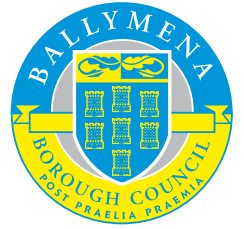


Good Relations Strategy



Ballymena Borough Council's Good Relations Strategy for 2010 - 2012



Neighbourly



Diverse



Shared

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Endorsements of Good Relations Strategy

// Promoting Good Relations is high on the agenda at Ballymena Borough Council //

As Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chief Executive of Ballymena Borough Council, we have great pleasure in presenting Council's new Good Relations Strategy which has been developed after extensive consultation with our citizens.

We recognise our role is to provide strong civic leadership within the Borough as we strive to make Ballymena **"A Great Place to Be"**. This new Strategy not only complements and continues the Good Relations work that has been achieved to date, but allows Council to move forward in an inclusive and progressive manner.

Through the themes of our new Strategy **"Create a Climate for Change"**, and **"Promote**

Provision of Shared Space", Council pledge their continued commitment and support to projects and initiatives aimed at creating Good Relations for **all** our citizens.

We will strive to embed Good Relations in all aspects of Council business, and will work closely with other agencies to help make Ballymena a safer and more welcoming place for all.



James K F. Currie MBE.

Cllr James K F Currie, MBE (Mayor)



P. J. McAvoy

Ald P J McAvoy (Deputy Mayor)



Anne Donaghy

Mrs Anne Donaghy (Chief Executive)

Introduction



Good Relations can only be developed in a climate where all stakeholders accept the need to play an active part and take responsibility for creating and maintaining Good Relations throughout the Borough.

We recognise Good Relations is not just a polite thing to do – it forms a critical component of a sustainable Ballymena.

Failure to achieve, create or secure Good Relations...

- Could lead to issues such as community tensions and division, leading to anti-social behaviour, intimidation, harassment and indeed violence.
- Means scarce police resources are diverted away from dealing with other crime and community safety issues.
- Can have a knock on impact on the economy of the area. If a negative image is created people will be reluctant to shop, visit and socialise in the Town Centre and Borough in general.
- Means that Ballymena loses out on the synergy, which can be achieved when all citizens work together for the common good of the Borough.

Council cannot possibly take sole responsibility for Good Relations in the Borough, but we do recognise our role as civic leaders. We will help create the necessary synergy with all of our stakeholders from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors to ensure Ballymena is seen as **“A Great Place to Be”**.

Good Relations

Vision

Ballymena is seen as:

“A Shared Space – A Neighbourly Place”

Where...

- Everyone is free from fear and has the freedom to move, live and work where they choose
- There is a visible expression of diversity in art, culture, heritage and sport
- People feel safe and welcome in all areas of the Borough

