Council will consider how best to make a contribution towards the reduction of the numbers of the long term unemployed in Belfast

establish an inter-Departmental Good Relations Working Group to manage the action plan, with consultancy support as required, and direct the work of the Good Relations Unit; this will report to the Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis, initially



Promoting Equality through a Representative Workforce



PROMOTING EQUALITY THROUGH A REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE

Our aim in relation to promoting equality through a representative workforce is:

To create a welcoming and supportive employment environment that will help the Council to attract and retain a workforce which is broadly representative, at all levels and in all occupations, of the community it serves.

Workplace

In Northern Ireland, segregated living patterns mean that on the whole we live separately, educate our children separately, and socialise separately. Research has shown that the workplace is one of the few areas where people from all communities mix.

The public sector in Northern Ireland in particular has removed itself from the conflict and adopted an official neutral stance where fair employment practices are promoted and acknowledgement of differences are avoided for the sake of harmony and safety. This approach has enabled the Council to continue to deliver services equitably and impartially through some of the worst periods in the last 30 years and it can be justifiably proud of its record in this.

However, our 'neutral and harmonious' workplace culture takes no account of diversity and in the long-term ignoring differences is not sustainable. We have a responsibility to demonstrate civic leadership and contribute towards a more stable, diverse and equitable society, within our own workforce as well as in the wider community.

Setting an example

The Northern Ireland Executive has recognised the importance of "setting a positive example to others" and has stated that it will promote equality of opportunity both "as an employer and provider of services to the public".³⁶ The Northern Ireland Civil Service has already acknowledged that "it should be representative of all shades of opinion, all the traditions, all the diverse elements that make up the society and that each should contribute from his or her own background".³⁷

The Council has also acknowledged the need to be fully representative and for the past four years has been committed to becoming a 'role model' for the public services in managing diversity within its workforce.³⁸ We should now take the opportunity, for both ethical and pragmatic reasons, to move towards a working culture where diversity and individuality are not only acknowledged but valued.

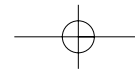
Managing diversity

Managing diversity, in other words, creating a workforce that seeks, respects, values and harnesses individual differences, is a key component of good management practice. Some differences may be visible, for example, gender, race and some disabilities, and some are not. In the public sector, the movement towards managing diversity positively is not only based on legal compliance but on gaining a competitive advantage and being able to provide a better service.

³⁶Northern Ireland Executive, *Programme for Government, 2001*

³⁷Maurice Hayes, *A Report on Staff Development in the Northern Ireland Civil Service, (Hayes Review), 1997*

³⁸Personal Sub-Committee Statement, *Belfast City Council Corporate Plan, 1998-2002*



Good organisations are built on effective teams of people working together, using their individual talents and experiences, to achieve a common purpose. When the community relations principles of equity, respect for diversity and interdependence are integrated into our policies, procedures and ethos they will have considerable impact on our ability to attract employees from as wide a background as possible.

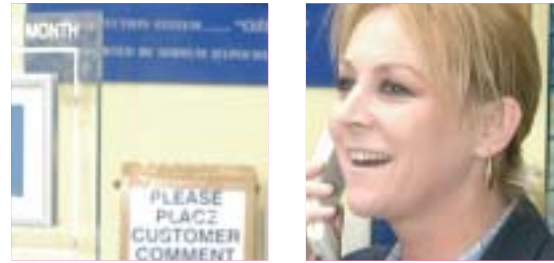
People are the most important resource in any organisation and attracting, retaining, motivating and developing the people who can best do the job is vital for success.

Image of the Council

Every organisation needs to employ the best people available. At the outset, people make choices as to whether or not to apply to a particular organisation for a job and those with the best reputations are likely not only to attract but to retain the best potential workforce.

An image as a fair employer can help to make an organisation an 'employer of choice'. Over the past decade, the Council's workforce has become more balanced, with the Fair Employment Commission commenting "that the general trend in the workforce composition shows evidence of continued improvement".³⁹

In particular, there have been significant increases in the proportions of Catholics and women employed. The proportion of Catholics employed by the Council was 30.6% in 1990 and this had grown to 37.3% on 1 January 2001; the proportion of women employed was 27.8% in 1990 and this had grown to 38.1% on 1 January 2001.⁴⁰ The statement 'Belfast City Council is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all sections of the community' appears on all job advertisements and application forms.



We have been pro-active in promoting our reputation as an attractive equal opportunities employer with our Community Outreach programme and other initiatives.

Our Public Consultation Survey in 2001 found that 59% of those interviewed thought that the Council was an equal opportunities employer; 59% thought the Council would offer good pay and conditions and 55% thought that job opportunities within the Council were well advertised.

If an organisation is seen to be fair, its integrity is reinforced and fairness and integrity can be directly related to staff motivation and performance.

Since the Council complies with all relevant legislation, the financial costs of discrimination such as tribunal costs, legal fees etc. are minimised. However, sectarianism, harassment, unfairness, bullying and other symptoms of our divided society have hidden costs in terms of absenteeism, staff motivation and morale, team effectiveness and performance.

The business case

The business case for diversity within the workforce, which gives an organisation competitive advantage, can be made on many fronts, including the following:

³⁹Letter from Fair Employment Commission to Belfast City Council, 16th April 1999
⁴⁰Belfast City Council, *Annual Fair Employment Monitoring Return*, as reported to Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee, 31 April 2001

Attracting and retaining employees

- ability to attract high calibre candidates
- broader based workforce with diversity of talents/skills/viewpoints
- better retention of personnel, with reduced costs in recruitment and training
- using people's talents to the full - improved workforce morale, motivation and commitment
- more stable social climate for organisational growth and development

Improved delivery of services

- better customer care
- improved quality of service
- larger potential customer base/market
- increased creativity and innovation from workforce

Civic leadership - social responsibility

- meeting social responsibility as a public service - 'the right thing to do'
- practical demonstration of our Vision and value statements
- better public image and profile, as employer and service provider
- demonstrating best practice
- improved management practices
- contributing in the longer term towards reduction of conflict.

Economic benefits

- lower costs associated with discrimination /litigation, absence, disruption etc.
- attracting more funding.

The adoption of a truly representative workforce will result in better performance all round and is in line with Best Value requirements.

