

P 5 JUN 2002 1

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Equality Unit
Room E3.25, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3SR
Tel: 028 9052 3148 Fax: 028 9052 8300
gerry.mulligan@ofmdfmni.gov.uk

25/6/02
Mr Walker
Mr Martin
Mr G. H. H.

10/6
Mr Walker
For P/Apl

FROM: Gerry Mulligan (Dr)

cc: See below

DATE: 31 May 2002

TO: PS/Mr Leslie
PS/Mr Haughey

Beverley
To file please.
20/6/02

WEST BELFAST AND GREATER SHANKILL TASKFORCES' REPORT – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Summary

Issue: Ministerial clearance of OFMDFM input to
Government Response to Taskforces' Report.

Timescale: Urgent – to be cleared by Thursday 6 June in
advance of Sir Reg Empey writing to First and
Deputy First Ministers seeking approval to include
the paper outlining the Government Response, on
the Executive's agenda.

Recommendation: Ministers are asked to agree the response to the recommendation given in Annex 3 and to note the content of the paper which Sir Reg Empey will be providing to First and Deputy First Ministers, seeking approval to include on the Executive's agenda.

BACKGROUND

1. In May 2001 Sir Reg Empey and Morrice Morrow announced the creation of the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Taskforces whose job it was to bring forward recommendations aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty in the West Belfast area. Padraic White the former Chief Executive of the IDA and John Simpson chaired the West Belfast and Shankill Taskforces respectively.
2. The Groups brought forward their recommendations in a single report which was published in February 2002. (A summary of the report's key findings is enclosed as Annex 2).
3. An Inter-departmental Group led by DETI, was subsequently established to provide and publish a co-ordinated response from Government Departments to the recommendations. This is now available as a draft report (See Annex 1) and departmental representatives have been asked to clear relevant sections with their Ministers prior to circulation through Executive Written Procedure.

4. The text of the draft Government response recognises that actions resulting from recommendations will be consistent with New TSN objectives given the high level of multiple disadvantage in the West Belfast and Shankill areas. Also many of those benefiting from actions listed in the response are also covered by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland 1998 Act. Departmental actions will need to be consistent with their statutory duty under the Act. Again, the text of the draft response deals with this requirement explicitly.
5. The recommendation relevant to this department is given in Annex 3 along with a suggested OFMDFM response.

RECOMMENDATION

6. Ministers are asked to agree the response to the recommendation given in Annex 3 and to note the content of the paper which Sir Reg Empey will be providing to First and Deputy First Ministers, seeking approval to include on the Executive's agenda.

Gerry Mulligan

GERRY MULLIGAN
HEAD OF EQUALITY AND SOCIAL NEED DIVISION
X 23418

*cc: PS/First Minister
PS/Deputy First Minister
PS/Mr Loughran
PS/Mr Haire
Mr Gray
Mrs Bunting
Mr Grimason
Mr Rooney
Mrs Devlin
Mrs McAuley
Mr Stewart
Mr May
Mrs Flanagan
Mr McKervill
Mr Shannon
Dr Smith
Mr Barrington
Mr Campbell
Mr Logue
Mr McAteer
Mr McNarry
Mr Neale
Mr Cullen
Mr Larmour
Mrs Cosgrove
Mr Henderson
Miss Rogers*

FROM: SIR REG EMPEY

Minister of Enterprise Trade and Investment

DATE:

TO: Executive

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE WEST BELFAST TASK FORCE REPORT

Introduction

1. This Paper provides an outline of Government's initial response to the recommendations contained in the West Belfast Task Forces' Report presented on 4 March by the Task Force Chairmen to the two sponsoring Ministers Nigel Dodds and myself, accompanied by Carmel Hanna. We propose, on behalf of the Executive to meet a public commitment to respond to the recommendations by June. This paper, containing responses which will continue to be developed through the Inter-Departmental Group, will form the basis of that response which would be delivered on 28 June 2002.

Background

2. The continuing high level of unemployment and social deprivation in West Belfast, relative to other areas of the City, has been a matter of considerable social and economic concern. In May 2001, Maurice Morrow, the then Minister for Social Development and I established two Task Forces to examine the economic and social problems impacting on West Belfast and bring forward recommendations to reverse the problems faced by the area.
3. Padriac White, former Chief Executive of the IDA accepted an invitation to chair the West Belfast Task Force and John Simpson, Economic Commentator agreed to chair the Task Force relating to the Shankill and Woodvale areas. Maurice and I worked with the Chairmen to agree membership including representatives from business, education, training and the community sector. Both Task Forces were supported by local representatives and received technical support from DETI, DSD and DEL officials in conjunction with Belfast City Council and the Planning Service.

