

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

Report on the Executive's draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021

**Report on the Outcome of Consideration by Statutory Committees Together
with Proceedings of the Committee Relating to the Report**

**Ordered by the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and
deputy First Minister to be printed on 15 February 2012
Report: NIA 29/11-15**

Committee Powers and Membership

Powers

The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is a Statutory Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, Section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Assembly Standing Order 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and has a role in the initiation of legislation.

The Committee has the power to;

- consider and advise on Departmental Budgets and Annual Plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- approve relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Membership

The Committee has eleven members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members.

The membership of the Committee is as follows:

- Mr. Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
- Mr. Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr. Trevor Clarke
- Mr. Colum Eastwood
- Mr. William Humphrey
- Mr. Alex Maskey
- Mr. Francie Molloy
- Mr. Mike Nesbitt
- Mr. George Robinson
- Ms. Caitriona Ruane
- Mr. Jimmy Spratt

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations used in the Report	iv
Report	
Introduction, <i>Paragraphs 1.1 - 1.3</i>	1
Approach, <i>Paragraphs 2.1 - 2.4</i>	1
Responses from Statutory Committees, <i>Paragraphs 3.1 - 3.2</i>	1
Strategic Priorities, <i>Paragraphs 4.1 - 4.3</i>	2
Gaps in the PfG, <i>Paragraphs 5.1 - 5.9</i>	2
Comments on milestones/outcomes, <i>Paragraphs 6.1 - 6.10</i>	3
Monitoring progress, <i>Paragraphs 7.1 - 7.4</i>	4
Appendix 1	
Minutes of Proceedings	7
Appendix 2	
Minutes of Evidence	17
Appendix 3	
Statutory Committees - Written Submissions	87
Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development	87
Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure	88
Committee for Education	93
Committee for Employment and Learning	96
Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment	101
Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment - Supplementary Response	104
Committee for the Environment	110
Committee for Finance and Personnel	115
Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety	123
Committee for Justice	124
Committee for Regional Development	127
Committee for Social Development	133
Appendix 4	
List of Witnesses	139
Appendix 5	
Other Papers Submitted to Committee	143

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms used in this Report

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BT	British Telecom
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CFP	Committee for Finance and Personnel
CIFNI	Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland
CIIF	Creative Industries Innovation Fund
CoPEs	Northern Ireland Centres of Procurement Expertise
CPD	Central Procurement Directive
CSI	Cohesion Sharing and Integration
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
CTA	Community Transport Association
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and leisure
DE	Department of Education
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change
DEL	Department of Employment and Learning
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DSD	Department of Social Development
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EC	European Commission
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
e-PIMS	electronic Property Information Management System
ESA	Educations Skills Authority
EU	European Union
EYF	End Year Flexibility
FE	Further Education
FSB	Financial Services Board
GB	Great Britain
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HMT	Her Majesty's Treasury
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HR	Human Resources
HSSPS	Health, Social Services and Public Safety
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IFA	Irish Football Association
IREP	Independent Review of Economic Policy
ISNI	Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland
LPS	Land and Property Services
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
NAMA	National Asset Management Agency
NAV	Net Asset Value
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NI	Northern Ireland
NIA	Northern Ireland Assembly
NICCY	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NICVA	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
NIIRTA	Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association
NISEP	Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme
NIW	Northern Ireland Water
NSMC	North South Ministerial Council
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
OGC	Office of Government Commerce
OTC	Odyssey Trust Company
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PEDU	Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit
PfG	Programme for Government
PSA	Public Service Agreement
R & D	Research and Development
RPA	Review of Public Administration
RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
R VH	Royal Victoria Hospital
SBRR	Small Business Rate Relief Scheme
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SIF	Social Investment Fund
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SWaMP	Southern Waste Management Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

Introduction

1. Background

- 1.1 The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has the lead in co-ordinating the responses of Assembly statutory committees to the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI). In addition, the Committee also wishes to highlight some of the issues raised during its consideration of the proposals in the PfG/ISNI relating to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.
- 1.2 The PfG supported by the Budget and ISNI collectively set out the Executive's strategic vision for Northern Ireland and how this vision is to be resourced and delivered. The PfG establishes five strategic priorities for the Executive. Each priority is supported by a number of key commitments which each have milestones/outputs for each year in the PfG period. The five priorities are:
- Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future
 - Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Well-Being
 - Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities
 - Building a Strong and Shared Community
 - Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services
- 1.3 The draft Investment Strategy reflects the Executive's priorities from the PfG and seeks to invest a total of £5.376bn in years 2011/12 to 2014/15 and £7.218bn in years 2015/16 to 2020/21. The ISNI document also highlights key achievements since 2008. Although OFMDFM does not expend a large amount of capital funding, the Committee has a key role in ensuring that the Investment Strategy effectively delivers on the investment needed to achieve the Executive's priorities.

2. Approach

- 2.1 In co-ordinating the responses of other statutory committees, the OFMDFM Committee wrote to committees seeking their views on the draft PfG/ISNI, with particular focus on:
- Gaps in the Programme for Government
 - Comment on the Milestones/Outcomes of departmental commitments
 - Monitoring progress
- 2.2 The Committee held an evidence session with the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 14 December 2011, in which they briefed the Committee on the content of the draft PfG/ISNI (a copy of the Minutes of Evidence are included).
- 2.3 The Committee also held a round-table event with the Commissions that fall within the Department's remit (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Commissioner for Older People and one of the Commissioners for Victims and Survivors) on 11 January 2012 (a copy of the Minutes of Evidence are included).
- 2.4 The Committee's response to the draft PfG/ISNI will look to highlight its overall strategic views in addition to commenting on the 3 areas mentioned at 2.1.

3. Responses from Statutory Committees

- 3.1 At its meetings on 8 and 15 February 2012 the Committee considered responses from the Assembly's statutory committees to the draft PfG/ISNI. These responses are produced in full at Appendix 3 to this report.

3.2 It is not the role of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to comment on the views of other statutory committees or to seek to substitute its views for those legitimately held by other statutory committees on the draft PfG/ISNI. However, as the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has lead responsibility for the process to develop the PfG, the Committee agreed that it would like to comment on the strategic priorities.

4. Strategic Priorities

4.1 The Committee generally welcomes the 5 strategic priorities within the draft PfG and would like to highlight the interconnected and cross-cutting nature of the priorities as evidenced in the "Building Blocks" listed within each priority.

4.2 The Committee would like to emphasize the importance of joined up government and interdepartmental co-ordination to ensure that commitments are delivered efficiently and effectively. The Committee would like to see further detail on how departments will be held to account for delivering their key commitments, particularly in cross-cutting areas such as poverty and social inclusion, the integrated childcare strategy, the "One Plan" and agricultural waste/energy.

4.3 The Committee would also highlight the importance of producing detailed delivery plans for each of the commitments contained within the draft PfG. During evidence sessions, the Commissioners welcomed the focus on equality and sustainability as the underpinning principles within the PfG and the commitment to continue to promote equality of opportunity.

5. Gaps in the draft PfG

During the briefing sessions with the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Commissioners, a number of issues were raised in relation to gaps in the draft PfG:

5.1 In relation to child poverty, there was a discussion in relation to the possibility of putting Northern Ireland specific targets into the PfG. This issue was also brought up in discussions with the Commissioners. The Committee is aware that there are UK-wide targets contained within the UK Child Poverty Act. However, the Committee would like consideration given to producing Northern Ireland specific targets, which would allow monitoring of progress here and contribution towards meeting the targets in the UK Child Poverty Act. These targets could then be incorporated into the PfG.

5.2 A number of organisations considered that there was insufficient reference in the draft PfG to their particular area of responsibility including the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors who felt that there was insufficient reference in the draft PfG to dealing with the past.

5.3 During the evidence session with the Commissioners, there was a discussion in relation to the lack of a legislative programme to accompany the PfG and that there was little reference to legislation in the draft PfG. All the Commissioners welcomed the commitment to extend age discrimination legislation in relation to provision of goods, facilities and services. The Committee would like to see further information in relation to the items of legislation which have been agreed and would welcome a commitment to publish a rolling legislative programme.

5.4 The Equality Commission highlighted the need for legislation in relation to disability and race, as Northern Ireland was falling behind the rest of the UK in relation to protection and provision. The Committee was briefed by the Equality Commission on the gaps in legislation and would ask the Department to consider bringing forward a flexible framework capable of reflecting changing best practice in relation to disability and race. The Equality Commission also felt that the focus of the EQIA was on the past and present rather than on the implications of the commitments in the PfG.

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- 5.5 The Commissioner for Children and Young People highlighted the following areas in which there are significant gaps in the draft PfG: early intervention; family support; mental health; play and leisure; participation; safeguarding children; post-primary transfer; special education needs; children in care; and children with disabilities.
- 5.6 Overall, the Commissioner for Older People felt the significance of an ageing population was insufficiently addressed in the draft PfG, including its significance for Northern Ireland's workforce and as a key consumer of health and social care services. The Commissioner highlighted the increasing rates of pensioner poverty and especially pensioner fuel poverty and that there is no recognition of this in the draft PfG.
- 5.7 The Commissioner for Older People highlighted that there was between £1.18m and £2.26m every week, in unclaimed benefits for older people and if there were a specific commitment to maximise benefit uptake this would greatly impact on reducing the levels of pensioner poverty in Northern Ireland. The Committee would like to see the establishment of a mechanism whereby an individual's enquiry as to a particular benefit entitlement would be a trigger for the provision of advice and a check on his or her other benefit entitlements. The Commissioner for Older People also highlighted the need for a commitment in relation to promoting and supporting volunteering.
- 5.8 The Commissioner for Victims and Survivors advised the Committee that victims felt there was a lack of recognition of victims in the draft PfG and that this could be addressed by including a commitment to continue to develop services that address the needs of victims and their families.
- 5.9 Following the Committee's briefing from the Department on 15 February on the draft European Priorities for 2012/13, the Committee agreed that there should be greater reference to Europe and the opportunities available in the PfG. In particular the Committee would like to see a commitment in relation to increasing the uptake of European funding by 20% over the period to 2015. The Committee would also like to see a commitment in the PfG to greater engagement in Europe and with the European institutions and that the European Priorities document would provide the milestones/outcomes for the commitment.
- 6. Comments on milestones/outcomes**
- During the briefing sessions, Members as well as witnesses made a number of comments in relation to the commitments that are the Department's responsibility.
- 6.1 ***Develop the "One Plan" for the regeneration of Derry/Londonderry*** – There were comments made in relation to the lack of information in the milestones/outputs as to the areas in which development would take place.
- 6.2 ***Provide financial and other support across government to ensure the success of the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture 2013*** – There were comments raised in relation to quantifying amounts and type of support to be provided.
- 6.3 ***Provide £40m to address dereliction and promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas through the Social Investment Fund (SIF); and Invest £40m to improve pathways to employment, tackle systemic issues linked to deprivation and increase community services through the Social Investment Fund (SIF)*** – The Committee remains interested in the Social Investment Fund and how the Executive will ensure delivery of the funds over the period. The Committee would also like to see further clarification in relation to the meaning of the word "dereliction" in the commitment.
- 6.4 ***Implement an Integrated and Affordable Childcare Strategy*** – The Committee welcomes this commitment and sees this as one of the key approaches to tackling child poverty in Northern Ireland. The Committee would like to see the implementation plan brought forward as soon as possible.
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- 6.5 **Deliver a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion** – The Committee welcomes the commitment to tackle poverty and social exclusion in the document. The Committee welcomes the earnings disregard pilot and sees this as an important tool in encouraging parents into paid work and it would welcome more detail on the pilot.
- 6.6 **Fulfil our commitments under the Child Poverty Act to reduce child poverty** – The issue of having Northern Ireland specific targets in the PfG was raised and Members would like to see greater joined-up working in the area of reducing child poverty.
- 6.7 **Extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services** – The Commissioner for Older People and the Equality Commission welcomed this commitment.
- 6.8 **Improve online access to government services** – The Commissioner for Older People highlighted concerns that improving online access may provide a barrier for older people and that the commitment could make reference to tackling exclusion for older people.
- During discussions there were also comments made in relation to some commitments that are not within the Department's responsibility.
- 6.9 The Commissioner for Victims and Survivors stated that references to crime in the PfG do not acknowledge the legacy of sectarianism and estrangement between neighbourhoods. The Commissioner also raised the issue of the future of peace walls and that there was no historical back-drop in relation to this. The Committee would like to see this issue considered in consultation, at the outset, with the local communities affected.
- 6.10 The Commissioner for Older People welcomed the focus to tackle crime against older people and the more vulnerable.

7. Monitoring Progress

- 7.1 In the previous PfG period, the Committee received regular delivery reports (approximately every 6 months). This report provided the latest assessment of the prospects for delivery of the Executive's key goals and commitments under the priority areas; and the associated targets as set out in the 23 Public Service Agreements (PSAs).
- 7.2 In the report, the prospect for delivery of the commitments was highlighted in a traffic light system with options for green, green/amber, amber and red. During the previous mandate the Committee raised on a number of occasions that the reporting of progress through this system was in instances misleading as to the actual progress. In the previous mandate the Committee wrote to the Department asking that progress would also be shown in a numerical form (percentage of progress or financial investment).
- 7.3 The Committee is keen, in this new PfG period, that the progress of departments in delivering their commitments is clearly demonstrated and reflects accurately what is happening "on the ground". The Committee would encourage the Department to bring forward at as early a stage as possible their delivery plans for meeting the commitments. The Commissioners also highlighted this as a key issue.
- 7.4 The Committee would again like to see an update on the progress report every 6 months in order for committees to scrutinise the work of departments in achieving their commitments.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 1

Minutes of Proceedings Relating to the Report

Wednesday 7 December 2011

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Francie Molloy
Ms Caitríona Ruane

Apologies: Mr Mike Nesbitt
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gary Cocker (Bursary Student)

2.07pm The meeting opened in public session.

2.18pm Mr Eastwood joined the meeting.

2.42pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting.

7. Any Other Business

Programme for Government

The Committee had a discussion in relation to how it may wish to consider the draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to all statutory committees to seek their views on the draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy and that it would collate a report on behalf of all statutory committees. The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to seek further information on the proposed date for debate on the Programme for Government and Investment Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a briefing from the First Minister and deputy First Minister at next week's meeting in open session. The Committee also agreed to meet with the Department's relevant Commissioners to seek their views on the draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy in January.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 14 December 2011

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Ms Caitríona Ruane

Apologies: Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gary Cocker (Bursary Student)

2.01pm The meeting opened in public session.

6. Draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy

2.12pm The First Minister, deputy First Minister and junior Ministers joined the meeting.

The First Minister, deputy First Minister and junior Ministers briefed the Committee on the draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy. A question and answer session followed.

3.47pm The First Minister, deputy First Minister and junior Ministers left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider whether to table a "Take note" debate in January.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 11 January 2012

Room 115, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Chris Lyttle

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gary Cocker (Bursary Student)

2.08pm The meeting opened in closed session.

6. Draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy

2.15pm The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Commission for Victims and Survivors, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Commissioner for Older People joined the meeting.

2.36pm Mr Molloy joined the meeting.

The Committee held a roundtable discussion with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Commission for Victims and Survivors, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Commissioner for Older People on the draft Programme for Government. The discussion specifically focused on the gaps in the Programme for Government, the outcomes and targets and how the Programme for Government will be monitored.

3.45pm The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the Commission for Victims and Survivors, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Commissioner for Older People left the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 18 January 2012

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Mr George Robinson
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Jimmy Spratt

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gary Cocker (Bursary Student)

2.05pm The meeting opened in public session.

2.08pm Mr Clarke joined the meeting.

2.20pm Mr Eastwood left the meeting.

6. Strategic Investment Board

2.22pm Officials from the Strategic Investment Board joined the meeting.

2.26pm Mr Spratt joined the meeting.

2.30pm Mr Robinson joined the meeting.

2.45pm Mr Eastwood re-joined the meeting.

Mr Brett Hannam, Mr Martin Spollen and Mr Scott Wilson briefed the Committee on the work of the Strategic Investment Board. A question and answer session followed.

2.51pm Officials from the Strategic Investment Board left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the draft Programme for Government and the draft Investment Strategy in closed session at next week's meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 25 January 2012

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Mr George Robinson
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Colum Eastwood

In Attendance: Mr Alyn Hicks (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)

2.05pm The meeting opened in public session.

2.06pm Mr Molloy joined the meeting.

2.08pm Mr Nesbitt joined the meeting.

2.10pm Mr Maskey joined the meeting.

3.27pm Mr Elliott left the meeting.

3.27pm Mr Lyttle took the Chair.

3.34pm The meeting moved into closed session.

7. Programme for Government

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would prepare a draft response on the Programme for Government for consideration at next week's meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 1 February 2012

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Mr George Robinson
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Tom Elliott
Mr Alex Maskey

In Attendance: Mr Alyn Hicks (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gary Cocker (Bursary Student)

2.07pm The meeting opened in public session.

2.22pm Mr Eastwood joined the meeting.

2.32pm Mr Clarke joined the meeting.

2.35pm Mr Humphrey joined the meeting.

3.00pm Mr Spratt left the meeting.

6. Programme for Government

The Committee considered its response to the draft Programme for Government. The Committee will consider this further at next week's meeting together with the available responses from other statutory committees.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 8 February 2012

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Francie Molloy
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Ms Cairtriona Ruane

Apologies: Mr Chris Lyttle
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

In Attendance: Mr Alyn Hicks (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gary Cocker (Bursary Student)

2.04pm The meeting opened in public session.

2.16pm Mr Eastwood joined the meeting.

2.18pm Mr Clarke joined the meeting.

6. Programme for Government

The Committee considered further its response to the draft Programme for Government and the responses of other statutory committees.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not table a motion for a “Take Note” debate on its report as the debate on the final Programme for Government was scheduled for 12 March 2012.

3.42pm Mr Humphrey left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of amendments to the report and agreed that it would finalise its report at next week’s meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 15 February 2012

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Trevor Clarke
Mr Colum Eastwood
Mr Francie Molloy

In Attendance: Mr Alyn Hicks (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Gary Cocker (Bursary Student)

2.03pm The meeting opened in public session.

8. Programme for Government

The Committee considered its draft report on the draft Programme for Government and agreed a number of amendments.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed Paragraphs 1.1 – 1.3 Introduction.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed Paragraphs 2.1 – 2.4 Approach.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.2 Responses from Statutory Committees.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed Paragraphs 4.1 – 4.3 Strategic Priorities.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed as amended Paragraphs 5.1 – 5.9 Gaps in the PFG.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed Paragraphs 6.1 – 6.10 Comments on milestones/outcomes.

Agreed: The Committee read and agreed Paragraphs 7.1 – 7.4 Monitoring Progress.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include Appendices 1-5 in the Report.

Agreed: The Committee ordered the Report to be printed.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that an extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of today's meeting should be included in Appendix 1 of the report and are content that the Chairperson agrees the minutes to allow the extract to be included in the printed report.

[EXTRACT]



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 2

Minutes of Evidence

14 December 2011

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Colum Eastwood
 Mr William Humphrey
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Mr Mike Nesbitt
 Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Mr Peter Robinson	<i>Office of the First</i>
Mr Martin McGuinness	<i>Minister and deputy</i>
Ms Martina Anderson	<i>First Minister</i>
Mr Jonathan Bell	

1. **The Chairperson:** I welcome the First Minister, the deputy First Minister, the junior Ministers and staff. Thank you for attending this session on the Programme for Government. The Committee has agreed to collate the responses of the other statutory Committees to the Programme for Government, which is what we did last time, as each Committee will have its own point of view on its issues.
2. I now hand over to you. Please give a briefing, and then we will take questions. I wish to point out that the session is being recorded by Hansard. I am conscious of time constraints; how are you fixed for time?
3. **Mr P Robinson (The First Minister):** We are here at the will of the Committee, so we are not rushing away.
4. **The Chairperson:** That is good.
5. **Mr P Robinson:** Will 10 minutes do it? *[Laughter.]* Thank you very much indeed, Chairman. It looks as though it is a bit of a one-sided affair, with William having to take questions on his side of the House. The deputy First Minister and I are grateful for the invitation to appear before the Committee. We welcome the opportunity to update you all on the new draft Programme for Government and the draft investment strategy for Northern Ireland.
6. The draft Programme for Government is a clear statement of our intention to tackle important issues head on. We believe that it provides the groundwork for economic and social recovery. Before Martin and I talk about the document in more detail, it is important to say something about what it is that we have achieved to date, by looking back at the last Programme for Government. We delivered £5 billion of capital investment since 2008. We passed the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 — the first justice legislation to be enacted by a Northern Ireland Assembly in more than 40 years. We spent more than £140 million on the regeneration of our most disadvantaged areas through the neighbourhood renewal programme. We took decisions on 50% of all planning applications within 11 weeks, and 89% of all applications were approved. We delivered new health and social care developments, including Altnagelvin's £33 million south wing, the new £64 million Downe Hospital, the £9 million Craigavon Area Hospital trauma and orthopaedic facility, 60 new ambulances and £143 million for the new critical care block at the RVH, which is due for completion by the end of next year.
7. We funded more than £1 billion in improvements to water infrastructure and completion of the £160 million Belfast sewers project, resulting in improvement to water quality in the River Lagan and reducing the risk of flooding. We published a 10-year victims' strategy and secured £36 million for work with victims and survivors for that period. We started the construction of the £97 million Titanic signature building, which we expect to be completed in the first half of 2012. We also provided funding for the Giant's Causeway visitors' centre.
8. All in all, it is gratifying to look back on some of the achievements of the last

Executive and to know that people are experiencing real improvements in their lives. However, I primarily mention those achievements to make the point that we did not develop this Programme for Government in a vacuum but upon a solid base of achievement. Of course, that does not mean that everything is perfect or that we do not need to go much further. Whatever people may say about the draft Programme for Government — and feedback so far has been very positive — it is aspirational, and it does include stretching commitments.