Demographic Issues

At the UK national level, the structure of the workforce is changing as a result of a range of social, demographic and technological factors. By 2010, it will be older, there will be fewer able-bodied males under 45 and the vast majority of the workforce growth (estimated at 80%) will be female.⁴¹

Similarly, within Northern Ireland, the population will become older, with the number of people of pensionable age projected to rise sharply by 56% between 2000 and 2025.⁴² Unemployment levels are falling, with the December 2001 level being the lowest for over 25 years.⁴³ In a more restricted labour pool, employers increasingly have to compete to recruit personnel with the skills they require and provide the right environment and policies to retain them.

Fewer people are staying in jobs for life. Labour turnover can be very expensive, with some research indicating that the cost of replacing an employee can be as much as 100% - 150% of their annual salary.⁴⁴ The indirect associated costs, such as the loss of key skills and knowledge and the cost of training a new recruit, are harder to quantify, but can be considerable.

Issues the Council will address

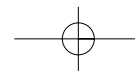
The Council is committed to attracting and retaining a workforce which is broadly representative of the community it serves, at all levels and in all occupations. A Model Policy was produced in 1998 by the then Equality Agencies; this Policy was then adapted by the Local Government Staff Commission to suit local authorities.

⁴¹Office of National Statistics, *British Labour Market Projections, 1998*, quoted in *Opportunity Now, Equality and Excellence: the Business Case*, London, November 2001

⁴²Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, *New Northern Ireland Population Projections*, November 2001

⁴³4.8% of the workforce unemployed in December 2001 (seasonally adjusted Claimant Count), Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, *Key Facts from the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey*, January 2002

⁴⁴HR Financial Report, Saratoga Institute, 1999, quoted in *Equality and Excellence: the Business Case*, London, November 2001



The Council adopted a Model Equal Opportunities Policy dealing with employment at its meeting in October 2001, as a management side position for consultation with the Trade Unions.

In addition to the areas covered in the Council's former Equal Opportunities Policy (i.e. race, disability, gender, marital status, religion, political belief and trade union activity) the Model Policy includes family status, age, sexual orientation, non-membership of a trade union and criminal record.

We will retain the merit principle in any recruitment and promotions and will make efforts to aim to address the under-representation and/or imbalances which exist at present at certain levels and in certain Units, through the Community Outreach programme and other initiatives.

Gender

Girls first outperformed boys at both GCSE and A-level nationally in 2000 and the pattern was repeated in 2001. Recent data on university degrees shows that in 2000, 54% of women obtained either a first or upper second class degree, compared with 47% of men.⁴⁵

The fact that women now outperform men in gaining academic qualifications leads naturally to the possibility that they may also outperform them in the workplace. The performance benefits of having a better-educated female workforce may be lost as long as women continue to bear the primary family and caring responsibilities, or face discrimination in the workplace.

Occupational segregation

In general, women dominate the lower levels of the Council's Business Support functions, occupying

⁴⁵Helen Gray, *It Pays to be Family Friendly*, CentrePiece, Autumn 2001

⁴⁶Middle management defined as salary grades Principal Officer 1-4

⁴⁷Senior management defined as salary grades Principal Officer 5-9

over 81% of the posts at secretarial/clerical grades.

Occupational segregation is still prevalent and some small Units have very few or no women employees. The Council has undertaken certain initiatives in recent years in an effort to address this issue. We participated in Opportunity Now's Drive Day by offering women a chance to try out driving a bin lorry, to encourage them to consider working in a traditionally male environment.

Other initiatives are planned at present within the Contract Services Department, in conjunction with Human Resources. Within Cleansing Contracts, the experience criterion has been broadened for street sweeper posts and consideration given to part-time posts to attract more female applicants. Alongside this, outreach research is being carried out to establish why women are not applying for posts. In contrast, the Department is also examining how men can be attracted to posts within the Building Cleaning Unit, a traditionally female working environment.

We will continue to monitor the situation in an effort to achieve a more equitable gender balance, for example, to correct the under-representation of males at the lower levels in Business Support.

Women in management

Considerable progress has been made within the Council in advancing gender equality issues and overall, women's participation in the labour force has increased. However, the 'glass ceiling' still exists, inhibiting women's access to senior management positions and few females occupy positions of real power.

For example, while 39% of our current employees in the middle management salary grades⁴⁶ are female, only 26% are women in more senior grades.⁴⁷ At the highest level, although 25% of the Chief Officers, or Directors, are female, at the second tier, or Head of

"At Head of Service level, the under-representation of women is most striking, with the figure plummeting to only 4%."

Service level, the under-representation of women is most striking, with the figure plummeting to only 4%. Research shows that in general, men in management tend to adopt an approach that relies more on power of position and formal authority whereas women are more likely to adopt a participative style where good communication skills, flexibility, intuition and emotional intelligence are evident. Today, the best organisations depend on a balanced mix of so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes. An increasing number are adopting measures to attract and retain women so as to benefit from their qualifications and talent in a highly competitive environment.

The competency framework recently introduced into the Council, as a basis for personal development and performance management, specifies skills such as teamwork, communication and relationship building and so should aid the advancement of women in the longer term. A competency based approach to recruitment has also been adopted, with assessment centres supplementing the traditional selection interview. Other initiatives such as 'Breakthrough 2000,' aimed at women in middle management, have been very successful and the Council intends to develop similar training schemes to equip women employees to be better able to apply for posts at senior levels within the organisation.

Work/Life Balance

The traditional view of men's and women's social roles has altered but women still retain the bulk of family and caring responsibilities and some either choose or are obliged to work part-time.

Although the work/life balance is of particular significance in the turnover of women, employee expectations are changing and our Employee Satisfaction Survey in 2000 clearly showed that both men and women wanted a balance between work and family commitments. Evidence from national UK research shows that employing organisations which have practices that support a balanced lifestyle can expect enhanced performance, better staff retention and lower rates of absenteeism. 88% of those interviewed in the survey of local authorities within the UK, carried out by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in 2000, agreed that work/life balance practices fostered good employment relations.⁴⁸

This is particularly true for younger employees. Research suggests that work/life balance is in the top three criteria for people about to enter a job⁴⁹ and 90% of final year MBA students rate achieving a balanced lifestyle as a key factor when choosing an employer.⁵⁰ The new Generation X (born between 1965-85) is motivated at least as much by lifestyle and personal fulfilment as by salary and status.

Schemes are already in place for flexi-time, job sharing and career breaks. From an equality viewpoint, we should endeavour to develop more work/life balance policies and specific initiatives like term-time working, home-working and phased return from maternity leave should be given serious consideration to attract and retain employees.