Aims

4. The Task Forces were asked to identify measures to reverse socio-economic disadvantage and alienation in West Belfast and bring forward recommendations in the form of a Report to Government for suggested policy action under the Executive's Programme for Government. They had to reflect on a range of issues and offer recommendations to impact positively on unemployment and poverty, to include how the communities could share in the opportunities created in the wider Belfast area. While West Belfast has been subjected to many studies, recent demographic changes, particularly in the Shankill, required a review of the socio-economic data to provide a current context and help define the scale of the problems faced by both areas.

Approach

5. While the Chairmen's approach to the process differed to reflect the responses from each area, they worked to identify and offer recommendations common to both and to encourage dialogue with a wide range of local groups and interests. They also kept in close touch with, and contributed to, the work of the Executive's Employability Task Force, chaired by Mrs Hanna, whose remit extended across Northern Ireland.

Targeting Social Need

6. The area targeted by the Task Forces includes some of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. The recommendations and suggested actions resulting from this process will complement the work currently underway by Departments and Agencies to meet commitments initially detailed in Government's New TSN Action Plan Report, Making-It-Work, and updated in Departmental Action Plans covering the period 2001-2003.

Issues

7. The Task Forces worked in parallel on the issues impacting in each area and identified many recommendations common to both. These include problems faced by individuals trying to access jobs, harnessing the opportunities created by the cultural and social economy sectors, the need for additional physical regeneration, a reinvigorated enterprise programme, appropriate industrial accommodation, and an improved convergence of the education and training needs of individuals and requirements of employers. There was a shared desire that the implementation process should be transparent and involve the community and business working in a meaningful partnership with Government to achieve targets for reducing unemployment.
8. The key differences were reflected in the strong cultural and social economy in West Belfast that cements community cohesion, a factor absent in the Shankill/Woodvale area. The scale of physical dereliction, paramilitary feuding and associated activities, which have severely affected morale and confidence, compounds problems in the latter community. To address these issues a broad based Community Convention has been organised by the Shankill communities.

Coordination

9. While much of the technical support to the Task Forces involved DETI, DSD and DEL the recommendations extended more widely and impacted on most Departments. It was also recognised that given the Inter-Departmental nature of this exercise the Executive should agree to the response before it was made public.
10. In order to ensure a coordinated response, Departments established an Inter-Departmental Group led by DETI, reflecting the economic focus of the initiative. Additionally, it was important to ensure maximum convergence between the Northern Ireland wide focus of the Executive's Employability Task Force and the recommendations presented by Padraic White and John Simpson.
11. The expectations of the communities in West Belfast and the Greater Shankill remain very high for a coordinated response from Government if the recommendations are to be actioned in a way to make a significant difference to the disadvantage faced by both communities. They are looking to Government to help support a number of coordinating bodies to work with Departments in a meaningful partnership to ensure that agreed actions to recommendations are implemented within defined timeframes.

Response to Key Recommendations

- 12 Annex A indicates Departmental responsibilities for, and actions against, the recommendations contained in the Task Forces Summary Report. A number of recommendations and suggested actions are particularly important in terms of community expectations to help drive the implementation of the Report. These include:
 - Establishment of an Oversight Body (page 1, Annex A) to liaise with the Inter-Departmental Group and report on Government's action to deliver on the recommendations (being considered by DSD, DETI and DEL);
 - Removal of the Benefits Trap to encourage people to seek work (page 1, Annex A);
 - Establishment of an Employment Services Board (page 3, Annex A);
 - Regeneration of the ex-Mackies site (underway, page 4, Annex A);
 - An invigorated enterprise campaign (exploratory discussions underway with stakeholders, page 6, Annex A);
 - An Employers Forum (being formed-private sector lead, page 8, Annex A)

13. Departments represented on the Inter-Departmental group recognise the important contribution from both Task Forces to identify key issues and present imaginative solutions to problems. While much has been achieved in West Belfast and the Greater Shankill, Departments appreciate that more can be done and understand the need for an ongoing coordinated response to many issues which are interrelated. They have agreed to work with the proposed Oversight Body and other key local groups in taking forward the Report's recommendations.
14. While most of the recommendations focus mainly on economic issues, DHSS&PS recognises the importance of its activities (Annex B) to support the work of other Departments. Many of the Task Forces' objectives complement those in the Investing for Health Report published by DHSS&PS in March 2002.

