



Good Relations Strategy

2008-2011



goodrelations

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Introduction

It has been encouraging to witness the recent economic growth in our Borough. This has been driven not only by the success of existing businesses but also by many new businesses locating in the Antrim Borough area. Our changing economic landscape has brought significant investment in housing along with a broad spectrum of newcomers to the area.

As a result, the Borough of Antrim has never been more racially or culturally diverse, with many different identities living alongside the more settled communities. This diversity brings new challenges and opportunities to overcome these challenges.

Antrim Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2006 – 2010 sets out how the Council will work on behalf of the people of the Borough to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives in or has a stake in the future prosperity and well-being of the Borough.

In recognition of the importance of involving its community in shaping the future of the Borough, the Council has included the following as one of four overarching themes in its Corporate Plan..... **'A COMMUNITY where people are involved and have influence over the things that matter to them, with a sense of place, inclusiveness and respect for others.'**

How the community interacts will directly influence how the Borough develops and how it is perceived.

In addition, 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 desirability of promoting Good Relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

To achieve its objectives, the Council has developed this Good Relations Strategy. It was informed by a Borough-wide community audit which was undertaken in 2007 and identified five priority action areas. The Strategy outlines Council's commitment to recognising and addressing the many challenges presented by religious, political and racial diversity and the five priority action areas set the scene for our Good Relations programmes.

There is much work to be done in this field but the Council has made a significant first step forward in developing this Strategy and the associated programmes. The Council will work to promote the Strategy throughout the Borough and encourage local groups to realise the potential of the Good Relations programmes offered by the Council.



Oran Keenan
Mayor of Antrim



David McCammick
Chief Executive, Antrim Borough Council

Background

What is Good Relations?

In March 2005 the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) produced **A Shared Future**. This document outlines the Northern Ireland Government's commitment to and vision for Good Relations:

"The establishment over time of a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere, and where all people are treated impartially. A society where there is equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence."¹

This regional strategic framework is designed to help people within Northern Ireland move from a two tradition situation, dominated by a narrow outlook addressed through community relations activities to a more inclusive approach, reflective of our current multi-cultural population. Addressing good relations issues is essentially about addressing sectarianism and racism.

The general aims and objectives of **A Shared Future** have since been re-enforced by the publication of the **Programme For Government 2008** which sets out the target of a shared and better future for all. Additionally it is expected that **A Shared Future** will be the broad basis for the forthcoming **Programme for Cohesion and Integration**, which is expected to emphasise Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.



Multi-Cultural Event, March 2008

¹A Shared Future: Policy and Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland, Office of First and Deputy First Minister, March 2005, p. 7



Need for a Good Relations Strategy

Antrim Borough Council has developed this Good Relations Strategy for a number of reasons:

- The development of this strategy is an indication of the importance of, and commitment to, the promotion of good relations by Antrim Borough Council – a positive, proactive step by Council.
- Council is required to develop a Good Relations Strategy by the Community Relations Unit (CRU) in order to receive good relations funding.
- Under Section 75 (Part 2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, public bodies are required to 'have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.' This strategy will help Antrim Borough Council promote good relations in an informed and structured manner, which can be monitored and recorded by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
- The development of this strategy and action plan sets out the first step beyond consultation to fulfil the people of Antrim's desire for an informed and structured approach to improving good relations in the Antrim area.

Benefits of a Good Relations Strategy

There are many benefits to Antrim Borough Council in developing and implementing a Good Relations Strategy. Among these are:

- The development of this strategy to help meet Council's strategic objectives
- The strategy will enable Council to meet its legislative requirements
- The strategy is linked to other Council policies
- The strategy will be used to help Council to secure and distribute its Good Relations Challenge Fund
- It provides a context within which controversial issues can be addressed
- It outlines Council's commitment to the promotion of good relations which will in turn lead to:
 - An atmosphere where controversial issues can be addressed in a positive manner
 - Antrim Borough Council attracting a representative workforce
 - Providing safe, welcoming premises
 - Improving relations within the local community
 - Meeting the needs of the wider community



Ulster Memorial, 36th Division, Thiepval

Context

Good Relations Audit & Strategy Development – Terms of Reference

Antrim Borough Council requires a Good Relations Strategy that delivers the following outcomes:

- An audit of past and present Community/Good Relations Programmes identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Development of a new Good Relations Strategy for Antrim Borough Council
- Development of a costed action plan including a small grants aid scheme

Policies and Legislation

Antrim Borough Council does not exist in isolation. A broad range of policies and practices influences the decisions of the Council. The Good Relations Strategy of Antrim Borough Council is influenced by policy documents, which range from those with a local focus to those with a Northern Ireland wide remit. The main policies and legislation, and their key points, which influence the Antrim Borough Council Good Relations Strategy, are detailed below.

