



Local Government Taskforce

Community Planning Sub-Group

Note of meeting, Thursday 29th June 2006, Malone House, Belfast

Present:	Thomas McCall (Chair)	Newry & Mourne District Council
	Marie-Therese McGivern	Belfast City Council
	Peter Daniels OBE	IDeA
	Cllr Kevin Wilson	IDeA member peer
	Damian McKeivitt	DOE Local Government Reform Unit
	Cllr Paul Fleming	Sinn Féin
	Cllr Lynn Frazer	Alliance Party
	Cllr Nelson McCausland	DUP
	David McClarty MLA	Ulster Unionist Party
	Frances McCandless	NICVA
	Gareth Harper	Rural Community Network
	Nick Mack	Rural Development Council
	Stewart Cuddy	NI Housing Executive
	Kieran Doherty	Coleraine Borough Council
	J McEldowney	OFMDFM
	Robert Heyburn	Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure
	Dympna McGlade	Community Relations Council
	Alison McCullagh	Omagh District Council
	David Jackson	NI Policing Board
	Robert Mitchell	NI Policing Board
	David Lennox	Community Safety Unit, NIO
	Sharon O’Gorman	Armagh City & District Council
	Angela Clarke	Department for Social Development
	Nick Livingston	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
	Helen Honeyman	Local Strategy Partnerships Working Group
	Shirley McCay	NI Local Economic Development Forum
	Colm Bradley	Community Technical Aid
	Damian McAuley	Invest Northern Ireland
	Andy McQuiggan	PSNI
	Ivan Farr	PSNI
	Sam Knox	SGEHC (CEHOG)
	Jim Stewart	DOE Local Government Division
	Damien Martin	DHSSPS
1. Apologies:	Angus Kerr	DOE Planning Service
	Gillian Ardis	NIO Policing Reforms Unit
	Eleanor Gill	NI Consumer Council
	Joan Cassells	Dept of Education

2. Minutes of previous meeting (8th June)

The Chair apologised for the delay in issuing the minutes of the meeting on June 8th. It was agreed that if anyone had any amendments or comments, they could email them to Damian McKeivitt, to be received by the end of following day, Friday 30th June.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Report from Briefing Seminar on 27th June

The Chair gave brief feedback on the seminar on 27th June, stating that it had served its purpose well. He was delighted with the number of people who attended. It had been extremely worthwhile having Sir William Rae as the keynote speaker; his speech, combined with the afternoon's focus groups, had been very useful in raising awareness of the power and potential of Community Planning. He thanked Sharon O'Gorman and Peter Daniels for all their work organising the event.

5. Draft Final report

The Chair thanked everyone who had contributed to the report, and in particular Marie-Therese McGivern for her coordination and collation of the Report. The Chair outlined that, unless there were particularly substantive issues that needed to be addressed, the report would be signed off at this final meeting of the sub group. The finishing touches would be put to it that afternoon and it would be sent to the Permanent Secretary the following day.

Marie-Therese McGivern updated the group on the amendments that had been made to the report following the detailed deliberations at the meeting in Warrenpoint on June 8th. The final report now also incorporated the output of the legislative group who had met on 22nd June, and she thanked Jim Stewart and Gillian Ardis for their work in this area.

A number of comments had been made to the effect that central government does not act in a joined-up manner, but these had not been included in the report as the Central / Local Relationship sub group would focus on this area.

There had also been a couple of requests to make substantive changes to the document, but as these had not been raised previously and did not reflect any of the group's earlier discussions, these amendments were not included.

However the group was asked to approve two sets of changes to the report:

- to clarify what is meant by a 'a modified Scottish model'; it was agreed to include a sentence or two of explanation;
- a view had been expressed that recommendation 11 was not particularly strong, and could be open to misinterpretation. It was agreed to replace recommendation 11 with the following wording: "that it is recommended that the legislation and / or statutory guidance ensures that strong, effective elected member representation is found in all Community Planning Partnerships and similarly in all"

There was discussion as to whether or not this could be included in legislation, but it was ultimately agreed that the wording above would allow for inclusion in either legislation or guidance.