Statutory Equality Duty

15. A number of Section 75 Groups representing (dependants, age and gender) were involved in the work of Task Forces. Actions to tackle the recommendations will have a beneficial impact on those most disadvantaged in West Belfast, including many covered by the Section 75 groups. Departments who change or introduce new policies or activities in response to recommendations will need to consider an EIA at that stage.

Relations, Cooperation or Common Action on a North/South or East/West Basis

16. There are no implications for North/South or East/West relationships although it is worth emphasising that the recommendation relating to marketing West Belfast and the Greater Shankill areas will have a beneficial impact on the image of Northern Ireland as a location for new inward investment and tourism promotion.

Relationship with the Programme for Government (PfG)

17. Most Government Departments will have an important contribution to make towards the achievement of the Report's recommendations. Departments have contributed to the papers through the Inter-Departmental Group to look at a coordinated Government response. They have confirmed responsibilities for their actions to meet recommendations and identified consistency with ongoing activities in terms of strategy/policy development and existing PfG commitments.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB's)

18. These proposals will not involve the establishment of any NDPB's.

Political Implications

19. The Task Forces' process has brought together individuals from various communities in West Belfast and the Greater Shankill representing a range of political opinions to agree on a common way forward to tackle problems (many generic) across the area. Actions against some of the recommendations will continue to promote good community relations, particularly the development of the ex-Mackie site located in an interface area and, cooperation on the Oversight Body likely to include representatives from both areas to work with Government on the implementation of the recommendations.

Human Rights

20. Actions in respect of recommendations which counter any perceived "chill factor" for individuals wishing to work outside their area and to ensure employment opportunities are equitably spread across all communities by the proposed infrastructure development, location of industrial sites and suggested action to prepare people for work, will support the objectives underpinning human rights.

EU Implications

21. No implications have been identified.

Financial Implications and Regulatory Impact Assessment

22. The communities will look for additional funding in a number of key areas to reflect Governments commitment to achieve the step-change in the problems faced by the area. Examples of what has been sought by the Task Forces area:

- Five years funding for the Employment Service Centres and Outreach Centres.
- A flexible fund for customised training to meet personal development needs of the unemployed.
- Three-year funding for the social economy and intermediate labour markets.
- Support for cultural enterprises and promotional bodies.
- Support for the Oversight Commission.
- Unemployed retaining benefit for a short time after taking up employment.

- 23 Funding is in place for some activities underway to meet a number of the recommendations (development arc) while others will require a re-engineering of resources (enterprise development, cultural and social economy) rather than significant new expenditure. Some like the Employment Service and Outreach Centres will require additional expenditure and recommendations to tackle 'benefit trap' issues are likely to prove difficult to implement. While it is too early to detail additional resources required to meet the recommendations, any new initiatives arising from this Paper would be subject to the usual procedures for securing resources. None of the recommendations are likely to result in extra costs to business, therefore a Regulatory impact Assessment is not required.

Recommendation

24. I recommend that Nigel Dodds, Carmel Hanna and myself present the Executive's collective response, to the audience who attended the Report's publication, on 28 June, along the lines developed in the following annexes, with particular reference to those listed as major priorities. It is not intended to publish this material in this detail but to produce a summarised and more easily read document, reflecting the attached responses. Given the tight time timescale this publication is still being developed but will be cleared with Departments before it is finalised.

Sir Reg Empey

SUMMARY OF THE WEST BELFAST AND GREATER SHANKILL TASK FORCES' REPORT

Background

1. Sir Reg Empey, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Maurice Morrow the then Minister for Social Development announced the creation of the Task Forces on 2 May 2001. Padriac White, former Chief Executive of the IDA accepted the Minister's invitation to chair the West Belfast Task Force and John Simpson, Economic Commentator to chair the area covering Shankill and Woodvale.

Aims

2. The aims of the Task Force work was to bring forward recommendations aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty in West Belfast which continues to experience high levels of unemployment at over 14% in contrast to the unemployment levels in Belfast at around 5%. The constituency also experiences other aspects of disadvantage related to and contributing to the economic problems.
3. The Task Forces were asked to identify measures to reverse socio-economic disadvantage and alienation in West Belfast and bring forward recommendations to Government for suggested policy action under the Executive's Programme for Government, across a range of issues that will impact positively on unemployment and poverty to include how the communities could share in the opportunities created in the wider Belfast area.

