



Northern Ireland
Assembly

**Committee for the Office of the First
Minister and deputy First Minister**

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Social Investment Fund

14 March 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr William Humphrey
Mr George Robinson
Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Mr Ricky Irwin	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
Mr Henry Johnston	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

The Chairperson: We have Henry Johnston and Ricky Irwin from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). You are very welcome, gentlemen. I ask you to brief us on the responses and then leave yourselves available for questions.

Mr Henry Johnston (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I will kick off. Thanks for the opportunity to brief members on the report. We have prepared this following an analysis of the responses received during the social investment fund (SIF) consultation. First, I apologise for the delay in providing the report and thank you for rescheduling our session to accommodate that.

I will keep this short, as most of the information that I will cover is outlined in more detail in the report, which I hope you have now had an opportunity to read. You will be aware that the Ministers launched the consultation on the fund on 27 September 2011 and that it ended on 23 December last year. During that time, we held six public events in Belfast, Antrim, Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen, Craigavon and Newry. Approximately 250 people attended those events, which were advertised in local media and on the OFMDFM website. To further raise awareness of the events and to encourage attendance, we also produced flyers that were distributed to health centres, libraries, jobs and benefit offices and other key service providers. Similarly, the information was sent to our extensive stakeholder list and through member organisations such as NICVA. We were pleased with the number of people who attended the events and the large number of formal responses that were received. In total, 328 were submitted, and 235 were made on the consultation questionnaire, either directly via the online survey link or in hard copy, while the remaining 93 responded via alternative written submissions. As detailed

in the report, we also engaged with children and young people directly, and worked with 22 children aged between four and 18 to hear their views in four smaller events.

The majority of respondents welcomed the fund, and there was general agreement on the concept, the proposed aim and the strategic objectives. Respondents were also receptive to the area-based planning approach and the intention to include a technical assistance stage in the roll-out of the fund. The majority of respondents preferred the community option of delivery, which would see resources allocated directly to one or more organisations nominated by the steering group, which would, in turn, deploy the projects included in the strategic area plan. The key issues about which there was more debate included the geographic spread of the social investment zones and the establishment of the steering groups. A recurring concern from respondents was that the zones were too wide, particularly the border zone, and that many areas with needs were excluded from the proposed zones, such as mid-Ulster and Downpatrick.

The proposal emerging from the consultation responses was that the zones should be reviewed to cover all areas from the start and that consideration should be given to alignment with the 11-council model under the review of public administration (RPA), with targeted intervention within those broad areas based on objective need. In considering the formation of steering groups, the preferred option that emerged was for OFMDFM to invite groups and individuals to indicate interest in serving on the steering groups. However, the response rate to the selected option was particularly low, with a high number of additional comments around that issue. The additional comments focused on the need for a fair and transparent process, an opportunity for less-established groups to engage and the use of existing structures to avoid duplication and additional unnecessary layers.

As you will appreciate, the consultation has outlined a number of very important issues, which Ministers will, of course, want to consider in depth before taking any final proposals to the Executive on the operation of the SIF. We are now looking at how we might progress to the next stage, paying particular consideration to the zones, the steering group membership and the basis on which communities and steering groups might identify need in the zone. We hope to be in a position to finalise proposals shortly and bring those to the Executive. Although we appreciate that it has taken longer than expected to get to this point, we also recognise the very real need to get things right and to get things moving, with delivery on the ground, if the SIF is to make a difference. We are happy to take questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. Did any of the responses include much detail on the issue of dereliction?

Mr Ricky Irwin (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): It is fair to say that most of the responses were more based on the geography of the zones, the steering group formation and alignment with existing plans and structures, so there were fewer responses around dereliction.

Mr Johnston: The four themes of building pathways to employment, addressing dereliction, tackling the systemic issues around deprivation and addressing the lack of community facilities were broadly welcomed. There was not much in the way of specific responses around dereliction, and defining objective need around dereliction is one of the more challenging areas. Some of the sources of information are not as up to date as we would like.

Mr R Irwin: All of the strategic objectives were welcomed in the consultation, and one of those is to address dereliction.