David Jackson proposed that the reference to the PSNI in the list of specified bodies in recommendation 9 should be amended to read the Policing Board and the Chief Constable. After discussion, it was agreed to make this amendment, as it reflected the Scottish legislation.

There was extensive discussion of recommendation 10, and in particular the second sentence, "Each sector to decide how these representatives should emerge". Cllr McCausland expressed serious reservations about this wording, arguing that community bodies were not bound by the equality legislation that other bodies had to work within, and that this could have implications for the process of selection. Representatives from the community and voluntary sector stated strongly that they wished this recommendation to remain unchanged. Cllr Fleming reminded the group that their role was to set the general framework and that they could not address all the detailed issues, such as how the community sector should go about how it wished to its representation to be decided. The overall view of the group was that the recommendation should remain unchanged, although Cllr McCausland wished to have his dissent recorded.

It was agreed to remove the words "seeks to" from recommendation 13, so that it reads "it is recommended that each community planning partnership sets up a local area planning structure which meets their own particular needs and ensures the participations of as wide a range of people in the locality as possible".

The group discussed recommendation 14, and agreed to include reference to links with South East Scotland and other cross channel links.

It was agreed that "duty" in recommendation 15 should be amended to read "statutory duty" to mirror the requirements in recommendation 9.

The Chair reflected that the debate around the legislation that morning had reinforced the importance of recommendation 21 and the continued involvement of the sub-group as the legislation was being drafted, and before it goes out to formal public consultation.

It was agreed to amend the third bullet point on page 31, replacing the word "encourage" with "co-operate".

It was pointed out that some of the bullet points in the legislative section were duplicated, and it was agreed that these be deleted.

There was some discussion around the wording of the penultimate bullet point on page 31, and a perception felt by some that it was very negative. It was explained that it was there to ensure that any money spent outside the UK by councils is spent for the benefit of the inhabitants of the council area. However, Cllr Fleming maintained his view that the wording was negative.

The group discussed the question of sanctions, which were included in the final bullet point on page 31. This provision was also included in the Scottish legislation, and would only be used as a final resort.

Concerns were expressed that councils might be held responsible for the failings of other partners in the community planning process, and it was agreed to include the following wording to clarify the issue: “and where that failure is attributable to other bodies that appropriate sanctions should be taken against them”.

The group returned to the earlier discussion about community representation, and it was suggested that the paper should include some reference in the introduction to a shared future and the special challenges it presents. Damian McKevitt would draft something appropriate to be included in the Chair’s acknowledgement.

With regard to the stakeholder event, it was agreed that this should also be referred to in the introduction, and also that the list of attendees be included as an Annex to the report.

Sharon O’Gorman agreed to circulate the notes from the focus groups for information to sub group members the following week.

6. Arrangements for presentation of report to Working Group and Political Panel

The Chair outlined the timetable over the next few weeks: the approved report would be sent to the Department on Friday 30th June. It would be presented to the Taskforce Working Group on 4th July and to the Political Panel on 17th July. That will conclude the first stage of this process. At that point the Department will need to look at the nine reports, distilling what needs to go into primary legislation and handing this over to the legislative team in Local Government Division.

7. Final Comments and thanks

The Chair thanked everyone for all their hard work. On behalf of the sub group members he expressed thanks to Marie-Therese McGivern in particular for drafting the report, and to Sharon O’Gorman, Gillian Ardis, and Jim Stewart. He thanked Damian McKevitt and Claire Devlin for their help and support. He stated that the sub group could not have had better advisors than Peter Daniels and Cllr Kevin Wilson, the two IDeA peers, and the group was very much indebted to them for their sound advice.

CLAIRE DEVLIN
Local Government Reform Unit