

Police Service of Northern Ireland
7th OCTOBER 2014

Response to the Inquiry on
Together: Building a United Community

The PSNI welcomes the delivery of a Community Cohesion Strategy for Northern Ireland in the form of Together: Building a United Community. We note the objective of Departments working together to ensure that outcomes are delivered on the ground.

We welcome the commitment to creating a new, united, reconciled and shared society.¹

The PSNI welcomes the proposal for the establishment of an independent Equality and Good Relations Commission. The statutory basis of the commission and its role in providing advice to government alongside challenge is welcomed. It is important that in giving the Equality Commission a Good Relations function that we define what Good Relations are clearly in that statute.

In TBUC it states that “it is not intended to replace or subsume our work on racial equality and good relations. Rather it will compliment and provide the co-ordinated framework for aspects of its delivery”². It is however important that the overall strategy highlights the linkage between the various strategies and that its references to key outcomes are not just focused on the issues related to sectarianism but all areas of good relations.

PSNI Welcome the objective of achieving a consensus around the definition of sectarianism for the draft legislation for the Equality and Good Relations Commission. It would be important that this definition is clear in law to allow for its potential use in the future were the Assembly to consider amending the Criminal Justice (No 2) Northern Ireland Order 2004³ to include sectarianism

¹ Paragraph 1.9 - TBUC

² Paragraph 1.30 - TBUC

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2004/1991/contents>

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in the ambit of enhanced sentencing for offences aggravated by hate or hostility.

PSNI Welcome the highlighting of the role of PCSPs and DPCSPs in delivering safer, shared and confident communities at local level.⁴ This strategy will need to inform the work of the new District Councils under Community Planning provisions to address underlying community issues on a partnership basis to deliver locally the strategic outcomes. This will be especially important if the objective of removal of interface barriers is to be achieved.

While TBUC noted the decrease in hate crime at the time of publication we would highlight the increase in Hate Crime and incidents that has emerged over the past 12 months. The significant increase in hate crime noted both in terms of race hate and sectarian offences emphasises the warning in paragraph 4.10 that we must not be complacent on this issue.

The PSNI has provided a response separately on the consultation on the good relations indicators.

⁴ Para 3.24 TBUC