The Chairperson: That is fine, once money is being put in. Resources would be welcomed, but the issue around the meaning and definition of dereliction has caused me some concern, because there is no real defined idea of what that means and would cover. How wide or narrow is it? I would like to have seen that narrowed or at least focused on slightly more, particularly when such a large slice of the funding will be going in that direction.

Mr Johnston: As I said, we are working up proposals for decisions by Ministers, and one of the key areas on which we will need to get agreement so that we can clearly inform those steering groups is what we mean by objective need around each of the themes, particularly dereliction. We will need to

get agreement on what the information sources will be and what information we will expect people to gather locally on dereliction. Particularly on dereliction, some of the readily available information sources are not as up to date as we would like. Some of the available stats go back to 2006, and a lot could change in an area between 2006 and 2012. We are working on guidelines on where those steering groups can get information and validate the responses they get from local communities that say that they have a major problem with dereliction, so that they know what that means exactly and what the best practice is for addressing that.

The Chairperson: What is the timescale? You said that you are looking forward to progressing.

Mr Johnston: We are waiting for decisions by Ministers on three key issues. The first is the response on the zones. We went to public consultation on eight investment zones, including the large border zone. We need a decision from Ministers on how they intend to progress, whether they want to retain that number or move to a different number. We need to agree the exact composition of the steering groups. We have said that the steering groups will have representatives of the four sectors on them. There will be statutory, community and voluntary, political, and private sector representation on the groups. We will put proposals to Ministers as to how those members would be brought on to the groups. The final area is the definition of objective need within the wider zone. Again, we have put options to Ministers as to how that could be done using existing information sources and other programmes, and potential new sources of information that could be used in relation to particular aspects of need.

The Chairperson: Are you concerned about the overall slowness of the process?

Mr Johnston: We have a challenge moving ahead. A significant budget has been allocated to the programme for 2012-13. We are now in March and we have not started the process of creating the steering groups, so officials have concerns about our ability to deliver tangible progress on the ground in 2012-13, which is something that we and the Ministers are very keen to do.

Mr R Irwin: We are particularly aware of the challenge in relation to the lead-in times for capital projects.

The Chairperson: It has been a year since the fund was established, but not a penny has gone on the ground yet. Is it still not possible to give us any definitive timescales? Clearly, you are not working as efficiently as the team who are looking at the consultation on the Programme of Government, who found it possible to bring forward a new Programme for Government only a couple of weeks after the close of consultations — I welcome that. Even though this consultation has been closed since December, we have no definitive timescale for moving forward.

Mr R Irwin: We have progressed our plans to the point where, if we get decisions on the critical issues that Henry has outlined, we will be able to hit the ground fairly quickly. It is a question of getting the decision that we need. It would be difficult to sign up to a definitive timescale at this stage.

Mr Johnston: There are things that we have done in the interim. The consultation responses that we received took a fair amount of analysis to articulate and bring together, and that has been done. We have also beefed up and enhanced the SIF delivery team in OFMDFM and we have done a fair amount of work on project planning. We have established a new project board to take the work forward, and we are in the process of doing a gateway review of the plans and prescriptions that we have for the various products to be delivered on the ground and our plans for delivery. As Ricky said, there are three major decisions on which we need Ministers to come to a settled view before we can progress with mainstream delivery.

The Chairperson: OK. How and by whom will the appointments be made to the steering groups?

Mr Johnston: That is one of the issues on which we have put options to Ministers. We await their thoughts on it. We have looked at a range of options across each of the four sectors. Whatever method is agreed by Ministers for arriving at membership, the membership will be quite small. We will also need to ensure that there are effective mechanisms to allow feedback between whoever is on that steering group and the wider constituency that they represent. That is going to be very important

politically and in relation to the community and voluntary sector. We hope that, when it comes to business interests, we may be able to build on existing representative organisations, which we have done in other places relatively successfully.

The Chairperson: What options have you put forward for appointments to the steering groups?

Mr R Irwin: We have a couple of options for the size of the steering groups, looking at models from other area-based initiatives. We have a couple of options for how political representation can be finalised, and we have a couple of options for the voluntary and community sector. Those options are being considered.

