



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Social Investment Fund: OFMDFM Briefing

10 October 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Colum Eastwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Paul Givan
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr George Robinson

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 are joined by Mr Ricky Irwin and Mr Henry Johnston from the Department. I take it that you are leading, Henry?

Mr Henry Johnston (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): Yes, I am leading.

The Chairperson: What can you tell us about this morning's announcement?

Mr Johnston: We can tell you quite a lot about this morning's announcement. Do you want us to start off with the social investment fund (SIF) briefing or the signature projects?

Mr Lyttle: We should talk about the social investment fund first and then we can ask where it came from.

The Chairperson: We will talk about the social investment fund first. Are you going to make a presentation?

Mr Johnston: Yes, and you should also have received a letter from us earlier today with that timeline. I will be talking around that timeline.

Thank you for enabling us to reschedule; I apologise that we could not make it last week.

As advised, we have reached a key milestone and were fully occupied in supporting Ministers to finalise membership and establish steering groups that will allow us to move to the area planning

stage. We do, however, welcome this opportunity to bring members up to date on the social investment fund.

If you are content, I intend to provide members with a timeline for progress since the fund was announced, followed by our future plans for implementation. I will then be happy to take any questions that you may have and talk about the signature projects.

By way of background, I will provide an overview of progress to date. Members will be aware that, following discussions with the Budget review group in 2011, the Executive announced the setting up of the social investment fund, aimed at tackling poverty and deprivation in communities here. A total of £80 million was subsequently ring-fenced in the current Budget in order to deliver this fund.

On 22 March 2011, the Executive agreed a pre-discussion paper detailing the strategic context, objectives and main operating procedures of the fund. The announcement provided the necessary clearance for officials to enter the exploratory stage of policy development to ensure best use of the additional £80 million and that SIF would provide additionality and complementarity to resources already committed to reducing poverty and deprivation.

Work began on mapping the current policy landscape and identifying best practice and opportunities for SIF. There was also ongoing stakeholder engagement across various sectors. During this time, we began work on securing the necessary approvals.

On 16 September 2011, the strategic outline case, which was the first step in the approvals process, was approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). This outlined the overall programme objectives. In order to refine the objectives and ensure alignment with relevant stakeholders, it was essential to undertake meaningful consultation across the community, voluntary, statutory, private and political sectors.

On 27 September 2011, Ministers launched the formal consultation period. Six public events were arranged and delivered at venues in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Antrim, Enniskillen, Craigavon and Newry. These were supplemented by meetings with a number of key stakeholders, including other Departments and statutory bodies. An online questionnaire was also used. We talked about that process previously.

The primary aim of the consultation was to seek views on the policy proposals to inform final decisions on how SIF would be delivered. The engagement process was used to maximise the potential effectiveness of the spend by developing partnerships with all relevant stakeholders to scope existing or planned interventions applicable during the lifetime of the fund and identify how additional fiscal support from the social investment fund could be best targeted. The consultation period ended in December 2011.

There was significant engagement during the consultation, which received over 600 responses. Following an in-depth analysis, a number of key issues emerged in relation to the geography of the zones, the formation of the steering groups, the criteria for the fund and the process for area planning. The final consultation report was approved by Ministers in March this year, at which time the Committee had sight of it. It was subsequently published on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) website.

While Ministers were considering the consultation analysis, we started developing the necessary finance and governance arrangements to justify spend of this magnitude and provide assurance to the Executive, the Assembly and the public that SIF would provide value for money in public expenditure. A number of workstreams were then commenced.

We established and convened a programme board, which includes representatives from key Departments, such as the Department for Social Development (DSD) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), along with special advisers from OFMDFM. The purpose of the board is to support the successful delivery of the fund, and it continues to meet on a monthly basis.

In line with good governance practice for programmes of this scale, officials organised a gateway review of the programme, which took place in March. The purpose was to provide an assurance rating of the deliverability confidence of the programme, and to provide advice and guidance to Denis McMahon, the senior responsible officer for SIF. In line with gateway review practice, further reviews will occur prior to the allocation of funds under the strategic area plans. We also started work on an

evaluation framework for the fund to ensure that we can monitor progress from the outset and set clear targets and objectives for evaluation. I think that Stephen Donnelly mentioned that when he talked to the Committee.

We established a further project board to develop a comprehensive web presence, which will form the basis of an online transactional process for the fund and which we hope will streamline its operation. It will also provide transparency and accountability to the public on how and where the funds will be spent.

As this is an Executive fund, fundamental operating issues require Executive approval. In May 2012, final proposals for implementing the fund, informed by the consultation process, were brought to and agreed by the Executive. The three key elements the Executive agreed were the geography of the social investment zone; the process for establishing the steering groups; and the basis on which areas will be eligible for an intervention. That agreement enabled officials to immediately begin work on finalising the outline business case, which is the second stage in the approvals process before we can spend serious money.

Programmes of this scale and type require approval through the Department's internal finance subcommittee. Following consideration by the departmental economists, the outline business case was approved by the subcommittee on 2 August 2012 and passed to DFP for approval, in line with guidance on delegated limits. On 14 September, conditional DFP approval was granted.