⁴⁸National Joint Council for Local Government Services, *Finding the Balance, Work-Life Policies in Practice*, September 2001

⁴⁹Young People's Attitudes to Work, Careers and Learning, Roffey Park, September 2000, quoted in Opportunity Now, *Equality and Excellence: the Business Case*, London, November 2001

⁵⁰Coopers and Lybrand, *International Student Survey Report, 1997*, quoted in Opportunity Now, *Equality and Excellence: the Business Case*, London, November 2001

Positive support from senior management for phased return from maternity leave in particular has been found to be very helpful.

The Council acknowledges the importance of obtaining a proper balance between paid work and other personal responsibilities, which will result in a more highly motivated workforce and a more efficient organisation. We will encourage our managers to develop flexible workable solutions, which meet the demands both of service delivery and more flexible employee working practices. Effective use of modern technology allows home-working for some posts and pilot studies in some local authorities in the UK have reported positive results, including increased productivity, revenue savings and lower sickness absence.⁵¹

The legislative framework has also changed over the past few years. A commitment to work/life balance initiatives is high on the Government's agenda and the incorporation of European directives has resulted in a strengthening of UK employment law. It is likely that this trend will continue. What is best practice at present is likely to become the legal minimum in future and those organisations at the forefront of best practice will continue to have a competitive advantage over others.

Minority Ethnic Groups

At present, the number of job applicants from a minority ethnic background is extremely small and the Council intends to address this by making positive efforts to increase the numbers of such applications through, for example, the Community Outreach programme. We will also investigate the reasons that prevent or reduce the numbers of potential candidates from minority ethnic backgrounds from applying for employment in the first instance.

⁵¹Paul Humphries, *Home is where the Work is*, Municipal Journal, 18 January 2002

Disability

The Council also has an extremely small number of job applications from people with a disability. As defined under the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, a person has a disability "if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." Research from elsewhere indicates that employees with a disability have better records in safety, attendance and performance. Since it is estimated that around one in six adults in Northern Ireland has a disability, a relatively high figure in UK terms, the potential labour recruitment pool is large.

We have already extended our Community Outreach initiative to focus on promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities and have held discussions with a number of disability organisations.

We intend to make more positive efforts in future to increase the numbers of applications from candidates with disabilities and will also investigate the reasons that prevent or reduce the numbers from applying for employment in the first instance.

Open discussion of community divisions

The advantages of having a diverse range of employees within an organisation may be lost if staff cannot openly discuss and accept community relations and cultural diversity issues.

We must strive to create a welcoming and supportive employment environment where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. As already stated, the workplace is one of the few places where people from all communities meet. Therefore it has great potential to provide a focus for change, not present in many other facets of society in Northern Ireland.

There should be a recognition that people from a diversity of backgrounds can work together, contributing to a mix which enriches the whole and where people feel comfortable contributing their ideas.

All other district councils in Northern Ireland have had experience of community relations type training. Belfast has not and as part of this culture change should mainstream awareness raising of both community relations and cultural diversity issues as part of its employee training and development programme. The Management Development Programme, developed for Council staff, already contains a specific module on equality and this could be extended in future years to include community relations and cultural diversity issues.

The movement to an approach where diversity is celebrated and the development, in time, of an open culture, based on trust, where different views are welcomed would result in a more effective inclusive organisation.

There is a conflict between the culture envisaged and the present 'neutral' environment and managers must exercise care and sensitivity here. Moving from a familiar organisational culture can be unsettling. It is important to recognise that change comes with emotional as well as rational and technical aspects. Support for employees working in difficult areas should be provided and there should be opportunities for developing the skills required to handle the issues raised by division. A distinction must be drawn between open discussion in a supportive context and comment that may be perceived as threatening.

Current community divisions are not sustainable in the City in the long term. Belfast City Council stands for sound democratic principles and must model such principles in its own internal practices. It must be seen to be addressing some of the core issues of conflict in Northern Ireland and making a positive practical contribution to the wider political arena.



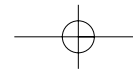
We will take the following actions:

by April 2004, formulate a pro-active action plan, incorporating the merit principle, which will address under-representation/imbalance and investigate the structural/cultural impediments which prevent or reduce the number of applications from certain groups (i.e. women, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities)⁵²

between 2003 and 2006, implement a number of targeting initiatives to increase the numbers of applications from candidates from the groups currently under-represented in the workforce. In the first year, the initiative will concentrate on two areas - to increase the number of women in the Contract Services Cleansing Section; and to attempt to equip women employees to be better able to apply for senior posts within the Council, through the development and promotion of training programmes

establish an inter-Departmental Good Relations Working Group to manage the action plan, with consultancy support as required: this will report to the Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis, initially

⁵²An Equality Impact Assessment of the Council's current Equal Opportunities policy has been completed



Appendix A

EQUALITY IMPACT

Equality legislation

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Council, in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without. The Act also requires the Council, in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

In April 2001 the Equality Commission formally approved the Council's Equality Scheme, which details how the Council will fulfil its duties. A fundamental element of that Scheme is the production and implementation of a Good Relations Strategy.

Consideration of available data and research

This strategy includes a summary of literature on good relations from a wide variety of sources in Northern Ireland and refers specifically to data on the extent and nature of community divisions within Belfast. Research undertaken during the preparation of the document also included analysis of the policies of other organisations, including policies of other local District Councils.

Consultation carried out to date

We ensured that our second Public Consultation Survey in 2001 included specific questions to gauge public perceptions of the state of community relations in the City. Relevant information from the public survey, which indicated sound support for the Council taking a more pro-active role in the promotion of community relations in the City, was included in the development of the strategy.

The strategy itself was developed by a Steering Group of Councillors representing all six political parties in the Council; two of these were also Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly at that time. In the autumn of 2002, the Good Relations Steering Panel extended its consultation beyond the City Hall. The Steering Panel undertook a wide-ranging series of consultation meetings with representatives from a variety of sectors within the City, including churches, faiths, minority ethnic groups, trade unions, business, statutory bodies, voluntary organisations, community organisations and community relations specialists, advisors and academics. Although the sessions focused primarily on the role the Council could play in attempting to address sectarianism in the City, the meetings were also used as part of an informal consultation process on the draft strategy, to gauge opinions and views about the role of the Council in good relations.

These consultation meetings were well attended and the reactions to the Council's proposals were very positive.