The Chairperson: That sounds very vague, Ricky, if you do not mind me saying.

Mr R Irwin: As there are four different sectors, we have to have a number of different options for how representation will be achieved. Politically, there are options such as using the d'Hondt system and looking at the level of political representation across a particular zone. The problem that we have is that we need to understand the geography of the zones and get a decision on that, which will feed in to how the steering groups are formed.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you for your presentation. Henry, you mentioned that you were pleased with the number of people who attended the events; how many was that?

Mr R Irwin: Two hundred and forty seven.

Mr Humphrey: Is that the total attendance at all the events?

Mr R Irwin: Yes.

Mr Humphrey: How many meetings did you have?

Mr R Irwin: Six. There were an additional 22 children and young people in attendance through dedicated board events.

Mr Humphrey: What mechanism or route did you use to engage with the young people?

Mr R Irwin: We organised four specialist events using four stakeholder groups.

Mr Humphrey: Who were they?

Mr R Irwin: I need to check that, because I do not have the names of the groups with me. We used stakeholders that we engaged with through children and young people policy areas. Those stakeholders organised for the children to come. There was an age range of four to 18, and there were four different locations. I can get the details of that.

The Chairperson: William, page five lists the following groups: YouthAction; Rainbow Project; Zero-8-Teen; PlayBoard; and Just for Kids after-school club.

Mr Humphrey: Why is no consideration ever given by government to contacting the state youth organisations about these things?

Mr R Irwin: We did talk to the education and library boards.

Mr Humphrey: I am talking about organisations such as the Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, the Scout Association, Girlguiding and that sort of thing.

Mr R Irwin: We received requests to talk to a number of different groups that approached us directly.

Mr Humphrey: I declare membership of the Scout Association. The reason I raised that is that there are thousands of kids in Northern Ireland involved in those organisations and no one ever talks to

them. Yet groups that have a fraction of their membership are consulted. I have no difficulty with you consulting those groups, but there are organisations providing programmes week-in, week-out for tens of thousands of kids here, and nobody talks to them. That is a bugbear of mine, and it is something you should bear in mind for the future.

Mr Johnston: I am aware of the need to consult and engage more usefully, because those organisations are also the largest source of volunteering.

Mr Humphrey: They cater for an age range of four to 25, so I ask you to remember that in the future.

You mentioned community organisations. In a divided constituency such as mine, North Belfast, it is going to be very difficult, if not impossible, for you to get a community organisation that will work for the entirety of the zone. Is that right?

Mr Johnston: Yes.

Mr Humphrey: How would you deal with a situation like that?

Mr Johnston: In those areas, there are a number of community representatives who will sit on the respective boards. Those people will have to agree to be broadly representative of the area from which they come.

Mr Humphrey: In that case, Henry, you will not use a community organisation, which is what you said earlier. Instead, you will use representatives.

Mr R Irwin: There are a number of existing structures, particularly in North Belfast. There are partnerships in place that have community organisation membership. So, if we use those members, they are acting on behalf of their community organisation.

Mr Johnston: I know we keep going back to this point, but, depending on the geography of the zone, there may be existing structures that we can leverage and build on, as opposed to putting in new structures ourselves.

Mr Humphrey: I have a couple more short questions. On page 10 in your overview of responses, you refer to the "West Belfast & Greater Shankill Taskforce". The task force no longer exists. Why are you using that term? I sat on it, and it is no longer there. I suggest that you revisit that, because it is not accurate.

Mr Johnston: In relation to Belfast, there are a number of alternative models of how the zones in Belfast could be —

Mr Humphrey: The task force is well out of date, Henry, and your smile suggests that you know that.

My final question relates to the steering groups. You talk about statutory, community and voluntary, private and political. It is absolutely vital that the community has confidence in this process and in those groups and the people who will be sitting round the table. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Department to ensure that the representatives who sit around those tables are both reflective and representative of that community, otherwise the whole process will be left wide open to criticism. Do you agree?

Mr Johnston: In relation to the political representation?

