



## Local Government Taskforce

### Community Planning Sub-Group

**Note of meeting, Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2006, Council Offices, Omagh District Council.**

<b>Present:</b>	Thomas McCall (Chair)	Newry & Mourne District Council
	Karen McFarland	Strabane District Council
	Cathy Kelly	SEUPB
	Stewart Cuddy	NI Housing Executive
	Jane Corderoy	OFMDFM, GRRD
	Tina Gamble	DE
	Damian McAuley	Invest NI
	Paul Fleming	Sinn Féin
	Andy McQuiggan	PSNI (Community Safety)
	Helen Honeyman	LSP Working Group
	Catherine McKinney	DOE Planning Service
	Jim Stewart	DOE Local Government Division
	Frances McCandless	NICVA
	Nick Livingston	Arts Council
	Angela Clark	Dept for Social Development
	Angus Kerr	DoE Planning Service
	Alison McCullagh	Omagh District Council
	John News	Sports Council NI
	Gareth Harper	Rural Community Network (NI)
	Wendy McClenaghan	Policing Reforms Division, NIO
	Colin McClintock	Lisburn City Council
	Gemma Attwood	Community Relations Council
	Sam Knox	Southern Group Environmental Health Committee
	Robert Heyburn	Department Culture, Arts & Leisure
	Sharon O'Gorman	Armagh City & District Council
	Marie-Therese McGivern	Belfast City Council
	Damian McKeivitt	DOE Local Government Reform
	Claire Devlin	DOE Local Government Reform
<b>1.Apologies:</b>	Eleanor Gill	General Consumer Council
	David Lennox	Community Safety Unit, NIO
	Shaun Henry	SEUPB
	Seamus McAleavey	NICVA
	Nick Mack	Rural Development Council
	Gillian Ardis	NIO Policing Reform Unit
	Dympna McGlade	CRC
	Cllr. David McClarty	UUP
	Cllr. Lynn Frazer	Alliance Party

## **2. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair of the Sub Group, Tom McCall, welcomed all those attending and invited them to briefly introduce themselves and indicate the organisation they were representing on the Community Planning Sub-Group.

## **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting of the sub group held on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2006 were accepted as an accurate record of that meeting.

## **4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising that were not on the main agenda of the meeting.

## **5. Progress Report from sub group investigating the legislative requirements**

A brief update was given on the meeting to discuss legislation which had taken place on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May. The legislation had focussed minds on which of the policy issues need to be decided upon immediately. The main issues identified at the meeting were the role of the Auditor in Community Planning, the role of the Assembly in Community Planning, and the question of whether the group felt the legislation should set out the requirement to initiate a process, to produce a plan or to produce and implement a community plan. It was also stressed that while the Scottish model had much to offer to Northern Ireland, the group also needed to consider the English and Welsh models.

In terms of the role of the Auditor, the Chair advised the sub-group that they had learned from their visit to Glasgow that Audit Scotland now has two roles: a financial side which looks at probity and that money has been spent properly, while another section looks at processes and procedures. As a result of the RPA, there may be a need for audit arrangements in NI to change and adapt. The role of Audit was identified as one of the cross-cutting themes, falling within the remit of the work streams on Finance and Performance Management.

Scottish legislation requires Scottish public agencies to operate at Best Value at all times, which means that Well-being has to operate within Best Value requirements.

The Chair advised that an Audit Scotland report on the operation of Community Planning was due for publication on 15<sup>th</sup> June, and that this would be extremely useful in assisting the group in its deliberations.

The group discussed the question of whether the legislation should require the production or the implementation of a community plan. It was generally agreed that in Northern Ireland we should specify a requirement on local government to produce a community plan, and it should also be their responsibility to ensure it is implemented. There was also discussion on the other possible bodies to be specified within the legislation as having a duty to assist in the development and delivery of a community plan. The Chair suggested that the group who had met to consider legislative issues would draft a list of bodies and organisations that should be involved in the Community Planning Process.

The legislation itself should be flexible and enabling rather than prescriptive, setting out clearly what is required and creating uniformity of approach. Scotland has drafted

Guidance Notes and examples of best practice to help guide councils, and this is an option Northern Ireland could consider.

### **Role of Assembly / Executive**

There is a requirement on Scottish Ministers to 'promote and encourage' community planning. The group discussed whether this would be appropriate to Northern Ireland.