In parallel with that further work, we invited community and voluntary nominations. Nominees had to demonstrate previous experience in programme management and community endorsement in their applications. It is important that the steering groups have the required skills and necessary technical and administrative support to be able to progress the identification of need and subsequent implementation of the social investment fund. We also held a number of public information sessions during June to outline the process for nominating steering group members. That publicised the steering group make-up of four voluntary or community representatives, four political representatives, four statutory representatives and two representatives from business.

A total of 80 nominations for the community and voluntary positions were received and considered by Ministers. In July, Ministers wrote to the political parties to request nominations for the political positions on each of the steering groups. Positions were identified on the basis of the proportions calculated by applying d'Hondt to 2011 council and Assembly election results. At the same time, we continued to develop relationships with all relevant stakeholders, and asked them to identify a contact point to feed into the identification of objective need during the area planning process. Those included other Departments, trusts, education and library boards, the Housing Executive and the PSNI. An extensive database of contacts has now been established. We also asked the council clusters in each zone to agree a council official for each steering group, which will be one of the four statutory nominations on each group. The remaining statutory nominations will be filled once the area planning process is complete, and will be dependent on the local issues that emerge from the zones. The remaining two business nominations will also be completed at that time.

We have also worked with DFP's Central Procurement Directorate in recent weeks to develop a framework for technical assistance support to steering groups during the area planning process. The publicly advertised tender process was carried out and a number of organisations have been identified to assist the groups to identify need, carry out engagement across the social investment zones and propose the appropriate interventions in the development of the area plans, supported by a full economic appraisal. Business case approvals are in place for that process, which will take up to four months to complete. That brings us up to where we are now. We are now moving into the implementation phase. Core steering group membership has now been confirmed, and is included with the paper that was provided earlier today. The area planning process can now begin in earnest. It will be kicked off with a two-day planning workshop on 17 and 18 October, at which all steering groups will be brought together. They will be introduced to their allocated consultants at that event, and it will also be an opportunity for us to outline plans for future implementation.

As I said earlier, it is anticipated that the area planning process will take four months to complete, with a view to having plans submitted to the Department by February 2013. Area plans will be accompanied by full economic appraisals for each proposed project, which will, in turn, be assessed against criteria. Evidence provided in the area plans will be reviewed and validated, and Ministers will consider and approve the area-based plans. To ensure that there is no duplication, plans will be considered by a funders reference group, comprising representatives from other key funders in the area of spatial deprivation and dereliction. That will also ensure additionality.

Following assessment and allocation, we will move into the mainstream delivery phase of SIF. Contracts will be awarded to lead partners on the steering groups, who will procure services to meet need, including services for more than one investment zone. Steering groups will be supported in mainstream delivery by dedicated project development officers in OFMDFM, who will work closely with all relevant stakeholders across the zones. They will also monitor delivery in the areas of performance, compliance and spend.

Expenditure to date has been incurred for the consultation, the gateway review and the information seminars. There will also be expenditure for technical assistance in this financial year. There may be some spend achieved on projects that meet the objectives of the fund this year. The Department continues to explore options for those.

Funding for SIF is held centrally by DFP as an Executive programme fund and must be drawn down in accordance with projected spend within yearly budgetary exercises. We are looking to reprofile SIF to ensure that we deliver the full £80 million of additional expenditure for the benefit of communities. The profile will seek to achieve the maximum possible spend over the next two years. Ministers are keen to achieve maximum impact with the fund and have preserved the integrity of the fund to date. Final spend projections for this year will be agreed by the Executive as part of October monitoring considerations in the coming weeks.

Finally, we are mindful of the need to achieve delivery on the ground in areas of need as quickly as possible. However, we emphasise that it was imperative for us to take the time required to ensure that the necessary structures and processes were fully thought out and put in place to safeguard the delivery of such a significant programme and ensure that it addressed objective, evidenced need. The necessary finance and governance arrangements are now in place to move forward, and to be commencing the area planning process is a significant milestone in delivery. We welcome the opportunity to update the Committee further and are happy to take questions.

The Chairperson: Henry, thank you very much indeed. I will ask you just one question at this stage. The fund began as an £80 million pot of money to be distributed over the four years of the comprehensive spending review (CSR) period. From what you have said, it is now going to be £80 million over two years. Is that correct? You said that you have:

"preserved the integrity of the fund".

That could be interpreted in two ways; that you have managed to ring-fence the £80 million or that you have not managed to spend anything yet.

Mr Johnston: What we are saying is that the £80 million will be spent on SIF. We are exploring a number of options in the Department as to when the £80 million will be spent. We are very keen to maximise spend on the ground over the last two years of the CSR period. We are looking at a number of options as to how we can maximise that spend.

Ms Fearon: Thank you for your presentation. My question is about the steering groups. I am glad to see that they have been established. Of the political representatives, a few names of councillors and MLAs that I know jump out at me, but there are a few who do not have an elected position. Can you tell us who they are? I am aware that you do not have to be an elected representative to be on a steering group, but who are Vicky Nelson, Sharon Skillen, Marion Quinn and Jim Wilson?