9. You will be glad to know that I am not going to list all the commitments in my opening remarks, but it is worth highlighting a few of them if only to demonstrate that the draft PFG is, first and foremost, about delivering for the people of Northern Ireland. It is about creating an environment in which people can exercise their talents and strive for a more hopeful and fulfilling future. For that reason, we make no apologies for the fact that the programme opens with a commitment to support the promotion of 25,000 new jobs. Employment and economic activity need to be at the centre of our efforts to enable people to contribute to their own well-being and that of everyone else.
10. Examples of other stretching commitments include increasing the value of manufacturing exports by 15%; supporting £300 million of investment by businesses in R&D, with at least 20% coming from SMEs; supporting 200 projects through the creative industries innovation fund; 8,000 social and affordable homes, eliminating air passenger duty on direct long-haul flights; encouraging industry to achieve 20% of electricity consumption from renewable electricity and 4% renewable heat by 2015; improving the thermal efficiency of Housing Executive stock and ensuring full double glazing in its properties; and agreeing to any changes to post-2015 structures of government by the end of next year.
11. The draft Programme for Government sets out a challenging agenda, but, if it is to mean anything, it must inspire real delivery: we do not intend to wait until every i is dotted and every t crossed in the final version before we begin implementing it. Indeed, the process is already under way. You will have seen announcements about the outcome of the health review yesterday. Difficult decisions will need to be taken, but that demonstrates that we are intent on fulfilling the commitment to reconfigure health and social care services. Those services represent a major endeavour, spending over £4 billion annually. We are determined to take a grip of that issue so that we can deliver the best possible services with the resources available to improve the health and well-being of everyone and to focus resources where they will make the most difference.
12. We have developed a social protection fund to mitigate the impact of the harsh economic climate on the most vulnerable. Importantly, we have decided to use the fund to benefit more than 250,000 people through a one-off fuel allowance payment this winter. The initiative will support older people, cancer sufferers and individuals who receive a number of income-based benefits. That is nothing less than a real and visible commitment to delivery, although we are committed to looking at how to deal with such issues on a more holistic and long-term basis in future. Our decision to proceed with the Education and Skills Authority has unlocked a major programme of work to make it operational by 2013.
13. Those are just a few examples of the kind of work that is already under way to deliver the Programme for Government. The PFG is about looking forward and positioning Northern Ireland well for the future, whether that is economically, socially or environmentally. The priorities and commitments that we have identified in the draft document reflect a sense of common purpose in delivering meaningful and lasting change to all parts of our society.
14. That is why I am determined that we address the need to bring people together across religious, geographical

- and other boundaries. Quite simply, we cannot afford to waste our valuable energies reliving past conflicts; we need to divert all our efforts into improving our economy. It is for that reason that the programme includes a strong emphasis on creating conditions to improve educational outcomes, particularly for those from deprived community backgrounds. That is, of course, fundamental to developing our knowledge and skills economy and making Northern Ireland more attractive to investors.
15. As I said in my statement to the Assembly, we also see education as a way of tackling the divisions in our society. That is why we have committed to establishing a ministerial advisory group to explore and bring forward recommendations to the Minister of Education on how to advance shared education. It is also why we have committed to ensuring that all children will have the opportunity to participate in shared education programmes and why we are committed to increasing substantially the number of schools that share facilities.
16. Before closing, Mr Chairman, I shall touch on the investment strategy for Northern Ireland, which sends out the important message that although we need to cope with smaller capital budgets, investment is more important than ever. Our ambition is to invest £19·3 billion over a 10-year period, including investments in education, health and the economy. Those investments are important in their own right and are even more important in demonstrating that we are moving Northern Ireland forward. With your permission and on that important note, I hand over to the deputy First Minister.
17. **Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister):** I am also grateful for the opportunity to talk you through the Programme for Government and the investment strategy. I thank Peter for his initial remarks, and I will pick up on some of the points that he made.
18. First, we are fully committed to promoting aspiration in our new draft Programme for Government, and I welcome that. We will never tackle deprivation without enabling and empowering people to realise their creative capacity. Our people represent a huge well of talent and energy, and it is from them that we will create the economy and the society that we need for future generations. The Programme for Government will be genuinely transformative only if it reflects the need to rebalance the economy, coupled with the need to ensure equality and promote good relations.
19. A good example is the commitment to include social clauses in all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction. Work has been under way on that for some time, and there are several key examples of where it has been used, such as in the building of the Peace Bridge in Derry. That is a win for the community, which receives the benefit of the investment; it is a win for unemployed people, who are given a chance to become economically active; and it is a win for employers, who gain new skills and experience and can demonstrate their value as innovative businesses. It brings more than a short-term benefit to those who participate. Members will know the critical importance of having real experience when people look for a new job. Such thinking does not conflict with economic development; it enhances it.
20. I am delighted to see commitments to critically important measures for growing the economy. Those commitments include achieving £300 million investment through foreign direct investment; increasing visitor numbers to 3·6 million and tourist revenue to £625 million by 2013; aiding the liquidity of small and medium-sized enterprises through a £50 million loan fund; developing sports stadiums for the IFA, GAA and Ulster Rugby; and extending the small business rates relief scheme to 2015. However, the programme recognises the need to support those measures with broader

developmental commitments, as the priorities are interconnected and, in many cases, interdependent. We cannot expect to reap the dividends of a thriving economy in future if we do not invest in our people now. Therefore we need to improve educational outcomes for everyone and to tackle the disparities of opportunity between the most and least disadvantaged. We also need to tackle the root causes of deprivation systematically.

21. The draft Programme for Government is a step in the right direction. It includes, for example, very specific commitments to invest in social enterprise growth in order to increase sustainability in the broad community sector; to establish the new 11-council model for local government by 2015; to implement a levy on single-use carrier bags by 2013; to implement a strategy for integrated and affordable childcare; to deliver at least 30 schemes to improve landscapes in public areas in order to promote private sector investment; to develop Maze/Long Kesh as a regeneration site of regional significance; to develop the One Plan for the regeneration of Derry/Londonderry, incorporating key sites at Fort George and Ebrington; to fulfil our commitments under the Child Poverty Act 2010 to reduce child poverty; to tackle crime against older and vulnerable people by more effective and appropriate sentences and other measures; and to improve community safety by tackling antisocial behaviour. Those are, I am sure you will agree, real commitments to transformation.
22. However, the Programme for Government has been developed, as we all know, in challenging times. We want the programme to be aspirational, but we also want it to be the basis of real delivery. As the First Minister said, it is not being developed in a vacuum. During the last Executive, we delivered a school improvement policy that saw the percentage of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs at A* to C, including GCSE English and maths, increase from 53% to 59%;

some 53 major capital school projects, representing an investment of £492 million in our schools estate; some £77 million of expenditure between 2008-2011 on urban regeneration projects, including the transformation of Derry and Armagh city centres, the new Peace Bridge over the Foyle, and the Belfast Streets Ahead project; improved journey times and safety on key transport corridors due to completion of several major road schemes, including the M1 Westlink project, the M2 improvement scheme, improvements on the A1 Belfast-Dublin road, dualling of the A4 from Dungannon to Ballygawley, the new dual carriageway on the A2 from Broadbridge Maydown to City of Derry Airport, and a dual carriageway link facilitating through-traffic on the A26/M2 Ballee Road East in Ballymena; investment of more than £250 million in protecting and enhancing the rural environment and contributing to the development of competitive and sustainable rural businesses and thriving communities; some £28 million refurbishment of the Ulster Museum, which has attracted more than 1 million visitors since reopening and has achieved success in several prestigious awards, including the Art Fund prize in June 2010 and the Sandford award for museum and heritage education; and the establishment of NI Direct as the premier online platform for government information and services, with nearly six million visits since the launch.

23. More than 100 strategies and plans form the building blocks of the programme, and those contain much of the tactical detail for delivery. Importantly, however, many of the commitments in the programme are being delivered already. Specifically, we are working towards rebalancing the economy, and our arguments on the merits of reducing corporation tax are well documented. Indeed, we have a meeting of the ministerial working group on the issue tomorrow involving the Treasury. I assure you that we are determined to argue our case comprehensively and effectively. We are making preparations to host the World

- Police and Fire Games in 2013, which will be an event of global significance.
24. We have also developed and are consulting on proposals to provide £80 million to improve pathways to employment, tackle systemic issues linked to deprivation, increase community services, address dereliction and promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas through the social investment fund. Consultation on that is due to close at the end of the month. We intend to deliver a new victims and survivors' service in 2012. As many people know, we are developing the new multi-million pound police, prison service and fire and rescue service training college at Desertcreat.
25. The point is that we are determined to deliver. We are doing so already. Those commitments were not written as theoretical concepts but as real targets that everyone can understand and support. The investment strategy represents an excellent lever to drive forward the reforms that we are aiming for in the programme. Around 57,000 people are employed in the construction industry, of which around half are supported by investment in infrastructure and other public works. A significant number of jobs are supported directly through the investment strategy, and many more will be supported indirectly through the supply chain.
26. In closing, I want to stress how much we welcome this engagement. We are here for two-way dialogue. We are committed to using a consultative approach to finalise the Programme for Government and the investment strategy. Therefore, we all need to focus our attention on delivery. In particular, we intend to come back to the Committee with regular updates as we take the consultation process forward. We are happy to take any questions that the Committee might have.
27. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much. I put on record that the Committee and I welcome the draft Programme for Government, although I do not welcome all of the issues that it contains or does not contain. However, we believe that it is a step forward. Last week, we discussed taking the Programme for Government forward. It was thought then that the consultation period will end in February 2012 and that the programme would, probably, come to the Floor of the House in March. Is that reasonable? It would be useful if you could give us a timeline.
28. **Mr P Robinson:** We have set out a fairly detailed timetable. I am not sure whether there is any slippage or speeding up within it. We have a set number of consultation meetings, which will take place during January and early February. The Committee will want to look at the consultation responses, as we will. We hope to be able to agree the final Programme for Government at an Executive meeting, probably on 8 March 2012, if we can make that date. Amendments may be made to the final draft before it goes for sign-off. We hope that by 10 March, before St Patrick's Day comes and we start to head off to the States or to other parts, we will have sent the final document to the printer, with an Assembly debate, perhaps, on Monday 12 March if we can keep to the timing that we have set ourselves. That will allow Committee members and others to be free for the St Patrick's Day period.
29. **The Chairperson:** We worked out that we would need to table a take-note debate prior to that. However, from members' reactions last week, and with that timescale, there will probably be no point in having a take-note debate, because the motion will come forward a lot sooner than, perhaps, some of us anticipated. Although we appreciate that there will perhaps be slippage or movement, it would be useful to have that timescale.
30. **Mr P Robinson:** There is no reason why you, or we, cannot have a take-note debate on the draft programme while the consultation is ongoing.
31. **The Chairperson:** We anticipated that. However, we thought that it would be more useful to have more intensive discussions with interested groups, take briefings from them and collate those

- into, probably, one document for you. We will discuss that anyway.
32. I have a couple of questions on specifics: social homes, double glazing and thermal efficiency. The programme undertakes to deliver 8,000 social and affordable homes. Is there a breakdown showing how many of them will be social homes and how many will be affordable homes, because there is a difference? I noted somewhere recently that some organisations are indicating that we will require 10,000 social homes over the Programme for Government period. How close will we get to that? There is a specific target of 8,000 in the programme. How many of them will be social homes, because if there are 6,000, will we be 4,000 short, going by the other agencies' figures?
33. **Mr M McGuinness:** It will be a challenging programme of work, but the construction of social and affordable homes will provide much-needed housing for some of the most disadvantaged and a boost for the construction industry in difficult times. The programme says that it will deliver 8,000 social and affordable houses across the North. We will also increase the number of energy efficient, sustainable and affordable houses while addressing issues such as fuel poverty and homelessness. The breakdown between social and affordable will have to be decided by the Department for Social Development (DSD) in conjunction with housing associations and others.
34. **Mr P Robinson:** To follow on from that, if I may, there are issues about how numbers are calculated in the Department. Very often, because a project has begun, they take the number for the programme as a whole. This is a matter for the DSD and the Committee for Social Development. We want to make sure that we have real houses that people can move into as opposed to the paper numbers that we saw in the past.
35. The DSD has not given us a breakdown of the social housing and affordable housing numbers. It has work to do to determine its own detailed programme.
- The Department's difficulty is that any housing programme can slip depending on how a housing association is progressing and whether planning permissions and other land purchase comes through. We expect the bulk of it to be in social housing, although we should not underestimate the importance of affordable housing as well, which was a significant element over the past four years.
36. **The Chairperson:** Was the figure of 8,000 given by the DSD?
37. **Mr P Robinson:** Yes.
38. **The Chairperson:** Then, I assume that there must have been some discussions with the DSD about the figure.
39. **Mr P Robinson:** It was their figure. We challenge every Department because we come across this when we deal with other figures in the draft Programme for Government. We challenge Departments on every figure to give us their view and whether, if stretched, they can reach that figure. I would be surprised if we can meet every figure in the Programme for Government. Indeed, I would be disappointed if we did so, because that would mean that we had not made them sufficiently challenging in order to stretch Departments to achieve them. However, OFMDFM was given that figure and the DSD is content that it can meet it. It will be up to the Executive to ensure, through the monitoring period, that if any target is starting to fall behind, we take whatever steps are necessary to bring it up to speed.
40. **The Chairperson:** I assume, then, that the Department must think that 8,000 are sufficient.
41. **Mr P Robinson:** I would have thought so. It could well be that were you to take everyone off the housing lists, then you would need that number of houses. However, that never happens, and it does not happen anywhere in the western world.
42. **The Chairperson:** Double glazing is also a matter for the DSD. Do you have any idea of the number of houses that

- need to be double glazed? I notice that the document just says “100% double glazing achieved”, but what are the numbers?
43. **Mr P Robinson:** My guess is that the number of houses that already have double glazing will be relatively small. Therefore, a major programme will be required — one that is being very much welcomed. We are talking about most Housing Executive properties.
44. **The Chairperson:** What about other energy efficiencies? I do not see anything about solar panels in the document. There is no indication of whether the DSD mentioned any requirement for energy efficiencies.
45. **Mr M McGuinness:** As regards the new 8,000 social and affordable houses, we can say without fear of contradiction that solar panels have been installed in some of the newbuilds that the housing associations have been involved in, and that that will be a major aspect in the construction of affordable houses.
46. It is a very challenging programme, but the DSD has been happy to accept it as a challenge. In recognising its responsibilities to meet the target, the DSD recognises the responsibility, when constructing houses, to ensure that they are energy efficient. There is no point in constructing houses and then coming back five or 10 years later to install energy saving devices that could have been installed during construction. Therefore, I presume that that will be a major element in the newbuild of the 8,000 houses. We do not have DSD’s figures for double glazing, but those will be tied to the wider issue of addressing fuel poverty.
47. **Mr P Robinson:** Higher building standards, building codes and regulations will automatically require any newbuild to be up to the required standards. On top of that, double glazing assists in home insulation; and further insulation will be part of the DSD’s programme.
48. **The Chairperson:** The Committee has been involved in the child poverty aspect. The targets appear to relate to the Child Poverty Act in general. Is it reasonable that there are no individual targets in the Executive?
49. **Mr P Robinson:** The targets are in the Act, but it might be worthwhile permitting the junior Ministers to say a word on this issue as it is their particular area of responsibility in the Department.
50. **Mr Bell (The junior Minister):** We aim to complete the child poverty action plan in the first operating year of the Programme for Government. We are specifically looking at a poverty outcomes model, which will be designed to show the interventions that produce the best effects. As the programme progresses, we expect to implement key milestones, monitor progress through the use of indicators, and make sure that those feed through into the area plans being developed for the social investment fund and the social protection fund, as well as for the childcare fund. We believe that those are key levers for change and accelerators of progress in those particular areas.
51. OFMDFM officials have been working with other Departments on a child poverty reduction pilot study. The study was planned in advance of announcements in the welfare reform programme that people in work and benefits would be able to retain more of their income. Currently, someone on benefits and in work is allowed to retain a fraction of their income before their benefits are cut, on a pound-for-pound basis. We are looking at the outcome of the study, which aims to reduce child poverty in lower income families and could result in allowing families to work for a few extra hours without losing benefits.
52. **Ms M Anderson (The junior Minister):** As you know, we appeared before the Committee a number of weeks ago and gave you some detail about the work that Jonathan and I are taking forward around children and young people. As we explained then, there are two ministerial subcommittees. One is dealing with a 10-year action plan, and we are mid-term in that period. The five-

- year action plan, which will take forward the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child concluding observations, is being worked on as we speak, and we hope that it will be launched in the new year.
53. The second action plan is around children and young people. Jonathan and I have had a series of meetings with children's champions in each Department. Jonathan and I chair a stakeholders' forum. The ministerial subcommittee on poverty and social inclusion is chaired by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, but the stakeholders' forum is part of the infrastructure of that.
54. Jonathan and I have met departmental and non-departmental officials in relation to the work that we are taking forward on an outcomes model. Jonathan explained how we hope that is going to address some of the issues and concerns. I was involved in the child poverty inquiry as a member of this Committee, and I know the work that has been put in by the Committee to take that forward. The work that OFMDFM is doing involves co-ordination. That does not negate or replace the responsibilities of each Minister to bring forward an action plan, as the Act determines, in relation to tackling child poverty.
55. **Mr Bell:** Chairman, you are correct in saying that individual targets are set out in the Act, and they include references to the three ways to measure poverty: absolute poverty, relative poverty, and the mixed measurement. Those are the three measures that we are aiming for, and our targets are equally ambitious.
56. **The Chairperson:** I have a follow-up question about the indicators for calculating poverty. There are three different indicators mentioned in the Act, is that correct?
57. **Mr Bell:** Yes.
58. **The Chairperson:** But there are different targets for each of the indicators, am I right on that?
59. **Mr Bell:** Yes.
60. **Ms M Anderson:** Each Department has a responsibility for developing its own action plan.
61. **The Chairperson:** I want to ask one more question before I move on to other members. I note that, in relation to greenhouse gas emissions, you are using the baseline of 1990. Why is that?
62. **Mr Bell:** Do you mean greenhouse gas emissions?
63. **The Chairperson:** Yes. It states:
"to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35 on 1990 levels by 2025".
I am curious about why you are using the 1990 level.
64. **Mr Bell:** So am I. I will tell you in just one second. The target represents an increase in the ambition from the previous Programme for Government, which contained a target of 25% reduction for the same years.
65. **The Chairperson:** I am sorry; can you repeat that, Jonathan? I missed it.
66. **Mr Bell:** You are talking about working towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% on 1990 levels by 2025?
67. **The Chairperson:** Yes, that is it.
68. **Mr Bell:** We have to look at the most accurate baseline, but the target represents an increase in ambition from the previous Programme for Government of 2008-2011, which contained a target of 25% reduction for the same years. Based on current Executive commitments, analysis of the available data indicates that Northern Ireland emissions in 2025 are likely to show a reduction in the order of around 33% based on the 1990 levels. Therefore, the 35% target is challenging. Achievement of the target reductions in greenhouse gas emissions depends on an effort across all Executive Departments and accountabilities. The Executive agreed to the establishment of the cross-departmental working group on climate change, chaired by the

- Environment Minister. The group has produced a Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions reduction action plan setting out how each Department will meet its target.
69. **Mr P Robinson:** The short answer to your question, Chairperson, is that it is the 1990 baseline that the Act uses.
70. **The Chairperson:** OK. Is there any update on the reduction from the 1990 baseline figure to the most recent figures? Do we have any figures for last year?
71. **Mr P Robinson:** We do not, but I am sure that the Department that is responsible for it does. We can get it to provide you with those figures.
72. **The Chairperson:** Thank you. Before I bring in Members, I caution that I do not want five-minute speeches. I am going to be like the Speaker; I do not want five-minute speeches and then a series of questions. I am happy to have flexibility [*Interruption.*]
73. I have to say that mine were all questions. I did not do all the speaking.
74. **Ms Ruane:** Go raibh maith agat, a Chathaoirligh. Tá fáilte romhaibh go dtí an Coiste.
75. You are very welcome to our Committee. I have a couple of questions and no speeches. It will probably take shorter than 20 minutes. First, I welcome the inclusion of social clauses in public procurement contracts for supply services and construction. That is really important. Will you outline their use and how they will help the economy and individuals? I know that you used the example of the Peace Bridge in Derry, and the same has happened in other projects. That would be very helpful.
76. **Mr M McGuinness:** The Peace Bridge is a very good example. When the First Minister and I recently visited the Titanic signature project, we noted that around 35 apprentices were employed there, and many of them came from all over the North. It seems to be an idea that is catching on. People seem to accept that there are real benefits in upskilling workers, not only for those who are in long-term unemployment or who are just joining the dole queues, but for companies too. Many people who worked on the Peace Bridge have gone on to other and greater things.
77. In seeking to secure the maximum level of social return from public expenditure, we are determined to include social benefit clauses into every stage of the procurement process, whether it is with respect to construction, services or supplies. Those clauses and contracts can deliver skilling, re-skilling and training opportunities. For example, they can deliver apprenticeships or on-the-job training; create employment opportunities for people who are long-term unemployed; encourage equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, race or disability; and support SMEs and social enterprises.
78. Of particular advantage to the Executive is the ability to match investment in an area while taking account of the need to get local people into employment. Contracts will carry a core requirement to target the recruitment and training of local people, and such a process can help to regenerate some of our most disadvantaged communities. We will ensure that social clauses are appropriate to the size of the contract and that their use does not have to add to the cost of a contract. One contractor with experience of working with social clauses in a contract found that their use was the deciding factor in securing additional work of £100 million when in competition with competitors who did not have community-benefit targets in their contracts. Therefore, we welcome a commitment from local councils to take forward a parallel process.
79. As I said, the idea is catching on and seems to have widespread support among all parties in the Assembly. From our dealings with the construction industry, we know that people there are determined to ensure that we continue to intensify efforts. I am told that the construction of the Peace Bridge created the following jobs: a community liaison