Mr Humphrey: No. What I am saying relates to statutory representation. Having somebody coming in who has no feel whatsoever for the community, the area or the zone group that they will sit on would be pointless. The same would apply to someone from the community and voluntary sector who does not understand the area. It would be very helpful if the people we draw in from the private sector had a grounding in or were from that community, although I know that that is difficult. They would understand and could empathise with that community. We do not want people being sent in as "men from the Ministry".

Mr Johnston: You are right to flag up the challenges, and they are different across each of the four sectors. As regards the political, there are a number of options, and Ricky has outlined some of the suggestions we have put forward. As regards community and voluntary representation, there are two key concerns. First, they need to be clearly seen as representative of that area. Secondly, we are not going to have 100 people from the community and voluntary sector. Therefore, we need to ensure that whatever we put in place has a mechanism that ensures that those who represent the community and voluntary sector are representing the wider sector, not just a particular interest —

Mr R Irwin: They must communicate with them and communicate information.

Mr Johnston: That is a big challenge for them. For the statutory representation, the key is in ensuring that the people who sit on the steering group are the right people at the right level, with the right connections to the area. As you say, perhaps the biggest challenge for us in many areas will be in identifying people from the business sector who want to step up to the plate, either because their current business involves them or because they have family ties or a background that means that they came from the area originally. That will be a challenge. There have been successful instances of people coming into a number of areas from the likes of Business in the Community, and they have done a really good job. It is doable, if difficult. Some business folk get incredibly frustrated when they go along to meetings and all the people do is argue over minutes, agenda items and things, and there does not seem to be much in the way of progress. Therefore, it will be a challenge for us to ensure that those steering groups are moving forward and doing so in a way that engages with all the people who are on them.

Mr Lyttle: Thank you for your update. In relation to the appointment of the steering groups, I felt that the options set out in the consultation paper were exceptionally vague, and I do not feel that any more clarity has been put forward. The one clear bit of feedback from the consultation seems to be that whatever mechanism is used it should be clear, open, transparent and inclusive. How are you going to ensure that the appointment process will be all those things?

Mr R Irwin: It comes back to the options that Ministers are considering. It is a massive challenge. There will be issues about trying to get representation. There are options around open calls and targeting particular groups. Initially, it is about agreeing the geography of the zones, so the process will then flow from that.

Mr Lyttle: Did the feedback agree with the geography of the zones that were proposed in the consultation? Did it suggest that they need to be changed? Are you reconsidering the zones?

Mr Johnston: There were two primary concerns about the zones. The first was that they did not cover all the areas of need. There was quite a lot of feedback from mid-Ulster, which asked why it was excluded entirely. There was other feedback from the likes of Downpatrick, which suggested that areas of need such as the Flying Horse area do not seem to be included, and feedback also came from parts of north Antrim, which also said that they do not seem to be in the zones.

The second concern was that the area of the long banana-shaped border zone was too large. The only thing that is shared there is the border, and it cuts across so many areas, be they council, trust or education and library board areas, that it would be very hard to come together to have any sort of coherent political or statutory representation. It would also be difficult to involve some of the networks of community and voluntary organisations, which tend to have a defined geography anyway. We reflected those concerns to Ministers through recommendations in a modified version of what was in the consultation paper and through a couple of other alternatives. It will be for them to decide on that.

Mr Lyttle: Will there be proposals for new zones?

Mr Johnston: We have given proposals to the Ministers for their consideration. Those reflect the concerns that were raised during the consultation.

Mr Lyttle: As it stands, the greater east Belfast, north Down and Ards zone takes in approximately four council areas, four education and library boards and three health and social care trusts. How will you

ensure appropriate engagement with existing layouts, infrastructure and area plans in an area of that size and with that number of bodies?

Mr R Irwin: We cannot avoid cutting across some councils. It is about how we can better align the zones with health and social care trusts and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. So, there are decisions that need to be made on that, and we have tried to provide advice that takes account of some of the alignment issues.

Mr Johnston: Particular concerns were raised that east Belfast would dominate that zone and that Bangor and Ards would not get a shout.

