

Race Study file

18 JUN 2002

## The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

---

### *Equality Unit*

Room E3.19, Castle Building, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3SR

Tel 028 9052 3422 Fax 028 9052 3323

karen.davidson@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

---

FROM: Michael Harkin

DATE: 18 June 2002

TO: Members of PSI Working Group on Minority Ethnic People

### **PSI WORKING GROUP ON MINORITY ETHNIC PEOPLE – MINUTES OF MEETING ON 1 DECEMBER 2000**

I attach the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2000 of the above  
PSI Working Group.

*pp K. Davidson*

**MICHAEL HARKIN**



**PSI WORKING GROUP ON THE POSITION OF  
MINORITY ETHNIC PEOPLE**

**MEETING AT 1500 HRS ON FRIDAY 1 DECEMBER 2000**

**MINUTES**

**Those Present:**

Mr Tony Canavan	Chairperson
Mr Adrian Arburthnott	DHFETE
Ms Collette Connor	DARD
Ms Nadette Foley	MCRC
Ms Joan Harbison	Equality Commission
Mr John Johnston	DSD
Mr Frank Kane	DSD
Mr Colm McCaughley	NIHE
Ms Mary Potter	DE
Ms Maggie Smith	Equality Unit
Ms Barbara Swann	DETI
Mr Michael Sweeney	DHSSPS
Ms Anna Manwah Watson	Chinese Welfare Association
Mr Patrick Yu	NICEM
Ms Ruth Osborne	Equality Unit (Secretary)

**Apologies:**

Mr Peter Barbour	DRD
Ms Margaret Langhammer	DOE
Ms Sunil Sharma	Indian Community Centre
Mr Seamus Tierney	DCAL
Ms Ruth Thompson	PANI
Mr Gary White	Community Relations Branch



Mr Canavan opened by commenting that it had been quite a long time since the last meeting of the Working Group. He explained OFMDFM had taken forward work during this period on the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and draft Budget, which included important issues of interest to minority ethnic groups. These were now published, albeit in draft form, and can be discussed as substantive items under the following agenda items.

**Item 1: Minutes of 5 July Meeting**

- 1.1 The minutes of the last meeting on 5 July 2000 were agreed, without amendment.

**Item 2: Matters Arising**

- 1.1 Mr Canavan reported that Ministers recently agreed to publish for consultation the Report of the PSI Working Group on Travellers. A consultation exercise would commence very shortly and was likely to span at least four months. He commented that the process of the consultation would be innovative and proactive in ensuring the views of the Traveller community were received and taken fully into account.
- 1.2 Ms Smith explained the handling of the consultation exercise. It would essentially be two-pronged: - the WG Traveller Report would be given wide circulation under cover of an introduction signed by Ministers, which would highlight that the recommendations of the Report were those of the Working Group, and not of Ministers. In addition, at an early stage of the process the Equality Unit would be working in close partnership with Travellers' organisations on how best to present the information to Travellers at grassroots level, to ensure their views were received. Mr Canavan added that as part of the latter process, a meeting was soon to be arranged with Traveller organisations, and Group Members, in particular those of NICEM and MCRC, were most welcome to participate at this meeting. **(Action: Ms Smith)**

**Item 3: Programme for Government**

- 1.1 Mr Canavan explained that the consultation period for the Programme for Government was shorter than usual because of the disruption to the process during the suspension of devolution and the need for the Executive Committee to reach decisions on the draft Budget for the next financial year by mid-December. Nonetheless, Working Group Members still had an opportunity to submit views on any aspect of the Programme which did not involve budgetary allocations for 2001/2 by 15 January next year. Copies of the Draft PfG were available round the table. He pointed



out that the draft PfG spelt out clear equality and human rights commitments including a new race equality policy.