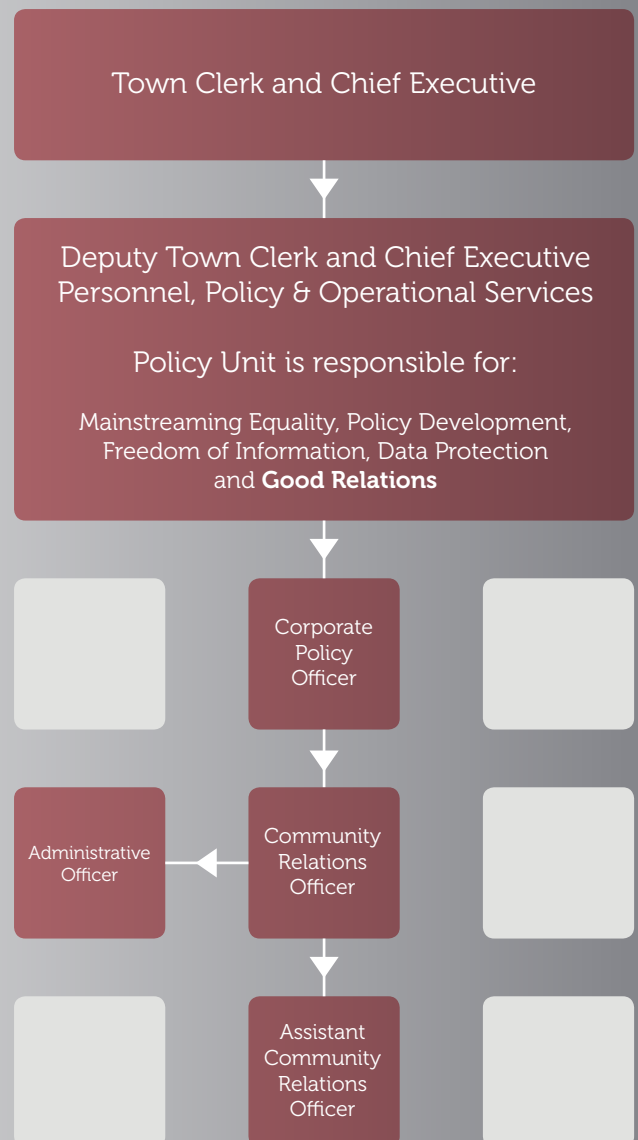
Good Relations

Mission

“Good Relations is at the core of everything we do”

Good Relations Position within Council Structure

Good Relations is placed within the Policy Unit, connected to equality and with access to the Senior Management Team and Chief Executive. This enhances the opportunities for the mainstreaming of Good Relations across all policy areas and enables close co-operation with the delivery of equality.



Council's Vision And Core Values

Ballymena Borough Council's overall Council Vision and Core Values, together with the Good Relations Vision and Mission Statement, complement and support each other:

Council's Corporate Purpose:

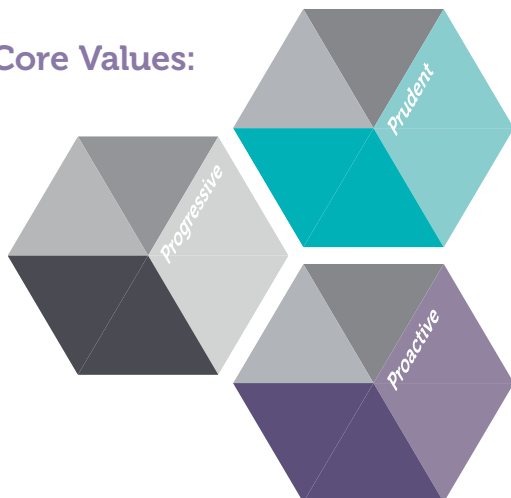
Council Purpose: Is to improve the quality of life for all the citizens and to develop the Borough to be an attractive place in which to live, work or visit. We strive to ensure our services offer excellence, efficiency and value for money.

A Great Place to Be... Ballymena 2012

Council's Vision:

We seek to ensure that by 2012 Ballymena is seen as '**A Great Place to Be**'

Council's Core Values:



Progressive

- We are always connected to our people
- We are forward thinking and embrace change positively and creatively
- We maximise all opportunities for the benefit of our citizens

Proactive

- We are recognised and rewarded for our 'Can Do Culture'
- We provide excellent service
- We show courageous civic leadership

Prudent

- We are openly accountable and transparent to our public
- We are careful in our decision-making
- Stewardship and good governance are paramount to our ethos

Good Relations within Council's Corporate Priorities:

Priority 2: People

Improve the quality of life for those who reside in the Borough by making Ballymena a welcoming place.

Objective 2.1

Engage with the community to make Ballymena a safe place to live, work and play by adoption of relevant strategies.

Areas for Action:

- Community Safety & District Policing
- Cultural Awareness
- Emergency Planning

Objective 2.2

Enhance the communities in which we live by promoting togetherness and tolerance.