Approach

6. While the Chairmen's approach to the process differed to reflect the responses from each area, they worked to identify and offer recommendations common to both and to encourage dialogue with a wide range of local groups and interests. Additionally, through officials who represented DEL on the Task Forces they kept in close touch with the work of the Employability Task Force and met with Ian Walters to discuss areas of commonality. In October 2001 Dr Farren the then Minister for Employment & Learning met together with the DETI and DSD Ministers and the Task Force Chairmen to discuss work to that date.

Key Issues and Recommendations

7. Many of the issues raised in the Report are similar to both areas in terms of problems faced by individuals trying to access jobs, the need for additional physical regeneration, and an improved convergence of the education and training needs of individuals and requirements of employers. It is also recognised that the unemployment figures in the area are likely to be higher than those registered on the Claimant Count, although it is difficult to gauge how many of these are actively seeking work.
8. The key differences in both areas are reflected in the strong cultural and social economy in West Belfast that cements community cohesion, a factor absent in the Shankill/Woodvale area. The scale of physical dereliction in the area, paramilitary feuding and associated activities, which have severely affected morale and confidence, compounds problems in the latter community. To address these issues the Shankill communities are in the process of establishing a broad based Community Convention and help them relate the Task Force recommendations to the narrower questions of employment and living standards.

Creating Jobs

Issue

7. A perception that West Belfast suffers an image problem which acts as a barrier to new investment or local people gaining employment. There are low levels of entrepreneurial activity compounded by the "benefit trap" which acts to discourage people actively seeking work. Local companies identified a lack of expansion space in the range of 2,000-10,000 sq ft and rates for sites and property restricted to small business growth.

Task Force Recommendations

- Belfast must brand itself to attract new/commercial development.
- The area should be designated as a Enterprise/Action Zone with ring-fenced resources to tackle infrastructure requirements.
- Attractive sites of different sizes for inward investment, business start-up and larger company expansion.
- Former Mackies' site and the proposed adjacent Springvale Educational Village development should form the core of a West Belfast development arc linking sites from Twinbrook to Glenbank (Upper Crumlin Road).
- A re-invigorated Enterprise Awareness Campaign to encourage more business start-up.

Infrastructure Development

Issue

8. Concern was expressed on the lack of a co-ordinated planning framework for West Belfast, relevant to the medium term demands and linked to infrastructural investments that are underway or planned. Action is required now on a planning policy for the area in advance of the implementation of BMAP in 2005. There is recognition of competing demands for limited development space throughout the area.
- Sites for industrial, commercial, retail development should be identified within the proposed development arc.
 - A local area planning policy is required for arterial roads, urban retailing and dereliction faced by the area.

- An active urban regeneration policy to sustain and modernise retailing.

Getting People Into Work

Issue

9. A key concern is that specific unemployability needs of individuals across a number of unemployed categories (disabled, ex-prisoners, travellers etc) are not being met. The effects of the "benefits trap" is considered a major disincentive to encourage unemployed to consider employment or self-employment. The inability of large local employers with unfilled vacancies brings these issues into sharp focus.

Task Force Recommendations

- The creation of a community based West Belfast Employment Service (Job Assist) similar to the GEMS initiative in South Belfast, which will encourage people to be better prepared for work.
- This body would seek the co-operation of employers in the placement of suitable people with appropriate skills.
- The creation of a Employers Forum comprising companies from West Belfast and the wider Belfast area.
- That Government address any significant under-representation of one community in large local employers by offering enhanced training or reviewing equality legislation, to assist employers recruit more local employees.
- The Equality Commission should work closely with the proposed West Belfast Employment Service to provide Equality Guidelines to employers.

Education and Training Provision

10. There are concerns that the local training and employment response is inflexible to service the needs of companies and individuals within the West Belfast area. There are particular concerns that the training to be offered by the Springvale Educational Village will not be relevant or accessible to both communities and strong doubts, linked to perceived "chill factor", that BIFHE's new Millfield College will not serve the wider needs of the Shankill. The continued delay in developing the Springvale Educational Village reinforces pessimism that local people will be disadvantaged to compete for jobs resulting from any new investments attracted to the area.

Task Force Recommendations

- A clear role and timetable for the Springvale Campus needs to be agreed taking account of the educational needs of the area and the economic re-generation priorities.
- Encourage additional linkages between the world of business and school.
- Young people now in school emerge with a better education and orientation which enhances their chances of getting jobs and avoids them entering a lifestyle of unemployment.
- There is a need for a co-operative partnership between the institutions which guide the education and training of young people including, primary and secondary schools, recognised training organisations and Belfast Institute of Higher and Further Education.