Assessments of impact

Our research and consultation shows there is evidence that the negative effects of current divisions in the community impact differentially on a number of groups covered in Section 75, particularly on people of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

It is our view that the policy proposals contained in this paper should not have any negative impact on equality of opportunity for any of the groups. In fact the reverse is the case and the strategy has positive consequences for aspects of good relations in terms of all nine equality dimensions.

As these recommendations are based on Section 75(2), the strategy is focused on the three dimensions associated with this Section and, since it aims to promote good relations positively between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group, is likely to have a differential but positive impact in terms of all three dimensions.

We believe that the promotion of good relations between all our citizens will assist in attaining our vision of a stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist society, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated, in an inclusive manner.

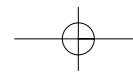
Consideration of mitigating measures or alternative policies

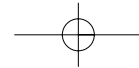
We believe that this strategy provides the most effective way of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations and, since there should not be any adverse impact, we have not considered it necessary to consider mitigation measures.

Consultation

The Council now seeks views on the equality impact of the proposals in the strategy and will consider incorporating representations made when making decisions on the actions included in this document.

As with all Council policies, the strategy will be monitored and reviewed in due course.





Appendix B

Appendix B

GOOD RELATIONS STEERING PANEL (at September 2003)

ELECTED MEMBERS

Councillor Tom Ekin	Chairman
Councillor Nelson McCausland	Deputy Chairman
Councillor Carmel Hanna	
Councillor Billy Hutchinson	
Councillor Eoin Ó Broin	
Councillor Bob Stoker	

EXTERNAL MEMBERS

Rev. Doug Baker	Presbyterian Church
Rev. David Campton	Methodist Church
Father Anthony Curran ⁵³	Catholic Church
Canon Barry Dodds	Church of Ireland
George Dawson	Caleb Foundation
Peter Bunting	Trade Unions/ICTU
Bob Gourley	Trade Unions/ICTU
Rory Galway	CBI/Bombardier Aerospace
Gerald Steinberg	Belfast Chamber of Commerce
Duncan Morrow	Community Relations Council
Anna Lo ⁵⁴	Chinese Welfare Association
Patrick Yu ⁵⁴	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities

OFFICERS

Peter McNaney	Chief Executive
Robert Wilson	Assistant Chief Executive
Hazel Francey	Policy Officer
Sinéad Grimes	Policy Analyst

GOOD RELATIONS WORKING GROUP (at September 2003)

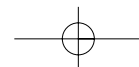
Robert Wilson	Assistant Chief Executive (Chairman)
Sylvia Moore	Client Services Department
Jim Kennedy	Contract Services Department
Stanley Black	Corporate Services Department
Briony Crozier	Development Department
Wesley Thompson	Health and Environmental Services Department
David Cartmill	Policy Services
Stella Gilmartin	Equality Officer
Anne Deighan	Good Relations Officer
Caroline Wilson	Good Relations Officer
Hazel Francey	Policy Officer
Claire Patterson	Policy Analyst
Sandra Donnelly	Policy Analyst

FORMER MEMBERS INCLUDE

Jenny Oliver	Client Services Department
Brian Downing	Contract Services Department
Jenny Watson	Corporate Services Department
Michael Drysdale	Health and Environmental Services Department



⁵³Father Curran replaced Monsignor Tom Toner in February 2003
⁵⁴Joined the Panel in October 2003



Appendix D

RESULTS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

Methodology

One of the first key tasks of the Good Relations Working Group was to identify and assess the amount of work already being undertaken within the Council, which might have an impact on good relations.

A standard audit form template was devised and circulated to all Departmental representatives.

Each member of the Working Group was asked to carry out a comprehensive audit within his/her own Department to draw up a list of the activities/projects currently being carried out, which had an impact on, or contributed to, good relations in Belfast. Work being done in partnership with other organisations/groups was also to be recorded, along with details of associated budgets.

The audit form outlined the background to the work of the Good Relations Working Group, explained the purpose of the exercise and gave some examples of the types of activities which might be included.

Results - Overview

Good Relations is a new area of work for the Council. As the concept was unfamiliar, the interpretation of what constituted Good Relations varied considerably between Departments and a wide range of policies, projects and activities was reported.

The Equality Scheme Screening Report provided a useful reference source in ensuring that all key policy

areas within the Council were included. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 identifies nine specified categories for public authorities to consider in relation to equality - persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with and without a disability; and persons with and without dependants. Good Relations differs slightly as only three main groups are identified - persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial groups. This did result in some confusion as Departments found it difficult to restrict their returns to these three categories and included references to work done with, for example, women, people with disabilities, or the elderly; references to work with such groups have not been included in this audit.

The wide range of services and policies mentioned in audit returns have been classified into two main categories:

- specific activities which actively promote good relations - and have a direct, major impact
- more general activities which reflect the value of good relations - and have an indirect, minor impact.

The two Services dealing most directly with the issues of religion, politics and race are Human Resources and the Recreation and Community Development Section. Human Resources is responsible for all personnel policies and must ensure compliance with legislation in promoting the Council as an equal opportunities employer. The Recreation and Community Development Section provides grant-aid to community and voluntary groups throughout Belfast; many of these groups are involved in community relations work or work with minority ethnic groups.

The link between religious belief and political opinion in Northern Ireland is very close and it was not considered possible or advantageous to attempt to separate reported work between these two categories in this analysis. In Belfast, the two main religious and political communities invariably form the focus of most good relations related activities.

There are of course more than two cultures in Belfast. Recognition of the growth of minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland is a relatively recent development and research has shown that the majority of these groups live in Belfast. Most Council contacts with racial or minority ethnic groups have developed only in the past few years and tend to concentrate on Irish Travellers and the Chinese community.

Although other Departments may not refer explicitly to the issues of religion, politics and race in the provision of their services, good relations type principles underpin many other Council activities generally and indirectly. For example, staff involved in economic development and arts and heritage initiatives consider that equality of opportunity is built into all their projects and point out that the work undertaken has considerable potential to contribute to the good relations agenda.



Council's impact on society

Departments were keen to emphasise that they provided services to all communities in Belfast on a fair and equal basis.

The Council is aware of its impact on, and contribution to, society as a whole and aims to treat all its customers with respect. This approach to service delivery fosters the development of good relationships between the Council and the various communities in the City irrespective of religious, political or racial differences. Employees who are not based in central office locations are particularly active in establishing links with their surrounding communities and there is much evidence of their involvement in local activities.

