

Appendix 1

Safer City Workshop

6th April 2009

Lord Mayor's Office, Clarendon Dock

Notes arising from the discussion

1. Purpose

To set an agenda and agree the next steps for improved coordination and management of the City's ambitions for a Safer City.

The 'Safer City' workshop was organised to provide a platform to allow Members to debate, highlight issues and agree actions on how Belfast City Council can rationalise and become more integrated in both how it delivers services and also leads and manages key partnerships (CSP and DPP) that aim to make the city safer.

The workshop, which was attended by Members from all Parties and by Chief and Senior officers from across a number of departments, encouraged participants to identify current issues in relation to the delivery of the above agendas. Presentations were also provided from the CSP, DPP, PSNI and the NIO representatives.

The NIO speaker referred to the recently released consultation document 'Local Partnership Working on Policing & Community Safety: A Way Forward'. This paper presents a discussion around moving towards an integrated CSP/DPP model post 2011 and in the interim suggests some practical steps to bring about more joined up working between these partnerships.

2. Key Issues

A summary of the outcome of the discussions is provided below.

2.1 CSP / DPP Duplication

It was noted that, although both the DPP and CSP work within the arena of community safety, both partnerships currently have distinct functions;

DPP – Monitoring of police performance against the targets included in the annual and local policing plans and engaging the community in policing issues. The DPP enjoys statutory authority and involves front-line participation by the Political Parties.

CSP – Bringing together a range of statutory, voluntary and community sector agencies to delivery community safety projects and interventions to tackle antisocial behaviour, reduce crime and help people feel safer.

However it was agreed that this separation is far from ideal and that there are definite advantages in bringing the two partnerships together in the longer term. It was further agreed that the independent monitoring function currently provided by the

DPP needed to be maintained in order to retain the confidence of local communities with the overall process. It was emphasised that the DPP provided a direct link to the community through the political and independent representatives and, as such, has political legitimacy. However, it was further considered that the DPPs need to change in that their inability at present to deliver interventions and programmes at community level is causing serious frustration and there is a danger of the public losing patience.

Members indicated the need in the short term for better co-ordination between the two partnerships in terms of staff interaction, joined up public meetings and a clear and constant communication line between the two structures.

2.2 Community Engagement

Members highlighted concern in relation to the number of community engagement methods and models that currently exist throughout the city and the pressure on Members' and officers' time in attending meetings. It was noted that representatives within the wide range of community engagement structures were, in the main, the same people and that a process to rationalise and eradicate duplication was required. Some concern was expressed about the emerging PACTs (Partners and Community Together) arrangements and the demands which these additional meetings are placing on both Members and officers. There was felt to be a lack of connectivity and accountability in relation to attendance by other statutory agencies and Government Departments at these meetings. The question of the relationship between PACTs and the DPP was also raised and more clarity was called for.

3. Actions

Short Term

- CSP/DPP staff should be brought together under one administration and management structure, situated within a department / section that can deliver best outcomes for the public.
- A proposal paper should be developed and agreed through the political system detailing actions to better align the work and outcomes of both partnerships (e.g. improved communication / joint consultation / joint public engagement) and yet maintain the independence of the DPP's monitoring role. This should include proposals to join up agendas, planning processes, etc. The paper should clarify the roles and relationships between both partnerships in respect of:
 - Engagement
 - Delivery
 - Monitoring

This should be presented to NIO, NIPB etc.

- Work should commence as soon as possible with the Policing Board to review the Code of Practice that governs the DPP administrative and delivery functions to make it more flexible at a local level.
- One point of contact should be identified within the Council on safer city and DPP/CSP issues and this should be communicated to Members.
- The feasibility of organising joint CSP / DPP meetings around a number of key issues should be considered further.

- A political paper on community and political engagement should be developed, including options for rationalising local community engagement models. This needs to be presented to the PSNI, NIBP, NIO , DSD etc.
- The Transition Committee should also be engaged in this debate the actions suggested could potentially begin the process of embryonic community planning
- A 'one council' approach to community engagement should be piloted in advance of the introduction of community planning under RPA in 2011.

Longer term

- It was agreed that in the longer term the merging of the CSP and DPP into a new Partnership was both necessary and desirable and the point was made that the changes needed to include funding arrangements, accountability processes, effective governance arrangements and the development of a strategic and integrated plan.
- A lobby should be built for legislative reform at Ministerial level in conjunction with the Policing Board and NIO regarding a review of legislation necessary to facilitate a merging of the two partnerships in a way which protects the valuable elements of both as described above.
- The introduction of community planning should be used as an opportunity to rationalise community engagement models, infrastructure and methods, recognising that to engage the right people (e.g. Chief Executives of key agencies) the agenda has to widen out beyond safety.
- There is a need to work towards reducing duplication at a community level and to identify if community engagement methods are involving the 'right people' within the statutory sector' (i.e. the decision makers).

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