The Task Forces recognise that many of these issues are picked up and reflected in the recently published Burns Report which makes recommendations for the possible reform of education structures.

Intermediate Labour Market Initiatives

11. A community based approach to employment generation or to assist people move into employment, is reflected in the recommendations from both areas, to support the social economy. In West Belfast this has a particular relevance to the expanding cultural/craft sector while in the Shankill/Woodvale area the use of targeted social actions with an environmental and community focus to generate confidence within the area, is deemed important. The key issues are identifying the most effective actions sustainable over a significant period, an organisation to effectively co-ordinate provision and, payment systems and proposed schemes containing incentives for people to move off benefits.

Management and Co-ordination of the Implementation Phase

Issue

12. Now that the reporting phase of the process has been completed, communities will be keen to ensure that the momentum of the work to date is maintained throughout the implementation phase. Additionally, there is a strong expectation for a co-ordinated approach by government to the recommendations, if the report is to make a meaningful impact on the issues faced by the area.

Task Force Recommendations

- An Oversight Commission comprising community representatives from both Task Forces be established to monitor, twice yearly over a 5-year period, implementation of recommendations.
- The Ministers would publish the reports produced by the Commission within 6 weeks of receipt.
- The Task Force are seeking urgent action for the establishment of a inter-departmental group with representatives from the departments who will be implementing the recommendations.
- A senior official appointed to co-ordinate the work of this inter-departmental group and to liaise with the Oversight Commission.

Funding

13. Some of the recommendations in the report are currently being actioned while others are likely to require a re-engineering of funding rather than significant new expenditure. The Task Force consider that additional funding will be required, from the public and private sectors, to achieve the step-change in the prospects for the unemployed. These include:

- Five years funding for the Employment Service Centres and Outreach Centres.
- A flexible fund for customised training to meet personal development needs of the unemployed.
- Three-year funding for the social economy in intermediate labour markets.
- Support for cultural enterprises.
- Support for the Oversight Commission.

ANNEX 3

RESPONSE TO WEST BELFAST TASKFORCES' RECOMMENDATION ON THE NEED TO REVIEW EQUALITY LEGISLATION

RECOMMENDATION

Government should review equality legislation and consider measures by which employers who experience a significant under representation of one religious community can, on a voluntary basis, achieve at least 50% recruitment of the under-represented community.

RESPONSE

Existing Fair Employment legislation permits the use of affirmative action measures to secure fair participation in employment. In addition OFMDFM are committed to bringing forward a single Equality Bill which will harmonise, as far as practicable, anti-discrimination law and extend it to new areas such as sexual orientation and age. We will review the existing legislation and take into account developments in Europe, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

12/01/02/52

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL GROUP

<u>TAB</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>DATE</u>
1	West Belfast Inter-Departmental Group – Sub 292 E-mail from M Bunting to P McAuley This is closely aligned to the Employability Task Force, which I liaised primarily with Maggie and Stephen Donnelly	18/04/02
2	Report and Recommendations of the West Belfast Greater Shankill Taskforces Minute from G Mulligan to E Collins The recommendations were aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty in West Belfast	08/05/02
3	West Belfast Task Force Recommendation [] Proposed Response We are committed to bringing forward a single Equality Bill which will harmonise, as far as practicable, anti-discrimination law and extend it to new areas such as sexual orientation and age	N/A
4	West Belfast and Greater Shankill Taskforces' Report – Government Response Minute from G Mulligan to PS/Mr Leslie and Mr Haughey Recommendation is that Ministers are asked to agree the response to the recommendation given in Annex 3 and to note the content of the paper, which Sir Reg Empey will be providing to First and Deputy first Ministers, seeking approval to include on the Executive's agenda	31/05/02
5	Sub 784 – West Belfast and Greater Shankill Taskforces' Report – Gov Response E-mail from L Fowler to G Mulligan Please see the attached Sub 784 tracked changes and 784 Draft Executive Paper	06/06/02
6	CR (02) 60 – Executive's Response to West Belfast Task Forces' Report E-mail from Execomm Secretariat to G Mulligan Please see attached CR (02) – Commissioning Letter CR(02) – Memo to OFMDFM CR (02) 60 – Executive paper	07/06/02

7	Response to West Belfast Task Forces E-Mail	03/12/02
---	---	----------

8	Government's response to the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Taskforces Report E-Mail	10/12/02
---	---	----------