- 1.2 Mr Canavan commented that the draft policy framework set out in the Working Group's Report would form an important basis for the race equality policy. He also reported that the draft Budget included £300K in 2001/2 to fund ethnic minority voluntary organisations. (See Item 4 below)
- 1.3 Mr Canavan also highlighted other issues contained in the draft PfG Report which would be of interest to the Group, as follows:-
  - reference to a Single Equality Bill, which has a target date of April 2001 for commencement of a full consultation on the scope of the Bill;
  - measures to address the educational needs of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Travellers; and
  - developing a policy on linguistic diversity, to include the languages of minority ethnic groups, as well as Irish, Irish Scots and sign languages.
- 1.4 Mr Yu commented that NICEM were in close liaison with the relevant Departments on defining the minority ethnic languages to be taken into consideration.
- 1.5 Mr Canavan further reported that following Assembly decisions on the PfG, Departments would draw up Public Service Agreements spelling out their objectives set against key targets and expenditure, based on the Government's programme priorities for service delivery to the public.

**Item 4: Funding for Voluntary Organisations**

- 1.1 Mr Canavan cautioned that the £300K funding for minority ethnic voluntary was in the draft Budget – which would be debated by the Assembly later in December. If approved the fund would begin in April 2001. The proposed fund comprised £250K for core funding for regional voluntary organisations (it was anticipated that approximately 5 organisations would benefit), and £50K for innovative projects
- 1.2 The New TSN Unit was drafting funding criteria, application forms, information about the decision-making process and other documentation with a view to consultation early in the New Year so that voluntary organisations would submit proposals by April. Ms Smith noted that much of the information would cover the aims of the funding, issues relating to accountability and other points which had to be included. It would be important in any consultation to make clear what was set and what could



be changed as a result of consultation. An important element would be making sure that the information provided was clear and unambiguous.

1.3 Ms Smith suggested that, due to the tight timescale, this information could be presented to voluntary organisations at a seminar in mid-January with a further meeting in early February to take final views. Mr Yu and Ms Watson emphasised the importance of ensuring that consultation was inclusive and agreed to advise the Equality Unit on consultation arrangements.

1.4 Group Members raised the following:

- Concern about the timescale of implementation and the fact that projects currently receiving EU funding were likely to end in March 2001 – Mr Canavan indicated that about £2m “gap” funding had been made available during the Summer. It had been announced on November 20 that DSD, DHFETE and DHSSPS had been given an additional £3.6m to extend gap funding until the end of the financial year.
- the possibility of the main umbrella minority ethnic groups meeting to discuss allocations – however it was concluded that this could be divisive
- £50K for innovative projects might not be sufficient to cover needs;
- would the Equality Unit would make decisions on applications, and a suggestion that a Committee be set up
- the possibility of organisations applying in partnership for funding
- whether there would be a maximum allocation for any one voluntary organisation.

1.5 The New TSN Unit would consider the final 3 points in finalising the draft information for consultation.

#### **Item 5: Way Forward – Policy and Strategy**

1.1 Mr Canavan reported that the two Junior OFMDFM Ministers recently endorsed an outline of the Working Group's draft document dated June 16 including aims, principles and structural arrangements. The next step for the Group would be to further develop a final draft policy and strategy document. This would need to be agreed cross-departmentally and submitted to Ministers and the Executive Committee.

1.2 Mr Canavan indicated that this final draft Report would then need the endorsement of the Executive Committee before publication for public



consultation, as the Group's remit included making cross-departmental recommendations. Mr Canavan explained that the devolved procedures were more complicated than those under Direct Rule, and Ministers were taking a greater interest in the detail and procedures of all areas falling within their responsibility. Departmental Committee also had an interest.