The other challenge arises because the SIF does not confine itself to urban areas; we are taking in a range of rural and urban areas. It is about trying to find structures and ways of working that will pick up the need in the rural areas, which can sometimes be masked in a wider area by the need in the larger urban areas. It will be a challenge to balance those area plans and to ensure that some investment goes into the rural areas. Less money in those areas may have a greater impact in a smaller area than if it were put into some of the large concentrations of deprivation in the likes of Belfast or Derry.

Mr Lyttle: The other overlap in that zone is that there are approximately three parliamentary wards. Can you go into any more detail about the proposed mechanisms for organising political appointments in a zone that has three parliamentary wards?

Mr R Irwin: We cannot.

Mr Johnston: We cannot, really. Where the political representation is concerned, I think that we are looking at —

Mr Lyttle: I should say that it has three constituencies.

Mr Johnston: Yes. We know that MLAs and councillors would like to be involved in those structures in a number of areas. We need to consider both.

Mr Lyttle: OK. Finally, some reference was made to the social investment fund in also promoting good relations. Is there any recognition of how promoting good relations through the fund can help to tackle inequalities, deprivation and dereliction?

Mr Johnston: The four themes of the fund include pathways to employment and the systemic issues of deprivation. There is a reasonable correlation between the most deprived areas and areas of separation, so there will be some recognition of that, but it is not the primary focus of the fund.

Mr R Irwin: It is not a good relations fund, but good relations by-products may result from some of the actions that are funded.

Mr Lyttle: So, does that mean that there is no explicit reference to that or to any specific outcome of that nature and that it is just a by-product?

The Chairperson: I notice that, on the area-based approach, paragraph 5.10 states that:

"The majority of respondents agreed with the approach but raised issue that many plans already exist through such initiatives as Neighbourhood Renewal, community based planning etc and that these should form the basis of the strategic area plans and so avoid the costly and time consuming exercise of developing new plans."

Is there further consideration of that?

Mr R Irwin: It is fair to say that that is probably the second strongest comment that came out of the consultation. It is something that we are mindful of when putting together final proposals about how the fund will operate. Existing structures and plans are in place. We are aware of them, and we have been looking at them. Where we can use those in some meaningful way, we will look to do so.

Mr Johnston: If you look across the place, neighbourhood renewal focuses on the worst 10% of deprived areas. Those would also be picked up by SIF. All the neighbourhood renewal areas will have recently finished reviews of their plans — or hopefully they will have done so by now. That will be something to build on. A number of council areas and council clusters have been working on community planning exercises, so there should also be something in that. The plan is that we will look to build on what is already there so that we do not have to start with a completely clean sheet. We have brought a representative from the Department for Social Development (DSD) on to the project structures that I alluded to, as well as a representative from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), to try to ensure that there is reasonable alignment between initiatives that will roll out under SIF. DARD and DSD are taking forward those initiatives, and DSD is in the process of reviewing what it is doing on neighbourhood renewal post-2014.

The Chairperson: I would be interested to know whether the zones were actually developed and what criteria were used to develop them.

Mr R Irwin: We can take that back with us. The zones' geography is certainly the strongest issue to be looked at now.

Mr Johnston: Are you going back to the question of where the zones in the consultation document came from?

The Chairperson: Yes.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh. Thanks, Chair. Tá fáilte romhaibh; you are welcome to our Committee. First, I pay tribute to the fact that you carried out a very wide-ranging consultation. Notwithstanding William's comments, I think that it is good that that has happened. It was also innovative. It was good that you included the young people, the section 75 categories, representatives from the Rainbow Project, women, etc. I just want to put that on record. Given the number of consultations that are going on, it is obvious that you went to a lot of effort. You considered six different interest areas, as well as the young people, and that needs to be recognised.

I like the focus that is on multiple deprivation, although I am concerned about areas such as Downpatrick, including Flying Horse and Ballymote, being left out. That is not just because it is in my constituency but because it is one of the targeting social need (TSN) areas in the Noble indices. I do not think that we should leave areas of TSN out. You mentioned objective need. I notice that, in your document, it is proposed that those are flexible, bringing in other, relevant, smaller areas if necessary, because it would defeat the purpose if we do not go by objective need.

