

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN MR POOTS, CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRE AND JUNIOR MINISTERS HAUGHEY AND NESBITT ON 18 JUNE 2001

Present:

OFMDFM

Mr Denis Haughey	Junior Minister
Mr Dermot Nesbitt	Junior Minister
Mr Geoff Beattie	Assembly Liaison Officer
Mr Stephen Cowan	PS/Mr Haughey
Mr Mark Goodfellow	PS/Mr Nesbitt

COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRE

Mr Edwin Poots	Chairperson
Mr Oliver Gibson	Deputy Chairperson
Mr Hugh Farren	Committee Clerk
Ms Stella McArdle	Committee Clerk

Children's Commissioner

1. Mr Poots updated the Ministers on the Committee Inquiry Report. This is due to be debated in the Assembly on 26 June. Embargoed copies will be sent to OFMDFM in advance. Progress on the OFMDFM consultation document and the implications of the Private Members Bill were discussed.

Single Equality Bill Consultation

2. Mr Poots updated the Ministers on the Committee's handling of this consultation document and the OFMDFM timetable for the Bill was discussed.

Budget Proposals 2002-03

3. It was noted that the First and Deputy First Ministers had been invited to come to discuss the budget proposals with the Committee on 20 June. This is now likely to take place on 27 June. Mr Poots expressed concern that the Committee will not have an opportunity to input to OFMDFM proposals until after these have been considered by the Executive and announced in the Executive Position Report. This made it difficult for the Committee to fulfil its statutory role to advise and assist with the formulation of policy.

Forward Work Programme

4. The large number of consultation documents due for issue over the summer period was noted. Mr Poots said that the Committee may have to prioritise these. The Junior Ministers indicated they would be happy to accommodate the Committee if there were any difficulties in meeting deadlines.
5. Mr Poots alerted the Ministers to the Committee's plans to visit Washington and Boston in September and highlighted some of the issues it plans to look at. These include e-Government, Modernising Government, Victims, and the review of the role and remit of the NI Bureau.
6. The Committee's plans to undertake a specific exercise in relation to a European issue in the autumn were also discussed. The Junior Ministers gave an update on the progress with the EC office in Brussels and the plans for an official opening.
7. The visit by the Belgian Ambassador to the Assembly and his planned meetings with the Junior Ministers and the Committee were discussed.
8. The Review of Public Administration was discussed and Mr Gibson expressed concern about the lack of progress. The Ministers emphasised the importance of getting it right and it was agreed that the Committee needed to be involved from the outset.
9. The position on the consultation on a Strategy for Victims was discussed and Mr Poots and Mr Gibson expressed concerns about delays in getting funding to victims. The need to monitor the disbursement of funds by the IFB was also highlighted. The Junior Ministers indicated that the consultation document would be issued fairly soon.

Date of next Meeting

10. It was agreed that the next meeting should take place in October.

Hugh Farren
Committee Clerk