Mr Johnston: The nominations came from the political parties. As you say, some political parties put forward only MLAs and councillors and other parties put forward other nominees, including one MP.

Mr Ricky Irwin (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): Some included nominees who worked in the party.

Ms Fearon: So, they are all members of political parties?

Mr Johnston: They were all nominated by political parties.

Ms Fearon: Do you know which parties they were? No? You do not have that information now.

Mr R Irwin: No. We know which parties nominated the individuals.

Mr Johnston: We can let you know which parties nominated which people.

The Chairperson: What you would like, Megan, is a list of all the political nominees and the parties who nominated them.

Ms Fearon: That is fine.

The Chairperson: Is that a problem, Ricky?

Mr R Irwin: No, that is not a problem. The website has the same list; it details whether the nominees are political or community or statutory representatives.

The Chairperson: This would be a list of people nominated by named parties.

I refer you back to the letter to the Committee dated 17 May, Ricky. Did I misread it or was there an intention to have a maximum of two business reps per steering group? I do not see any.

Mr Johnston: Not yet. The idea is to get into the area planning process with the kick-off sessions. Then, as we move into it a little bit, we will agree who the final statutory and business representatives will be.

Mr R Irwin: We have identified a core of each of the steering groups. So, out of the 14, nine are there — the four political members, the four from the voluntary and community sectors and one from the statutory bodies, who is a council official from the representative councils. As Henry says, the remainder will be identified later in the planning stage.

The Chairperson: OK. The letter also talks about regional support teams. Does that include the likes of Copius and RSM McClure Watters?

Mr R Irwin: No. I think you are referring to the Executive paper. The regional support teams are structured within the Department to support delivery on the ground. That is how the officials will be structured.

The Chairperson: The learning advisory forum and the funders reference group are to come?

Mr R Irwin: They are to come early next calendar year. The learning advisory forum will draw on all the members of the steering groups and the funders reference group will represent some of the key funders in each deprivation area.

Mr Johnston: We will also link some of that across to other structures that we have set up under Delivering Social Change. There will be significant crossover on the learning side in particular between some of the issues that we want to address in the nine social investment zones and the things that we want to do under the wider Delivering Social Change banner.

Mr Eastwood: Thank you for your presentation. Can you confirm whether any money will be handed back from SIF as part of the October monitoring round?

Mr Johnston: We have not drawn down any money.

Mr Eastwood: A number of weeks ago, we had a report about the October monitoring round, and, inadvertently, there was £27 million in it from the social investment fund. It was withdrawn on the day, and we were told that it was an oversight. Have you made up that £27 million or have you spent it? What happened? On that day, the officials talked about a possible plan B for that money.

When asked about that spend in the House this week, the deputy First Minister said that we should all wait by our radios for a press announcement. There was a fairly significant press announcement this morning, which is for £26 million to be spent under Delivering Social Change, which is a very similar figure to the £27 million reported to this Committee. Is there any connection between the two?

Mr Lyttle: Say it with a straight face.

Mr Johnston: Obviously, there is some connection. Let us go through the two bits. As I said earlier, there is a commitment from Ministers that £80 million will be delivered for the social investment fund. As the First Minister said this morning around the announcement of the £26 million, that money is coming from central funds, which will be drawn down and allocated to Departments and, through the process of October monitoring, they will have to look at the allocations of those central funds. To date, OFMDFM has not drawn down any of those central funds for SIF.

Mr Eastwood: For the record, I am not knocking today's announcement. I am just saying that the figures are very similar. We have had very little spend so far from the £80 million that has been ring-fenced — that is your word — to be spent within four years of the announcement, of which we have two years left. Do we even have two years left?

Mr Johnston: It is two years and six months. Essentially, it is two years, because it will be the end of January before we get to the end of the area planning process and get into licensed spend.

Mr Eastwood: I am saying that because a number of groups out there are struggling with all sorts of financial difficulties and are looking, rightly or wrongly, to the social investment fund as some sort of saviour. They are wondering whether the money will ever be spent. Other officials who were here a number of weeks ago could not really tell us whether it was going to be spent within the four-year timetable. We have seen more money allocated today to different programmes. People need to be clear about whether that £80 million will be spent on the social investment fund?

Mr Johnston: I think that we can be absolutely clear that the £80 million will be spent on the social investment fund.

Mr Eastwood: There is no connection between today's announcement on delivering social change and the social investment fund.

Mr Johnston: There is a connection, but it is not that £26 million has been lopped off the social investment fund to find the money for today's announcement.

Mr Eastwood: What about the £27 million that was mentioned inadvertently to the Committee a number of weeks ago? Was that a complete mistake? Was it ever under discussion?

Mr Johnston: That was a mistake, because the money had never been drawn down from DFP. There had been earlier profiles in relation to projected spend at an earlier date.

The Chairperson: So, it was the Department's intention at one point to draw down £27 million for SIF in this financial year?

Mr Johnston: I do not know whether that was ever the Department's intention. I believe that DFP may have had profiles of that amount of money.

The Chairperson: So the Department will not be drawing down a significant amount of money for SIF in this financial year?