I hope that, and I ask that, when you are setting up steering groups — William talked about the "men from the Ministry" — they are representative of both genders, and that means women and men, and people from our ethnic minority communities, because there are new communities here in the North. That representation is very important. I also want to see the broad section 75 categories represented. I know that it is impossible to get everything, but it is important to include section 75 categories such as youth at risk and issues that concern sexual orientation, which is an area that, in the past, has not got the support that it needed. I have another question to ask after this one, but I welcome confirmation that you will look at those broad categories and that you have stated their importance to the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Mr R Irwin: Yes, is the answer.

Ms Ruane: That is the answer that I expected, but I just wanted verify that.

The border area may be a big area, and I know that people have commented that it is a very big area. However, I do not think that we should repeat what we did in the past in a lot of education and library boards and health trusts. Through RPA, we now have a greater consistency of approach, because, in the past, there were problems for areas such as those covered by the South Eastern Education and Library Board or the Southern Education and Library Board or areas where there were borders. It is good that the zones are bigger, and it is good that they cut across all the health and education

providers. Otherwise, it all becomes far too parochial, and there is not the consistency of approach that is needed. However, that will have to be very carefully managed. So, I welcome this; it is a very important fund.

Mr Johnston: We have looked at brigading a number of those 11 council clusters together into bigger geographies, and one of the other geographies, which is extant, is the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, which covers quite a wide geography. We already have structures for linkages into community and voluntary organisations and that range of section 75 groups that you talked about. That is maybe another option, and it is for the Ministers to decide which they prefer. However, that is certainly one of the options that we have looked at and that we will mirror and piggyback on.

Mr R Irwin: There may be natural relationships in some areas.

Mr Johnston: The criticism of the board was that it cut across so many areas. Even if had been cut in two, people would have been happier. The mid-Ulster people are complaining that they were excluded, and in places such as Dungannon and up towards mid-Ulster and down towards Fermanagh, that area was possibly seen as a natural community.

Mr G Robinson: Thanks for the presentation. I have a couple of points to make. First, how do you plan to address the social investment fund gap in community cohesion, confidence and capacity between the unionist and the nationalist communities?

Mr Johnston: That will be a challenge. It is particularly clear in the number of urban areas where there is differential capacity.

Mr G Robinson: How do you plan to address that?

Mr Johnston: We will put a fair amount of effort into providing support to steering groups in those areas. We are including not only local community and voluntary representatives but political representation to try to enhance the capacity, particularly on the Protestant/unionist/loyalist (PUL) side.

The other challenge that we will have is in the rural areas, where there are problems of differential capacity on the PUL side and on the wider Catholic/nationalist/republican (CNR) side. A lot of the community infrastructure that is in place in some larger urban areas is not in those rural areas. So, they are starting from much further back or are starting with a very pocketised approach, where you have a good group in one area doing good work but not a lot happening in the surrounding area. That will be a challenge, and it will mean that, in a number of those areas in the early days, there will be a particular focus on building capacity, engaging and reaching out to communities for a range of events and structures that may not be required in other places, because the work is already being done.

Mr R Irwin: We are proposing a mechanism by way of a technical assistance fund in the early stages that will help to address some of those issues.

Mr G Robinson: I noticed that Derry — Londonderry to me — and the greater north-west will, potentially, comprise two zones. Which of the zones will Limavady fit in to?

Mr Johnston: I have to be evasive and say that that is to be determined. Given that the wider city has delivery structures around the One Plan, one of the options for the north-west is to maybe get something up and going relatively quickly. How then, do you build in the rest of the north-west? Do you look at Limavady as being part of that, or do you look at Limavady as being part of the area from Coleraine across to Moyle? That is one of the options on the geographical zones that we have presented to Ministers.

The Chairperson: What he is trying to say, George, is that Limavady might not get in anywhere.