- officer; a labourer; a storage person; a boat man; a track safety co-ordinator, and graduate engineers. It also created the following apprenticeships: an apprentice administrator, a trainee engineer and a trainee welder. Eleven of the 12 people who worked on the Peace Bridge went on to gain full-time employment. That is a clear vindication of the strategy.
80. **Mr P Robinson:** It is also worth pointing out that, in this case, it turned out to be an advantage to the contractor. He was able to use his experience in operating the procurement policy to get a job outside Northern Ireland because of his experience and because he had been able to do it so well.
81. I will tell a story that is slightly “out of school”. In a previous life, when I was Finance Minister, I became chairman of the procurement board. I was being briefed before my first board meeting, and, needless to say, I asked something about the personnel involved. I was told that there was one person who might be a bit of a problem. He was from outside and had a bee in his bonnet about social clauses in procurement contracts. However, at the meeting, the more that that individual spoke, the more that I was convinced that he was right and that the rest of them were wrong.
82. If the Government set out aims and objectives, goals and targets for what they want to achieve economically, socially and environmentally in relation to procurement, then all levers of government should be used to reach those goals. The Government buy more than anyone else, and so are one of the largest procurement agencies in Northern Ireland. That puts us in the front line of using procurement as a lever to achieve our goals, which are set in our Programme for Government. It is a first-class way, and it is being operated successfully.
83. **Ms Ruane:** Thanks for that. I have to say that I agree with both of you about the positive impact.
84. The final area that I want to focus on briefly is the review of public administration (RPA) and the education and skills authority (ESA). I welcome the decision on the 11-council model and the fact that the ESA will be established. I think that both of you spoke about educational outcomes, which is an issue that is very close to my heart. I welcome the fact that there have been improvements. However, I think that we all agree that further improvements are needed. In light of that, will you outline — you talked about 2013 — the timetable for the RPA and the ESA?
85. **Mr P Robinson:** In both cases, the first step will be to get the legislation before the Assembly and, indeed, to get it passed. I will deal with the timetable element of each separately.
86. Every indicator shows that it is full speed ahead for the Department of Education, but I think that there is still work to be done. I think that it was on 22 September when the then Acting deputy First Minister and I reached agreement on how we would take forward the RPA. We are still waiting for that to be progressed actively in the Department. I think that it is unfortunate that the Minister is not showing enthusiasm in taking it forward, in spite of it being one of his party's policies in the Programme for Government, which was brought forward during the election campaign and for which he got votes. It is an issue that we need to resolve as an Executive. Martin and I have a responsibility as the leaders of the Executive to ensure that when Executive decisions are taken, they are implemented, and we are determined that this decision will be implemented. In the draft Programme for Government, we have set out a timetable by which it should be completed. So, we do not want there to be foot dragging and miss the targets that we have set.
87. **Mr M McGuinness:** The actual targets are to make the local government reorganisation Act in 2012-13, to have arrangements in place for the shadow councils in 2013-14, and have

- arrangements in place for the transfer of powers to councils in 2014-15.
88. It is interesting to note that the former Executive's decisions on the future shape of local government were announced in a statement to the Assembly on 31 March 2008. Despite the fact that the former Executive were unable to reach agreement on a way forward to allow for local government restructuring in May 2011, there is still a commitment by the Executive to deliver the vision of strong, local government that will ultimately save money and improve outcomes for the ratepayer by creating more efficient and effective councils. We have had a number of discussions about that at the Executive in the course of recent times. I have to say that I am very hopeful that people will move forward sensibly on the issue and expedite it as quickly as possible. It has been a running issue for up to eight or nine years, and now, it is make-your-mind-up time. We have made an Executive decision, which is very clear in the Programme for Government, to move to an 11-council model within the time frame that I outlined. So, we are working in a positive spirit with everybody in the Executive to ensure that we meet the commitment that we have made in the Programme for Government.
89. We expect that ESA will be fully operational by April 2013. I think that that will be another very powerful development because, as we all know, education is at the heart of everything. It is another issue that has been running for too long. The good news is that we have agreement on the way forward. I think that ESA will bring huge benefits to our education system. I concur with Peter's remarks about our drive forward on the need for an intensification of shared education. I think that it is vital that everybody and all of the vested interests, some of whom may be reluctant to fully embrace it even at this stage, recognise the huge benefits that there would be for our young people and education system if we could intensify our efforts on shared education. It would be good for our whole society if we could do that.
90. I know that some people in the background who are involved in different aspects of education may have concerns; however, the Executive are determined not only to press forward but to intensify the work. The establishment by the Minister of Education of an advisory group is a clear indicator of the importance that we place on the need to ensure that we move forward decisively to bring our children together for the betterment of our entire society.
91. **Mr Lyttle:** Thank you, First Minister and deputy First Minister, for your attendance to speak to this important document. I repeat the welcome that I gave the document on its publication. I fully agree that it is time to move on from the existence of the Assembly and Executive to meaningful delivery on economic and social progress, and economic and social integration. I welcome the key commitment to building a shared and better community.
92. Would it be possible to provide detail about the sort of businesses that the £50 million loan fund for small and medium-sized enterprises will assist? What is the timescale for the roll-out of the scheme?
93. With regard to the ESA, will you speak about the need to create sector-support bodies for the controlled and maintained sectors without reference to the integrated sector? Perhaps you could also speak about how exactly you see a shared education system working.
94. Lastly, the Programme for Government mentions an advisory group to alleviate hardship that may flow from UK Government welfare reform. Will you give us a bit more detail about that and its timescale? It is clear from discussions in the Assembly that extremely difficult times lie ahead as a result of those welfare reforms. Child poverty and childcare have already been discussed, so it would be helpful to hear from you about them.

95. A public statement issued recently in my name contained an inaccuracy; I apologise to the First Minister and deputy First Minister for it. I corrected that inaccuracy; it will not happen again.
96. **Mr P Robinson:** Thank you for the latter comment. You were not on your own: the BBC ran a similar story. I appreciate the member making those remarks.
97. Perhaps we should caveat all our remarks on the loan fund, as we are dealing with departmental business other than our own. If you are looking for fuller or better particulars in any cases, we are happy to ask the Ministers of those Departments to provide them.
98. In common with many other UK regions, Northern Ireland has suffered from market failure in the micro-financing, debt finance, venture capital, technology transfer and business angel funds markets. We will, therefore, address that market failure, increase access to finance and ensure that it is less significant as a barrier to growth. Thirty million pounds of the loan fund will be available in the three years covered by the Programme for Government; the remaining £20 million will be available from 2015-16.
99. Do you want to deal with welfare reform?
100. **Mr M McGuinness:** That issue exercised us before the Programme for Government was put together. We had a group of officials meet yesterday to set the process of the establishment of that group in train. We want to do it with all haste. It is hoped that a paper outlining the options will be discussed at this week's Executive meeting. It is also hoped that issues around support bodies can be discussed and sorted out very soon. We should make fairly rapid progress on that, given that all this is bearing down on us fairly rapidly.
101. It is important that everyone be involved in the Education and Skills Authority in a way that satisfies everyone. In putting the Programme for Government together, there were many intensive negotiations to get final agreement on the ESA and to be inclusive. The warm welcome for the establishment of such a group allows those with responsibility for implementation to move forward. However, it has to be inclusive and done in a way that satisfies all the interest groups, given the many neuralgic issues in and around it. We are happy to have agreement and an inclusive approach.
102. **The Chairperson:** I appreciate the First Minister's point about other Departments answering questions, but is there any indication of what powers the sectoral bodies, which the Deputy Chairman mentioned, will have? Will they be only consultative groups or will they have statutory powers?
103. **Mr M McGuinness:** Since it is primarily the responsibility of the Department of Education, we are content to leave the detail to it.
104. **Mr P Robinson:** As Chris said, the ESA will bring together the boards, whereas, of course, integrated schools are not covered by the boards. Presumably, that means that the Department will have to look at another mechanism for ensuring that their views are taken properly into consideration.
105. **Mr Humphrey:** I thank the Ministers for their presentation. First, on a positive note, the fuel allowance initiative, the 8,000 new social and affordable homes, and the double glazing scheme are very welcome in my constituency of North Belfast.
106. In talking about moving Northern Ireland forward, the First Minister touched on a wide range of issues, including 25,000 new jobs; investment, particularly inward investment; and competitiveness on the world stage. The First Minister will be aware that many economists, businessmen and business organisations have expressed differing views on corporation tax. Can the First Minister outline the position on pressing for corporation tax, including when it will be devolved and reduced in Northern Ireland?
107. **Mr P Robinson:** The Government have not yet responded publicly to the consultation, although we know that the outcome was overwhelmingly positive,

- with businesses of all sizes and from all sectors indicating their support. There was opposition, but it seemed to be based on a circular from trades unions. Outside the trades union movement, there was very little opposition. That is not to suggest that trades unions' views should be taken lightly. Their prime concern was that if our block grant was reduced as a result of corporation tax, frontline services might be affected. The Executive will have to look at that issue when they determine what the cost to our block will be.
108. Some further steps have to be taken. Tomorrow, the deputy First Minister and I and the Finance Minister will meet David Gauke and the Secretary of State and Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office to look at, principally, three areas: the legislative vehicle that might be used if corporation tax were devolved; the administrative arrangements that would have to be put in place; and, of course, the quantum of any reduction to our block. Each area will have subheadings dealing with its complexities — brass-plating, for example. The Government's expectation is that that will take some months to complete.
109. As you know, we believe that the decision could have been taken in autumn 2011. The Chancellor of the Exchequer visited Wrightbus Ltd at the time, and indicated that he hoped to take the decision in autumn. The complexity of the issue suggests that the Government will not be able to do that before the summer. However, if the decision is positive, the Executive will have to determine the level of corporation tax and from when they will introduce the changes. They might announce their intention to do so and the amount by which they would do so but delay the date. Indeed, they may introduce it incrementally. The Executive have not taken those decisions. The united view of all the political parties represented around the Executive table is that those powers should be devolved to Northern Ireland to be able to compete with our near neighbours on the island, who have a much lower level of corporation tax.
110. **Mr Humphrey:** The emphasis of the previous Programme for Government was on growing the economy. Are the proposals in the draft document for growing the economy and industry more ambitious?
111. **Mr P Robinson:** I do not believe that they are over-ambitious, although they are ambitious. We admit that. When we deal primarily with jobs, targets are ambitious because the Departments involved were successful over the past four years; it is the punishment for success. For example, with regard to DETI, we set Invest Northern Ireland a target of about 6,500 jobs; it achieved well over 7,500. That told us that if we stretch that Department, it can go further; therefore, we have stretched it further. The targets are ambitious; however, the leadership is such that we believe it is capable of performing.
112. We know from our trips to the United States — indeed, hopefully, we will look at other destinations over the next four years — that Northern Ireland has become a very attractive place for business. The figures that we have set ourselves are based on present circumstances, and we know that we are limiting the areas where we can seek inward investment. We cannot go for front-office jobs because Northern Ireland is not as attractive as the South due to its lower corporation tax. Therefore, although we have set ambitious targets in the Programme for Government, had we power to set our own corporation tax, we could set even more ambitious targets.
113. At present, that is based on our looking at areas such as financial services, business services, ICT, high-end engineering, creative industries and the green economy. In those areas, Northern Ireland is an attractive place due to its cost-competitiveness and skills. However, all bets are off if we could set a lower level of corporation tax, as Northern Ireland's attractiveness could be unbeatable.

114. **Mr Eastwood:** You are very welcome. There is much in the document, so I will try to focus. Our party will make its own submission.
115. There are some notable omissions: one is the legacy of the past and finding a comprehensive mechanism for dealing with it; the other is the upcoming decade of commemorations. We have all been in discussions about that, and OFMDFM needs to take leadership. It is a difficult issue but one that we need to grasp.
116. I want to focus on the One Plan in Derry — the regeneration plan. It is very welcome to see it in the Programme for Government. You say that you will develop the One Plan, but what does “develop” mean? I asked questions about your spend and got the answer to one just before lunch. However, it was more about the spend on Ebrington specifically.
117. The One Plan is big and ambitious but essential for the people of our city. It contains 11 catalyst projects: City of Culture, the expansion of Magee, and infrastructural development, among many others. Like the people of Derry, I want to see resources put behind that. Can you tell me today or in writing what money and resources will be put beside each of those catalyst projects? Derry has many great plans, but we need delivery. The potential for delivery and change for the city would be enormous, but we need to see the resource allocation behind it.
118. **Mr M McGuinness:** Everything in the Programme for Government is included on the basis that there is initial agreement by the Executive that it go out for consultation; in other words, we are agreed on the content of the Programme for Government.
119. The past and how we deal with commemorations are subject to discussion that involves more than the Executive parties; it includes the Irish and British Governments. It is vital to get agreement on the way forward before anything is put into a Programme for Government. Thus far, we have not had agreement on the past. I have said repeatedly in many interviews in recent years that the biggest flaw in the Belfast Agreement or Good Friday Agreement, the St Andrews Agreement or the Hillsborough agreement is the lack of agreement on how we deal with the past.
120. Where there is failure, we have to acknowledge it; that does not mean that we accept failure. The past challenges us all, and it is hugely important that we recognise that there is still a job of work to be done. That is a nettle that will have to be grasped.
121. We have to deal with commemorations, which are important irrespective of people's political allegiances, in a way that ensures that there is no disruption of the incredible political and peaceful transformation that has taken place in recent times. There are people who will try to capitalise on situations around commemorations in order to exacerbate the situation on the streets. It is our job to prevent that, and all the parties are anxious to ensure that nothing happens during those important commemorations that in any way endangers the recent changes. Discussions on how we deal with commemorations will continue to ensure that they pass off peacefully and with dignity and respect.
122. Ilex has been at the heart of the One Plan, including the completion of an iconic peace bridge and the new parade ground that will be ready early next year. It is a performance infrastructure and public space. That creates an exciting platform with which to attract investment. The City of Culture 2013 is a fundamental element in the regeneration of the city, and BT has shown its confidence in the area by investing £3.75 million and making the city a digital capital through access to superfast broadband. Twenty digital companies have already been created this year, and it is such initiatives that attract investors and build further confidence. As developments at Ebrington and Fort George develop on site, the private sector is taking an increasing interest. Over the next

- 12 to 18 months, six projects will be brought to the market, both for direct development and for occupancy. That exercise will involve many millions of pounds of private investment.
123. The One Plan was published in June 2011, and Ilex is engaging with other Departments, which is important in ensuring that the process is used to inform decision making in the north-west.
124. By 2014-15, we will have spent about £30.5 million on the Ebrington site. The Department provides for revenue costs to Ilex, which is about 50% of its annual running costs, and other expenditure, largely in relation to projects at Ebrington. It is envisaged that the projects developed on the Ebrington site will be the parade ground infrastructure and public realm; that is well advanced and will be open to the public early next year. Work on the car park and enabling platform will begin next year and will be finished by the end of the year. There will be the refurbishment of the building to house a maritime museum and the development of the clock tower in the main square. In addition to conservation works to bring other buildings back into use in the site, that work will continue. The parade ground works commenced in September 2010, with a completion date of early next year. The car park project is due to commence next year, and, hopefully, it will be finished by the end of the year. The clock tower will be developed in 2012-13 and the maritime museum in 2014-15.
125. You will have heard the announcement about extra places for universities and higher education places. Magee is looking to grab some of those, and many of the places will be in the STEM subjects, which are very important to the businesses that we are attracting.
126. There is huge discussion about the A5 and the A8, which are flagship projects for the North/South Ministerial Council. The Irish Government's commitments were for the latter years of the project, and we were front-loading in years 1 and 2. However, in light of the very disappointing statement by the Irish Government, serious consideration has to be given to how we take forward those important projects, and Departments have been charged with doing that. It would not be appropriate to pre-empt here the outcome of those discussions, which will take place over the coming weeks, but, by early next year, people will have a good idea of how it will be taken forward.
127. The key is to ensure that lines of communication between Ilex and the Departments are kept open. All Departments understand their responsibilities, and there is an absolute commitment from the Executive to ensure that we proceed as best we can with the One Plan and to ensure that the City of Culture 2013 is the success that we all know it can be.
128. **Mr P Robinson:** Martin has dealt with those issues fairly comprehensively, and I will touch on one or two of the matters involved, starting with Ilex. I have been impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm of people in Londonderry. I have met people who are involved with the Ilex project and more widely.
129. We should all look at what happened there with some satisfaction because I suspect that all those groups had their own ideas of how progress should be made and they were able to bring it together successfully in the One Plan. It is an ambitious plan with challenging targets. It cannot all be funded by the Executive, although the Executive have a contribution to make; however, the Ilex board and personnel will recognise that they have to look to other funding as well. I understand from my most recent visit that they were looking for considerable engagement from the private sector. It would be a much better environment for the private sector to operate in if they followed the plan through. We wish it well and will give as much assistance as possible.
130. On the two wider issues that Colum raised, we will have one centenary after another over the next decade, and it is vital that in commemorating them we do not undermine the very real

- progress that we are making in Northern Ireland. There is a great opportunity for us to gain a better understanding of each other's positions by looking at the context of history. Perhaps by looking at history from a distance we will come to understand how we arrived at our positions. The centenaries can be positive if we learn to respect and have greater tolerance for the views of others.
131. There are many layers to dealing with the past: to a great extent, we were dealing with the legacy of the past when we set up the institutions here; the political stability that we achieved is addressing the issues of the past. Our Programme for Government commitment to a shared future and the work that we are doing and happily progressing under the cohesion, sharing and integration strategy will make a massive contribution to that.
132. When most people talk about this subject they are really dealing with how we come to terms with victims, their hurt and how it can be dealt with. There is more than just one answer. Victims look for different ways of dealing with the dark, difficult days that they have come through.
133. One aspect of dealing with it is our looking at the Maze/Long Kesh site and the building of a peace and conflict resolution centre, part of which will be a storytelling exercise to allow victims to tell their stories. That in some way addresses the issue. Most, if not all, parties have accepted an invitation from the Secretary of State to bring them together to look at how we deal with the past. However, we want to make sure that in dealing with the past we do not jeopardise the future.
134. Some events where it looked as if people wanted to address the past became very heated. Therefore it is important that we do it in a way that respects people's very real difficulty in coming to terms with loss and, for many, the injuries that they will have to suffer for the rest of their lives. It is a very sensitive issue and one that we should not attempt to make a party-political issue; we should seek to resolve it in a way that allows flexibility for people who have suffered to deal with it in their different ways.
135. **Mr A Maskey:** Thank you for your time and contributions so far. There has been much discussion about the social investment fund. I am very pleased that tackling disadvantage is writ large throughout the Programme for Government, and I look forward across the Departments to see how we deal with that effectively and holistically.
136. As you outlined previously, the social investment fund has twin pillars. Will you give us a sense of how you see it being developed? There has been a fair amount of speculation and suggestions about how the money will be spent. What are the current updates?
137. **Mr M McGuinness:** There has been a lot of interest in the establishment of the social investment fund and the social protection fund. There has been a widespread welcome for how we utilised the social protection fund in trying to assist a fairly wide range of people who are affected by fuel poverty. It is intended that the social investment fund will provide £40 million to address dereliction and promote investment in the physical regeneration of deprived areas, and £40 million to improve pathways to employment, tackle systemic issues such as deprivation, and increase community services. Although we expect to see improved outcomes for the four key objectives of the fund, specific targets will be set for the strategic area plan, and those may differ across the zones depending on baseline information and identified priorities.
138. We recognise that the issues that we are trying to tackle will not be addressed overnight, and we all know that. It will take some time before we see the progress that we would wish to see. Although we will see outputs during the period, the delivery of outcomes will not be apparent until near the end of the fund. Nonetheless, we will ensure that the strategic area plans have clearly defined outcomes and targets, monitoring and

- evaluation, and that will be an integral part of the work going forward.
139. This is a real challenge, not just for those in Government or those who established the fund; it also represents a real challenge for people in communities to come forward with ideas. This is about a bottom-up approach, as opposed to stuff trickling down to communities. We want communities to be involved in identifying issues in their areas so that delivery is not just what we provide; rather, it is what communities can bring to this important project themselves.
140. **Mr P Robinson:** That is the critical issue. I was taking a breath after you asked the question, because there are two areas in which I think that it is necessary to pause. First, this is out for consultation, and we do not want to say what we are going to do until we have had the benefit of the views of consultees. Martin touched on the second issue, which is that this is a bottom-up approach. We have given guidance on the themes that will be covered by the fund. However, if it is to be meaningful, it is essential that the proposals as to how an area can be improved come from people in that area. It is not a matter of us telling them what is good for them: it is about them telling us what they need in order to realise the potential of their area. When we get to the phase at which people are looking at projects in their area, I hope that there will be — and I hesitate to use the word cross-contamination — interaction between the various zones so that good ideas in one can be picked up in another. This is a real opportunity for some exchange between communities to ensure that they get the best value for money out of the funds that will be available.
141. We are looking at the exercise not just in terms of the three remaining years that we have under this Programme for Government, because we believe that it will be necessary well beyond the life of this Programme for Government. We also want it to include investment for the future so that it effectively becomes
- a baseline commitment as opposed to a one-off project.
142. **Mr A Maskey:** Thank you. I have a final point. You earlier outlined the positive outcome that the Executive have agreed to move forward on local government changes, and you outlined the time frame for the legislative and enabling process. If there is undue delay, is there any point at which that time frame will be in jeopardy?
143. **Mr P Robinson:** There is. We have set out the target in the Programme for Government and we need to bring forward legislation. A considerable amount of work has been done in council areas to look at how they can bring together those council activities that will form part of the new council areas, although it dispersed towards the tail end because no progress was being made. There is a lot of work involved, and we will want the Department to give us a timetable to show how it will meet the Programme for Government deadlines. We will be fairly stern in ensuring that each of those points on the time frame are kept, so as to ensure that we do not have slippage and fail to meet the overall target.
144. **Mr M McGuinness:** The Minister of the Environment recently sent invitations to all Departments to meet him to discuss how all of this will be dealt with in the time ahead. Hopefully, those discussions will take place shortly. It is very important that the decision in the Programme for Government on the establishment of the 11-council model is implemented, because any failure to implement it means that we are squandering much-needed resources that could be utilised over the course of quite a number of years ahead of us for the benefit of front line services in both health and education.
145. **Mr Nesbitt:** I have questions about two of the hard numerical targets. First, in relation to the 25,000 jobs, the deputy First Minister mentioned the value of apprenticeships. I think I am speaking accurately in saying that only 4% of the 8,000 members of the Federation

of Small Businesses are currently engaged with ApprenticeshipsNI, but that their research suggests that that figure could go to well over 50% with the right resource and support. Secondly, I know that the First Minister was with the FSB last night. It has a vision not of 25,000 jobs but of 40,000, not overall but just in the micro and small enterprise sectors. I would welcome your comments.

