

The Chair
Belfast City Council
Community Planning Partnership

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Our ref: DO1-15-7828

18 November 2020

I am writing regarding the statutory requirements for the review of community plans. As you will know these are set out in Part 10 of the Local Government (NI) Act NI 2014¹, explicitly in Sections 69 and 70. In accordance with Section 69 (1) a review must be completed before the fourth anniversary of the date on which the community plan was published. The publication date for the eleven community plans varied from late March to November 2017, so the review of plans will be due for completion by the relevant fourth anniversary date during 2021.

Current events and the disruption to normal working arrangements have understandably created a difficulty for partnerships to meet these requirements in the manner initially envisaged. The link between community plans and the Programme for Government (although not statutory) also creates practical difficulty since community plans will naturally wish to reflect any substantial change to the PfG Outcomes which may be decided by the Executive.

The periodic review of community plans, which by their nature are long term, is key to ensuring they deliver desired outcomes. We recognise that the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how much partnership working over the last period has been aided by the community planning process. The Minister believes that the collective leadership of central and local government alongside grass roots community organisations, working together, has never been more important. In this context it is clear that community plans and the structures and relationships which have evolved from the process are important and should be sustained.

All partnerships either have or are currently considering changes to the plans that are needed in light the COVID-19 pandemic, The Department considers that it will be sufficient to meet legislative requirements for Partnerships to formally confirm that a review of the community plan has been conducted and that Partners agree the plan continues to meet (or will meet in an amended form) the needs of the local community In addition I would recommend that Partnerships should consider formally committing to carrying out a further review before April 2022, since reviews can occur at any time before the next legislative review date, i.e. before 2025. This secondary review would facilitate the timetabling around PfG.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/8/part/10>

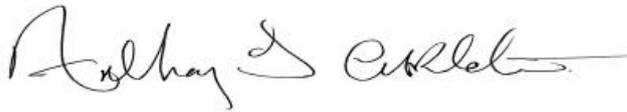
Appendix I – DfC Letter dated November 2020

I would also reassure Partnerships that the review of the community plan does not need to follow any specific format, indeed it is likely that current work of partnerships in relation to actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, will inform a very large element of any review.

The Department will continue to liaise with officials from The Executive Office as they plan and take forward the new Programme for Government (PfG) and will ensure that community plans remain part of that process, recognising the contribution to delivering PfG Outcomes.

I am aware that several Partnerships have met remotely and continue to work together over recent months and I do hope that all Partnerships will be able to progress with this important work over the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Carleton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony Carleton

Director Local Government & Housing Regulation