It is clear that many of our employees are involved in a wide range of voluntary and charitable activities outside work, including school Boards, youth / sports / cultural / church / community groups. Although many of these organisations are mixed or cross-community in nature and we recognise that their participation is very worthwhile and commendable, we have decided not to include such extra-curricular work in this audit as contributing towards the Council's promotion of good relations.

For similar reasons, the following activities were also excluded from the audit list: involvement in internal Council charity or fundraising events; involvement in general or professional advice giving forums; attendance at information days and local events; and the provision of work experience or careers advice for young people.

Format of Audit Report

An explanatory section is provided for each Department, with additional summaries for Human Resources and the Recreation and Community Development Section, given the greater volume of activity in those Services.

The results of the Audit may be divided into two distinct categories:

- those policies/functions which relate to the Council as an employer - largely Human Resources work
- those which relate to the Council as a provider of services - either internally or externally

The findings which relate to the Council's status as an employer are presented first.

This is not a complete list but a representative reflection of activities going on within the Council at the time when the audit was carried out in late 2001.

Database

As the area of Good Relations is likely to become an increasingly important area of work for the Council, the Good Relations Working Group proposes that this database be held and up-dated centrally to facilitate access to Good Relations work within the Council. This information will form a useful basis for developing SMART targets to monitor the progress being made towards attainment of the corporate objective of Promoting Good Relations.

CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Human Resources

The Human Resources Section is responsible for all personnel policies and complies with relevant legislation in promoting the Council as an equal opportunities employer. Various dedicated Units have responsibility for ensuring compliance with the many statutory requirements, codes of practice and best practice guidelines, which relate to equality, equal opportunities and fair employment practices. The Section's focus as an equal opportunities employer means that much of its work with for example women or people with disabilities, extends beyond the three categories of religious, political and racial; this audit, however, is restricted only to those three categories.

The Section ensures that recruitment and selection procedures are carried out in a fair and equitable way, that appointments are made on the basis of merit and that the Council does not discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment and selection on the grounds of religion, politics or race. All permanent vacancies/posts are publicly advertised and foreign equivalents of qualifications are considered in the selection process.

“ Good Relations is likely to become an increasingly important area of work for the Council.”

The Section ensures there is no direct or indirect discrimination against employees and job applicants in recruitment, training, promotion or any other way and monitors their perceived religious affiliation and ethnic background. Policies ensure that all employees are treated in a fair and equitable way and the implementation of the Single Status Agreement will ensure that all employees enjoy the same terms and conditions of employment.

There are agreed procedures for dealing with complaints regarding intimidation and/or harassment in the workplace, including racial and sectarian harassment, and for ensuring that employees are protected against victimisation. The Council's Joint Declaration of Protection/neutral and harmonious working environment ensures that every employee has the right to work free from intimidation or harassment on the grounds of religious belief, political opinion or any other such matter relating to equality of opportunity (i.e. including race). An audit of work places is carried out on a six monthly basis to ensure compliance.

All staff are made aware of the Council's commitment to equality and equal opportunities policies in the Section's training and induction programmes. The Section has been involved in consultation in developing training material and has assisted in the production of a training video on equality.

The Council is promoted as an equal opportunities employer through the Community Outreach programme and is represented on various Equality Groups to demonstrate its commitment to this principle.

CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT - other Services

The Financial Services Section has provided the annual rates leaflet in a number of formats to ensure minority groups can access the information easily; these include Braille, audio, Chinese, Urdu, Irish and Ulster-Scots.

The Department is responsible for ensuring use of the City Hall is allocated fairly and provides information for visitors in various languages.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

Supported by a Council-wide working group, the Policy Services Section has direct responsibility for the development and implementation of the Equality Scheme and associated work, which has a direct impact on good relations. The consultation process with the nine specified groups and the production of publications in various formats, to ensure all sections of society are aware of ongoing developments, reinforces this work.

Policy Services is responsible for producing the Council's Corporate Plan, which is widely distributed and available in a variety of formats. The Section also has responsibility for ensuring that corporate consultation exercises with a representative sample of the population include those from minority ethnic groups. The 2001 Public Consultation Exercise contained questions relating to the public's perception of community relations in Belfast and their view of the Council's role in promoting good relations within the City.

Communication of the corporate strategies, both externally and internally, is a key role. A variety of formats is used to ensure the message is conveyed at the appropriate levels and increase awareness of equality and good relations issues.

The Committee & Members' Services Section is responsible for considering requests from organisations for the provision of civic hospitality. Some initiatives of individual Lord Mayors have in recent years been cross-community in nature and in 2001, the Section organised the 8th European Cities' Against Drugs Mayors' Conference, where various groups involved in drug education and awareness discussed matters of mutual interest.

CLIENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Recreation & Community Development Section

The Recreation & Community Development Section is responsible for the provision of community services through both the direct management of Council community centres and the provision of grant aid and support to a wide range of voluntary and community groups throughout the City. The Council will provide grant-aid only to community and voluntary groups, which confirm that they are open to a full range of local opinion, are inclusive and non party political and do not seek to promote any party political position. In 2000/2001, over £1.1 million was provided in grant-aid to local community groups in Belfast.

Community relations work

This Section reports the greatest number of direct contacts with the three categories specified in the good relations section of the equality legislation. Despite the fact that the Community Relations Programme was discontinued in 1995, Community Development Workers have continued their involvement in many community relations projects, although this is not their primary function. Regardless of the lack of dedicated staff or budgets, there are many examples of general community development projects supported by the Section, which are community relations based and are

specifically targeted at those from the main religious and political groups. For example, the Celebration of Women project, which received Millennium funding, was a Citywide programme of seven events. The Concorde Irish dancers, Duncairn drama club, East Belfast Festival, Hammer women's history project, and Ligoniel Improvement Association's work with Ballysillan are all cross-community. Two Dolly Mixtures projects - cross-community children's music workshops - are in operation in Highfield and Ligoniel.

Interface projects

Some groups are specifically working on projects in difficult interface areas. These include the Highfield Over 50s, the Springfield Inter-Community Development Project, Outer Belfast Interface Working Group and the Whiterock Festival.

Cultural awareness

A number of groups undertake work to raise awareness of cultural and political issues - Divis Link-up, the East Belfast Initiative and the Suffolk Cultural Group.

Minority Ethnic Groups

With regard to work with different racial groups, the Section reports various projects with Travellers and work with the Chinese community in Donegall Pass.

Travellers' projects include an After School Club, a Baby Club, a Young Women's Group, a Women's Personal Development Project, a Development Group and an Environmental Project.