146. **Mr P Robinson:** I am very supportive of the FSB entrepreneur initiative, particularly because it is not just based on the principle of bringing people into work but on the principle of helping our economy, because the intention is to encourage export drives, and that, of course, is a very valuable part of improving the prosperity of Northern Ireland. I support what they are doing, and, as I indicated to William Humphrey a short time ago, the targets we have set are based on recognition of the global recession, the finance made available to us and the limitations within which we have to work because of tax. If there are changes in those factors, that will change the outcomes. The real game changer in all of that would be a reduction in corporation tax. That would make life a lot easier for Invest Northern Ireland, and I would be disappointed if it did not considerably exceed the targets that we have set under those circumstances.
147. As far as apprenticeships are concerned, as someone who has spent the last 30 or 40 years as an elected representative in east Belfast, where we had the big industries and manufacturing, which had the apprentice system at their core, I am a strong believer in it as a way of ensuring that we do not start to lose valuable skills. It is an area that I hope DETI will look at to see what it can do to assist.
148. As you will know from last night, 97% of companies in Northern Ireland have fewer than 20 employees, but if each of those companies were to take on just one additional person, that would have a massive impact on the employment figures, which were publicly released

today. It is good to see that Northern Ireland's unemployment level is going down — 6.9% from 7.3%. It is good to see that it is less than the UK average, almost half the figure for the Republic of Ireland and less than European and American levels, but it is still a great challenge. If you are in that 6.9% of people who are unemployed, it is of little comfort that the figures are relatively low compared to other places. Nonetheless, the challenge is there. Given all the circumstances that we have faced over the past three or four years, we have come out very strongly compared to those who have faced the same kind of circumstances as we have. However, there is a lot more to be done.

149. **Mr M McGuinness:** I agree with Peter. There are huge challenges for us as we move ahead. The main emphasis has to be on whether we can achieve a lower rate of corporation tax, because, from our experiences, we have proven that even against a backdrop of a high rate of corporation tax, we are still attracting a lot of foreign direct investment. In fact, during our stewardship of the Executive over the years, we have brought in more jobs through foreign direct investment than at any other time in the history of the state. If we can do that against the backdrop of a high rate of corporation tax, just think about what is achievable.
150. When we took part in the economic investment conference at the State Department, which was supported by Hilary Clinton and President Obama, we learnt that the businesses there expressed their keenness to come here if we could get a lower rate of corporation tax. However, all of this will centre on whether we can get the tax at a rate that is affordable and acceptable to our Executive and Assembly.
151. Those important discussions will commence tomorrow. I hope that we will not see a foot-dragging exercise on the issue. As Peter said, we expected that we would have had an announcement in the autumn, but it looks likely that it will not happen until next summer. However, we know that there are all sorts of attitudes in the Treasury and in Downing

- Street, where it was clear to us from the very beginning that there was coolness on the issue from the Treasury. However, as articulated by Owen Paterson and others, in the political sphere, they were quite keen that this would be done.
152. Therefore, this is something that they have to work out among themselves. We are advocating very strongly on behalf of the Assembly and all parties in the Executive that this needs to be done, that we are at a huge disadvantage, and that we can dramatically improve employment prospects, particularly for our young people, if we can have the powers to devolve corporation tax in our own hands.
153. Therefore, this is a difficult and challenging time. Unemployment statistics in mainland Europe are massive compared to those we are facing. As Peter said, it is unacceptable that 6.9% of our people are not in employment, but, when you look at unemployment statistics in places such as Spain, Portugal and Greece, they are through the roof. Even down South yesterday, there was a further increase in unemployment levels to something like 14.5%. Therefore, we are focused on ensuring that developing our economy remains front and centre of our Programme for Government, and it is hugely important that all the strategies and tactics that we can deploy are utilised to get the best results for the people whom we represent.
154. **Mr Nesbitt:** I would like to ask about the tourism targets, because I see the Titanic signature building on the front cover of the Programme for Government. The Comptroller and Auditor General said that the alternative proposal from the Odyssey Trust would have been a lot easier on the public purse — £40 million compared to the Titanic building's £60 million — and that the OTC would have yielded more in terms of long-term cash benefits. Therefore, what was wrong with the wrap-around at W5? Why did you go for this project?
155. **Mr P Robinson:** Did you see the wrap-around at W5? It did not inspire me, I have to say.
156. **Mr Nesbitt:** What about the economic appraisal that seems to favour the OTC?
157. **Mr P Robinson:** That was their economic appraisal. My view of auditors might have sneaked out during Question Time this week. The visitor figures that we have in the Programme for Government require us to do much better than we have done in any previous year; they represent a significant increase.
158. I believe that people will be blown away by the new Titanic signature project when it opens. It is a fantastic concept, and the building is great. The deputy First Minister and I visited it just over a week ago, and it is beginning to take shape. They already have about 30,000 visitor bookings from sources outside Northern Ireland. It will be a very significant attraction in Northern Ireland.
159. Interestingly, some of the market research that they carried out showed that the Titanic is better known than Ireland by people in middle Asia and south Asia. From that point of view, we have a massive commodity for the tourist industry. I do not think that anyone will be disappointed by the Titanic signature project. The rather more makeshift one proposed for the side of the Odyssey paled in comparison to what is happening. I accept that this is a much more extensive proposition, but it is a much more permanent proposition that, in international terms, will be seen as a must-go destination.
160. **Mr M McGuinness:** Maybe, we are just more ambitious for the future than the Comptroller and Auditor General.
161. **Mr Nesbitt:** You are remarkably clear on the point. Thank you very much.
162. **The Chairperson:** First Minister, deputy First Minister and junior Ministers, thank you very much for your presentation and generosity of time. We will collate the views of other Committees and discuss the possibility of a take-note debate.

11 January 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
 Mr Trevor Clarke
 Mr Colum Eastwood
 Mr William Humphrey
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Mr Francie Molloy
 Mr Mike Nesbitt
 Mr George Robinson
 Ms Cairíona Ruane
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mr Brendan McAllister	<i>Commission for Victims and Survivors</i>
Ms Claire Keatinge	<i>Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland</i>
Ms Kate McCullough	<i>Office of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland</i>
Mr Bob Collins	<i>Equality Commission for Northern Ireland</i>
Ms Evelyn Collins	<i>Equality Commission for Northern Ireland</i>
Mrs Patricia Lewsley-Mooney	<i>Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People</i>
Ms Alex Tennant	<i>Office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People</i>

163. **The Chairperson:** We move to the main business of today's meeting: a round-table discussion on the draft Programme for Government (PFG) and the draft investment strategy for Northern Ireland. I welcome the witnesses. We wish to focus on three areas: gaps in the draft Programme for Government; comments on milestones and outputs; and how best to monitor progress. I am told that it has been agreed that Patricia will

lead off what we hope will be a fruitful discussion.

164. **Mrs Patricia Lewsley-Mooney (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People):** I will give an overview that is collective of all the bodies, after which others will give their individual inputs from each organisation's point of view. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Executive's draft Programme for Government, and we look forward to the fruitful discussion that you talked about, Chair. We understand that you want us to focus on a number of broad themes: our respective views on gaps in the draft Programme for Government; on milestones and outputs; and on how best to monitor progress. Having held discussions on the draft Programme for Government among the bodies that cohabit in Equality House — ourselves, the Equality Commission, and the Commissioner for Older People — along, of course, with the Victims' Commission, we want to make a number of collective preliminary points, and I have agreed to do that on behalf of us all. We will then outline our individual responses to the draft Programme for Government.

165. First, we agree that the publication of the draft Programme for Government is to be welcomed. We recognise the challenges of agreeing a policy framework across the Executive and are pleased that a substantive draft has been issued for public consultation. Secondly, we agree that there are many very good aspects to the draft Programme for Government, and, in particular, we welcome its focus on equality and sustainability as underpinning principles for the Executive's plans. We welcome the recognition of the inequalities that exist and the commitment to ensuring that the Programme for Government makes a real difference to people's lives.

166. Collectively and as individual organisations, we welcome the strategic priorities set out in the programme and many of the individual proposals that it contains, a good number of which we sought to have included. That said, the delivery of the programme's priorities will be what makes a difference to people's lives in Northern Ireland, and we recognise that the detail on delivery and the work of individual Departments, both separately and collectively, will be the crucial determinant of success. We have many questions about what, how and when aspects of the priorities will be delivered, and we hope that the further detail will be elaborated on at departmental and Executive level so that progress can be effectively monitored. Crucial too is the development of meaningful targets and timetables for delivery of priorities within a clearly integrated approach across all Departments.
167. We welcome the investment strategy's commitment to continue to promote equality of opportunity so that all our people can fulfil their potential, and the commitment to social clauses, mirroring the commitment in the Programme for Government. We feel that the social clauses have important potential in addressing disadvantage and inequalities. The Committee's initiative in organising this round-table discussion is to be commended, and we look forward to identifying a way in which your engagement can assist the realisation of the crucial proposals that are — and some that are not — in the Programme for Government.
168. **Mr Bob Collins (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland):** From the perspective of the Equality Commission, I will speak initially principally about the Programme for Government, and will come back to the investment strategy at a later stage. The consistent thread throughout the document is one of a strong commitment to equality, and it is built on principles of equality and fairness. The consistent references to equality of opportunity and good relations are very important dimensions, as is, as has already been noted, the document's recognition of persistent inequality. That is an important starting point for any governmental programme. The identification of diversity in the population as an asset is a heartening statement in the context of the changing nature of the composition of the population of Northern Ireland. The Programme for Government sets out a clear sense of what the Executive wish to achieve, and we welcome the ambition that is incorporated in it.
169. The chronology with which we are presented is not ideal. It would, perhaps, be better if there were a Programme for Government, followed by a Budget to match those priorities, followed by detailed departmental plans that indicate the setting out of those priorities. However, that is not where we are. We have a Programme for Government in, perhaps, the context of a pre-established Budget and in the absence of much detail on departmental plans. That puts us all at something of a disadvantage, and, while we welcome the ambition, the document is couched in largely aspirational terms, and that also poses some difficulty.
170. We believe that an opportunity for legislative change was missed. The introduction of protection in respect of goods, facilities and services on the grounds of age is obviously to be welcomed and is a significant change. The commission has been advocating legislative change, including that one, for several years, but we think that a real opportunity was missed to take account of significant differences between the legislative position in Northern Ireland and that in the rest of the UK, particularly in the areas of disability and race. It is not a question of establishing some kind of ideological parity between Northern Ireland and Great Britain; jurisdictional distinctiveness allows and realises benefits in difference. However, in respect of the protections that people enjoy, there is a floor below which nobody in the UK should fall, and, in some respects, Northern Ireland is closer to the basement than to the floor.

171. The document contains a reliance on strategies without any clear indication of what those are designed to introduce and whether their implementation can be integrated. However, the direction in which the strategies are moving is positive and welcome. As I have been hinting at, there is a real absence of clarity in the document on the consequences that are envisaged for the decisions that are identified at a strategic level, and it is, of course, in the detail that the devil is found. At some stage, it will be necessary to confront that devil to see to what extent the actual decisions that must be made arising from the Programme for Government will have an impact on reducing inequality and, perhaps, an adverse impact on some of the groups that statute recognises.
172. The commission identified four key issues in respect of the Programme for Government and the Budget. Those were educational attainment, urban and rural regeneration, the creation of an effective childcare strategy, and promoting the independence and well-being of older people. It is heartening that those were referred to and incorporated in the draft equality impact assessment (EQIA), which was published yesterday. The overall response to the EQIA at this early stage — we have had the opportunity to read it only a couple of times — is one of disappointment. The value of an EQIA is not as a procedural exercise. It is an opportunity to clearly and carefully look at the implications and the consequences of the decisions that are under discussion; to identify whether there are any adverse impacts; and to identify whether any alternative policies would produce more effective access to equality of opportunity. The way in which the EQIA is written focuses, to a considerable extent, on what has been done or what is being done, but gives very little opportunity to identify how the practical implications of what is in the Programme for Government will work out over the next number of years.
173. There is enduring inequality in education, poverty and health, and those are profound barriers to equality of opportunity. There must be greater clarity on the precise measures that the Programme for Government envisages so that its impact in addressing those abiding inequalities can be more clearly known. Until then, and until we see the detailed departmental plans that will flow from the Programme for Government, we will be at something of a disadvantage.
174. To recap my earliest point, we welcome the positive focus of the Programme for Government on equality, good relations and fairness. We also welcome the recognition that part of its purpose is to redress persistent inequalities. Thank you.
175. **Mr Brendan McAllister (Commission for Victims and Survivors):** Good afternoon, everyone. It is good to have this opportunity for some creative space to have a good discussion with Committee members. The approach of the Commission for Victims and Survivors to the Programme for Government is to judge it against the key policy framework for victims, which is the Executive's 10-year strategy for victims and survivors. It is worth noting that the three key themes of the 10-year strategy, which is already Government policy, are dealing with the past, developing services to meet assessed need, and building for the future. We do not see sufficient recognition of those three key themes in the draft Programme for Government.
176. A total of 76 commitments are listed in the document. Perhaps number 77 could be to develop an approach to dealing with the past that strengthens peace and assists with the work of reconciliation. Perhaps number 78 could be to continue to develop services that address the needs of victims. In fairness, there is reference to the new victims' and survivors' service, but it is well into the document; it is not a commitment and it is not given any profile. It comes under priority 2 as a milestone or output, and the setting up of the new service is referenced in about two lines.

177. Our soundings on the ground with victims are such that they feel a lack of recognition in the document, and we have stressed to them that it is a work in progress. Therefore, our engagement with the Committee and our formal response to the consultation are all part of a process through which we hope to get greater recognition for victims in the final version of the Programme for Government. From our recent work with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, we are satisfied that a range of good developments are being seriously worked on that will bear fruit before long. I know that the Department will be before the Committee in February to talk about those sorts of things. However, a lot of that is not known about or in the public mind yet; it is implicit rather than explicit. The significance of the Programme for Government document is that it is a shop window that shows the priorities of the political establishment over the next four years. I sense that victims and survivors out there at the moment will view the document as insufficient and will take a negative view of political leaders if there is not deeper, more comprehensive treatment of the victim issue.
178. On page 20, the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in introducing the report, set out their approach to the Programme for Government. They say:
- "we are committed to growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future; tackling disadvantage; improving health and wellbeing; protecting our people and the environment; and building a strong and shared community and; developing high quality services."*
179. Those are obviously the five priority areas. However, they are saying that their approach to the Programme for Government is that everything should connect; that there should be interconnectedness. In that respect, on page 26, they say:
- "We recognise that we cannot simply grow the economy at the expense of disregarding our endeavours to transform society and enhance our environment."*
180. On page 27, they say:
- "It is essential to recognise the inter-relationships that exist between our priorities."*
181. However, reference to victims is contained in only one of those priorities instead of continuing to appear across all five areas.
182. Therefore, as I said a moment ago, we find only a very brief reference to the new victims' service under priority 2, which is about creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being. That is viewed as insufficient recognition of the significance of the issue. It is interesting that that is also the priority that addresses the issue of health in the Programme for Government. There is some concern that that reflects an attitude among political leaders of tending to view the past and victims as a pastoral concern, rather than taking a more holistic approach across government to the past and, indeed, the needs of victims. Recently, the Health Department's community development strategy for health and well-being was put out for consultation. However, there was no reference in that to the past and its legacy in respect of victims.
183. On page 38, again under priority 2, there is a reference to the need to set up an advisory group to consider the implications of welfare reform. Again, we want to highlight the fact that poverty will be a growing problem across this society as the recession continues over the next years, and victims and survivors of the conflict will be to the fore of the harsh end of that. We envisage that as a growing problem area, but, again, it is referred to only briefly. We do not have a big complaint about that. However, I wanted to draw attention to the significance of that commitment under priority 2.
184. With regard to priority 3, on protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities, the references to crime do not acknowledge the legacy of sectarianism and the estrangement between neighbourhoods, such as the situation featured in the news in recent days in which an 18-year-

- old was the victim of a very serious sectarian attack, the kind of which we know too well historically. Therefore, there is insufficient recognition of that enduring problem, which expresses itself through crime.
185. Under priority 4, on building a strong and shared community, there is list of building blocks, including the following: the cohesion, sharing and integration (CSI) strategy; the equality and good relations programme; the anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy; and the community relations, equality and diversity in education policy. However, it does not list the victims' strategy or, indeed, dealing with the past as fifth and sixth building blocks. Those should be key commitments and/or milestones regarding the CSI policy of which there is no evidence yet. There is also a reference to the future of peace walls under priority 4. Again, that is all termed very much in the present tense, without any reference to the historical backdrop and the need to help communities to overcome decades of difficulty here. It is as though the situation with peace walls arose only in recent years and they are just dealing with it now.
186. Briefly, priority 5 is about high-quality and efficient public services. It would be good to see the new victims' service listed there. It is due for commencement in April, and it would be good to see a significant commitment being made to making it a new high-quality service.
187. Priority 1 is, of course, growing a sustainable economy. We totally agree that the defining issue of our time is economic development and the impact of the recession. This society should certainly not continue to be defined by the past and the victim issue, and that is only likely to happen if we do not deal with it. However, there is insufficient evidence that those matters are being faced up to in the Programme of Government.
188. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Brendan. Claire, I think that this is your first appearance before the Committee. You are especially welcome.
189. **Ms Claire Keatinge (Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland):** Thank you, Tom. Every pleasure has its first outing. Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the first opportunity to speak to you and the Committee in response to the draft Programme for Government. I took up the post of Commissioner for Older People in the middle of November last year, and my contribution will focus on older people. I advise the Committee that I have not yet had the opportunity to establish a formalised advisory committee to support my role. Therefore, the views that I will express today are based on the information that was collated and collected through the work of the Older People's Advocate, through existing research and information, and through analysis in my office. I will endeavour to cover the key issues and the significant impact on older people. However, I am also aware of a further opportunity to contribute and to respond in writing.
190. I would like to start with a short commentary on our ageing society. Most of us now live longer. The life expectancy for babies born in western Europe today is 81 for women, and, I am afraid, gents, 76 for men. Increasing life expectancy is very good news. Indeed, it is the best public-health news of the century. A total of 20% of our population in Northern Ireland, some 340,000 people, are over 60, and 28,700 people are over 85. Those numbers are increasing swiftly.
191. We have to maximise the opportunities that are presented by a society with increasing numbers of older people living in it. We should not forget that older people make a very significant contribution to communities, faith organisations, family and civic life generally — those are all greatly enriched by the full and active participation of older people. Older people contribute thousands of hours as volunteers to community and voluntary organisations in wider society, and they demonstrate a positive influence on their own lives when they volunteer. However, as many of you will be aware, it is not all good news. Pensioner poverty is on the increase, with fuel

- poverty at an all-time high; equality legislation does not currently cover the provision of goods, facilities and services to older people; and an increasing number of older people experience frailty, ill health and disability for which they need, deserve and have the right to care, treatment and support. There are currently 19,000 people living with dementia in Northern Ireland. Those numbers are increasing rapidly, and there is no prospect of an immediate stabilisation or reduction in those numbers. Crime against older people and the fear of crime against older people continues to cause fear and distress.
192. Through the appointment of the Commissioner for Older People, our Executive and wider society have agreed that there is a need to place older people at the heart of decision-making on the issues that affect them, to protect their rights and interests and to highlight their positive contribution to society. All of those issues will need to be addressed effectively through the new strategy for older people, the consultation on which is proposed for the spring of 2012. The active involvement of older people in shaping and reviewing that strategy will be central to its success. The new strategy for older people will need to be reflected as a building block across the entire Programme for Government, and not, as it is at the moment, in some building blocks only. The Commissioner for Older People will need to have a role in supporting and holding to account the delivery of the strategy for older people through monitoring and reporting processes.
193. I very much welcome the focus in the Programme for Government to introduce legislation that will end discrimination on the grounds of age in the provision of goods, facilities and services. I am aware that legislative matters of that nature will take time to be delivered. However, that commitment is very welcome as it is timetabled in the commitments. I also want to welcome the focus in the Programme for Government to tackle crime against old and vulnerable people by more effective and appropriate sentencing, and other measures. I particularly welcome the milestones to develop measures to reduce fear and to increase confidence among older and vulnerable people.
194. As other colleagues have said, the Committee requested a response on the three broad themes: gaps in the Programme for Government, its milestones and outputs, and how best to monitor progress. The first gap to be identified is that the older people's strategy should be a building block across the entire Programme for Government. Older people exist, operate and live in every aspect of our world. The second gap is the absence of older people in the Programme for Government. In the introduction and contextual aspects of the programme, the ageing population is insufficiently addressed. The joint statement of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister refers to the need to appreciate and make the most of our assets. Those are referred to as peace; political stability; a young, skilled and increasingly diverse population; increased tourism potential; a growing creative industry — I hope that that will continue after the incident yesterday that was referred to by my colleague Brendan McAllister — and a strong entrepreneurial tradition. There is no mention of an ageing population and that that is an asset to our society. That really needs some attention.
195. On the issue of growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future, make no mistake that our workforce is ageing. That priority makes no specific reference to maintaining and supporting an ageing population to remain longer in the workforce. Many older people want or need to continue working. There is no longer a compulsory retirement age, and the Programme for Government commitment to upskill the working population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications makes no specific or underpinning reference to older people being encouraged, enabled or supported to secure the qualifications that they

- need to secure adequate income in older age or because their preference is to continue working.
196. Under priority 2, on creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being, there is no specific mention of challenging levels of fuel poverty or poverty generally among older people. The proportion of older people who are fuel poor increased in Northern Ireland between 2001 and 2006. That is getting worse. The commitment is to deliver a range of measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion, but all the milestones focus on child poverty, disability, and victims and survivors. There is no reference to older people, yet in Northern Ireland the proportion of pensioners on low income has started to rise and remains higher than in the other constituent countries of the UK. The family resource survey shows a worrying increase in poverty among people aged over 60, with 23% of older people in Northern Ireland living in poverty, after housing costs. That figure of 23% compares with 16% in the rest of the UK. It is a rising trend and a significant issue.
197. Priority 3 refers to protecting people and the environment and to the creation of safer communities. Health and social care is of enormous significance to everyone, and particularly to older people. The commitment and the milestones do commit to reforming and modernising health and social care, but make no specific reference to outputs that focus on older people. It is important to note that the quality, availability and cost of health and social care are of great significance to older people. Older people are those who are most affected by having to pay for social care in the residential and nursing home sector.
198. Priority 4 refers to building a strong and shared community. That is a building block of the volunteering strategy, but there is no reference to promoting and supporting volunteering in the key commitments. You will all have seen and been very familiar with the fact that so much of the portrayal of older people is as dependent, frail and in need of services and support. It is sometimes easy to miss the other realities. Older people's contribution to civic life and communities and the individual potential contribution of older people are often unrecognised. Older people can and do contribute to formalised and informal volunteering, to the ongoing development of our communities, to peace building and to wider society as carers, volunteers, mentors, campaigners, grandparents and in family life, to name but a few.
199. There is a commitment in priority 5 to improve digital access to government services, and that may inadvertently contribute to older people's exclusion from accessing more affordable services. The proportion of people in all age groups who access the internet in Northern Ireland has risen during the past 10 years. However, individuals aged over 60 remain less likely to access the internet than younger age groups. The commitment could usefully include a statement of milestones that tackle digital exclusion of older people. Those of you from rural backgrounds will also, of course, face the question of whether there is any access to the internet at all, whether you are an older person or not. We are not unfamiliar with that issue, but the digital exclusion of older people is a particular issue.
200. It is my view that the milestones would benefit from some reconsideration and, potentially, redrafting in the light of my comments on the Programme for Government. I received the strategic EQIA yesterday, and it is difficult to evaluate the overall impact of the Programme for Government without having had the opportunity to undertake a careful review. Across all of the milestones in the older people's strategy, the actions, budgets and time frames must also reflect the key commitments of the Programme for Government. As well as the older people's strategy being a building block, its timetable, budgets and actions need to match across to the Programme for Government.