Mr Johnston: We will not be drawing down a significant amount of money this year.

The Chairperson: Just as you did not last year.

So what was £80 million over four years is now effectively £80 million over two years.

Mr Johnston: It may be. It is still under discussion in the Department. I can say two things. First, the £80 million for SIF is secure. Secondly, the timing of the spend is under discussion.

Mr Eastwood: That was the point that I was going to make. You said that the timing is under consideration. What is the consideration? Is it going to be spent within four years or is it not? You said that you are going to spend £80 million on the social investment fund, but will you do so over an extra four years, three years, two years — what is it?

Mr Johnston: A number of options are under discussion. We have not come to a definitive decision.

Mr Eastwood: It would be useful to know. This is not just for us. It is for the groups out there that are doing a lot of very good work. They are waiting on that money, but a lot of them are going to the wall. They are expecting this money to come down the line.

Mr R Irwin: I think that this is a great opportunity to say that the objective of the fund is obviously to meet the need on the ground. It is a community-led initiative, but the objective is not to keep the doors of community groups open. It is about meeting the need on the ground.

Mr Eastwood: Yes, but the initiative was trumpeted as a great saviour for the community sector. That perception is out there, regardless of whether it was intended. The bottom line is that you have not yet spent any of this on the ground. However this is done, let us hope that it is done right. Have you any indication of when the first penny will be spent on the ground?

Mr R Irwin: As Henry said, the area planning process commences next week with a two-day workshop. We will have organisations supporting those steering groups to identify the need. A lot of work has already been done on the plans. We need to see how SIF will add value. There is a four-month planning process to go through, and then there will be a process of assessment. So, as I think Henry said in the presentation at the start, there may be some spend on the area plans before the end of this financial year.

Mr Johnston: It will be limited.

Mr Eastwood: Finally, will you confirm that the £80 million is secure but that the timetable does not exist any more?

Mr Johnston: The timetable is under discussion.

The Chairperson: Is there any profile at the moment, even in draft form?

Mr Johnston: No. A number of variants are under discussion in the Department. Until decisions are made, we cannot go further on that.

Mr Lyttle: Ricky and Henry, thank you for your presentation, although it has not told me a whole lot new, other than some idea of the timescales. Like others, I welcome the announcement on the social investment fund, given the serious issues that it has to deal with, such as unemployment, deprivation and dereliction. To be honest, if those issues were not so serious, the way in which this has been handled up to now would be akin to some sort of dark political satire that the Department seems to be making up as it goes along. It is pretty frightening.

In respect of implementation, which is what everybody wants to see us move to, it has taken approximately 20 months for the Department to agree governance, geographical areas and steering groups. Yet, it now wants the steering groups to deliver area plans for two years at least, with full economic appraisal to green book standards, and full community engagement strategies in about three and a half months. Do you think that that is reasonable?

The Chairperson: Chris, I am sorry but, technically, do you need to declare an interest?

Mr Lyttle: I am sorry, I declare an interest as a member of the east Belfast steering group. I think that it is still OK for me as a Committee member to ask that question.

Mr Johnston: It is a challenging timeline. Since the Executive agreed the way forward following the extension of the public consultation in May, we got the outline business case approved relatively quickly and got agreement on the membership of the steering groups. So, it took from May to September to get that sorted. It is a challenging timeline. The longer we spend on that process, the longer it will be before money gets out on the ground. In many areas, a tremendous amount of work has already been done. It has really been about corralling that work, brigading it together, presenting it and agreeing priorities. We are not looking for a huge number. What we are hoping for out of this

process is a limited number of strategic interventions in each of the nine zones, where we can put in some serious money and create some real tangible change.

Mr R Irwin: On the back of that, I just want to say that four months is very tight, but we were very clear in the specification for this piece of work that whoever was going to support the steering groups had to go through a clear set of steps, including how they would engage in the zone with the wider voluntary and community sector, with the statutory sector and with section 75 groups, and how they would draw up a short-term plan and a wider longer-term delivery plan. We will be supporting those organisations in that process. So we have provided a lot of information to ensure that the four-month deadline is met.

Mr Lyttle: If this mystery work has already been done on the ground in the background, on which I have no information, and firms have been appointed to deliver the will of the Department, what exactly are the members of the steering group for?

Mr R Irwin: The members of the steering group have a number of key roles, including taking ownership of the area plans. They will also have to work closely with the organisations that will be supporting them to ensure that they are content with the engagement process they have put in place and that they have consulted with groups in local areas where they know there is need in line with the criteria for the fund. The steering groups will, of course, have a key role during the mainstream delivery process to ensure that targets are met and that performance and spend are on track. The steering groups are also the conduit for the Department. That will be how we ensure delivery of the fund as well.

Mr Johnston: We also expect that most steering group members will have previously engaged in similar exercises in their area and will be aware of work in east Belfast on spatial plans, neighbourhood renewal plans and investing for health plans. So a fair amount of work has already been done against the four objectives of SIF. There are gaps, and we know that there are areas where information is a bit poor. One of the things the steering group will also have to oversee is the garnering of that information.