The Council has supported the Chinese Welfare Association's glass painting and lunch club in Donegall Pass Community Centre and its Local Festival in conjunction with Donegall Pass Festival.

The development of a Grant Aid Policy for Minority Ethnic Groups has been a direct result of the realisation of the importance of promoting good relations with minority ethnic groups. Over £80,000 of grant aid was allocated in 2000/2001 for minority ethnic groups. The Council is aware that confidence building within minority groups is essential as an initial step and that cross-community work will develop at a later stage.

The Council has also sponsored a series of radio programmes aimed at raising awareness of the problems faced by ethnic minorities. Involvement in this project demonstrated the Council's commitment to the equality agenda and was an innovative method of promoting good relations with the various racial groups in Belfast.

CLIENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT - other Services

The Parks & Amenities Section organises a cross-community Primary School Athletics event each year and produces information leaflets on the parks in Belfast in different languages for visitors. It is responsible for organising events within parks and playgrounds in Belfast to encourage all residents and visitors to develop an appreciation of the parks and the countryside and raise environmental awareness e.g. Rose Week and Music in the Parks; these events are open to everyone. The Autumn Flower Show and Bygone Days event in Botanic Gardens in 2001, for example, featured dance and music from the Indian and Chinese communities.

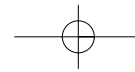
The Parks Education Section's Environmental Education Programme is used by between 4,000-5,000 schoolchildren every year and of these approximately 15% (600 -750) are visits made under the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) scheme - i.e. two classes, one from each of the two major communities.

The Zoo is also a natural magnet for school visits; in 2001, over 18,000 children used its education service, 1,520 of these were on EMU visits and 370 came from Irish medium schools.

Two major venues in Belfast - the Ulster Hall and Waterfront Hall - ensure a rounded programme of entertainment is staged for all communities to enjoy. The Waterfront Hall has hosted various events, including a cross-community photographic arts project for youth groups and a weaving project with a local integrated school. The Waterfront Hall has also helped to promote an Irish language play with a simultaneous translation facility and has been the venue for both the Chinese New Year celebrations and an exhibition of contemporary Chinese art. These are part of ongoing efforts to encourage access to and awareness of the wider potential role of the Hall in the community.

The Ulster Hall has hosted a variety of cross-community events, ranging from a Senior Citizens' Tea Dance to the Community Schools' Proms. It has also been used for an Amnesty International Lecture and a Persian Cultural Celebration. The Group Theatre is used for a number of cross-community events, especially productions designed for children.





Leisure Events have promoted a number of major international events, such as the World Irish Dancing Championships, the World Cross Country Championships and the World Amateur Boxing Championships, all of which attracted large audiences from all sections of the community. The Marathon is now established as a very successful annual cross-community event. Other events have included a reception for the Chinese Welfare Football Tournament.

CONTRACT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

As a direct service delivery organisation, the Contract Services Department works in conjunction with other Departments to ensure that the range of Council services is delivered in an appropriate way, which is sensitive to the community's needs.

As mentioned previously, managers based outside central locations are encouraged to develop good relations with their local communities. Facilities are made available to support local initiatives and among the examples quoted is one of assistance given to local groups in clean-up operations, including the loan of equipment, by the Contract Services Department.

Leisure centre managers are keen to build links with their local communities. Ballysillan is a member of the local Community Forum and Olympia has links with local health groups. Several Leisure Centres are involved with local festivals - Avoniel with East Belfast Festival; Shankill and Ballysillan Leisure Centres with the Greater Shankill Partnership Festival; Grove Leisure Centre with both the Lower North Belfast Festival and North Belfast Festivals; and Whiterock Leisure Centre with the West Belfast Festival.

Within leisure, facilities are available for use by all members of the community and this includes the use of Council facilities by particular groups for specific important events e.g. a Festival in Olympia to mark the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting for Muslims.

DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The range of economic development initiatives is designed to ensure that opportunities which result from the Council's promotion of economic growth, are accessible to all the citizens of Belfast. All projects have equality of opportunity incorporated into them. All services are actively promoted and made available throughout the City through the First Stop Shop. The Gasworks Initiative is designed to promote equality of access to job opportunities for the long-term unemployed.

The Culture and Arts Unit's programmes are based on the principles of supporting the growth of the cultural infrastructure of the City and providing opportunities for all the people of Belfast to enjoy through the equitable distribution of services and the development of partnerships. Its work is established on good relations generic principles, through the allocation of funds and the type of projects supported.

The Council provides vital financial support in the form of Arts Grants to a wide range of arts organisations in the City, professional and amateur, providing both community-based and City-wide activities. Awards are allocated for the delivery of specific activities, which add value to the work of the recipient and research shows that the Council's investment has helped to create thousands of new opportunities for access to and participation in the arts throughout the City.



The Unit produced and managed a major exhibition entitled 'Buildings of Belfast', featuring 80 buildings, which was aimed at celebrating and raising awareness of the built heritage throughout Belfast. It toured libraries, community centres, the City Hall and the Odyssey among other venues. The exhibition was registered and included in the Diversity 21 Programme.

In June 2001, the Council, in partnership with the five Belfast Area Partnership Boards and the North Belfast Tourism Project, published 'Belfast On the Hoof: A Walking Guide to the City's Culture'. This comprehensive cultural guide features arts and heritage assets across the City and is aimed at both residents and tourists.

In partnership with the Ulster History Circle, the Council works to ensure that historic citizens from a range of backgrounds are represented in the Blue Plaques which are erected all over Belfast.

The Unit has initiated a successful series of free public talks on a wide range of local popular historical themes, including Famous Sons and Daughters, Literary History, Pubs, Entertainment, and Graveyards of Belfast. It also organised an Act of Union Commemorative Lecture, featuring speakers with differing views on the subject, and a chaired discussion with audience members.

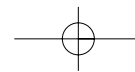


"The Events Unit provides major seasonal public events, which create a positive image and attractive profile for Belfast."

Through the Culture and Arts Unit, the Council has supported the publication of two books by the Ulster Historical Foundation on Barney Hughes and Researching Belfast Ancestors and has funded a local history publication on the Shankill. The Council has also published two books, 'Celebrated Citizens of Belfast' and 'Historic Pubs of Belfast', in association with Appletree Press.