201. As a final comment on milestones, we need robust statistical evidence to inform policy decisions across Departments, and the collection and reporting of data must enable my office in particular to be able to analyse the impact on older people. We have already found, on a number of occasions, that it has been very difficult to find out the position of people aged over 60 or, indeed, any particular age group. That information must be available in a way that is easy to access.
202. On monitoring progress, my aim is simply to support and assist in holding to account the overarching commitments of the Programme for Government that affect older people. I envisage that a key route for such monitoring will be through the strategy for older people, which is, at present, being prepared for consultation. However, the actions that cascade from the older people's strategy to each of the Departments must include clear evidence, outputs, budgets and a timescale, and be mapped across to the Programme for Government and reported against it.
203. I thank the Chairman for his good wishes and the Committee for its invitation to provide some supporting information and comment. I am quite happy to take any questions.
204. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much, Claire. Patricia, you dealt with the general issues at the start. Do you want a few moments now to talk about your role specifically?
205. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** I will focus my comments largely on the Programme for Government, and less so on the investment strategy. My primary interest is the Executive's commitment in the Programme for Government to deliver more effectively on children's rights and best interests. My overall assessment is that although the programme contains some positive commitments, it is quite limited and lacks coherence.
206. I would like to start with three general points. First, there is little evidence of a joined-up approach. Of the 76 commitments, 74 are assigned to an individual Department. That was a key finding of the report that I commissioned from Queen's University, 'Barriers to Effective Government Delivery for Children in Northern Ireland', which I presented to the Committee in December 2011. It found a lack of cross-departmental working.
207. Secondly, there is a lack of coherence in commitments. Some are very high level and others are extremely specific. Many important areas are left out entirely or are not carried through into commitments: for example, mental health, safeguarding and early intervention.
208. Thirdly, there is no evidence of a clear legislative programme. If you scrutinise the document carefully, you can identify only eight pieces of legislation that are mentioned over three years. However, other important pieces are not included, for example, the Welfare Reform Bill or the Mental Capacity (Health, Welfare and Finance) Bill. There is little specific evidence of a coherent vision for delivery for children. The children's strategy is listed as a building block, but there is no commitment to its delivery. The previous Programme for Government had a cross-departmental commitment to children and young people. However, we have seen a rollback of that in this draft Programme for Government.
209. The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) identified 12 critical areas that, in our assessment, the Executive needed to address in relation to children, and that we raised awareness of those through our Make it Right campaign last year. When we looked at the Programme for Government, we found that only one of those 12 areas was significantly addressed, namely child poverty. Two others were mentioned: community safety, and youth justice. However, there were no commitments at all on the other nine. We can provide the Committee with more details if it requires information on that. So there are significant gaps around early intervention, family support, mental health, play and leisure, participation, safeguarding children,

- post-primary transfer, special education needs, children in care, and, not least, children with disabilities.
210. Our assessment of the targets that are articulated as milestones or outputs is that they are very variable. Some are very specific and will be easy to measure. Others suggest a lack of clarity on what will be delivered and how they will be delivered. There is also little information in regard to monitoring mechanisms. The programme provides a high-level delivery framework and states that there will be effective monitoring and regular quarterly reporting regimes. So I ask that the Chair and the Committee request to be consulted in the development of those regimes and that you, in fact, ask for a specific role in the monitoring and delivering of them.
211. NICCY is planning to scrutinise delivery for children and to provide annual assessments for four of the Departments: the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), the Department of Education, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and the Department of Justice. Although we will require more information than was made available in the last Assembly term, we are happy to share any of those annual assessments with the Committee.
212. Lastly, I want to mention the economic strategy. Although I am not in a position to comment on it in detail, I ask the Executive do not assume that a rising tide lifts all boats. The economy can be developed in such a way that it either benefits our society broadly or increases social inequalities, with only a minority seeing the real benefits. Thank you very much.
213. **The Chairperson:** I thank Patricia and all four of the commissioners for their presentations. We will now have a question and answer session to clarify any issues that Committee members may have, and to tease out some of the issues that have been raised. I will start off.
214. Poverty was raised by a number of the commissioners, and, at the end of her contribution, Patricia indicated that one of the aspects that was covered in the Programme for Government was child poverty. Poverty, particularly child poverty, is an issue that this Committee has been involved in quite often. However, in the past few years in particular, we have also dealt with poverty among older people and the cost of heating and fuel. The issue of poverty is relevant to all of the commissioners. Will the commissioners expand on where they think a difference can be made to poverty through the development of the PFG? I will go from left to right as I look you. Brendan, will you begin?
215. **Mr B McAllister:** Chairman, you began your remarks by referring to child poverty and finished with a question about poverty generally. I imagine that my colleague Patricia will have more immediate and explicit concerns about child poverty, but, from the point of view of victims of the Troubles, we see the trans-generational impact of the past on the lives in children and on unborn generations. It is no coincidence that the various studies of people's experience of suffering in the Troubles show that areas of social and economic deprivation were particularly badly hit. We must be concerned about the experience of the rough end of the Troubles crossing generations and impacting on the lives of small children and those that have not yet been born. That is our interest in the issue of child poverty.
216. On poverty generally, I mentioned earlier that we have begun to get briefings and indications from studies, which show that the Government's likely changes to the welfare system will worsen the impact on victim families. We are in the early days of the collation of that information. As yet, we do not have any specific proposals, other than to say that it is something that will be coming over the horizon at everyone, including the Victims' Commission. We are determined to reflect on our own programme of work over the next year. We will make an effort to bring forward advice that shows our own study and

- hopefully some insights that we can share with the likes of this Committee about the impact of poverty on the victims sector.
217. **The Chairperson:** Thanks, Brendan. Patricia, if you were to make one recommendation on child poverty in the Programme for Government, what would it be?
218. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** We have three strategies: the child poverty strategy, the childcare strategy and the NEETs strategy. If we could get a commitment to deliver on those and to have cross-departmental working on them, we would very soon see some impact on child poverty. We also need to have our own child poverty target in Northern Ireland, so that we can move towards it and reduce it.
219. **The Chairperson:** Do you believe that the targets in the PFG go far enough?
220. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** There needs to be more delivery targets. We also need to see the detail of that and what it means for Departments. However, for us, the core is having our own child poverty target.
221. We need a commitment from the Executive on child poverty, and we have seen an initial commitment in the draft document. However, we need to see how that will be delivered and how the Executive can bring all the Departments around the table to sign up to a child poverty reduction target and deliver on it. We also need to find out how they will be held to account to ensure that the work is being done.
222. **Mr B Collins:** Poverty is an antecedent barrier to equality of opportunity. It is a reality. In every area that you may want to consider in equality, the presence of poverty is a significant barrier to allowing people to enjoy or fulfil their own potential. There is no reference to poverty in the equality legislation, but it exists, and it would be a completely inadequate response to any consideration of equality if poverty were not taken into account.
223. Poverty is not a stand-alone item. It is not simply that poor people become ill; poverty makes you sick. On every issue, whether on the grounds of gender, disability or age, if you are poor, you will inevitably have greater problems.
224. **The Chairperson:** Bob, do you see anything in the PFG that will help to resolve or improve that? Do you believe that there is nothing in it that will do that? I am trying to get a basis for where you feel the PFG stands on that.
225. **Mr B Collins:** The general statement is welcome, but clear and measurable commitments are needed. A commitment to an unrelenting, long-term strategic approach with identified timetables, measures that can be evaluated, regular monitoring and reporting is needed. That is not in the Programme for Government. That needs to be much more strongly reflected. The introduction to the Compton review on the provision of healthcare lays out starkly the implications of poverty for outcomes. The Programme for Government needs to underpin the general statement of commitment with a much more rigorous statement of what it is intended to do through, as I said, a commitment to a long-term, sustained, unrelenting approach. That is more important in times of economic difficulty than in times of prosperity.
226. **The Chairperson:** Claire, particularly in the past couple of years, the issue of poverty among older people seems to have come further to the fore in the public domain. I am not saying that the issue was not always there; it was. The rising costs of living, including heating, have significantly added to that problem. What could be improved in the PFG that would help older and, indeed, vulnerable people, and get them out of poverty?
227. **Ms Keatinge:** Pensioner poverty is an increasing problem, and it causes people to be increasingly socially isolated, more anxious and more stressed, particularly with the fluctuating costs of fuel and the rising cost of living generally. It also makes people less likely to go out, which increases their

- fuel costs at home, so the problem can become quite circular.
228. A considerable stigma is still attached to the take-up of benefits among older people, and there is a considerable reluctance to have the state prying into one's personal business and asking questions. Every week, between £1.18 million and £2.26 million of benefits that are due to older people in Northern Ireland is unclaimed. There are 340,000 people who are over 60 in Northern Ireland, so that is a very considerable amount of money that is unclaimed every week. The single most useful approach that can be taken at this point to maximise benefit take-up is to trial the automatic payment of pension credit, which, I understand, is being trialled across the water in England. That reduces considerably the stigma that is attached to claiming what is, essentially, a discretionary benefit.
229. I would also look at implementing benefit take-up campaigns that include face-to-face contact, telephone contact and not just digital access. That would make it quite clear to older people that they can talk to someone, make a claim or take up enquiries with a real person.
230. **The Chairperson:** Claire, is that required to be in the Programme for Government to deliver?
231. **Ms Keatinge:** The whole question of tackling poverty, whether or not it is required specifically in the Programme for Government, is a matter for the Programme for Government's authors. It is my view, however, that that is the most effective method for reducing pensioner poverty at this point. Whether that needs to translate into a Department for Social Development (DSD) target or into a Programme for Government statement will be a matter for the authors. However, the increase in take-up and the automatic trialling of pension credit would have a considerable impact. The question of housing stock generally causes a significant impact on fuel poverty. If you live somewhere that is draughty and badly insulated, it will be harder to heat.
232. There are wider aspects of community life. The more that free and low-cost activities, including those of libraries, community organisations or faith organisations, are available to older people, the more they are able to engage at little or no cost. Those are ways that I look to the Executive to address pensioner poverty.
233. **The Chairperson:** My last point to Claire was about whether some of those matters should have been included in the Programme for Government in order to be delivered. Bob, you said that opportunities were missed in providing legislative change, particularly for disability and race. How much of that needs to be in the Programme for Government? Do such targets need to be in the Programme for Government in order for them to be achieved, or can they be achieved without being included in it? We are looking at the PFG from a strategic point of view. I am trying to establish how far you believe the Programme for Government needs to go in that respect or whether some of those targets can be delivered on and achieved outside it?
234. **Mr B Collins:** It is nearly four years since a change in the legislation in relation to age was first proposed. There was a series of regular meetings between the Equality Commission and Ministers and officials in OFMDFM over that period. A commitment has now been made, with the intention that it will be delivered within two or three years. As we said, we welcome that commitment.
235. The absence of a commitment seems to indicate almost certainly that nothing will happen about disability, race or any other area until the next Programme for Government. It is unlikely that something that was not given sufficient priority to be incorporated into the Programme for Government will suddenly emerge into being. Action may be taken as a consequence of a private Member's Bill. We think that there is a real opportunity, in parallel with the development of legislation on age, to incorporate at least some of the measures that would overcome the most

- significant difficulties that arise in other areas. If it is not stated, it is unlikely to be delivered. As Polish poet Czesław Miłosz has written:
- “What is pronounced strengthens itself;
What is not pronounced tends to non-being.”*
236. I think that what is not in the Programme for Government is likely to be in the category of non-being, unless we focus on it.
237. **The Chairperson:** You are absolutely clear that if it is not in the Programme for Government, there will be no progress or significant progress?
238. **Mr B Collins:** That is my real apprehension. Based on the experience of the past couple of years, that is a safe bet.
239. **The Chairperson:** Patricia and Brendan, before we move on to other colleagues' questions, do you want to respond to my last question?
240. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** It is OK to give a commitment, but we have to see delivery. The worry for us is that the Programme for Government mentions only eight pieces of legislation over three years. The absence of the Welfare Reform Bill will have a huge impact on poverty, not only for adults but for children, and we cannot understand why some other Bills have also been left out.
241. **The Chairperson:** To be fair, a number of pieces of legislation will come forward that have not been directly referred to in the Programme for Government. That has happened in the past, and I think that it will continue to happen. What I am getting from you is that you believe that if something is not in the Programme for Government, there will not be progress on it.
242. **Mr B McAllister:** Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to add to my earlier comments. I should, of course, point out that the Victims' Commission has recently submitted advice to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the matter of direct financial support to victims. We know that that is under active consideration at the moment. Obviously, you will want to ask the Ministers about that before too long. The Victims' Commission will be interested to see a response from Ministers, and we will have to form a view on whether we think that the response sufficiently addresses the needs of victims. However, we will try to address priority of need.
243. It must be acknowledged, of course, that the welfare system is UK-wide and that the devolved Administration have limited capacity to change that locally. In fact, they have no capacity to do so. You will, therefore, be reliant on Westminster colleagues to make the case on the Floor of the House or wherever. Much will be expected of MLAs in that area, but they will not necessarily have a lot of power to deliver.
244. **The Chairperson:** Before we move on to colleagues' questions, I ask members to try to keep their questions as straightforward and brief as possible so that we can get direct answers. We will try to have a conversation.
245. **Mr Eastwood:** I will do that. There is a lot in it. We have heard a lot today, and I look forward to reading your more detailed responses to the Programme for Government later. It has come across to me and I agree with the view that the Programme for Government contains many noble aims but that there is a lack of detail on how those ideas will be delivered.
246. Brendan, I agree with you that the issue of victims and of dealing with the past is a glaring omission. Given the bits of news this week on the beginnings of a process developing, what is your feeling on your discussions with OFMDFM and the Secretary of State? Is there a commitment to really get to grips with the issue of victims and dealing with the past? There is nothing in the draft Programme for Government that says that there is.
247. **Mr B McAllister:** The initiative that has been reported in recent days involving bilateral talks with the parties is not quite the response that the Assembly

motion called for. It called for round-table talks. However, we recognise the fact that the Secretary of State has taken a view that there is insufficient consensus for dealing with the past. Clearly, that is true. The question is whether consensus can be built, and if the bilateral talks that the Secretary of State is about have with each of the parties are a way of beginning to try to examine what needs to be built so that there would be sufficient strength on the ground for cross-party talks, that is a good thing. In other words, it is clear that it is a fairly intractable problem and that progress is likely to be made not so much in steps but in half-steps. Therefore, if the reports on the Secretary of State's approach are accurate, the slow pace of progress might, on the face of it, be a bit disappointing. On the other hand, if there is a serious intention to work with you to explore the areas of consensus, that is a good thing.

248. There is a need to approach the past in a way that respects the need to strengthen peace and reconciliation, and it is true that a naive and haphazard approach to the past could destabilise things politically with no gain for anyone. We recognise that it is a very difficult area of work, so we understand why it does not feature highly in the Programme for Government. However, it needs to feature because, at the moment, the approach is too narrow, and it depends on aspects of the criminal justice system. It does not provide what victims need, and it certainly does not address what this society needs. Therefore, a commitment in the Programme for Government needs to be realistic and incremental about the need for a process to enable parties to try carefully to reach a point of greater consensus with one another.
249. We think that that is possible, but not if parties feel bounced and not if we continue with a situation in which there is a fear across the parties, if I may say so, that other parties' interest in the matter is more about continuing the conflict and gathering ammunition with which to continue to attack one

another. There is a need to work at the issue in order to take it out of the work of the Executive and out of a partisan approach to the past. Obviously, that will not happen quickly, but a commitment to recognise the need to work towards that would be very welcome.

250. **Ms Ruane:** Go raibh maith agaibh. I was interested to hear your comments on the Programme for Government, because those will be very useful as part of the consultation. You have worked in the field of equality and against poverty and discrimination, so it is important that we listen very carefully to what you have to say. For me and our team, today is a listening exercise, and I am sure that it is the same for other members. I will be feeding back everything that is said here. That does not mean that I agree with everything or disagree with everything. I am struck by the fact that everyone talked about the recession, poverty and the economic situation that we find ourselves in. That impacts on every one of your fields and on ours. That will be the challenge over the next four, 10 and 20 years, and the more that we can legislate against that, the better.
251. I have a couple of brief questions. Bob, looking at England, Scotland, Wales, the South and further afield — we should not always look to the South or across to England, Scotland and Wales — what legislation would you like on race and disability? What would you like if we were to deal with those issues? What timescales should be set for that?
252. I know that everyone needs an opportunity to speak, so I will go through all my questions and then stop. Brendan, I was taken by your comments on the trans-generational aspect of poverty, and I agree with that. I am unsure whether it was you or someone else who mentioned the need for a cross-cutting approach to poverty. If we want to remove the barriers, as Bob so eloquently put it, health and education will be some of the key tools. Where do you see that link being made?

253. The Chairperson will be glad to hear that this is my final point. Claire, first of all, welcome to your new position. I am not sure whether we are getting the message about older people out there. However, that is not your fault; it is, rather, society's stigmatisation of older people. What struck me most about your comments is that when people think about elderly people, or even say the word "elderly", they associate it with someone with a stick who is running to doctors' appointments every week. There is a big challenge for us in that area. On the one hand, there are issues of welfare, entitlement and people receiving the money to which they are entitled, but on the other hand, there is a need to promote a positive and active ageing population that takes power and control. How do we bring that into the Programme for Government and challenge those stereotypes?
254. **The Chairperson:** Bob, will you lead off?
255. **Mr B Collins:** I will not give you the honours course on the legislative change that we have advocated over the past number of years. However, let me refer to two particular points in respect of disability. A number of years ago, the House of Lords radically altered the protection that is available to people with disabilities in a case known as the Malcolm case. That obtains to everyone across the UK, but it was not the intention of the original legislation. The judgement altered the original intention. That was corrected in Great Britain, but not in Northern Ireland, in the Equality Act 2010. That is why, in this respect, the rest of the UK is absolutely the correct comparator to look at. It would be relatively simple to make a similar enactment in Northern Ireland, and that would overcome the disadvantage that those with disabilities in Northern Ireland have been put at, relative to those with disabilities in Great Britain. That is a simple issue.
256. We have, for a long time, advocated a change in the definition of disability to remove the reference to a list of capacities. That would make it easier for disabilities that were not included in that list to be recognised and for those with such conditions to be protected under the legislation. Neither of those would tax a parliamentary draftsman or draftswoman, as the work in formulating the legislation has already been done in Great Britain. However, those measures would have a real, meaningful and instant impact on people with disabilities in Northern Ireland. We have submitted information on those measures to the Committee previously, but I will resubmit material to identify exactly the points that we have urged.
257. There are issues with the definition and coverage of race, and there are inconsistencies in the legislation in Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.
258. I will confine it to those three things and leave aside the whole range of other areas about which people have advocated for change. They would have an immediate impact. The Malcolm case is a significant source of disadvantage to people with disabilities who live in Northern Ireland. It has been corrected elsewhere, but it still arises here, and there is a genuine unfairness in that people who happen to be in Northern Ireland and who have a disability have less protection and will be treated less fairly than if they were in England, Scotland or Wales. It seems to us that those are the kinds of changes that could be taken together with the very welcome change to the extension of the duty to provide goods, facilities and services (GFS) to include age. We may submit a note to you on that.
259. **The Chairperson:** Bob, you mentioned the removal of the list. Is there any chance that the removal of the list makes it more cumbersome and complicated because any decisions would be made subjectively?
260. **Mr B Collins:** We do not think so, and that has not been the experience in Great Britain, where the specific list was removed. The same cover can be provided, and the descent into endless wrangles about what does and does not constitute a disability by virtue of

the way that it is written as it is can be avoided. When a list of capacities is introduced, the interpretation is that, unless someone suffers the absence of one of those specified capacities, irrespective of what his or her condition may be, that person does not qualify to be regarded or to have the protection as someone with a disability. The idea is not to expand the range of people who have disabilities to incorporate more and more of the population; it is genuinely to find a way to ensure that people whose condition represents what the law identifies as a disability have that protection and that that condition will not be excluded because it is not on the list of capacities.

261. **The Chairperson:** Caitríona's question to Claire is next.

262. **Ms Keatinge:** You are right to note that persistent representation of the challenges that face older people and the vulnerability and frailty of some older people can create quite a negative image of older people as dependent and as a financial drain on society rather than as an asset to society. It is important that, as well as proposing solutions, we recognise the genuine frailty and vulnerability of a number of older residents. We all know them. Every church and faith organisation, GAA club and British Legion club has plenty of older people who are active on committees. They participate actively in mentoring schemes, coaching and in a whole range of ways to support civic life. If we look up any road or around any village, we will see older people minding children for relatives after school. That is informal childcare, and many community and voluntary and faith organisations would be dead in the water without the involvement of older people.

