

DRAFT

MEETING OF JOINT GOVERNMENT / VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR FORUM ON MAY 2008 AT LOUGHRY COLLEGE, COOKSTOWN

JOINT CHAIRS' COMMUNIQUE

Compact

There was a general recognition that there is a gap in terms of the NI Executive's thinking on the voluntary and community sector, and consensus that we should seek Executive endorsement of an updated version of the Compact, the high-level agreement formalising the Government's relationship with the sector, as soon as possible.

Impact of Departmental efficiency savings and budgetary constraints

Voluntary and community sector panel members highlighted specific examples of departmental efficiency savings being passed directly on to some voluntary and community organisations in the form of cuts in funding.

Further examples of efficiency savings being made within departments further illustrated the tightened framework within which the public sector is now expected to operate. It was suggested that a more strategic approach to managing budgets is required and that Minister must be made aware of the likely damage.

Positive Steps

The Forum acknowledged that there is a clear difference of opinion between Government's and the sector's view of progress in the implementation of Positive Steps, the Government response to the Task Force on Resourcing the Voluntary and Community Sector.

It was agreed that there is a need to close the gap between promise and delivery. Members used the breakout session to identify the key issues affecting the relationship between Government and the sector for consideration by the Minister for Social Development.

Dormant Accounts

A representative from the Department of Finance and Personnel provided an update on the Dormant Bank and Building Society Account Scheme. Initial estimates of resources that will be available are between £10 and £20 million in the initial tranche with much smaller amounts in subsequent years. The current draft legislation provides a general definition of "social or environmental purposes" on which the assets may be spent. A pre-consultation process with key stakeholders will take place in the summer, followed by formal consultation in the autumn. Funding is likely to be available by 2010 and will be for purposes additional to mainstream government spending.

Joint Forum sub-groups

Training

The training sub-group met in early May and identified a set of training proposals for the next year.

Funding

It was agreed that a sub-group should examine and report on current and future funding environments. The first meeting will take place in July.

Dates of future meetings

The next meeting of the Joint Forum will take place in October (date and venue to be confirmed). Further information on the Joint Forum can be found at:

<http://www.communityni.org/index.cfm/section/article/page/Joint%20Forum>