The Study Visit to Glasgow had identified criticisms from Local Government that Central Government Departments do not always communicate with each other. The Welsh Assembly has created a "Better Wales" strategic plan, with overarching National Priorities, which has been better at clarifying the roles and relationship between Central and Local Government there.

The Chair suggested that the group would also need to consider the issue of enforcement, and come to a view on how this should be taken forward. He stated that there would be obvious links with other Taskforce work streams, including Performance Management, Governance and Central / Local Relationships.

### **Other Legislative issues**

There was discussion of whether legislation would be needed to allow partners in community planning to incur spending in relation to Community Planning or Well-Being. However it was pointed out that such expenditure will be within specific areas like health, education, etc. In Scotland, the police, health authorities, etc are providing specific resources to community planning from their respective budgets.

Scottish legislation allows councils to take actions outside their areas at times, and this lead the group to discuss the desirability of enabling North / South and East / West actions within Community Planning strategies and the power of Well-Being.

## **6. Progress Report on positions / options paper**

Marie-Therese McGivern advised that she would draft a paper incorporating the issues that had arisen during this discussion and earlier discussions. She hoped to circulate the draft paper by the middle of the following week, in order to allow members of the group time to note its contents before the meeting on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June. However because of pressure of time, it may not be ready for circulation until immediately before the next meeting.

## **7. Study visit to Glasgow**

Several members of the group gave very positive feedback on the study visit to Glasgow the previous week. It had highlighted the issues of Community Planning at the strategic Local Authority level compared with Community Planning at the local level. It had also reinforced the importance of involving the private sector. There was a need to manage expectations of what Community Planning could achieve, and to emphasise the necessity for a long-term commitment.

In terms of resourcing, it had become evident that it was important to involve key players who could commit funding.

The Chair summarised the discussion, highlighting that the Scottish Executive had made available considerable funding for deprived areas – Councils could bid for these funds, but they had to be focussed on improvements to specific deprived

areas. He also asked the sub group to consider what they will recommend to the Taskforce for the transition period until April 2009, and whether or not pilot schemes would be one of their recommendations. He highlighted the need for capacity building in Government Departments and in agencies that will have involvement in community planning.

Finally he expressed thanks to Damian McKeivitt for his organisation of the study visit to Glasgow.

### **8. Briefing Seminar**

Since the last meeting and based on discussions and the visit to Scotland, the purpose of the event has been amended and refined, so that it will (i) explain why community planning is so beneficial and demonstrate what it can achieve, and (ii) outline to a broader audience the key issues in the group's draft paper. The event will be focused as A Briefing Seminar on Community Planning, and it is hoped to enlist the services of two of the speakers from the Glasgow study visit, Sir William Rae and Councillor Stephen Purcell. The date is now likely to be 26<sup>th</sup> / 27<sup>th</sup> / 28<sup>th</sup> June, depending on the availability of the speakers. The venue will be finalised once the date is confirmed, but is likely to be Belfast or Templepatrick. The format of the seminar will be a full day, beginning with Welcome and Introductions by Tom McCall. The two guest speakers will outline the concepts and benefits of Community Planning, and then members of the sub group will present our draft views on how Community Planning could be taken forward in Northern Ireland. After a break, the delegates will go into sub-groups. The delegate list is being prepared at the moment, and should be in a position to circulate it early next week. Any additional suggestions should be sent to Sharon O'Gorman as soon as possible. It is hoped that invitations will be issued by Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June.

It was suggested that the draft final report be circulated to delegates ahead of the event, to allow time for reading before the seminar. In order to achieve this, it may be necessary for the group to meet in the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> June to finalise the draft paper and then send it out; a meeting for 15<sup>th</sup> June was also pencilled in, to be used if required.

### **10. Schedule of dates**

- 8<sup>th</sup> June – Warrenpoint Town Hall, Warrenpoint Co. Down
- 15<sup>th</sup> June – tbc
- 22<sup>nd</sup> June - tbc
- 26<sup>th</sup> / 27<sup>th</sup> / 28<sup>th</sup> June – possible dates for briefing seminar
- 29<sup>th</sup> June – tbc; possibly a central Belfast location

### **10. Any other notified business**

The Chair raised the issue of the Taskforce Working Group on 8<sup>th</sup> June, which clashed with the scheduled meeting of the Community Planning Sub-Group. The Chair hoped he would be excused from the Working Group, but was awaiting a reply from the Department.

**CLAIRE DEVLIN**  
**Local Government Reform Unit**