Areas for Action:

- Arts & Sport Strategy
- Community Development Strategy
- Equality Agenda
- Good Relations Strategy

Policy And Legislative Context

The Strategy and Actions proposed have the potential for effective partnership working and the maximising of budgets through connections to a number of Government and EU policies and specific legislation. These policies and legislation include:

1) "A Shared Future" – OFMDFM

This sets the Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland and includes:

Aims and Objectives

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

A Shared Future OFMDFM (Paragraph 1.2)

2) From "A Shared Future" to Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: Developments in Good Relations Policy

A new Good Relations Policy is due to be published by OFMDFM,

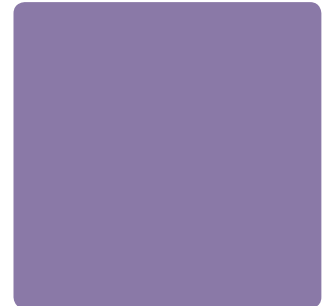
which will take the place of the current strategy document "A Shared Future". With the resumption of devolution in May 2007, OFMDFM indicated the development of a new strategy that would integrate the Race and Community Relations Strategies.

Programme for Government 2008-2011:

In the Programme for Government, the "A Shared Future" strategy is not mentioned but instead the document refers to the creation of a *shared and better future*, based on tolerance and respect for cultural diversity. The Programme for Government goes on to promise:

"We will bring forward a programme of cohesion and integration for this shared and better future to address the divisions within our society and achieve measurable reductions in sectarianism, racism and hate crimes. If we do not take this opportunity **now** there is a very real risk that the divisions of our past will be replicated in the new communities that have come here to live and work among us."

Programme for Government



Policy And Legislative Context Cont'd



Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI)

At a recent Assembly meeting, the following statement was made on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration:

“That this Assembly notes the recent progress made by the First Minister and deputy First Minister in agreeing their draft cohesion, sharing and integration strategy; believes that publication of the draft for consultation will be an illustration of commitment to fruitful working

relationships and to the building of a shared and better future; recognises the importance of a commitment at all levels of government and within civic society in creating a shared and equal society; and looks forward to early public consultation on the draft strategy which will give all parties and the wider community the opportunity to make a contribution to the shape and direction of final policy”

(Extracted from NI Assembly Debate 2 March 2010)

3) Equality Sections 75 (i) and (ii) : Equality Commission

Section 75 (i) of the Northern Ireland 1998 Act requires public bodies, including Councils, to have due regard to the need to promote equality within the following nine categories:

Religious Belief	Political Opinion	Racial Group
Age	Marital Status	Sexual Orientation
Men & Women generally	Persons with/ without disability	Persons with/ without dependants

Section 75 (ii) places a duty on public bodies, including Councils, to promote Good Relations between people of differing:

Religious Belief / Political Opinion / Racial Group

These two Sections form an important legal context for the Council's duty in regard to Equality and Good Relations, complementing the development of “A Shared Future”.

4) Peace III : SEUPB / CRC

The overall objective of the Peace III Programme is to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Boarder regions. The North East (NE) Cluster Peace III Plan outlines how the Council areas of Coleraine, Ballymoney, Moyle, Ballymena, Larne and Limavady aim to address reconciliation and how they intend to contribute to a lasting peace in their cluster area.

Vision for the NE Peace III Cluster by 2015

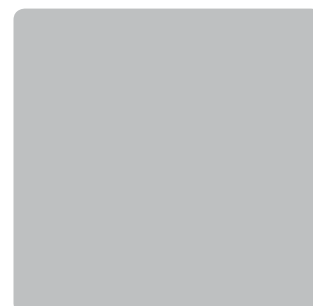
“The North East Area is a peaceful and stable area; is economically and socially prosperous; is an area that respects diversity, promotes good relations among and between communities and celebrates difference where people feel safe to express their identity without fear of intimidation, sectarianism or racism and is an area where cross community and cultural understanding, engagement and interaction is excellent.”