That will be a particular challenge for some rural areas, where some information is not available at a sufficiently local level to be able to discriminate between a problem that is really bad in one village or small town but not in another because it is masked by the fact that the ward or area covers such a diverse community, particularly in rural areas.

Mr Lyttle: I asked those questions with the aim of contributing constructively to getting the money to its best use on the ground. Obviously, that is what everybody is interested in. Is there a website, such as socialinvestmentfund.org.uk, that people seeking to understand the criteria for application to the fund in more detail could refer to?

Mr R Irwin: I am not aware of that website. I am aware of our website through the NI Direct website, which is the approved government portal. So, if people want to go onto there and put in SIF or social investment fund —

Mr Lyttle: OK. There would appear to be a socialinvestmentfund.org.uk website. You may want to have a look at it in case it is not official or accurate.

Ms McGahan: I want to ask about council representation the southern social area. I am assuming that it covers Armagh. Does council representation include all the councils in that cluster area?

Mr Johnston: Maybe I should have covered the geography of the thing. In the nine investment zones, the one plan area up in the north-west is for Derry/Londonderry because we thought that a huge amount of work was already being done up there. In Belfast, it is essentially the four constituencies with some changes. North includes the southern bit of Rathcoole. West includes the Shankill, because of the links with the west Belfast task force. The Colin area is brigaded with the south-east zone, because there has been a lot of work there under the auspices of Lisburn City Council between the Old Warren Estate and Colin. The other four zones are more or less the health and social trust areas, which are coterminous with the children and young people's strategic partnership operation.

Ms McGahan: With regard to council representation, will all councils have a place on that?

Mr Johnston: No.

Ms McGahan: No?

Mr Johnston: No.

Mr R Irwin: The southern zone is an alignment of the boundaries of the five councils represented there. We asked them to agree who would represent the five councils in the southern zone. The nomination of Liam Flanagan came forward. I think he is from Banbridge Council. They will then put a process in place to share information as we go through delivery.

Mr Johnston: That was the same elsewhere. Councils came to agreements on how they worked behind that. Some people are meeting off-line with council representatives. Others are rotating.

Ms McGahan: So, it is just simply for the purpose of sharing information.

Mr R Irwin: It will also be to identify need. We identified a separate set of contacts for each council, who will assist during the four-month area planning process to feed in their knowledge and experience in relation to need on the ground.

Ms McGahan: Will you have that engagement with, for example, Dungannon, which would know the needs of its area?

Mr R Irwin: Yes.

Ms McGahan: The gentleman from Banbridge would not know that.

Mr R Irwin: That is covered during the four-month process. We have a complete database of contacts, including for all 26 councils and other statutory organisations.

Ms McGahan: So, all the councils have bought into identifying a contact?

Mr R Irwin: Yes.

Mr Johnston: Some of them have yet to finally agree who the shared representative will be.

Mr R Irwin: No, we have them all.

Mr Johnston: Have you got the last one?

Mr R Irwin: Yes, we have got them all. We now have the last one.

Mr G Robinson: Thanks to Henry and Ricky for their presentation. My question concerns the steering groups. Have you set them up, or who was responsible for names, and so forth? I am not being parochial or anything, but from Limavady's point of view, we have some of the highest deprivation wards in Northern Ireland. I am not sure whether Limavady is in the western or the northern zone.

Mr R Irwin: It is in the western zone.

Mr G Robinson: From that point of view, there is no one from the voluntary, community or political sectors representing Limavady in that cluster. Why is that?

Mr R Irwin: The voluntary and community sector nominees were selected through an open and public invitation process. We passed all the nominations to Ministers for decisions. As Henry said at the start, we applied the d'Hondt process to the 2011 council and Assembly election results to determine the four political nominees for each zone. In order to determine the single council nominee, we consulted with the councils in each of those zones and asked them to agree representation.

The key point, as I said earlier, is that all councils and all areas will be involved in the development of the area plans during the four-month process. We have contacts for the Limavady area as part of that process.

Mr Johnston: The other challenge will be in the wider voluntary and community sector. We have four representatives, but you could have 400 representatives from some of these areas. One of our key challenges is to ensure that the four who are there will be part of an effective process for communicating across the wider sector in that quite large zone.

Mr G Robinson: I am surprised that there is nobody from the voluntary or political sectors. I do not see any names from Limavady, apart from Liam Flanagan, the chief executive of Limavady Borough Council, who was mentioned earlier as being nominated to the southern social investment zone steering group. I wonder how that all comes about. Limavady has some of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, and I thought that there would be some sort of representation from the political and voluntary sectors.

Mr R Irwin: There will be representation for the purposes of identifying need and monitoring how the plans are delivered. The organisations have been asked to come up with an engagement plan across the zone, not just for the organisations on the steering groups but for the entire zone.

Mr G Robinson: Still, it would be nice to have representation by people who know the area and its needs.

Mr Givan: Mine is a logistical question. Who will service each of the steering groups? The nominees will co-ordinate from their backgrounds and bring all that to the table, but who will pull it all together and produce the report for each of the areas?