A Shared Future

A **Shared Future** is the Northern Ireland government's commitment to promoting good relations within Northern Ireland. It has as its overall aim:

“The establishment over time of a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere, and where all people are treated impartially. A society where there is equity, respect for diversity and a recognition of our interdependence.”²

In order to realise this aim a number of policy objectives have been put in place to:

- “Eliminate sectarianism, racism and all forms of prejudice to enable people to live and work without fear or intimidation.
- Reduce tension and conflict at interface areas.
- Facilitate the development of a shared community where people wish to learn, live, work and play together.
- Promote civic-mindedness through education via school, lifelong learning and contact with residents.

- Protect members of minorities (whether for example by religion, race, or any other grounds) and mixed marriages from intimidation and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.
- Ensure that all public services are delivered impartially and guided by economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Shape policies, practices and institutions to enable trust and good relations to grow.
- Encourage understanding of the complexity of our history, through museums and a common school curriculum.
- Support cultural projects which highlight the complexity and overlapping nature of identities and their wider global connections.
- Support and learn from organisations working across ethnic divides for reconciliation, including those operating on a north-south basis.
- Ensure voice is given to the diverse victims of violence in Northern Ireland, including via archives and victim-centred reconciliation events.
- Promote dialogue between and mutual understanding of, different faiths and cultural backgrounds, both long standing within Northern Ireland and recent arrivals to these shores, guided by overarching human rights norms.”³



Cultural Workshop

³A Shared Future: Policy and Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland, Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, March 2005, p. 10-11

A **Shared Future** is also guided by several fundamental principles.

- “Political, civic and community leadership
- The North/South and East/West perspectives
- Progress towards a shared society
- A Shared Future is important to everyone in Northern Ireland
- Separate but equal is not an option: parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically
- Improving relations is an issue that affects all public services
- The legacy of the conflict must be dealt with
- Relationships matter and are central
- Northern Ireland is no longer a bipolar society – it is enriched because it is becoming culturally diverse”⁴

Equality Legislation

Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on public bodies regarding good relations. It reads:

“Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.”⁵

Good Relations presents both a challenge and an opportunity for public bodies in Northern Ireland. Promoting good relations should be more than simply fulfilling a requirement as laid out in the legislation. This should be a proactive, inclusive approach building on equality, reconciliation and appreciation of diversity as a means of dealing with all people within our society in a positive manner.

Review of Public Administration (RPA)

In the document **Better Government for Northern Ireland: Final Decisions of the Review of Public Administration** the RPA team detail the changes that will affect public service delivery in Northern Ireland. The RPA will be guided by four guiding principles: Subsidiarity; Equality and Good Relations; Common Boundaries; and Strong Local Government.

The RPA team’s recommendations on the future of local government will have significant implications for Antrim Borough Council which is to merge with Newtownabbey Borough Council in 2011 under the recently announced 11 super-council model.

Our Community Your Future – Corporate Plan 2006-2010 – A Vision for the Borough of Antrim

This Corporate Plan is a wide ranging and positive change document that enables the Council to place good relations at the core of its work. It sets out the overall vision for the Council as:

“An attractive, outward looking place, where people enjoy an enriched quality of life and increasingly want to live, work, visit and invest.”

This strategy details the corporate themes, which will also help incorporate good relations into the workings of the Council. These themes are:

- A community where people are involved and have influence over things that matter to them, with a sense of place, inclusiveness and respect for others.
- An environment that is sustainable, safe and healthy for all.
- An economy that is sustainable, vibrant, competitive and ensures prosperity for the Borough and its people.
- Excellence – high performance and professionalism in public services.