For detailed information on Peace III and associated Programmes, refer to website <http://northeastpeace.com/>

5) Review of Public Administration (RPA) : OFMDFM/DoE

Key implications of the Review of Public Administration for Good Relations are:

- Equality and the promotion and maintenance of Good Relations will be integral themes of Government Policy.
- Local Councils will have an increased role in the design and delivery of Good Relations.
- As the new Councils develop, there will be a need for greater co-operation between existing Councils on policy issues.
- Community Planning will form a key role of the new Councils and this provides an important chance to include Good Relations in the planning of communities and services.



Major Themes for Good Relations Strategy

The Strategy is based on two Major Themes, which complement each other. It is envisaged that in many instances the themes will be delivered in partnership with other agencies. While Council will not necessarily take the lead in all areas, it will play a key role:

Theme 1

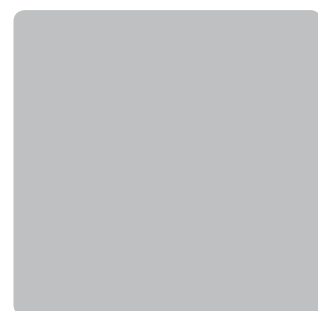
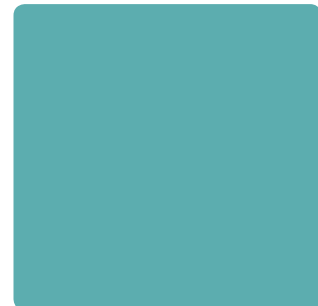
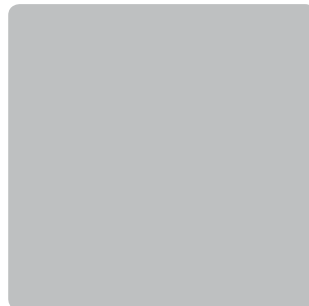
Create a Climate for Change

Theme 2

Promote Provision of Shared Space

The Major Themes and Action Plan will involve both:

- a) Internal work within Council on the development of policy and delivery of services, and
- b) External work with other bodies where partnership working will enhance delivery



Theme 1: Create a Climate for Change

Rationale:

One of the key principles underpinning “A Shared Future” is:

Political, Civic and Community Leadership.

“...it is incumbent upon every individual and organisation in Northern Ireland to play their part to promote a shared Northern Ireland. Real change will require leadership, vision, institutional commitment and long-term policies to promote and sustain change”

A Shared Future (Paragraph 1.4.1)

The creation of a Climate for Change will require effective leadership across the Borough. Council cannot possibly take sole responsibility for Good Relations in the Borough, but we do recognise our role as civic leaders. For a real Climate for Change to be successful, Good Relations has to become a priority for all local organisations. They need to take responsibility for actions to promote Good Relations.

To initiate and drive this change forward, Council needs to develop – in partnership with other leaders in the Borough – the concept that Good Relations is a critical factor in the development of the social and economic fabric of the Borough. This will involve changing behaviours which, consequently, will impact on attitudes. Local

organisations and leaders need to be encouraged to accept that they have a responsibility to do all they can to initiate and maintain Good Relations in the Borough. This responsibility cuts across all spheres of their activities including:

Work > Faith > Recreation > Neighbourliness > Sport > Socialising

Evidence from the consultation undertaken, and reports reviewed, indicates that this leadership is both needed and sought. The findings of the consultation show that there exists a degree of fear and resulting segregation. This indicates that levels of tolerance of cultural diversity are not high.

If leaders demonstrate that Good Relations is a priority for them and their organisations, then others are likely to take up the challenge.



Theme 2:

Promote Provision of Shared Space

Rationale:

One of the key principles underpinning “A Shared Future” is:

Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically.