Mr R Irwin: We have identified nine providers, who will support each of the steering groups in identifying need and putting plans together. The Department will provide the initial administrative support, arranging meetings, taking minutes and making sure that information is circulated. When we move into mainstream delivery, we will expect one or two lead partners in each of the steering groups to step up and act as administrative, managerial and financial co-ordinators. We will still be there to ensure that that happens.

Mr Givan: So, at some point, the lead partners will take over once they have identified the need and how they are going to deliver on that need. Then you talked about the service providers. Who will be given the authority to decide on the best way to meet the need in a particular area and to allocate contracts to service providers?

Mr R Irwin: When we bring the steering groups together next week for the first time, we will want them to identify a chair. That will be the basis for reaching consensus. We want the steering groups to come to a consensus on the priorities of need in each zone. They will be supported in that process, but the steering group members will decide on the priorities, based on the evidence put before them.

Mr Johnston: One of the other challenges, which has been a criticism of other funds, is the perception that community and voluntary sector organisations got the funding because their representatives were at the table. We are keen to decouple the need for things to be prioritised and done from who will do it. People can advocate strongly for their sector, as you would expect them to, but there will not be an automatic expectation that an organisation will get a funding contract.

Mr Givan: That is a good point. Ultimately, it is the service that is important, not who delivers it. However, to the same extent, if those who are put on those groups come from a particular sector and could, potentially, be lead partners, there should not be a presumption against them because they are on those bodies. We need to have balance: we should make sure there is a decoupling, but we should not disadvantage someone for stepping forward and bringing their experience and expertise to the table.

Mr Johnston: Ricky, do you want to talk about what you said at the workshop? That was one of a series of sessions that we ran across Northern Ireland in June.

Mr R Irwin: We looked at other spatial-based interventions such as neighbourhood renewal, and we developed guidance for the steering groups, so that they will not be working in a vacuum. We looked

at issues such as conflicts of interest and how those can be managed. We will provide some advice throughout the process to ensure that people on the steering groups are protected but not disadvantaged during the process.

Ms Fearon: Like George, I will be parochial. I take it that the Newry and Mourne District Council area and south Armagh are in south-eastern area?

Mr R Irwin: The Newry and Mourne District Council area is one of five council areas in the southern zone. It aligns with the Southern Trust and the Southern Education and Library board.

Ms Fearon: OK. I am from south Armagh and there is not a single person on the steering group from south Armagh. I know that there will be communication, but judging by the people on the list — I know a good lot of them — I do not think the communication will be too good in reaching out to south Armagh.

Mr R Irwin: It is up to us and the steering groups to make sure that there is good communication.

Mr Lyttle: It is all right; they have three and a half months to engage with everybody. I have every confidence in them.

The Chairperson: Final, final question on SIF from Bronwyn.

Ms McGahan: You mentioned conflicts of interests, and I think that that is a good point. There is a bit of frustration. We have a lot of groups and there is no joined-up approaches or parallel processes. Where you have a neighbourhood renewal area, will a fund such as that build on the work that has been done, rather than having another group, everybody working in silos, having turf wars and, really, not cutting it?

Mr R Irwin: Go ahead, Henry.

Mr Johnston: Why? Because I used to do neighbourhood renewal?

Obviously, the geography is different, and neighbourhood renewal areas are smaller. We are going to try to ensure that there is good alignment between what we do on SIF and what is happening with neighbourhood renewal. That is particularly the case with the review of neighbourhood renewal that is ongoing in DSD. That is one of the reasons why we have someone from DSD on the programme board. We also have someone from DARD to pick up the rural dimension.

There is perhaps an issue about how the funding has gone ahead historically. It has been quite bitty, and in some areas there are a very large number of individual organisations delivering very similar services. We do not want that to happen with SIF. There may be lots of local delivery partners, but they need to come together to deliver a joined-up service across a zone, or, ideally, across a wider geographical area. We think that there are good benefits to be had in the quality of interventions that will be delivered and in the support between the practitioners that are delivering them and the areas that will benefit.

Ms McGahan: Would it be possible for the DSD representative on neighbourhood renewal to also sit on that group?

Mr R Irwin: If you are referring to the steering groups, the numbers are fixed and have been agreed by the Executive. Again, it is the point about representation. We could, very easily, have had 50 members on each steering group, but that is just not possible or manageable. However, we will be talking to colleagues on the ground, and we have talked to colleagues in DSD about the local issues and the issues with neighbourhood renewal and other areas.

Mr Johnston: At the workshop next week, we will have to explore how we will engage with community organisations and other stakeholders. There is a variety of DSD development officers working in those zones. We need to see how we can ensure they all plug into this.

The Chairperson: Henry, if members have any further, detailed questions, would you be content for them to write to you?

Mr Johnston: To take up issues about their constituencies?

Ms Fearon: I have a really quick question. Did council officials decide which councillors would be on the steering groups?

Mr Johnston: It was the parties. Only council officials were chosen by the councils. Everybody else was chosen by the parties.

The Chairperson: Henry, thank you for that. You indicated that you were content to take a question or two on today's announcement about the signature projects under Delivering Social Change. You have said that the £26 million is not part of SIF, but that it is not unrelated. I am content —

Mr Johnston: It has not diluted the £80 million that will be available for SIF.

