

Written Ministerial Statement

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Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Together: Building a United Community Strategy

Published at 5.00 pm on Thursday 23 May 2013

Mr P Robinson (The First Minister) and Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): This statement is to advise the Assembly that the Executive agreed, at its meeting on Thursday 23rd May, to publish the Together: Building a United Community Strategy. The Strategy will be available on the OFMDFM website www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community and printed copies of the Strategy will be available shortly.

This Strategy has been many years in the making. It is the culmination of a long and detailed process which began with the draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy. The extensive public consultation undertaken alongside the draft Strategy demonstrated overwhelming public support for action on good relations. Equally, it showed that the actions being proposed in the draft were not regarded as sufficiently robust to command public support.

Ministers reacted decisively to the results of the consultation and we invited Executive parties to form a Working Group, through which a new Good Relations Strategy could be agreed. That process ran from September 2011 until December 2012.

What we have published today marks a significant step along the road to a united community. It provides the policy context and framework for strategic actions, which, when implemented, have the potential to make a real difference to the lives of many communities.

The Together: Building a United Community Strategy sets out our thinking and the principles on which we will operate in moving forward. We have established design teams with relevant departments to advance planning and costing for the seven major policy actions we announced on the 9th May.

These seven actions are, of course, not the only actions and commitments included in the strategy. We will be moving forward to implement actions around the four key themes:

Our Children and young people;
Our shared community;
Our safe community; and
Our cultural expression.

The actions and commitments contained in the Strategy show just how determined we are to effect lasting change in our society. We have displayed ambition in the things we intend to do. In addition

we have established design teams that will bring forward detailed proposals, specific targets and costings.

The Strategy demonstrates our determination to resolve all of our problems, even those most challenging problems.

Therefore we are in the process of establishing an all-party group to consider and make recommendations on matters, including parades and protests; flags, symbols and emblems and related matters; and dealing with the past. We are hopeful that we will be able to find lasting solutions.

We believe that the publication of this strategy, together with our key actions and All-Party Working Group marks an important step towards building a better, brighter and more united community for all.