263. As a cross-cutting theme, all Departments need to look at the images that they use of older people in the material that they produce. They need to look at producing statistics and information that flag up the positive contribution of older people. Too often, in publications and in the media, we see a large amount of information about

vulnerability. It is terrible when there is serious crime against older people, and it is terrible when they are afraid of crime. It is quite, quite dreadful and inexcusable in our society. We also need to reduce the fear of crime by commenting positively and noting and representing the positive ways in which older people are engaged across our society. Across our Departments, a look at the kind of imagery that is used would be extraordinarily useful.

264. It is important to tackle the stigma that older people face in relation to benefits take-up. In the main, older people do not regard themselves as being as deserving of state benefits and state support as other generations may. Very strong support for tackling that kind of stigma is needed so that older people can be told that they have paid their way and are entitled to that amount of money because the Government have decided that that is the amount of money that is available to them. Government needs to tell them that it is their right and that it is their duty, as the Government and as Departments, to ensure that they secure the income to which they are entitled. That would be a positive step in representing positive images.

265. Last, but by no means least, it would be an important step forward to involve older people in the development and monitoring of the older people's strategy and in the implementation of all those actions across the wide range of responsible bodies. That would remind people that it is not just about a problem with older people but about engagement and positive living. The other day, a gentleman told me that what he does beats the alternative. We have all heard that phrase, and it certainly does. Positive ageing is available to many of our older population, and those who deserve and need care should get it at the time when they need it without fear or favour.

266. The European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012 will create an opportunity to look at some positive images and programmes of work that link younger people and

- older people, who, frankly, quite often misunderstand each other. There are degrees of fear and misunderstanding that can usefully be addressed.
267. I had an early conversation with my colleague Patricia Lewsley, the Children's Commissioner, about that and look forward to working on the issue to promote not a glossy image of older people — it is not all Saga holidays — but a real image of what older people's lives are like. It really is very simple: older people's lives are everything that everybody else's lives are, with the added impact of ageing.
268. **The Chairperson:** Patricia or Brendan, do you want to comment briefly on either of those questions?
269. **Mr B McAllister:** Caitríona Ruane's question was about linkages across the Programme for Government, in particular, around health and education.
270. First, I do not yet have a lot to say on education. The Victims' Commission is working, as part of the comprehensive needs assessment, to address the trans-generational impact of the conflict, which we will bring out in the spring. I would like to think that we will develop some proposals and ideas around education. Of course, legacy issues are well developed in the curriculum. However, there is a need to think more widely about education and, indeed, the importance of the Youth Service. The Department for Social Development is, of course, covering voluntary and community work.
271. With regard to health, we think about physical health and then mental health. A recent study found that over 60% of physical health ailments are psychologically based. That is not to say that it is all in people's heads. People have genuine ailments, but one can often trace a somatic illness to a psychological experience or root. Very little is known about that in our context. That is obviously an area that we need to keep studying.
272. Mental health is even more complicated. You are probably aware of a recent University of Ulster study that suggests that there is a very high level of post-traumatic stress disorder in Northern Ireland, most of which is latent. The study also suggests that it can take between 18 and 22 years before post-traumatic stress disorders are presented in primary healthcare. In other words, there is a long gestation period. If that study is true, we can expect a continued emergence. Even though the Troubles as such are over, we are living with their legacy, and we can expect people to continue to present with conflict-related mental health issues over these next years.
273. Indeed, the Bamford review found that the level of psychological morbidity in Northern Ireland was 25% higher than the UK average. So we know that we have mental health issues, but we are not quite sure what they are, and practitioners are not agreed on the best methods of response and treatment. In fact, they disagree on that. So over these next years, the Victims' Commission hopes to convene discussions among experts in mental health so that we can emerge from those discussions and say to Committees such as this one, having conferred with enough of the right people around the table, that a certain path seems to be the agreed way forward on mental health issues related to the Troubles. So we need greater clarity on the phenomenon of conflict-related mental health issues.
274. Secondly, there is the whole area of concern around services. At the moment, there is very little bespoke or specialist service provision for mental health issues coming from the Troubles. There is a trauma resource centre in north Belfast and a family trauma centre in south Belfast, both of which are located in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area. Beyond that, there is a specialist worker in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. However, a unit in Omagh that dealt with trauma recently closed down. So there has to be concern about regional provision across Northern Ireland.

275. Of course, the victims' strategy anticipates greater mainstreaming of mental health provision and health provision generally by 2019. A lot of that is currently done by the community and voluntary sector. However, it is anticipated that that will be increasingly picked up by the health trusts over the years because of the ageing population. So work must be done on health over the coming years to prepare the trusts so that they are sensitised to conflict-related matters. At a time when the trusts are severely stretched and are facing financial difficulties, you have to worry about their capacity to do that. As I mentioned earlier, it is more likely that there will be commitments on alcohol, drug abuse and suicide in public health strategies, and that is absolutely correct. However, there will not be any recognition of the past or its impact on victims. We want to insert those issues over the next few years. Specifically, we need to insert building blocks in the Programme for Government about all the issues that I have spoken about in the areas of public and mental health, youth work and social development.
276. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** We flagged up the issue of cross-departmental working on a number of occasions. In November, the report that we commissioned from Queen's University found that a key barrier to government delivering for children is a lack of joined-up working across Departments. We wanted early intervention to be mentioned in the Programme for Government, because Ministers and others refer to that matter. That would help with some issues such as mental health.
277. Brendan talked about the victims of the Troubles, but there is often a ripple effect from those victims to their children. Many mental health issues are not being addressed. We see that in the number of young people who commit suicide but who were not even born during the Troubles. The Troubles have a ripple effect on them and on their communities. There is also the matter of mental health issues in the youth justice system. Children are in that system.
278. One way to address the issue would be through a commitment to make a statutory duty, so that Departments would have to work together on a statutory basis. The other way is through budget allocation, with priority being given to Departments that demonstrate cross-departmental working. In the long term, that would prove to be a better and more efficient way to spend money. Budgets would be shared, and there would be bigger outcomes.
279. **Mr A Maskey:** I thank everyone for their presentations this afternoon and for speaking so eloquently on a range of issues. I will reiterate Cairtriona's point, in that we view today as an important listening exercise. Therefore, we will certainly not take issue with everything that has been said, and we probably have a fair amount of sympathy with much of it.
280. Some contributions suggest that particular themes were not repeated often enough in the Programme for Government. That could be the result of presentational issues, and we could have a shorter or longer document to address that. However, I was struck by the specific issues that people raised that substantiate some of those arguments. Therefore, one bit could be presentational, but the other issues that have been specifically addressed are important and helpfully made.
281. Quite frankly, it annoys me to hear Owen Paterson talking about the past in the way in which he does. I will not agree with him about it. I know him well, I like him and I talk to him. However, that is neither here nor there, and a discussion with him will not address my concerns about the past. A singular failure of the past number of years is the fact that we have not managed to get to grips with the past in a better way. My party is keen to do that, and we have made proposals to that effect. I share the general concerns that we have not advanced as far as we should in tackling the past. However, I do not accept that that can be addressed entirely in the Programme for Government. That is unfortunate, but the issue

- is contentious, and there are many views on it across all the parties and participants and, probably, among a lot of people around this table. I am struck by some of the practical omissions or gaps that people have tried to identify today. I appreciate that.
282. I do not want to mischaracterise anyone's representations, but I think that Patricia made a point about the lack of coherence. Will you elaborate a wee bit more on that? I hear your point about not working across Departments and Departments not integrating well enough, and so on and so forth. However, if you do not mind, I would like to understand the lack of coherence a little better.
283. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** Some high-level issues are discussed, as are some general issues. However, there could have been much more reference in the Programme for Government about mental health, safeguarding and early intervention. To be honest, I think that there were missed opportunities on some of the issues that could have been included. Other witnesses might want to add to that. It was more about that. Some high-level issues are there, but we think that there could also have been other matters. That is why it is a missed opportunity.
284. **Ms Alex Tennant (Office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People):** I would like to add to that. The children's strategy is not included, and nor is safeguarding work. The issue of mental health is not covered at all in a commitment. So many major issues are not covered. The Welfare Reform Bill is not mentioned, but the Lisanelly shared campus is. Those issues are important, but there are different levels. Again, reducing sickness absence in the Civil Service is important. However, the issue concerns the level at which certain issues should appear as commitments in the Programme for Government.
285. **The Chairperson:** Does anybody else want to comment?
286. **Mr B Collins:** I will comment briefly on the question of integrating government activities and achieving a greater sense of conjoined activity. That is a dilemma with which all Governments have to try to deal. However, it is important in the range of areas for which the four commissions represented here have responsibilities. Very few of the issues that are of significance and substance can be resolved within the remit or legislative competence of any individual Department. However, there are no mechanisms or working structures. There is no evident mechanism beyond a stated aspirational commitment to secure that kind of integrated engagement, shared development of policy and shared implementation of decisions so as to have an impact on, for example, poverty and health issues, which the Compton report identified very significantly. Education, health and accommodation are crucially linked in respect of the capacity of one to influence the other. So here is an area where even the expression of aspiration would be beneficial in the Programme for Government.
287. I do not think that there are presentational difficulties with the Programme for Government. I think that, in very many respects, it is a well-presented, well-articulated, well-written and coherent document and that the aspiration that lies behind it is clearly expressed. So the issue is not one of presentation but of the substance represented in the programme and of the level of detail unveiled in it. Unless the document in its present form can be read side by side with the detailed plans for individual Departments, it is much more difficult to get a sense of its potential.
288. **The Chairperson:** To be fair, Bob, I think that you made that comment in your opening statement when you said that you wanted more information on the outworking and substance of some of the issues. So that point has been well made.
289. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** As I said in my presentation, it is about how it is monitored. What role does the Committee have in monitoring

- the delivery of the Programme for Government? That will be important, because it will help with accountability in respect of making sure that things happen and that the commitments in the Programme for Government are delivered on.
290. **The Chairperson:** The Committee has an overall strategic monitoring role. However, we will also specifically monitor the areas relevant to OFMDFM, hence the reason for your being in front of us today. You represent the bodies for which OFMDFM has direct responsibility. There are two aspects: the overall strategic issues and, more specifically, OFMDFM issues. It is our role to monitor that and to bring forward issues that we feel it is not progressing in the way that it should, as we have done in the past.
291. **Mr Humphrey:** First, on behalf of the DUP, I thank you all very much for your presentations. I thank you as individuals and your organisations for your contribution and expertise in trying to make better the lives of those people in our community with whom you are charged to work. I thank you for that. Thank you for being candid today. The Democratic Unionist Party team is also in listening mode to gather information and to take on board your views and concerns, and, without prejudice, we will feed them back. You have said things with which I am in absolute agreement and others with which I have more difficulty. It is our job to feed them back, and we will do that. Claire, on behalf of the party, I wish you all the very best in your post.
292. **Ms Keatinge:** Thank you very much.
293. **Mr Humphrey:** It is very important that your organisations are in there and lobbying in the consultation process. Brendan, you suggested that, in recent times, your work and liaison with officials in the Department has been better. That is good and to be welcomed, and I hope that that is the case with all the organisations. It is important that each of the four commissioners and your organisations continue in this consultation process to liaise with officials and, when an opportunity presents itself, with Ministers and Members of the Assembly to ensure that your concerns, which have been articulated today, are fed to the highest level.
294. I am conscious that time is marching on, but are each of the four commissioners involved in an ongoing process of negotiation and — perhaps to use a better word — conversation with the Department?
295. **Mr B Collins:** The Equality Commission has had sustained engagement over a long period on the development of budgets, the Programme for Government and all such areas. That engagement has taken place with every Department, not only with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. Last year, we had individual correspondence with every Department on the Budget and the extent to which that reflected the application by the Departments of their responsibilities in respect of section 75. The chief executive and I have had meetings with the permanent secretary of OFMDFM. The junior Ministers came to a meeting of the commission in November 2011. That was a useful opportunity for commissioners and the two junior Ministers to cover a full range of areas of shared interest and engagement between the commission and OFMDFM, including many of the topics to which we have made reference here. During the consultation period, we will continue to engage not only with the Department but with a whole range of others that have an interest in such matters.
296. In the context of their budget preparations and statements, we raised with all the Departments the ease with which they seemed to be able to say that nothing in their budgets was likely to have an adverse impact on anyone who is mentioned in section 75. They said that in circumstances in which, in many cases, there were going to be significant reductions in budget. Our argument was not against the fact that there were going to be reductions in budget, because we all live in the real world and we know that

- that is happening. Our concern, which is reflected again in the EQIA on the draft Programme for Government, is that the intention is that everyone in the nine section 75 categories will benefit from the application of the Programme for Government. There is no reference even to the possibility that the necessary application of budget reductions may in some circumstances have an adverse impact, not only by virtue of the reduction of the money but by virtue of the fact that some categories of people may be more significantly impacted and affected than others by a particular policy decision. Intuitively, that does not seem to ring true, and it would be a surprise if no one were so affected. That was one of our disappointments with the EQIA for the Programme for Government. I recognise the difficulty of developing a high-level Programme for Government. It cannot incorporate absolutely everything, and I see how difficult it is to have an EQIA at that level of policy. Nonetheless, there are some areas in which there are specific elements, and there is another reconfiguration of health and social care provision to secure better outcomes.
297. The devil is undoubtedly lurking in the detail on that one. We will need to see, in the general consultation and later, some teasing out of the extent to which all the Departments, as public authorities, are conscious of their responsibilities under the legislation, so they look at whether there are adverse impacts and how they can be alleviated or set aside by policy variations. So we have been, and will continue to be, extensively engaged throughout this process and into the future.
298. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** Prior to the publication of the draft Programme for Government, we had conversations with various Ministers about what we had hoped they would ensure would be in the Programme for Government. We are disappointed at some of the gaps. We will go back and have those conversations again. We will put our submission into the consultation. Although the template that has been put out is restrictive, we will put in a detailed submission with it.
299. **Mr Humphrey:** Obviously, there is a greater opportunity to talk to civil servants and officials than to Ministers. It is important that you talk to them. Is there an ongoing process by which you are also liaising with officials?
300. **Mrs Lewsley-Mooney:** We liaise with officials in each Department. We are looking in particular at the four Departments that I outlined earlier. We have constant contact with officials in them and, when we get the opportunity, with the Minister as well.
301. **Ms Keatinge:** Your question, Mr Humphrey, is about the importance of ongoing liaison with Ministers and officials to make our concerns obvious at the highest levels. We have ongoing contact with OFMDFM officials and are in conversation with them about how best to conduct the consultation on the older people's strategy so that we do not simply, in the shorthand, have a number of public meetings that some people attend, but we do not hear the hardest to be heard or those who find it most difficult to get out. We want a process of consultation that will increasingly reach the views of those people who do not tend to come to such public meetings.
302. We have already had meetings with the junior Ministers. I have been in post only since November. We have very useful minutes of that meeting with the junior Ministers, and such meetings will be routinely scheduled. They have indicated that the door is open for further conversation and discussion on any important issues.
303. We have also proposed engagement with OFMDFM generally on our governance structures to make sure that we get them right at an early stage, so that the only thing that you will hear from the Commissioner for Older People is about older people. Therefore, that ongoing liaison with the junior Ministers about governance and the older people's strategy is proving fruitful and useful.

304. **Mr B McAllister:** Let me say briefly, Mr Humphrey, that the normal arm's-length body contact with the Department is also followed by the Victims' Commission. At a basic level, there are accountability meetings between civil servants and our officials and liaison meetings with the commissioners. In addition to that, since last September, the Victims' Commission has had monthly meetings with the junior Ministers and, every second month, a meeting with the First Minister and the deputy First Minister, who join the meeting for a while. A particular concern is the setting up of the new victims' service. However, our discussions range wider across the victim agenda.
305. Since then, we have also set up, at the Ministers' suggestion, a transition group that meets frequently. That comprises senior civil servants, the Victims' Commission, the Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund. That anticipates the great changes that are about to come about in the victims sector over the next few years that need to be managed in a strategic way. I mentioned that earlier. That is a lot of activity, and we are pleased about it.
306. As a society, we are probably still on a learning curve about devolved government, and the interaction between Ministers, people such as us, special advisers and civil servants. That is still evolving and at times may get a bit confused. That is not a complaint; it is an observation about evolution.
307. More recently, we established direct contact with the Health Minister and are pleased with his commitment on the impact of victim issues on the health programme. We are also, of course, in contact with the Justice Minister. So at this stage we are satisfied with the quality and level of our contact with government.
308. **The Chairperson:** Do any other members have questions? No? Well, that was easy. Thank you very much, commissioners and your support staff, for that briefing. It has been very useful.
- Obviously, nobody on the Committee believes — or I do not think that they do — that the PFG is perfect. At least we have tried to progress it and give as much information to the Ministers and to the Executive as is reasonably possible. That is our job. Individually, members have their own thoughts, and collectively we may be able to put together a Committee response as well. However, at least your contribution has been very worthwhile and helpful. I accept and thank you for your honesty in putting forward your points of view and for the manner in which you have done so. Thank you all very much for that.
309. **Mr B Collins:** Chairman, this is the last time that I will appear before the Committee with the Equality Commission because my term ends in a couple of weeks' time. I take the opportunity to thank you and your predecessor for the courtesy that has been extended over the past six and a half years that I have been here.
310. **The Chairperson:** I was not aware of that, Bob, but I, on behalf of the Committee, wish you well, wherever the world takes you to now. I am sure that it will be just as interesting as the Equality Commission.
311. **Mr B Collins:** Even though I will miss the occasional joust. *[Laughter.]*
312. **Mr Spratt:** I still wish you very well, Bob. The occasional joust does no harm. *[Laughter.]* Do not worry: I will keep your successor on his or her toes as well.
313. **Mr B Collins:** They will be warned. *[Laughter.]*

18 January 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
 Mr Trevor Clarke
 Mr Colum Eastwood
 Mr William Humphrey
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Mr Francie Molloy
 Mr Mike Nesbitt
 Mr George Robinson
 Ms Cairtriona Ruane
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mr Brett Hannam *Strategic Investment Board*
 Mr Martin Spollen *Board*
 Mr Scott Wilson

314. **The Chairperson:** The Strategic Investment Board (SIB) will brief us on its work and on the draft investment strategy. I welcome Scott Wilson, Brett Hannam and Martin Spollen. Members have a copy of the paper that you submitted. If you would like to, please brief us on that and leave yourselves available for questions.
315. **Mr Brett Hannam (Strategic Investment Board):** Good afternoon. My name is Brett Hannam. I am the chief operating officer and interim chief executive of the Strategic Investment Board. My colleagues are Martin Spollen, who is responsible for the investment strategy in the SIB and Scott Wilson, who is head of the asset management unit.
316. **The Chairperson:** I am sorry, Brett. Before you go any further, I should remind members that the session is being recorded by Hansard.
317. **Mr Hannam:** I want to begin by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to present to you. The SIB is very aware of the Committee's important role in scrutiny, consultation and policy development. I hope that my colleagues and I will be able to answer your questions. Of course, if there are any areas on which the information is not immediately to hand, we will come back to you in writing as soon as possible.
318. The briefing paper that we provided to the Committee in advance of the meeting sets out the three main areas of the SIB's work: the development of the investment strategy; the provision of direct support to departmental programmes and projects; and the asset management unit. The Executive published the draft investment strategy on 17 November 2011, and it is currently out for consultation. We are working with colleagues in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) who are consulting on the draft Programme for Government and the economic strategy, and we contribute to their public consultation events. We are also running a series of bilateral sessions to seek the views of key stakeholders. The Committee will be aware that the announcement of the Irish Government's decision to postpone their contribution to the A5 project will require the investment strategy to be recast. We are working with relevant Departments to inform Ministers' decisions and discussions on that issue.
319. The SIB currently supports almost 50 projects with a total value of some £4 billion. As the briefing paper describes the type of support that we provide and lists the projects, I will not go into them in any detail now. However, it may be worth noting that the SIB works solely at the invitation of Departments and in roles agreed with them.
320. The asset management unit was formally established in the SIB in 2011 and has responsibility for achieving targets for capital generation of £100 million over the current CSR period. Achieving that target in the current

- economic climate is exceptionally challenging. Scott Wilson will be happy to provide you with an update on progress to date if the Committee would find that useful. In parallel, the unit is also working on the development of an asset management strategy and departmental asset management plans. The unit's final task is the completion of a central register of assets that will enable their more effective management.
321. Finally, the Committee will be aware that the SIB manages the investment strategy delivery tracking system, which monitors progress on the delivery of programmes and projects. The system issues monthly reports to each MLA, and we hope that you find those useful. If you think that any aspects of the operation could be improved, we would be keen to learn what those are.
322. **Mr Scott Wilson (Strategic Investment Board):** I am happy to give an update on the asset management unit. It commenced work at the end of August 2011 and has three permanent and four temporary members of staff. Our first task was to gather information on assets. The information is available but held in lots of different places, so we wanted to bring it together in what we call the central asset register. We use what is called the electronic property information management system (ePIMS), which was piloted by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) in Britain. To date, six out of the 12 Departments have their information, at various stages, on the ePIMS system. We have met all Departments, so we have begun the process of everyone getting their information on to that. The process will, we hope, be finished by the end of the summer.
323. In parallel, we are working with each Department to create an asset management plan that will spell out areas in which they could be more efficient in their use of assets and areas in which assets that may become surplus over time could be disposed of.
324. Finally, we are preparing a paper for the Budget review group's meeting next week. It will give recommendations on areas in which we may be able to deliver the £100 million over the remainder of the CSR period.
325. **Mr Martin Spollen (Strategic Investment Board):** I will not take up too much of your time. I know that you want to have time for questions. The draft investment strategy has been published and, as Brett said, is currently out for public consultation. If there are any questions, I will take them as we go round the table.
326. **The Chairperson:** The asset management unit appears to have been brought forward, or at least progressed, in recent months. Originally, there was a view that some Departments' property could be sold off or made better use of. I assume that, because of the downturn in market values, any sales came to a stop fairly quickly. At what is the asset management unit looking in particular? Does the unit take a strategic view of all the properties or pick out properties that could, perhaps, be sold, or disposed of, at an earlier stage? I am trying to figure out its exact role.
327. **Mr Scott Wilson:** I will start by explaining the process of what we have done to date. There are over 400 assets on what is called the surplus asset trawl system, which is managed by Land and Property Services (LPS). Those range from small strips of land that Roads Service no longer needs to quite sizeable sites. For example, some of the former new town lands are on the system. We have focused on what we think has a chance of selling in the current climate. We all know that values have gone down. What might have been valued at £1 million per acre at the height of the market is, at best, now worth £100,000 per acre. In some cases, for what are called phase 2 housing lands, it will be worth only its agricultural value, which is £10,000 per acre.
328. Very little, if any, debt is available in the market at present. In the past, you might have been able to sell a £5 million site for housing and the bank