“Good Relations must build on the significant progress that has been made on the equality agenda. No one is arguing for an artificially homogeneous Northern Ireland and no one will be asked to suppress or give up their chosen identity. However, the costs of a divided society – whilst recognising, of course, the very real fears of people around safety and security considerations – are abundantly clear: segregated housing and education, security costs, less than efficient public service provision, and deep-rooted intolerance that has too often been used to justify violent sectarianism and racism. Policy that simply adapts to, but does not alter these challenges, results in inefficient resource allocations. These are not sustainable in the medium to long-term.”

A Shared Future (Paragraph 1.4.1)

The lack of shared space and the sense of segregation, in the Borough, have been identified as key

challenges throughout our extensive consultation exercise. As already demonstrated, **Shared Space** forms a vital component of the “A Shared Future” Strategy. Development of **Shared Space** therefore will form an essential part of any transformation. “A Shared Future” promotes...

- The development of and protection of town centres as safe and welcoming places for people of all walks of life
- Creating safe and shared space for meeting, sharing, playing, working and living
- Freeing the public realm from threat, aggression and intimidation while allowing for legitimate expression of cultural celebration

In order to create freedom for people to move on from fear and to be able to express their diverse cultures and identities, **Shared Space** has to be developed. This space needs to be available for people of all ages, from all social and economic backgrounds and differing religions, political or ethnic backgrounds.





Good Relations Strategic Action Plan

How will we
implement the
strategy?

Theme 1:

Create a Climate for Change

Objective 1

Support and develop Civic Leadership from across sectors

Areas for Action

- Develop a Local Statutory Agencies 'Chief Executives Forum' dealing with Good Relations issues
- Develop Internal Good Relations Working Group
- Promote development of fora to create opportunities for dialogue
- Work in partnership with local Churches Forum to develop social outreach work
- Develop Community SWOP programme with areas of Interest
- Build Good Relations into all aspects of local capacity building

Objective 2

Involving Community

Areas for Action

- Profile Borough's achievements at all levels
- Promote Good Relations work in wide variety of partnerships
- Develop local projects as part of CR Week
- Support Good Relations elements of events including Grant Aid
- Promote local Community Leadership Programmes – by engaging in the Social Partnership Programme and Peace III opportunities
- Develop Community Dinner into Awards Scheme to recognise people who give a lead in Good Relations
- Review/Enhance current Grant Scheme



Create a Climate
for Change...

Theme 2:

Promote Provision of Shared Space

Objective 3

Increase Provision of Shared Space

Areas for Action

- Maximise use of existing space by encouraging those responsible to conduct accessibility audits
- Identify barriers which make facilities inaccessible to people from various traditions
- Take action to ensure facilities are neutral and activities are as inclusive as possible
- Council to take lead by evaluating its own facilities/share findings
- Create Partnership to address parades, flags, emblems, and bonfires to allow opportunity for dialogue. Examine good practice elsewhere

Objective 4

Promote Provision of Services which are accessible to all

Areas for Action

- Ensure Good Relations is mainstreamed in all Council business
- Promote sharing of services and facilities with schools/education bodies
- Build on co-operation from Common Purpose programme, examine including parents, sharing schemes in other areas
- Work in partnership to address issues of young people to promote Good Relations
- Build on existing infrastructure to further develop minority ethnic work
- Raise Councillors/Council staff awareness of minority ethnic issues
- Design programme for dealing with the past, examine appropriate models
- Develop an inclusive approach to Remembrance with Churches, Council and British Legion



Promote Provision
of Shared Space.



This document is available in accessible formats such as large print or audio cassette and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English

If you would like to know more about our Strategy please contact Mrs Jackie Patton, Community Relations Officer, on...

028 2566 0300 or email us at...
policy.unit@ballymena.gov.uk

Ballymena Borough Council
Ardeevin
80 Galgorm Road
Ballymena BT42 1AB

T: 08456 581 581 (local rate number)
T: 028 2566 0300
F: 028 2566 0400

W: www.ballymena.gov.uk
E: council.reception@ballymena.gov.uk

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