- 1.3 There was then some discussion on the approach of further working up the strategy of the draft WG Report. Ms Harbison queried the necessity for all Ministers to clear its content before publication; and Ms Anna Manwah Watson and Ms Nadette Foley suggested that the draft Report's aims and objectives should perhaps be specific, to facilitate discussion during the consultation exercise. However, it was concluded that the current approach of the WG Report setting the framework for policy and strategy was appropriate. Mr Canavan commented that it was prudent to involve Departments in drawing up the Report as the Working Group would want to ensure that inter-Departmental recommendations were practical ones which were deliverable.
- 1.4 Ms Smith suggested that the Equality Unit would write to all the relevant Departments inviting them to flesh out the outline policy and strategy areas contained in the Working Group's current draft outline Report. It was agreed that revised drafts of the Report would be circulated to Group Members at each stage of substantive revision for comments.  
**(Action: Ms Smith)**
- 1.5 Mr Canavan suggested that the Working Group invite a broader range of minority ethnic groups to a meeting to invite a wider range of views, ahead of submitting the draft Report to Ministers. Ms Harbison considered this an excellent idea; and Ms Foley and Ms Anna Manwah Watson suggested that perhaps there could be meetings specific to particular ethnic groups. Mr Yu indicated it was important to be transparent, and separate group meetings could arouse suspicion. Mr Canavan agreed with the latter point, but recognised the language difficulties in conducting a meeting.
- 1.6 Group Members concluded that a meeting should be held. Members could also discuss what was proposed separately with minority ethnic groups to sound out views. It was noted that the Chinese community would not be available during a two-week period round the Chinese New Year, which was on 24 January 2001. **(Action: Ms Smith)**
- 1.7 It was agreed that the next Working Group meeting would aim to be in a position to agree its final draft Report. Mr Canavan highlighted that thereafter Ministerial approval would need to be sought on the draft Report and on the consultation process.



**Item 6:      Legislation Up-date**

- 6.1 **Single Equality Bill:** Mr Canavan reported that the Bill will bring together existing NI anti-discrimination law, and take account of recent developments in Europe on discrimination in relation to race, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation, and in GB on race. The aim was that the Equality Unit would initiate consultation in April 2001 inviting views on what the Bill should embrace. The consultation would be a lengthy one, spanning over the Summer, and the outcome would be the introduction in the Assembly of a Bill in 2002. It was recognised that these target dates were challenging ones.
- 6.2 **Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam:** It was recognised that necessary amendments to bring existing NI race relations law into line with the new EC Race Directive would be relatively modest.
- 6.3 **Amendments to Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997:** Mr Canavan inquired about the Equality Commission's recommendations, which could impact on the way forward on the Single Equality Bill. Ms Harbison reported that the Equality Commission has indicated that it would want to press ahead with the work scanned by the Commission for Racial Equality for NI and is liaising closely with the CRE in GB on developments there.
- 6.4 Mr Yu expressed concern that the statutory provision for taking on board recommendations to the Order would be the Single Equality Bill, as this was likely to substantially delay their implementation. Mr Canavan responded that ultimately the decision was that of Ministers, but should amendments to the Race Relations (Amendment) Order be done separately, this would disrupt the timetable for the Single Equality Bill, scheduled to be enacted in 2002.
- 6.5 **GB Race Relations (Amendment) Bill:** Mr Canavan reported that the Bill had gone through all the parliamentary procedures and would receive Royal Assent very shortly. It was noted that if equivalent provisions were likely to be incorporated in the Single Equality Bill.
- 1.6 **Human Rights Act 1998:** Mr Canavan reported that the Human Rights Act requires from 2 October 2000 that all UK legislation should be ECHR compliant; and that redress will now be through the mechanism of the domestic courts

**Item 7:      Current Related Research**

- 1.1 Mr Canavan reported on the following research:



- **Ethnic Minority Groups in the Northern Ireland Education System:**  
**Experiences and Expectations:** Mr Canavan indicated that this research would assess the educational experiences and needs at school level of minority ethnic groups in NI, and is being carried out Professor Seamus Dunn and Professor Valerie Morgan, who are to report by June 2001.
  - **Identifying Barriers to Accessing Essential Services:** Mr Canavan indicated that this work would assess the experiences of socially excluded groups with respect to access to information and essential services, and would identify suggestions for improvements. Professor Seamus Dunn is carrying out this research, and is to report by end March 2001.
- 1.2 There was then some discussion on the methodology of commissioning and conducting research. Ms Potter indicated that DE were not aware of the existence of the above research on education, and Ms Anna Manwah Watson expressed concern that it may overlap with that conducted by Dr Paul Connolly, pointing out that ethnic minority groups were involved in the latter research at the outset. Members stressed the importance of involving ethnic minority groups at the very early stages, so as to avoid gaps and assist in identifying key issues. **(Action: Mrs Smith)**

**Item 8: Any Other Business**

- 1.1 It was agreed that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held at 10.00hrs on Friday 2 February 2001.