- might have lent 70%, but that is now very rare. We are looking for quality sites in good areas that may still have a chance of raising debt. Otherwise, we are relying on cash buyers, probably in the £100,000 to £500,000 range, where cash may be available. Again, however, that is for people who have cash, and they are looking for quality at a premium. We are filtering what has a bankable chance of happening and trying not to be unrealistic about what does not have a chance of being sold. We look at a broad spectrum of assets, everything from land and property to assets that may have an income stream.
329. **The Chairperson:** Have you categorised some of those assets already?
330. **Mr Scott Wilson:** We are building a database that we will use to provide advice to the Budget review group next week. It will be a case of outlining what land and property we think could be sold and the other areas that we want the group to consider as a possible way of generating the £100 million. We consider not only selling but ways of re-engineering the way in which we invest our capital, which could create additional capital for the Executive without selling anything. Those are some of the areas that we focus on.
331. **The Chairperson:** Brett, will you talk me through the process and how the SIB is involved in projects? As briefly as you can but giving as much information as possible, will you explain the SIB's role in, for example, the Lisanelly shared educational campus programme?
332. **Mr Hannam:** The Lisanelly campus project is being directed by the Department of Education. It comprises a plan to construct an educational campus on the former military site at Lisanelly in Omagh, which was gifted to the Executive as part of the peace process. The SIB's involvement is that it provided the Department of Education with a programme director, Hazel Jones, who is highly experienced in the delivery of high-value capital projects, with a particular bent towards educational projects. She has been given full responsibility by the Department of Education, working within its structures, for the delivery of the programme. Associated with that, we also provided some enabling funding at the outset of the project, before it becomes eligible for capital funding, to enable the project to progress. That is primarily in specialist areas such as the assessment of the decontamination requirement for the site. Our additional involvement is as part of the management and oversight structures; I sit on the programme board chaired by the Minister of Education.
333. **The Chairperson:** If the overall project commences, will the SIB have any ongoing work or continued role?
334. **Mr Hannam:** We expect to continue with the project director role. If any areas in which we could provide additional support were identified by the programme director or the Department of Education —
335. **The Chairperson:** Give me some examples of possible ongoing work.
336. **Mr Hannam:** Do you mean in the delivery of the programme?
337. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
338. **Mr Hannam:** At the moment, the programme has reached a stage at which detailed design work is being done, an outline planning application has been made, and the third stage of the consultation has begun. Through Hazel Jones, we are managing all aspects of that work. At a later stage, depending on the financing route that is decided for the project, further involvement might arise. If, for example, private finance were to be used in any element of the project, I expect that we would be asked to help with that.
339. **Ms Ruane:** Tá fáilte romhaibh. You are very welcome to our Committee. I want to put on record my appreciation for the work that you do. Obviously, we can all improve on certain areas, but you have made a contribution, along with Departments, in helping to spend money that, in the past, was sent back. In my previous role, I had a very positive

- relationship with the SIB. In fact, I initiated the Lisanelly arrangements and chaired the previous board, and I think that it worked very well. I know that you are also involved in the Long Kesh site, which the entire Committee visited. I look forward to working with you in whatever capacity we can, because none of us wants any money to be returned. Scott, you mentioned how difficult it is to sell assets at the moment. That is a real difficulty for every Department. We need all the creative and innovative thinking that we can get to address that.
340. I have found the tracking document that you send to every MLA very useful, and I would appreciate your continuing to send those to keep us up to date with what is happening in our constituencies.
341. **Mr Nesbitt:** Gentlemen, thank you. I want to ask about asset management, so it is back to you, Scott. I would like to tease out a couple of points. Taxpayers would probably be a little surprised by the lack, heretofore, of a central asset register, given that they will feel that they paid for it in the first place. How do you give the taxpayer confidence that you have everything on your list?
342. **Mr Scott Wilson:** We are going through a process. Each Department has its own asset register. It is just that we do not have all 12 in one place. The national asset register is produced every five years, but it holds an address and value but little else. The kind of information that we look for is whether a property is freehold or leasehold, when the lease expires, how much it costs to run the building and what is its planning context. We seek to find every piece of information that you could ever want to know about a property, right down to title maps. We want that to be available on a web-based, electronic system that all Departments can access, and we want all Departments to be able to access other Departments' information as well. For example, all of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) estate is now on the ePims register. That is an achievement: moving information from the Department's Excel-based system to a central system. We know that everything is on the system and that the majority of information that we will need to start working with that Department is there.
343. Similarly, all information for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), apart from cost information, is on the system. So we know that we are trawling everything that they know about. However, what I cannot answer for is whether there are things that they do not know about. That will come through the process. Once each Department has completed its work, we will run a validation process in which we quality assure all the information and ensure that it matches their records.
344. **Mr Nesbitt:** Are you anywhere near having a grand total of asset value?
345. **Mr Scott Wilson:** I am not. Any total would be slightly skewed because, for example, roads have a value, and so you would have to ask yourself what the value of a road was. In the short term, we are focused on land and property.
346. **Mr Nesbitt:** Brett, how would you categorise your relationship with the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA)?
347. **Mr Hannam:** We do not have any direct contact with NAMA. I believe that that is done through named individuals in OFMDFM and DFP who have been given responsibility for that. My colleagues are very aware of NAMA's activities, and we get good briefings on the agency from the Department of Finance and Personnel.
348. **Mr Nesbitt:** Is NAMA well aware of your activities?
349. **Mr Hannam:** It is aware that we have a programme for the disposal of assets, but our programme is much smaller than theirs.
350. **Mr Molloy:** Thank you for your presentation. I am looking at the list of projects in which the SIB is involved, and there is quite a spread. At what stage, and for what reasons, do you get involved?
351. **Mr Hannam:** As I said in my briefing paper, the SIB works only at the

- invitation of a Department. We have no right to interfere unless asked to do so. Some Departments have well-developed mechanisms for the delivery of capital projects. Roads Service, for example, has little need for the type of support that we provide. Other Departments have less experience of delivering major capital projects and, therefore, would invite us in at quite an early stage to assist them with the formulation of their investment delivery plans and work on specific projects. If a project runs into trouble, we might be invited, in a troubleshooting role, to assist in bringing that project back on to the rails. I cannot say that we go through any standard process in engaging with Departments. However, regardless of the process, it is initiated by a Department coming to us and seeking support.
352. **Mr Molloy:** I was a bit surprised that the move of DARD's headquarters was not one of the issues that the SIB was dealing with, because it is a big operation.
353. I am not sure whether I am right, but I think that you are involved in Arc21 and the North West Region Waste Management Group. I thought that the SIB was involved and had a management role in SWaMP 2008 as well.
354. **Mr Hannam:** No, SWaMP is the only one of the three waste management projects for which we do not provide a project manager. We provide project managers for the North West Region Waste Management Group and the Arc21 project. However, we do not have input into the SWaMP project. As part of the waste programme, we also provide the waste programme delivery support unit, which is a small unit in the Department of the Environment that provides central support to all three waste management programmes.
355. **Mr Spratt:** I apologise for being late. My earlier Committee was on an outside visit. Thank you for your presentation. I think that I heard most of it.
356. I see that, to minimise the impact of funding reductions, you reviewed the operating model and reduced the sum spent on outside consultancy. How much was the spend on external consultancy, and by how much was it reduced? You state that you have had to bring some consultancy in-house by employing a couple of people on short-term contracts. What has been the saving to the public purse?
357. During the past number of months, the Committee has been seriously concerned about the high cost of decontamination, particularly on former military sites. Figures appear to have been reached without there being any competition. What advice can you give on decontamination? What expertise is used to ensure that the public purse is not being ripped off? It is blatantly obvious that, at present, there is an element of that.
358. **Mr Hannam:** Perhaps I can answer the second part of that question. It exemplifies how we work, so it might answer the first part as well. As you correctly point out, sites inherited from the military are heavily contaminated. One issue that we identified is exactly that which you identified: the firms responsible for assessing the decontamination requirements are, in many cases, the same firms that will bid for the work. We worked with the Environment Agency on the problem. Together, we decided that we will employ our own experts in that field. Adverts will be issued shortly for two decontamination officers whose posts will be funded jointly by the SIB and the Environment Agency. That will address the moral hazard of the same companies both assessing and meeting the decontamination requirement. Therefore, we hope, or intend, that, in that way, we will be able to drive down the cost of that very expensive work.
359. You asked about the ways in which we have tried to reduce the cost of consultancy. We have pursued a policy of trying to replace consultants from the big companies with individuals who are brought in to do specific pieces of work on short-term contracts. In the current model, we recruited six associate advisers on zero hours

contracts. They can be deployed at short notice on specific, focused pieces of work, without the necessity of our going through an expensive procurement process or paying the higher rates of standard consultancies. Our preliminary evaluation of the approach, which, so far, is only a pilot employing six people, is that we are delivering savings of around 50%. We are getting people to work for around 50% of what would have been paid to an equivalent consultant from a large company. We intend to evaluate that pilot fully. If those results are borne out, we will continue with it and, perhaps, expand it.

360. **Mr Spratt:** That was a revelation about decontamination and one that certainly bears out what some Committee members thought, too. I am glad to hear you say that and that you are looking into the issue. You said that most military sites were heavily contaminated, but some of those sites are hundreds of acres in size. Not all sites are contaminated. Some are in agricultural use, and so on. There are small pockets of decontamination where helicopters landed for fuel, or firing ranges and suchlike were in use. Therefore, the contaminated areas are not large.
361. We should be seriously concerned about the decontamination issue. What moves have you made to ensure that the Executive are aware of your concerns? Have those concerns been highlighted to Ministers?
362. **Mr Hannam:** We report back through our normal channels on the work that we are doing in that area. I believe that Ministers are acutely aware of the problems, particularly Ministers in OFMDFM who have responsibility for those strategic sites. They receive regular briefings on those sites from their officials, and we feed into those. So I have little doubt that they are aware of the issue.
363. **The Chairperson:** OK. Thank you very much for your briefing. As Caitríona said, your updates are always very welcome. Indeed, we would very much appreciate your forwarding us any update or information that you think might be of use to the Committee.
364. **Mr Hannam:** Thank you.

1 February 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Trevor Clarke
 Mr Colum Eastwood
 Mr William Humphrey
 Mr Francie Molloy
 Mr Mike Nesbitt
 Mr George Robinson
 Ms Caitríona Ruane

365. **The Deputy Chairperson:** The next item on our agenda is the Committee response to the draft Programme for Government. The response is focused mainly on OFMDFM's commitments. The draft response brings together issues raised during the evidence sessions with Ministers and with the commissioners whom we took evidence from. Members will recall that we asked Statutory Committees in their response to us to focus on three key areas: gaps in the PFG; milestones and outcomes; and progress monitoring mechanisms. We hope to have most, if not all, the responses from other Committees available for members' consideration at next week's meeting. Do members have any comments on the draft response from this Committee as it stands at the moment? Are any changes necessary or have there been any omissions or deletions that we need to consider?
366. **Ms Ruane:** I have just a couple of points. I think that good work has been done by officials, and I welcome that. However, I think that we need to distinguish between our specific responsibilities as the OFMDFM Committee, and all the other Departments. We have to do that because we could be straying across a line that is not ours to stray across. I think that some of the things in the response could possibly do that. Health, education and various other aspects are not within our remit. Our remit is to ensure that there is a co-ordinating role, that Departments work together, and to encourage that. We need to be careful. We also need to distil our response down into those matters that are within our remit. We should highlight the importance of our co-ordinating role.
367. **Sinn Féin's position** is that a longer document is not necessarily a better document. Sometimes, it is better to have a concise, short, sharp document that does not include everything. We are not against inclusions or mentions, but, if it becomes too lengthy and big, it will become confusing. We suggest that it should be kept short and sharp and that the detail should then be put into the departmental operational plans and work plans. Those operational plans will be important and should be scrutinised by each Committee.
368. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I think that the intention is that the specific commitments for OFMDFM will be front and centre of our response and that the other Committee responses that we receive will be appended to our submission. Clerk, is that correct?
369. **The Committee Clerk:** Yes.
370. **Mr Eastwood:** I am happy enough with that. The response is not that lengthy, and most of the stuff that I can see in the document — unless I have missed something — is within our remit. I am happy for us to report the comments of other Committees in an appendix to our response.
371. **The Deputy Chairperson:** It is intended that the Committee will play a co-ordinating role in passing on the other Committee's responses. Are Committee members content at this stage?
372. **Ms Ruane:** What does "content" mean? Are we agreeing this?
373. **The Deputy Chairperson:** No. We will await the responses from the other Statutory Committees and include those in the report. We will give further

- consideration to that next week. Clerk, is that correct?
374. **The Committee Clerk:** Yes. Are there specific issues that you would like to run through?
375. **Ms Ruane:** I suppose that I have some questions about the child poverty targets in paragraph 4.1. I know that there is some discussion about outcomes modelling, and I think that we need to hear what other people are saying about that. I have some questions about how those percentages are looked at and used.
376. I also have some questions about salaries in the North of Ireland and those in England, Scotland and Wales. Further discussion needs to be had, and I would like to hear what other Committees say.
377. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Are there any other comments on specific points in the Committee's draft response?
378. **Ms Ruane:** Sorry; there was one other thing that I forgot to raise. I think that we should put something in about gender targets. I am not sure exactly what we should put in, and I would welcome some advice. The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the issue of gender, and there are appalling gaps at every level. It would be remiss of us not to recommend something in that area, whether on women in public life, women in the Assembly, etc.
379. **The Deputy Chairperson:** As there are no other comments, we will collate the responses from the other Statutory Committees for further consideration next week.
380. **The Committee Clerk:** If we can come up with recommendations, we will track the changes and circulate it on that basis so that everyone can see it. You may want to wait to see the responses first.
381. **Mr Molloy:** As a preamble to our response, it may be worth making the point that the Programme for Government does not deal with every minute issue. It is an overarching document, and that should be reflected. The Commission for Victims and Survivors commented that there was insufficient reference to victims and survivors. In some cases, an overall reference is all that is required as recognition, and it does not need to be included in the detail. That will give people a sense of it. If something is not raised, that does not mean that it has been left out. It will be in the Programme for Government.
382. **The Deputy Chairperson:** OK. If members can have a —
383. **Mr Eastwood:** I would like to see the wording of that beforehand because we need to be specific in our aims and objectives. The Government do, anyway. However, I am happy to leave it and we will look at it when it comes back.
384. **The Deputy Chairperson:** If members can fully read the latest draft for next week, we will get into those specifics and nail down some of the wording then.

8 February 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
 Mr Trevor Clarke
 Mr Colum Eastwood
 Mr William Humphrey
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Mr Francie Molloy
 Mr Mike Nesbitt
 Ms Caitríona Ruane

385. **The Chairperson:** We will now consider the Programme for Government (PFG). You will find in your papers a copy of the Committee's draft response to the PFG, which was considered at the meeting of 1 February. There are a few differences in the document: the commentary is in capitals, and the proposed new text immediately after section 2.4 is in a different typeface. Subject to members' views, that new text might form the basis for references that the Committee might make to other Committees' responses. In today's tabled items, there are further responses from the Committee for the Environment, the Committee for Regional Development and the Committee for Employment and Learning, bringing the total number of responses to nine.
386. You will be aware that the planned date for the Executive's debate on the draft PFG is 12 March. I certainly hope to have our response finalised by next week's meeting, because that will enable us to get our report printed and published for 22 February or 23 February.
387. **Mr Eastwood:** Is the deadline still 22 February?
388. **The Chairperson:** Yes. I think that we can submit the report and, if necessary, get it printed at a later stage.
389. At an early stage we considered the possibility of having a take-note debate on the Committee's report. However, I suggested that having a take-note

debate too close to the main debate on 12 March would probably mean that it would not have the same emphasis. I know that there was an earlier indication that we would not go ahead with the take-note debate if the main debate were to come up in reasonable time. Are members still comfortable with that?

390. **Members indicated assent. The Chairperson:** Members, how would you like the responses from the other Committees to be included in the report? Do you want a summary of each one in just our report, or do you want them to stand alone in the overall report?
391. **Mr Eastwood:** We could append them.
392. **The Chairperson:** That is probably the easiest way. Are we content with that?
393. **Mr Molloy:** They are those Committees' responses.
394. **Mr Eastwood:** Given what we heard from the Equality Commission today, do we need to add anything about its point of view on disability and race?
395. **The Chairperson:** I was going to go through our own report, because I have a few wee suggestions to make as well, Colum. It may be useful if we go through it now. Is there anything in paragraphs 1.1, 1.2 or 1.3?
396. Section 2 covers paragraphs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4. Clerk, is there anything on those that you need to comment on?
397. **The Committee Clerk:** The only thing would be that the numbering will change slightly, and the section that has text in a different font will become section 3. That is just a technical issue, however.
398. **The Chairperson:** OK. Section 3 is "Strategic Priorities".
399. I am sorry; we need to deal with the section in red about responses from the Statutory Committees.

400. **The Committee Clerk:** That is just in a different typeface in members' copies.
401. **The Chairperson:** Sorry, maybe it is slightly different in yours. The paragraph starts:
- "At its meeting on 8 and 15 November 2012".*
402. That is just saying that we will put the responses into appendices. Are members content with that?

Members indicated assent.

403. **The Chairperson:** I had a discussion with the Committee Clerk about paragraph 3.2, which states:
- "The Committee would like to see further detail on how departments will be held to account for delivering their key commitments, particularly in cross-cutting areas."*
404. I suggest that it may be useful for us to include examples of cross-cutting issues. The Committee Clerk came up with a couple of suggestions.
405. **The Committee Clerk:** The integrated affordable childcare strategy and measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion could be referenced as examples.
406. **Mr Eastwood:** The Ilex One Plan could also be included. That comes under our remit in a lot of ways, but there are 11 different catalytic projects in the Programme for Government that cut right across different Departments. The Programme for Government says that it wants to develop the scheme, but it is very much a cross-cutting plan for the city of Derry and may be one that you could throw in.
407. **Mr Molloy:** The other that one I can think of, which was raised several times at different Committees, is the issue of agricultural waste and energy from waste. That maybe needs a line about the cross-departmental roles across the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and others. In DARD, for instance, the next stage in funding for slurry holding tanks will be to fund

anaerobic digestion. Maybe that comes under DETI or other Departments. I do not know where we would include that point, but there is a need to discuss cross-departmental roles to ensure that waste, particularly agricultural waste, and the energy from waste is properly dealt with.

408. **The Chairperson:** Members, if other specific issues come to mind, maybe you would pass them to the Committee Clerk.
409. **Mr Molloy:** All Departments work in silos, and the only way that cross-departmental working will happen is if there is a collective line from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) trying to generate that thinking across Departments and gets them thinking outside their own Committee and box.
410. **Mr A Maskey:** On a general point, I do not think that the Committee has really decided on or thrashed out its views on the type of Programme of Government document that we want as an end product. There is an argument for having a shorter version for presentation and so on that covers all the general principles, but that has to be underpinned by all the necessary operations plans from each of the Departments, including those, for example, on delivery and setting specific targets, strategies, time frames and so on. I certainly favour a shorter version over a longer document that contains everything. In a way, I am easy with it, but OFMDFM currently seems to prefer the relatively shorter version. Of course, that is clearly on the understanding that it covers, as is illustrated throughout, the building blocks. More importantly, each Department wants a Programme for Government agreed on, and each Department has to come up with their strategies, policies, time frames and so on for implementation. I support that or something close to it. I have no difficulty at all with putting some things in by way of illustration, but we could still be in danger of wanting everything in the document.