The Chairperson: I will take to the grave your previous statement that you have:

"preserved the integrity of the fund".

That is a landmark statement, and, in its own way, I admire it.

I have looked at the statement from the Ministers and it strikes me that, although it is welcome, it becomes increasingly conditional. Obviously, the one that made the headlines was the Department of Education's signature project to tackle literacy and numeracy issues. Even on that, the statement, twice, refers to actions being taken "where appropriate". The statement continues:

"Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety...to take forward the establishment of 10 Family Support Hubs over the next 2 years."

What is the meaning of:

"to take forward the establishment of"?

Mr Johnston: Interesting question as that was, I will start by talking a wee bit about the background of Delivering Social Change.

The Chairperson: As long as you are not stalling.

Mr Johnston: I am not stalling; I will come back to it. I want to give the context.

We have briefly mentioned the Delivering Social Change programme before. It is an overarching programme that tries to tie together a lot of the work done by OFMDFM and other Departments. There are really three timelines. One is a long timeline that looks at some fundamental work, which probably will not pay dividends until the next CSR period and which will be aligned with the next Programme for Government, economic strategy and investment strategy.

We have also had a series of engagements with other Departments on early actions and held a public meeting in the Grosvenor Hall in Glengall Street, Belfast just before the summer. We will hold a public meeting in Craigavon tomorrow. We have identified a number of themes on early actions that we would like to see progress on sooner rather than later. The six signature projects really come out of the work at a ministerial level and the Ministers' impatience to see actual tangible progress on the ground. There have been some really good meetings of the ministerial group on Delivering Social Change, and there has been a great commonality of view on the sorts of things that need to be done and a great commonality of purpose that it needs to be done sooner rather than later. That is where today's announcement comes from.

All the elements build on existing things that have happened relatively successfully in the past. The work on one-to-one tuition is built on previous programmes that were supported and are no longer supported, and we think that they will be a good step forward. The Health Department has been doing a lot of work, more developed in the west, to create the idea of family support hubs. These can either be physical or virtual entities. They are really about engaging quite a wide range of clients, being able to deliver some services directly but, more importantly, signpost them to other services that may be

able to support individuals or families. Within that, there is the ability to escalate the level of intervention. So, you are looking for a lot of people to be in contact and get run-of-the-mill services, for some families and individuals to be able to avail themselves of other services that are already available from statutory and community and voluntary organisations for those in need and, at the pinnacle of that, for very troubled families or individuals to be able to avail themselves of very high intensity service delivery.

Mr R Irwin: On the back of that family support model, which Henry explained, there would be a referral process whereby the most vulnerable and most needy families and individuals would be referred by the statutory organisations that they come into contact with. The referral would come into the hub, be it virtual or actual, and then the link with the required service would be identified.

The Chairperson: It says:

"to take forward the establishment of".

What does that mean?

Mr Johnston: The expectation is that there will be 10 new family support hubs by the end of the two years.

The Chairperson: Why not say, "to establish 10 family support hubs"?

Mr Johnston: The process is over the next two years. What we are looking for is quite rapid progress in all six of those areas. The aspiration is that we start this over the next three months.

The Chairperson: Is there an action plan for that?

Mr Johnston: There will be.

The Chairperson: So, no.

The next one on parental support is also for the Health Department. Again, it says, "take forward". It then goes on to say:

"This would"

— which is a conditional verb, as you know —

"include potentially engaging 50 additional health workers".

Is there an action plan for that?

Mr Johnston: There will be.

The Chairperson: No. OK. Thank you.

Mr Johnston: As we said there, we are looking at a range of potential interventions that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety is interested in taking forward, including some it already funds on a limited basis and others that are funded by philanthropic bodies and that will now become mainstream.

Mr R Irwin: There will be delivery plans for all six projects.

Mr Johnston: In the coming days, we expect to have nominated individuals from all the relevant Departments. We will work with them to ensure that they rapidly deliver an implementation plan in order to ensure that, over the next three months, we start to see some real action on the ground.

The Chairperson: The next one states:

"The Department for Social Development along with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to take forward the development of approximately 10 Social Enterprise Incubation Hubs".

Why "approximately"?

Mr R Irwin: That is still flexible; there may be more. There may be an opportunity to provide more depending on exact costs. That will be for those Departments to determine in their delivery plans.

The Chairperson: Of which, as yet, there is none.

Mr Johnston: As yet.

The Chairperson: Anybody else?

Mr Johnston: Are you not going to mention the young people not in education, employment or training — NEETs — one? I thought that you were going to go to the end. On the NEETs one, DEL has already committed itself to quite a small pilot programme, and the extra money will allow it to do much more of that.

The final one that I wanted to talk about is the nurture units. I think that those are really good, and not just because I funded them in DSD. The units have proven to be tremendously useful on the ground. DSD was so convinced that it is rolling out seven additional nurture units, and this extra money will allow them to roll out an extra 20.

The Chairperson: OK. How is the £26 million being split between the six projects?

Mr R Irwin: In the delivery plans, we are asking for exact detail in the financial profile.