Mr Johnston: There is objective need in Limavady, and, coming back to your point about Downpatrick, Ms Ruane, even if you were to stay with eight zones, you could link areas of objective need to their nearest zone. So, you could link Downpatrick to the border zone and link Limavady to the north-west or

Strabane. That is doable, and areas around Ballymoney and Coleraine could be linked to the Antrim zone. It is possible, and it is one of the options that we have presented to Ministers. We will await their decision on which of the various options they want to take forward. We will then take them forward and ensure that all the areas of objective need are targeted and addressed.

Mr G Robinson: I mentioned Limavady in particular, because that is where I come from, and I am very parochial. Having said that, it is recognised as being one of the most socially deprived areas in Northern Ireland, and the situation with suicide and self-harm is not too good at present, to be honest.

Mr R Irwin: Those are some of the systemic issues with deprivation that the fund is designed to tackle.

Mr G Robinson: Unemployment is another issue. Limavady is an area of high unemployment.

The Chairperson: I assume that all the money that was originally put into the fund is protected, irrespective of the year that it is spent. Or, if there were some money to be spent in 2010-11 or 2011-12 that has not been spent —

Mr Johnston: It was 2011-12. We spent very little in 2011-12. We spent a bit of money on the public consultation and on the gateway review.

The Chairperson: To clarify, how much was in the budget for 2011-12?

Mr R Irwin: Eight million pounds in resource was reprofiled, minus any costs this year into 2012-13.

Mr Johnston: Around £20,000 was spent. The guts of £8 million was rolled forward into 2012-13.

The Chairperson: Was that an internal decision that was made in the Department without the need to go back to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)?

Mr Johnston: No. It had to be agreed by DFP, and it has been agreed by DFP.

The Chairperson: So, it agreed to roll it on?

Mr Johnston: Yes, there is £28 million between capital and revenue in the budget for 2012-13.

The Chairperson: Sorry, did you say £28 million?

Mr R Irwin: It is £28 million for 2012-13: £10 million in capital and £18 million in resource.

The Chairperson: Do you feel that that will be spent in the timescale that we have?

Mr R Irwin: It is a challenge.

The Chairperson: It is a challenge.

Mr Johnston: The audience left at that point. They each have their own challenges. On the capital element, it would be very difficult for us to start off on projects from the basis of absolutely nothing. To be frank, we will be looking for projects that are already well down the road to potentially go forward in 2012-13. They will have designs and planning done and most of their funding package in place. They will be in the right areas and will be addressing the right issues, and they can be subject to community endorsement in time to get the money out the door.

The Chairperson: I hope that you are not suggesting, Henry, that you will almost go looking for projects that may be better established than others just so that the money can be spent on them.

Mr Johnston: No. The other thing that we will have to look at is balancing spend in the areas over the course of the programme, because, as Mr Robinson pointed out, there will be differential capacity in some of those areas. We know that some areas are sitting pretty much ready to rock and roll. They have plans, their structures more or less in place and community endorsement and political

endorsement. They are ready to go, so they will be going forward. There are other areas that we are going to have to work up, but, over the course of the programme, we will have to ensure that they are not disadvantaged just because they are coming late to the table.

Mr Lyttle: May I supplement that question? How did the Department select groups to inform and consult about the scheme prior to its launch and the public consultation that was run on it?

Mr R Irwin: A pre-consultation document was published on the OFMDFM website after the Executive announced the fund in March last year.

Mr Lyttle: So, the Department did not proactively identify groups to interact with?

Mr R Irwin: Some groups approached the Department directly, so there were some stakeholders that were engaged as part of that process. However, they were told that there would be a formal consultation later that year.

Mr Johnston: I think that a number of groups proactively got together in certain areas in anticipation of something coming out.

Mr Lyttle: How were they made aware of it?

Mr Johnston: As Ricky said —

Mr R Irwin: The Executive made the announcement, and then there was a pre-consultation document on the website.

The Chairperson: I would be concerned that the funding would be channelled towards certain sectors and in certain directions without others getting a fair opportunity. That is the point I am making.

OK, thank you very much, Henry and Ricky, for that update. We look forward to hearing about progress as soon as is reasonably possible.

Mr Johnston: We can give you slightly clearer answers at that stage.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much.