Multi-Cultural Event, March 2008

Council has also detailed its commitment to strong leadership within its Corporate Plan. This is

“We (Antrim Borough Council) will adopt a central role in the development of a commonality of purpose as our community seeks to achieve its social, environmental, economic and residentship goals.”⁶

The development of this Good Relations Strategy contributes towards the fulfilment of the Council's objectives. The above themes and commitment also outline Antrim Borough Council's clear commitment to the promotion of good relations that will ensure that the good relations agenda will receive the attention and support needed to make a real difference to the work of Antrim Borough Council.

Antrim Borough Council Community Support Plan (CSP) 2006 - 2009

This plan, which details how Antrim Borough Council will work with and for the community and voluntary sector over the next three years, has as its overall vision

“An active, influential and diverse community and voluntary sector which works in partnership with others to address community issues across the Borough.”⁷

The plan is driven by a number of values that again will allow the Council to incorporate good relations actions and work. These values are:

- Inclusion
 - As many people as possible should contribute to the planning, implementation and monitoring process of the CSP
 - Particular effort will be made to facilitate the involvement of marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Different methods will be used to engage different types of groups
- Participation
 - Encouraging, enabling and responding to community consultation on the needs of the area

- Making sure that everyone can have a say and get involved with the implementation of the CSP. In particular, that the diverse and cross-community nature of the district is respected in the CSP

- Openness
- Mutual Respect
 - Ensure respect by all for the views and traditions of others particularly in the implementation of the CSP
- Sustainability
- Equality
 - Promoting equality of opportunity and making sure that marginalised groups have every opportunity to join in the implementation of the CSP
 - The Council will observe its duties under parts 1 and 2 of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Partnership & Integration
- Realistic
- Accountability

Aims and objectives of the Community Support Plan that are relevant to this Good Relations Strategy include:

Aim	Objective	Action
Capacity Building	Build skills and knowledge of the community and voluntary sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To foster civic pride and reduce apathy - To improve communication between the Council and the sector - To unify public voice of Council on key local issues
Networking and Forming Partnerships	Promote an ethos of understanding of networking in the Borough for mutual understanding and benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To facilitate building of networking between community and commerce and community and public bodies - To encourage cross-sectoral integration and inter-agency co-operation between Council, other agencies and the community and voluntary sector - To encourage partnership approaches in accessibility of services
Resourcing the community and voluntary sector	Make effective use of available funding, people, buildings and other resources to obtain best value for the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To undertake a review of 7 Council owned community centres in order to maximise use - To promote the implementation of Good Relations policies and activities within the Council and throughout the Borough - To identify potential groups with whom it would be appropriate to establish a service level agreement or compact of service provision

Antrim Borough Council's Equality Scheme

The development and delivery of this Good Relations Strategy will help Antrim Borough Council to meet its objectives it has set itself through its Equality Scheme. In particular:

“Council’s commitment to the promotion of good relations has been evidenced in Council’s delivery of a community relations programme over the last ten years and its commitment to equality, outlined in ‘managing diversity’ strategic aim of its corporate strategy.”

“Council...will screen policies and review all services in a manner that promotes the ‘good relations’ duty and will adopt such policies that are necessary to ensure compliance. This will be done by:

- Screening all policies for good relations

- Including good relations assessment in all impact assessments
- The provision of good relations training for all staff and Elected Members
- Conducting attitudinal surveys, both internal and external, to enable policy and delivery adjustments to be made where required in the delivery of equality and good relations
- The development and maintenance of relations with groups representative of ethnic minorities
- Ensuring the promotion of good relations is central to Council’s ongoing community relations programme”



Antrim Town

Antrim Borough Council Community Safety Partnership – Community Safety Strategy 2005 – 2008

This strategy recognises that there is a need to tackle key issues both across Northern Ireland and within the Antrim Borough area. Among these key issues is the need to address 'Offences motivated by prejudice and hatred'. The strategy also outlines suggested actions to deal with the issues facing the Borough area. These include:

- Improved linkages with key local agencies
- Support for reconciliation work
- Training and awareness raising
- More AWARE projects (AWARE – 'Antrim Welcomes and Advocates Racial Equality' is a voluntary task group established through the CSP which offers advice, advocacy and runs integration projects)
- Inclusive process to manage flags and emblems in the long term
- Integrating relevant action with the work of community relations locally
- Development of leaflets and promotions
- Programmes that encourage young people to engage in positive activities



Antrim, Round Tower



Wider Political Climate

At the time of writing, Northern Ireland has entered into a new period of self-governance and power sharing with the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly brought about through the agreement of the DUP and Sinn Fein parties to work together in government.