Mr Johnston: We have planning figures that are split across that. As the First Minister said this morning, he is keen to maintain flexibility until the plans are finished.

The Chairperson: OK. The one that made the headlines was tackling literacy and numeracy. I am sure that everybody agrees that this is as important a thing as we can do as an Assembly and Executive. How do we identify the children who need support?

Mr Johnston: It will be done in conjunction with the schools. It is not the intention that teachers will be employed by the schools but will deliver services in the schools in the same way as peripatetic music teachers. Some schools will not need a teacher, because they do not have enough children who need the intervention, but other schools might need that. We will work with the Department of Education (DE) to develop that.

On the primary school element, DE funded a similar programme for primary school interventions some years ago. That had proven to be quite effective, but DE had to stop it because it did not have the money to maintain it. This will allow it to re-energise that programme.

The Chairperson: Will schools have to come forward and say that they have children who need help?

Mr Johnston: Yes.

Mr R Irwin: Yes, but we will leave the detail to the Department of Education.

The Chairperson: When you say that the impact of this initiative will be measured over the course of the two years, you cannot tell me what the measure is, because that will be the responsibility of the Department of Education. Is that so?

Mr Johnston: We will agree the measure with the Department of Education. You can see that it was around Key Stage 2. It is the key target in primary schools, so we will look to see improvements between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

The Chairperson: Earlier, Colum referred to something that was said in the briefing that we had from your colleagues a fortnight ago. Is this plan B?

Mr Johnston: No. What was plan B?

The Chairperson: It was the money that you were not going to draw down for the social investment fund.

Mr Johnston: I thought that plan B related to a number of options around rolling out the social investment fund.

The Chairperson: Denis McMahon said —

Mr Johnston: You quoted me to him, so why should you not quote him to me?

The Chairperson: Yes, I did. I do not have the actual quote, so I will have to paraphrase him, Henry. Denis suggested that, if the £27 million, which we were told about because a paper came out by mistake, could not be drawn down, you were looking at a plan B.

Mr Johnston: That is accurate.

Mr Lyttle: Yes.

Mr Johnston: I think that he was talking about the other options for the delivery of the social investment fund. This money will come from central funds, and SIF is held as a central fund as well.

Mr Lyttle: Today's statement says that Delivering Social Change is about action. Although funding these issues in these areas, if effectively used, is good action, it is clear that it is action to replace the lack of action from the social investment fund over the past year.

Mr Johnston: Hopefully, it will be action to complement the action in SIF. This is just the start of the signature projects under Delivering Social Change. The early actions work will, hopefully, come to fruition and additional projects and programmes will be supported and taken forward by that. We have created a new Delivering Social Change fund to support this and other programmes in the future.

The Chairperson: The programme to enlist 230 recently graduated teachers is a two-year programme with the expectation that it will make a significant impact on numeracy and literacy and do really good work.

Mr Johnston: Yes.

The Chairperson: What about years three and four? Is there any thought that if we can prove that it works, it will have to roll out? I know that you cannot say for sure, but is that the thinking?

Mr Johnston: We will see how successful it is and what the budget position will be. It will be for Ministers to decide whether they want to preserve it going forward. Our expectation in Delivering Social Change is that it will be a fundamentally different way of working. We are trying to address the paradox around early interventions such as these, where, quite often, the person who puts most of the effort and resource in is not the person who benefits most.

Literacy and numeracy are key to the future of the economy. The children who are failing in school are the same children who will fall into ill-health in later years, are at risk of becoming NEET and are in danger of tangling with the youth justice system or, in later life, going to jail. It is a good opportunity to change their life chances.

The Chairperson: It is a long-term problem, so we do not want to just tackle it for two years.

Mr Johnston: No, but this is a start. It is an indication from Ministers that they want something to be done now. Here are six good things that they want to see up and running. Hopefully, the teachers will make a big difference to the lives of those children. It is replicating in some deprived areas what middle-class parents do. They have sharp elbows, and if wee Jimmy is having a problem, they get

tutors in or they spend time with their children. This project is about trying to provide the same sort of intensive support to children who do not have those advantages.

The other thing is that this is going to be very good for teachers. It is focusing on newly qualified teachers because there is a significant number of them. There is a big personal investment, and a big investment of public funds, to get them qualified, only for them to find that they cannot get jobs. One reason why they cannot get jobs is because they do not have any experience. This, at least, is an opportunity for them to get two years' solid experience.

It should be a win-win for the people delivering the programmes and for those who are going to benefit from them.

Mr Lyttle: How will you monitor and assess the outcomes of the programmes?

Mr Johnston: We are going to develop an implementation plan and an evaluation plan with our colleagues in the Department of Education.

The Chairperson: Are members content? No? I spoke too soon.

Mr G Robinson: Are the steering group members volunteers or are they paid?

Mr Johnston: They are not paid. Ricky frightened a few people off when he told them that. In the first three or four months' work on the area plans, there will be an intensive time commitment. There is a lot to be done in quite a short time.

The Chairperson: Will you take them away for a residential?

Mr R Irwin: No, they are going to Crumlin Road jail for two days next week.

The Chairperson: OK. Thank you very much.