The Tourism Unit markets the City as a key destination for leisure and business tourists and aims to provide opportunities for economic growth and job creation within the tourism industry. The Unit works closely with a range of other organisations throughout the City, including the Partnership Boards, to promote a positive image of Belfast for everyone and to ensure that tourism development occurs effectively within all areas of Belfast.

The Events Unit provides major seasonal public events, which create a positive image and attractive profile for Belfast. They endeavour to create an arena of neutrality and are designed to be accessible and inviting to all, attracting large audiences from all parts of the City and beyond.



The City Hall is a natural focus for certain occasions and St. George's Market, for example, has been used for cross-community events.

Although some events are based on key dates in the Christian calendar, they do not concentrate on such aspects and are designed to be open to all. Last year, 900 children from a range of schools across the City joined in the schools' carol service and a further 400 took part in the lamplight procession through the City centre. The Unit tries to provide a balanced and diverse programme by encouraging participation from minority groups, such as the Tastefest, where people from the Chinese and Indian communities took part.

“ The Department publishes food hygiene advisory information in Chinese, Urdu and Turkish.”

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Many of the activities of this Department stem from the regulatory and enforcement aspects of its work. Some creative initiatives, however, have been developed which exceed the statutory requirements and which demonstrate a positive response to local community needs.

Some of these relate specifically to the requirements of the City's various minority groups. The Department publishes food hygiene advisory information in Chinese, Urdu and Turkish. It has organised an Information Day specifically for members of the Chinese community who operate food businesses in the City, in order to break down barriers and improve communication. To assist the members of the Chinese community who work in the food business to meet their legal obligations, the Department has provided food hygiene training courses in both Cantonese and Mandarin, using an interpreter or tutor. Owners of Indian food businesses have also been consulted about their training needs.



The Building Control Service is responsible for street naming and property numbering in English and other languages, notably Irish and Ulster Scots.

The Department also contributes towards the creation of a better quality of life for all and better relations between communities through general initiatives. These include, at the local level, the night noise service and (in conjunction with Cleansing Contracts) community clean-ups and the speedy and efficient removal of graffiti, which may often be of a political or sectarian nature. Four cleansing forums are in operation, one in each of north, south, east and west Belfast, which offer an opportunity for members of the public in those areas to meet face to face and discuss issues of common environmental concern.

The Department's growing relationships with local community groups is evident in the management of recycling facilities in Suffolk, where bottle banks have been introduced at the community centre. In Ligoniel, the recycling project incorporates bottle banks provided and managed by the Council at the local community centre with a cash for cans scheme at the local St. Vincent de Paul Primary School.

On a Citywide level, the Department plays a leading role in the Belfast Healthy Cities initiative, which has had a major impact on the way organisations and individuals think about health from a much broader perspective. A considerable part of this involves exploring radical new ways of improving quality of life in the City, working on a cross-community basis and with minority ethnic communities.



Appendix E

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barr A., Hashagen S. & Purcell R., **Measuring Community Development in Northern Ireland - A Handbook for Practitioners**, Voluntary Activity Unit, 1996
- Barr A., & Hashagen S., **ABCD Handbook - A Framework for Evaluating Community Development**, Community Development Foundation, 2000
- Barry E. & Higgins P., **Getting Off the Fence - Challenging Sectarianism in Personal Social Services**, Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work, 1999
- Belfast City Council, **Guide to Grant Aid for Community Organisations**, 1999
- Belfast City Council, **Public Consultation Survey**, 1999
- Belfast City Council, **Public Consultation Survey**, 2001
- Belfast Interface Project, **Interface Communities and the Peace Process**, 1998
- Belfast Interface Project, **Information Pack**, 2001
- Belfast Traveller Sites Project, **Annual Report**, 2000
- Boal F., **Belfast: Frontier City**, Economic Outlook and Business Review 2001
- Bryson L. & McCartney C., **Clashing Symbols? - A report on the use of Flags, Anthems and other National Symbols in Northern Ireland**, The Institute of Irish Studies, 1994
- Buckley A.D. & Paisley R., **Symbols**, Community Relations Council, 1994
- Business in the Community, **Equality & Excellence: The Business Case**, Opportunity Now, 2001
- Business in the Community, **Work-Life Balance, an Introduction to the Work-Life Balance Campaign in Northern Ireland**, 2001
- Commission for Racial Equality, **Duty to Promote Race Equality, Good Practice Guide**, 2001
- Community Development in Protestant Areas Steering Group, **Community Development in Protestant Areas**, 1991
- Community Relations Council, **A Young Person's Guide to Cultural Diversity in Northern Ireland**, 1999
- Community Relations Council, **Accommodating Change - Responses to Community Relations Issues in the Workplace**, 1996
- Community Relations Council, **Dealing with Difference, A Directory of Peace, Reconciliation and Community Relations Projects in Northern Ireland**, 1998
- Community Relations Council, **Doing Business in a Divided Society**, 2001
- Community Relations Council, **European Union Peace Programme, Building Good Relations**, 2001
- Community Relations Council, **Guidelines for a Community Relations Strategy for Public Bodies**, 2000
- Community Relations Council, **Organisational Audits - A Community Relations Perspective**, 1998
- Community Relations Council, **Organisational Audits: Introduction**, 1998
- Community Relations Council, **PEACE - Preliminary Thoughts on Community Relations Work Under Peace II**, 2001
- Community Relations Council, **Review of Community Relations Policy**, Working Paper, 2001
- Community Relations Council, **Service Delivery in a Divided Society**, 1999
- Community Relations Council, **Strategic Plan 2001-2004**
- Community Relations Training & Learning Consortium, **Learning Curve**, Issue 1, 2001
- Community Relations Training & Learning Consortium, **Growing Sustainable Relationships - A Workshop Report on the Possibilities of PEACE II**, 2001
- Community Relations Training & Learning Consortium, **Strategic Plan 2002-2005**
- Community Relations Unit, **Evaluation of District Councils Community Relations Programme**, 2000
- Compact Working Group, **Black & Minority Ethnic Voluntary & Community Organisations: A Code of Good Practice**, 2001
- Connolly P. & Keenan M., **Racial Attitudes and Prejudice in Northern Ireland**, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2001
- Connolly, P. Smith A. and Kelly B., **Too Young to Notice? Cultural and Political Awareness of 3 - 6 Year Olds in Northern Ireland**, Community Relations Council, June 2002
- Counteract, **Anti-Sectarianism Means Business - An Anti-Sectarian Standard for Employers**
- Counteract, **Community Relations - A Counteract Perspective**
- Counteract, **Effective Anti-Intimidation Solutions**
- Counteract, **Total Quality Management & the Anti-Sectarian Ethos**