This in itself is good relations in practice and an example that could be replicated and followed throughout Northern Ireland, particularly at the local government level.

This positive message could be harnessed and used locally to drive forward the good relations agenda.

Antrim Borough Council Context

The most recent demographic statistics available for the Antrim Borough area are from the 2001 census. These statistics show that:

- The population of the Antrim Borough Council area was 48,366
 - 23.9% were under 16 years old and 14.8% were aged 60 and above
 - 50.1% were male and 49.9% were female
 - 38.6% were from a Catholic community background and 56.7% were from a Protestant community background
- Antrim has an extent of 6% on the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (2005) – this means that 6% of the population live in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland
- On census day:
 - 7.2% of persons, aged 18-59 claimed Income Support, which is below the Northern Ireland average of 10.8%
 - 8.1% of persons, aged 18-59/64 claimed Incapacity Benefit, which is below the Northern Ireland average of 10.7%
 - 7.1% of persons, aged 16+ claimed Housing Benefit, which is below the Northern Ireland average of 9.7%

- On census day, of people of working age (those aged between 16 & 74):
 - 59.6% worked in the Borough area
 - 17.4 % worked in the Belfast area
 - 6.4% worked in the Newtownabbey area

It must be remembered that since the time of the census in 2001 the Antrim Borough has benefited from a significant increase in its

population due to the influx of migrant workers, the ongoing expansion of Antrim itself and, more notably, the villages of Crumlin and Templepatrick and the development of previously rural land. The economic migration has brought new challenges for the area as detailed in the PSNI statistics below for the levels of Race, Faith/Religion and Sectarian incidents and crimes recorded within the Antrim District Command Unit for the years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007.

Type of Incident	Total No. of Incidents		Total No. of Crimes		Antrim Incidents			Antrim Crimes			Antrim DCU % of NI			
	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	+/- %	05/06	06/07	+/- %	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07
Racist	936	1047	746	861	37	66	+78.4	23	69	+200	3.9	6.3	3.1	8
Faith/Religion	70	136	78	120	0	2	-	0	2	-	-	1.5	-	1.7
Secretarian	1701	1691	1470	1217	77	55	-33.8	65	49	-24.6	4.5	3	5.3	4

Good Relations Work Within the Borough

There are already several examples of best practice good relations work carried out in the Antrim Borough. This work includes:

- A welcome pack for residents of the Springfarm estate, which offers vital signposting information for new residents, a large proportion of which are minority ethnic.
- A welcome DVD translated into 8 languages, which offers vital signposting information for new residents and employees to the Antrim Borough area. This DVD project was lead by the Community Safety Partnership.
- The appointment of an Art of Regeneration Co-ordinator and a Minority Ethnic Liaison Worker to compliment and extend the good relations remit of statutory bodies.
- Several important locally delivered projects funded by the Antrim Borough Council Community Relations Small Grant Aid Scheme, such projects have facilitated cross community contact, explored contemporary identity and explored shared histories.

- The formation of a Cross Party Good Relations Working Group and the production of a good relations newsletter.
- The Service Level Agreement with the Antrim Branch of Citizens' Advice Bureau.
- Translation and interpretation services offered by Antrim Borough Council.

PEACE III Funding (2007 – 2013)

At the time of writing, the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) has announced that Theme 1.1 of the PEACE III Funding as 'Building Positive Relations At The Local Level.'

The objective of Theme 1.1 is to 'challenge attitudes towards sectarianism and racism and to support conflict resolution and mediation at the local community level.'

Clearly this theme reflects core good relations work and as such underpins good relations in a major funding programme. To be eligible for funding, district councils will enter partnerships with each other and produce a collective Peace III Action Plan drawn from their existing Action Plans.

Carrickfergus, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Councils have entered into a cluster to form such a partnership. The partnership

will draw up a PEACE III Action Plan and formally apply to the SEUPB for PEACE III funding.