Counteract & the Future Ways Programme, University of Ulster, **Ethnicity, Identity and Change: New Challenges for Social Policy**, 2001

Crozier M., **Guidelines for a Cultural Diversity Policy - an Advocacy Document**, Community Relations Council, 2001

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, **Creating Opportunities: A Guide for Local Authorities in England on Local Cultural Strategies**, 2000

Department of Canadian Heritage, **Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act**, 2001

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, **Corporate Strategy 2001-2004**

Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, **Guidance to District Councils on the Development of Local Cultural Strategies**, 2001

Department of the Environment, **Transport & the Regions, Modern Local Government: in Touch with the People**, HMSO, 2000

Donovan P., **The Y Factor**, article in People Management Review, 2001

Edmund, John & Associates, **Formulation of a Cultural Diversity Policy & Strategy, Consultancy Proposal to Belfast City Council**, 1999

Edmund, John & Associates, **Cultural Diversity - Draft Policy & Strategy**, 1999

Equal Opportunities Commission, **Women and Men in Britain. Professional Occupations**, 2001

Eyben K., Morrow D. & Wilson D., **A Worthwhile Venture? Practically investing in Equity, Diversity & Interdependence in NI**, Future Ways Programme University of Ulster, 1997

Fitzduff M., **Approaches to Community Relations Work**, Community Relations Council, 1993

Future Ways Programme, **The Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Framework for Organisational Learning & Change**, University of Ulster & International Fund for Ireland Community Bridges Programme, 2002

Gray H., **It Pays to be Family Friendly**, Centrepiece, 2001

Hardy S., **Small Step or Giant Leap? Towards Gender Equality at Work**, The Industrial Society, Policy Paper, December 2001

Hayes M., **A Report on Staff Development in the Northern Ireland Civil Service**, 1997

Healing through Remembering Project Board, **Healing through Remembering**, Report of the Project Board, June 2002

Hughes J. and Donnelly C., **Ten Years of Social Attitudes to Community Relations in NI**, Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, Occasional Paper 1, University of Ulster, 2001

Humphries P., **Home is where the Work Is**, Municipal Journal, Jan. 2002

Humphreys P. C., Drew E., Murphy C., **Gender Imbalance in the Irish Civil Service**, Equality Committee of the Human Resources Management Improvement Group, 1998

Institute of Personnel & Development, **Managing Diversity**, Position Paper, 2001

Irish Peace & Reconciliation Platform, **Peace Building in the Republic of Ireland**, Discussion Document, 2000

Jarman, N., **Managing Disorder: Responding to Interface Violence in North Belfast**, Research Branch of Office of the First Minister/Deputy First Minister, 2002

Knox C., Hughes J., Birrell D. & McCready S., **Community Relations & Local Government**, University of Ulster, 1994

Liechty J. and Clegg C., **Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland**, Columba Press, 2001

Linenhall Library, **In Other Words - The Languages of Europe**, Languages of Ulster Project, Booklet, 2001

Logue K. & Glendinning W., **Anti-Sectarian Work - A Framework for Action**, Community Relations Council, 1993

McCartney C., **Striking a Balance - The Northern Ireland Peace Process**, Accord - An International

Review of Peace Initiatives, Conciliation Resources, 1999

Morrow D., **A Story of Us ... A report on the work of church-based groups supported by CRC under the European Peace Programme**, Community Relations Council, May 2001

Morrow D., **It's not everyone you could tell that to, report on Churches & Inter-Community**

Relations to the Armagh Church Forum, Community Relations Council, May 1997

Morrow D., Wilson D & Eyben K., **Reconciliation and Social Inclusion in Rural Areas - A Policy Discussion Document**, Rural Community Network, 2000

Mundy S., **Cultural Policy - A short guide**, Council of Europe Publishing, 2000

Murtagh B., **Ethnic Space and the Challenge to Land Use Planning: a Study of Belfast's Peacelines**, Centre for Policy Research University of Ulster, 1994

National Joint Council for Local Government Services, **Finding the Balance, Work-Life Policies in Practice**, 2001

Neill Wm. J.V., **Planning & Cultural Pluralism - A Report to the Royal Town Planning Institute**, School of Environmental Planning, QUB, 2000

Northern Ireland Executive, **Programme for Government**, 2000

Northern Ireland Executive, **Draft Programme for Government: Reinvestment and Reform**, September 2002

Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum, **'Yours faithfully' - Religious Diversity in Northern Ireland**, Training Notes, 2001

Northern Ireland Housing Executive, **Towards a Community Relations Strategy**, Consultation Paper, 1999

Quirk P., Hughes J. & Stuart J., **PEACE - A report by Deloitte & Touche on the work of EU funded groups**, supported by Community Relations Council

Rumbelow, Helen, **Belfast's Bamboo Curtain: the Chinese Protestants of Ulster**, article in The Times, August 2001

Smyth, M., Morrissey, M., Hamilton, J. and the Institute for Conflict Research, **Caring Through the Troubles: Health & Social Services in North & West Belfast**, North & West Belfast Health & Social Services Trust, 2001

Social Disadvantage Research Centre, **Measures of Deprivation in Northern Ireland, (the Noble Report)**, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2001

Spence L., **Too Easy to Ignore? Older People and Community Relations in NI**, Help the Aged and Community Relations Council, 2000

Wirth, Linda, **Breaking through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management**, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2001

DOCUMENTS RECEIVED FROM OTHER COUNCILS IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

Ballymena Borough Council, Good Relations Audit & Strategy - Final Report 2001

Ballymoney Borough Council, Community Relations Strategy 2000-2003

Banbridge District Council, Community Relations Strategy - Final Report 1997

Carrickfergus Borough Council, Community Relations Audit & Strategy, 1999-2000

Castlereagh Borough Council, Community Relations Programme, 1999-2000

Coleraine Borough Council, Community Development Strategy, 2000

Coleraine Borough Council, Community Relations Strategy, 2000-2001

Cookstown Borough Council, Community Relations Programme, 2001-2002

Craigavon Borough Council, Community Relations Plan 2001-2002

Down District Council, Good Relations Strategy 2001-2002

Fermanagh District Council, Community Relations Plan

Larne Borough Council, Corporate Plan, 1999-2002

Limavady Borough Council, Community Relations Strategy, 1999-2000

Moyle District Council, Community Relations