Holywell Consultancy conducted consultation on behalf of Antrim Borough Council regarding PEACE III funding. The consultation identified the following areas of potential PEACE III work in the Antrim Borough area:

- Placing Antrim Borough Council Area in Context
- Civic Leadership
- Community Participation
- Migrant Worker Initiatives
- Community Capacity Building
- Re-imagining the Community
- Promoting Good Relations
- Cross-Border Initiatives

At time of writing, the partnership has submitted a draft action plan and has extended an open call for social partners.

Priority Action Areas

This strategy sets out priority action areas that aim to focus resources to areas that are in most need of attention.

These priority action areas have been primarily informed by:

- Good Relations Audit Findings, Holywell Consultancy March 2007
- A Shared Future and Racial Equality Strategy Priority Action Areas
- PEACE III Partnership Action Plan
- Programme For Government
- Antrim Borough Council Corporate Plan
- Cross Party Good Relations Working Group

The Priority Action Areas are identified as:

- Hard Issues
- Accepting, Understanding and Embracing Cultural Diversity
- Developing, including and integrating new and marginalized communities
- Civic Leadership and Governance
- Providing a Small Grants Scheme.

Multi-Cultural Event, March 2008



These Priority Action Areas were agreed as the Action Plan Headings by Committee in April 2008.

This strategy and its priority action areas are underpinned by a desire to mainstream good relations into the workings of Antrim Borough Council and to encourage partnership working and support for work in the good relations field.

Implementation of Strategy

The implementation of this strategy will build on, and compliment the resources, structures and services already in place and those emerging from future partnerships and programmes such as PEACE III and **Programme for Cohesion and Integration**.

Action Plan

The Good Relations Officer will be responsible for implementing a detailed action plan. The plan will set out broad themes matching the priority action areas as well as detailed actions and anticipated outputs and outcomes.

Funding Support

Antrim Borough Council will continue to access funding from the Community Relation Unit of OFMDFM as well as through other funding opportunities and programmes such as PEACE III.



Multi-Cultural Event, March 2008

Support For Community Forums

Where opportunity exists, Antrim Borough Council will continue to support and develop the community and voluntary sector towards positive engagement with good relations objectives. This will be achieved by information provision, training, and other forms of support such as funding and identifying funding opportunities.

Support For Antrim Borough Council Staff and Elected Members

Antrim Borough Council will continue to support and develop its staff and Elected Members role in the good relations field. This will be achieved by information provision, staff training and an appropriate forum for Elected Members.

Linking with National and Regional Structures and Initiatives

Involvement with the main regional and national good relations initiatives, partnerships and organisations will be central to including local organisations in the overall picture of what is happening in the good relations field. This is essential for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and models of best practice, which may be adapted and applied to local situations.

Continuing Research and Evaluation

Appropriate research and evaluation is essential to ensure that this strategy remains focused and fit for purpose to both the local and regional good relations needs. This will be achieved by:

- Continuing liaison with local, regional and national organisations and forums
- The development of new partnerships and forums where appropriate
- The continued evaluation of specific good relations projects delivered locally
- Independent evaluation of the Council's good relations programme
- The development of a steering group including Elected Members, Statutory Bodies, Trade Unions, Clergy, Community & Voluntray sector etc.

Bibliography

Title	Organisation	Year
Information Paper: Migrant Workers: Useful Terminology and Challenging Myths	Animate	2005
Building Our Future Together	Belfast City Council	2003
A Good Relations Framework: An Approach to the Development of Good Relations	Community Relations Council	2004
Guidelines for Developing a Community Relations Plan for District Councils	Community Relations Unit	1998
Antrim Borough Council Corporate Plan 2006-2010	Antrim Borough Council	2006
Community Support Plan	Antrim Borough Council	2006
Good Relations Action Plan 2006-2007	Antrim Borough Council	2006
Good Relations Funding Scheme	Antrim Borough Council	2006
Antrim Borough Council Equality Strategy	Antrim Borough Council	2005
Better Government in Northern Ireland: Final Decisions of the Review of Public Administration	Review of Public Administration	2006
A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland	Office First Minister and Deputy First Minister	2005
Antrim Borough Council Community Safety Partnership Plan 2005-2008	Antrim Borough Council Community Safety Partnership	2005



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