411. For example, I do not want to misrepresent what Brendan McAllister said when he came to the Committee, but I thought that he said that he was generally happy with the Victims' Commission's discussions with OFMDFM but that the commission would have preferred much greater representation throughout the document. In other words, the commission needed to be named more often. I do not want to misrepresent what Brendan said, but, by and large, he said that the commission was, relatively speaking, happy enough so far and that it is having substantive discussions but that it would like to see its name referred to more often. Older people's advocates said something similar.
412. There is a presentational issue, which, I presume, could be dealt with. I have no difficulty in putting something in that illustrates our general points, but I would like us to draw attention to the issue that people are raising, perhaps in a preface to our response to OFMDFM. Some may be "relatively satisfied" with the substance of the Programme for Government, its direction of travel and its intentions. Evelyn said earlier that the Equality Commission thinks that it is going in the right direction but that it might want additional things to be included. Some of those additional things are presentational, and some are more substantive and need further consideration, such as the types of legislation that Evelyn mentioned. I am trying to work out how we frame our response, rather than just going through everything —
413. **The Chairperson:** In fairness, Alex, the draft response that has come here so far is pretty short. All I was trying to do was add a few examples to put a wee bit more flesh on the bones. We cannot go into the entire detail of a very substantial report.
414. **Mr Eastwood:** I like to see detail, and I like to see details written down, because our job as a Committee is to hold a Department or government to account. It is difficult to do that when a plan is produced that is not that detailed in some areas. It is important that we point that out. I do not know how many different parties are around this table, and I know that we will not all agree, but we have been given a number of examples from people who have given evidence to us. It is important that they are in the document. We will all thrash out what we think about it in debate in the Chamber, but I like to see details written down, to see them targeted and to see the money beside them. That is the only way that things will ever get done.
415. **Mr Nesbitt:** I am sorry, Colum, but I will appear to speak against you a bit.
416. **Mr Eastwood:** Go ahead, Mike, we are in different parties.
417. **Mr Nesbitt:** One of the difficulties the previous time was that there were more than 300 measures of the effectiveness of the Programme for Government. For example, if you are on the Victims' Commission, you report to OFMDFM as your sponsor body, but, clearly, there are other Departments that can help victims, including the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), the Department for Social Development (DSD) and DARD. As I found, the trouble was that, if you went to, say, the Health Department with an idea, it did not assess on paper whether that was a good or a bad idea. It looked at its targets, and if you ticked a box from its targets, you were in, and if you did not, you were told, "Sorry, you are out." The difficulty, Colum, is that there is a danger of being too prescriptive in saying, "Here are all the things, and here is all the money". I understand that you want to be able to hold people to account, but the danger is that you tie yourselves down for four years with no flexibility just to say that somebody has thought of a really good idea.
418. **Mr Eastwood:** That is fair enough, but I will go back to the example that I used earlier. The One Plan for Derry was launched with a great fanfare by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and it is great to have that support. It is a major document and a major plan. However, all it says in the Programme

- for Government is that they are going to “develop” it. I do not know what that means, and nobody in Derry knows what that means. Nobody in Derry knows what is going to happen to the 11 big projects that are supposed to be going on. People need to see a bit more flesh on the bones; that would be useful. That is one example, but obviously, there are others.
419. **Mr A Maskey:** I do not think that that is a great example. You said that there are 11 core components of the document. It is impossible to expect the Programme for Government to contain details on all those, including all the time frames and specific targets. Do not get me wrong: I fully support the One Plan and want to make sure that every Department, including the Department for Social Development, which I work with, fulfils their commitments in the Programme for Government on that. However, I do not want to see a document that contains all that detail. The One Plan represents Derry, and it is a hugely important development, but there are a whole lot of other developments.
420. **The Chairperson:** Hold on, members. We should not get too bogged down in this.
421. **Mr Eastwood:** I do not want every issue covered; I just want more than one word on the plan.
422. **Mr A Maskey:** That is a presentational issue.
423. **The Chairperson:** I made the point about that so that we could show some examples of the cross-cutting themes; I did not want to get into the overall specifics of the PFG. To be fair, paragraph 3.3 of our submission states:
“The Committee would also highlight the importance of producing detailed delivery plans for each of the commitments contained within the draft PFG.”
424. So, we are saying that we would like to see detailed delivery plans for whatever is in the PFG. However, they do not have to be in the PFG, but they must be seen at some stage. Obviously, we are highlighting that. Colum, we are trying to ensure that the document is not something that is unworkable.
425. **Mr Eastwood:** I am quite happy with our draft response. I just do not want it to contain any less.
426. **The Chairperson:** Let us keep going through it. If there are any other issues about the cross-cutting theme, let us have them. I am assuming that you are content with the issues that we have highlighted so far.
427. Paragraph 3.4 states:
“[The Committee may wish to add further strategic issues following consideration of other Committees’ responses.]”
428. We do not need that, do we, if we are just going to append those responses?
429. **The Committee Clerk:** If that is what members want to do. I know that members may not have had a chance to consider all the other Committee responses. However, we can take that bit out.
430. **The Chairperson:** They are their responses.
431. **Ms Ruane:** Did we name race and disability in the same way as age discrimination legislation?
432. **The Chairperson:** Where is that?
433. **Ms Ruane:** Sorry, I am jumping ahead.
434. **The Chairperson:** Paragraph 4.1 is the next one that I have to discuss. There was an issue at the end of paragraph 4.1, which states:
“However, the Committee would like consideration given to producing Northern Ireland specific targets, which could then be incorporated into the PFG.”
435. I raised that as a concern with the Committee Clerk, because I assumed that you could not set your targets any lower than those in the UK Child Poverty Act simply because they were in legislation. However, the Committee Clerk explained that the issue of the Committee wanting its own separate targets was that, if the child poverty

- targets in the Child Poverty Act were reduced by 10%, that might mean that Northern Ireland would not reduce its targets at all if the reduction in the rest of the UK were large enough. That is OK by me, provided that is what is behind it.
436. **Mr A Maskey:** I think that the operative thing for me is the phrase “consideration given”. As you rightly point out, by the stroke of a pen you could, in theory, virtually eradicate child poverty here without doing a damn thing. That is not what we want to do, and I presume that OFMDFM would not be entitled to do that. I am happy enough with that as it is at the moment. For me, the essence of it is that we will give consideration to it and see how and if that circle can be squared. You need some type of measure, whether it is the outcomes model or whatever. However, you need some device, so let us give consideration to it. I am happy enough with that.
437. **Ms Ruane:** We flagged up another thing. I have forgotten who made the presentation. Was it the group that discussed child poverty? The 10% can hide an awful lot. The child poverty rate in Belfast is 11%, yet it has some of the most disadvantaged areas in the whole of the North. We need to watch the statistics. I agree with Alex. We are only considering this; we are not saying that it definitely has to happen.
438. **The Chairperson:** OK. Do you understand the point I was making? I am concerned that we cannot set a lower target. I think that we may need to specify a reason for saying that, because it seems a wee bit bland to me. Alex, you said that the UK target for child poverty could be met without making any difference in Northern Ireland. We need to make that clear, because I certainly did not pick it up from my reading.
439. **Mr A Maskey:** We could maybe reference local circumstances.
440. **The Committee Clerk:** We can come back with some wording on that next week.
441. **The Chairperson:** OK. Paragraph 4.2 of our draft reports states:
- “The Commission for Victims and Survivors felt that there was insufficient reference in the draft PfG to dealing with the past.”
442. However, it did not make any suggestions.
443. **Mr A Maskey:** Chair, I think that that provides us with an opportunity to put in an expanded view that deals not just with victims. A number of organisations made similar points, and I think that we should relay to OFMDFM that a number of organisations explained to us that they believe that there is insufficient reference to their needs. It is just like what is written in paragraph 4.2, but more organisations than the Commission for Victims and Survivors made that point.
444. I asked whether that was a presentational issue or a substantive point. We have to be concerned about the substantive improvements and the work that needs to be done. If that means making another two or three specific references, we should put them in. Surely they could be accommodated.
445. **Mr Nesbitt:** Those organisations were looking for reassurance.
446. **Mr A Maskey:** Yes. Maybe that is what we should do. Perhaps we should say something like a number of organisations, including the Commission for Victims and Survivors and whatever other organisations we want to reference from our notes or from Hansard, expressed to us that they believe that there is insufficient reference to their organisations or to their particular needs. We should ask whether reassurance on that can be given. We could say something like that.
447. **The Chairperson:** To be fair, Alex, paragraph 4.4 of the draft report states:
- “The Commissioner for Children and Young People highlighted...significant gaps in the... PfG.”
448. So that means that we have referenced some of those concerns.
449. **Ms Ruane:** Am I right in saying that paragraphs 4.2 and 4.6 seem to be repetitive?

450. **The Chairperson:** They relate to two separate issues.
451. **Mr Molloy:** As Alex said, we should say that a number of different groups made that point, instead of highlighting only the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors, as is the case in paragraph 4.2. We need to relate that a number of different groups gave that evidence.
452. **The Chairperson:** We have tried to do that in a couple of areas, Francie. Paragraph 4.4 deals with the Children's Commissioner, and paragraph 4.5 deals with the Commissioner for Older People. We have tried to deal with all of them.
453. **Mr T Clarke:** Why not take them all out and make a general reference to all the organisations in one paragraph?
454. **The Chairperson:** I think that what we have is a bit more specific.
455. **Mr T Clarke:** They all said the same thing.
456. **Mr Eastwood:** No, they did not.
457. **Mr T Clarke:** The paragraphs are just repeating themselves.
458. **The Chairperson:** The only difference is that each organisation referred specifically to where they see some of the gaps.
459. **Mr Molloy:** In their own organisations.
460. **The Chairperson:** Yes. I think that that is fair enough.
461. **Mr Eastwood:** The difference between paragraph 4.2 and paragraph 4.6 is that paragraph 4.2 deals with the past, while paragraph 4.6 deals with victims and their families. There is a difference. Victims are supposed to be central to the issue, but there is a fairly big difference between them.
462. **The Chairperson:** Members, I want to bring you back to paragraph 4.3, which deals with the legislative programme. Is there anything more specific that we can put in there? I assume that the Executive have a list of pieces of legislation that are on board and ready to come through. Could we be more specific and ask them to detail at least the ones that they have agreed?
463. **Ms Ruane:** The commissioners said that they would like to see more legislation.
464. **The Chairperson:** They did.
465. **Ms Ruane:** They also said that they were satisfied that there is some legislation. I think that we should reflect that.
466. **The Chairperson:** Yes. However, when they were here earlier, representatives of the Equality Commission said that there was a lack of legislation on disability and race issues.
467. **Ms Ruane:** Yes, but they all welcomed that there was legislation on age and on goods and services. I remember Bob Collins opening up with that point, so that probably should be in the document.
468. **The Chairperson:** Although all the organisations indicated that they felt that there should be more detail on the legislation that is coming through.
469. **Mr Eastwood:** To be honest, I think that you have it right here. There are a lot of references to legislation in the draft PFG, and that is probably fair enough. Even if we know that legislation is coming, there is obviously room to put more in. I do not mind if they add that bit in about —
470. **Ms Ruane:** Yes, because they named that they had that in.
471. **Mr Eastwood:** That is fair enough just as long as the emphasis is not taken off the fact that they also said that there was little reference to legislation.
472. **Ms Ruane:** So, are we adding in that they welcomed that there is legislation on age and goods and services?
473. **The Chairperson:** I think that we should just ask whether they could be more specific on what legislation is agreed that could be included in the PFG. Those commissions and bodies said that that would strengthen the PFG. We do not want to know every piece of legislation that each Department has on board,

- but if they at least put in what they have agreed, that would show us those specific issues.
474. **Mr A Maskey:** In a way, we could include a whole lot. A lot of those organisations made presentations to ourselves, and we could include all that if we wish. We could just send it all forward. It is no skin off my nose, because it is just a few pages, so I have no real difficulty with that. For me, a number of Departments, including OFMDFM, will at some point have to bring forward legislation on the basis of having considered something or having decided to do A and B and then having to produce legislation for A and B. However, we cannot know that. At this moment in time, they are doing the Programme for Government. The Programme for Government will have to spell out the outcomes that we are going to try to get. If that requires legislation, that is fine, and if it requires just a policy change, that is also well and good. A full legislative programme could not be produced in a Programme for Government.
475. **The Chairperson:** I do not think anybody is suggesting that, Alex. We are saying that it would be useful if they highlighted what areas of legislation are agreed. To be fair, that may be only three or four pieces, but at least you would then have a commitment to a rolling legislative programme. We all accept that the Programme for Government will change and that it needs to change as time goes on, but at least a commitment could be given to a rolling legislative programme.
476. **Ms Ruane:** If I remember correctly, two pieces of legislation were named for age discrimination and the provision of goods and services. The Commissioner for Older People and the Equality Commission welcomed the fact that that legislation was included, and they said that they would like to see further legislation. So, I think that paragraph 4.3 needs to be reworded slightly or to have a sentence added, frankly. I do not think that it represents what people think.
477. **Mr Eastwood:** It may be useful to go back to the Hansard report just to see. Otherwise, I am happy enough.
478. **The Chairperson:** Is there anything else, members? The figures put out by the Commissioner for Older People, outlined in paragraph 4.5:
- “highlighted that there was between £1.18m and £2.26m every week, in unclaimed benefits for older people”.*
479. **Ms Ruane:** Yes, that is right.
480. **The Chairperson:** I was not sure where those figures came from.
481. **Mr A Maskey:** Yes, because you will get different figures. We had presentations on benefits from a range of organisations, not least a couple of days ago from A2B, and you get a variation on figures. The general point, however, is that everybody believes that there is a considerable level of unclaimed entitlement. All the statistics, including those from DSD and the Social Security Agency, show that quite clearly. In fact, they are currently advertising to try to get people to maximise what they are entitled to. Whatever about those figures, that is the danger of us wanting to scrutinise every single line that we get from organisations. There is a clear understanding that there is unclaimed entitlement, so the issue is what you do about it. Maybe it is for the Department, not OFMDFM, to be dealing with that.
482. **The Chairperson:** Alex, I do not know whether your Committee has looked at it, but we have talked for some time about the possibility of having almost a one-stop shop. Once you put in a claim for benefit, a presumption could be made to support you and a check could be run.
483. If you were to make a claim for pension credit, a check would automatically be run to see whether you were entitled to any other benefits. So, if you did not get that benefit, you might be entitled to some other benefit.
484. **Mr A Maskey:** Mike and other members will know from the fuel poverty event that that features quite strongly in a number of organisations that say that

- there are cultural issues, particularly among a lot of older people, whereby people are afraid to touch the system, or they think they should not be entitled to it or they do not want to upset the apple cart. A whole range of stakeholders expressed the clear view that there should be some automatic enrolment or entitlement. For example, in the Pensions Bill, the Government argue that there should be an automatic enrolment into a pension programme, so why not have an automatic entitlement to a particular benefit? If you are going to introduce universal credit and so on, it must be doable. I cannot pre-empt the discussion on the Welfare Bill, which, as Colum said, we will probably not have until March, but I know that that will feature and that we will seek to put it into a Bill. So, let us have something on an automatic check. At whatever point of intervention, someone should be able to do a quick check. The idea of the Bill is to simplify the system, and, surely, if you do that —
485. **The Chairperson:** I am assuming that the Social Security Agency does not do that.
486. **Mr Nesbitt:** At Alex's night, there was a clear feeling at the OFMDFM table that the information is all on official computers but in different silos. If the computers could start talking to each other, you could do all that. The information is all there, so that work could be done very quickly and effectively.
487. **The Chairperson:** Can we put a line in there about that? I know that it really should be an issue for the Department for Social Development, but the Commissioner for Older People raised it with us.
488. **Ms Ruane:** Yes, maybe that is the place to put it in.
489. **Mr Nesbitt:** If we are talking about cross-cutting issues, departmental computers is one of those.
490. **Mr Molloy:** After welfare reform, the computers will be used to take more people off benefits than to put them on to them, unfortunately.
491. **Mr Eastwood:** There is a call to include: *"a specific commitment to maximise benefit uptake"*.
492. The specifics around that can be debated. However, that is more an issue for DSD.
493. **The Chairperson:** We could mention establishing measures to maximise benefit uptake.
494. **Mr A Maskey:** I like to use the term "entitlement". Sometimes people think that you are trying to milk the system, but that is what your entitlement is. What you should be trying to do is find some mechanism that triggers a check to ensure that people are getting their entitlement linked, if you know what I mean. As everyone seems to be saying, a system should be inbuilt whereby, if you are engaging with the Social Security Agency, a check should be done so that you get what you are entitled to. A specific reference to that would be helpful.
495. **The Chairperson:** Paragraph 5.3 refers to the commitment to: *"Implement an Integrated and Affordable Childcare Strategy"*.
496. Can we put a line in there to say that we would like more detail on the implementation of the strategy? Again, that is a cross-cutting theme. It is all very well saying that you want to implement it, but not if you do not know how to implement it.
497. **Mr T Clarke:** Is that not part of the next step? The aspiration may be that they want to implement something, but they might not have a programme together to do that.
498. **Ms Ruane:** I agree with Trevor. That would be us as a Committee saying that, at the appropriate moment, we would like a briefing on the childcare strategy.
499. **The Chairperson:** We can put a line in about that. It does not have to be in the Programme for Government, but we need to be sure that there is going to be an implementation plan.

500. **Mr Eastwood:** I think that it is saying that there would be an implementation plan. Cairtriona mentioned what we heard about gaps in disability issues, and I think that I did too.
501. **The Chairperson:** Where were you suggesting that that go in, Colum?
502. **Ms Ruane:** Paragraph 5.6 or 5.7.
503. **Mr Eastwood:** Yes, somewhere around there.
504. **The Chairperson:** Paragraph 5.6, I would say.
505. **Mr Eastwood:** There is quite a bit. It might involve looking through the material that the Equality Commission gave us today. It highlighted a number of proposed legislative changes.
506. **The Chairperson:** You could put it in at paragraph 5.6 or paragraph 4.3, which states:
- “The Equality commission highlighted the need for legislation in relation to disability and race”.*
507. So there is actually something in the document already.
508. **Mr Molloy:** They also pointed out that we are not keeping parity on some legislation. Bob Collins made the point that the legislation in England, Scotland and Wales was different to that here and that older people in particular were losing out on the equality issue because of that. He said that the legislation needed only a tweak to ensure that we get the same here. Parity works both ways, and where we are falling behind in parity, we should be catching up and filling the gaps in the same way as trying to keep up with it in some cases.
509. **Ms Ruane:** Francie, does that come under paragraph 5.6?
510. **Mr Molloy:** Yes, it probably does.
511. **Ms Ruane:** Maybe we should check back in case there was something more than that.
512. **Mr A Maskey:** If we go back to paragraph 5.4 for a minute, I wonder whether it could be expanded. It deals specifically with tackling poverty and social exclusion. I am satisfied that, throughout the document, reference is made to tackling disadvantage and to equality and so forth. It is all in there. However, if you are worried about it, you need to know where the specifics and the operational plans are. DSD has told us that it will be producing an operational plan to underpin all those commitments. I would like to see whether we could expand that out a bit.
513. **The Committee Clerk:** There could be a sentence at the end of paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 to say something like:
- “The Committee would welcome further detail on this as soon as possible.”*
514. Is that the sort of thing that you were thinking of?
515. **Mr A Maskey:** I certainly welcome the references in the document to tackling poverty and social exclusion, including the earnings disregard pilot, for example. However, I would be keen to see something further.
516. **The Chairperson:** We would obviously be keen to see the outcome of the earnings disregard pilot scheme as soon as possible.
517. **Ms Ruane:** So, we are adding a sentence into paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 along those lines.
518. **The Chairperson:** The last sentence of paragraph 5.8 states:
- “The Commissioner also raised the issue of the future of peace walls and that there was no historical back-drop in relation to this.”*
519. If we are going down that road, we should ensure that the communities that are affected are consulted as part of that.
520. **Mr Nesbitt:** Paragraph 5.7 refers the Commissioner for Older People’s concerns about —
521. **The Chairperson:** Sorry, Mike. Are members happy with that reference in paragraph 5.8?

Members indicated assent.

522. **Mr Nesbitt:** The Commissioner for Older People was worried about digital exclusion. TV goes digital this year, so everybody who has a TV will be able to access that from their remote. Will that not make a significant impact on exclusion? You do not need a computer anymore; you can do it off your digital TV.
523. **Mr T Clarke:** That is assuming that the elderly can afford to have the television. So, they are still excluded if they do not have one.
524. **Mr Nesbitt:** Yes, but is it not likely to make a severe dent?
525. **Mr T Clarke:** I assume that it would make a dent, but it goes back to whether they have the technology to do that. The commissioner is saying that those people could be excluded if they do not have the technology.
526. **Mr Nesbitt:** Yes, but I suspect that the new technology will make a severe dent in the levels of exclusion.
527. **Mr Eastwood:** We may be debating beyond the issue, but how would that work if you have an old TV?
528. **Mr Nesbitt:** An analogue TV will not work anymore.
529. **Mr A Maskey:** We will be watching a black and black picture permanently.
530. **Mr Nesbitt:** Trevor's point is that they will need to be able to afford a new television or a hub box.
531. **Mr Eastwood:** It may be worth putting in something saying that, considering the changes —
532. **Mr T Clarke:** That has already been addressed by one organisation, whose name I cannot remember. However, it is still issuing grants for people to upgrade, provided they are in that —
533. **Mr Nesbitt:** I would just be concerned that we may leave ourselves open to the criticism of not realising that that will not be an issue after October or that exclusion will be significantly reduced.
534. **Mr Eastwood:** Can we get that checked? I do not know what the detail is.
535. **Mr T Clarke:** Whether or not that is reduced, it will still be a problem. The commissioner is identifying it as being a problem, and I think that is all she is doing. She is giving recognition to a potential problem, albeit one that could be reduced by what you said, Mike. However, it will still be a problem to some. So, we are only really referencing that we are not leaving those people behind.
536. **Mr A Maskey:** Maybe that could be written better. It talks about improving online access, but I think that it really means increasing online access. We are in danger of starting to unpick all this. I know the point you are making. You do not want to suggest that putting that in the document will solve the problem. Hopefully, it would make a dent in removing some barriers, but, as Trevor said, even all the barriers will not be removed. Maybe it would help if we just rephrased that.
537. **The Chairperson:** OK. Clerk, there is a challenge for you.
538. **Mr Nesbitt:** There may be figures on what impact that is likely to have.
539. **Mr Eastwood:** Does it mean that you access the internet through your TV as well? Is that what it means?
540. **Mr Nesbitt:** You can do, yes.
541. **Mr Eastwood:** Does that mean every TV that meets digital requirements?
542. **Mr Nesbitt:** They are all digital, so yes.
543. **Mr Molloy:** Would it help if you just took out the word "digital"? The statement links to one particular theme, but exclusion of older people is still the problem.
544. **Mr T Clarke:** That would work.
545. **Mr Eastwood:** I literally know nothing about it, but I am not sure that it means that every TV that meets the standard for digital TV will allow you to also go online on your TV. Is that it definitely the case? I do not know whether that is true.
546. **Mr Nesbitt:** You can put NI Direct online on the TV — yes.

547. **Mr Eastwood:** Can you do that if you have an internet-enabled TV? They are different.
548. **Mr Nesbitt:** No, just digital.
549. **The Chairperson:** Folks, we are getting a wee bit tied up in technicalities.
550. **Mr T Clarke:** If we removed the reference to “digital”, I think that that would work.
551. **The Chairperson:** Let the Committee Clerk have a look at it and come back to us. OK?
552. Members, paragraph 6.2 relates to monitoring progress. In past times, I had a problem with the traffic light system. We are highlighting that problem in paragraph 6.2. The Education Committee, in its response, suggested a different way to measure monitoring. That response said that there could be:
- “a quarterly report on progress against agreed performance indicators”.*
553. I do not know whether we want to go down that road, but we need either a different system or a different mechanism in the system for monitoring progress.
554. **Mr T Clarke:** Should we not wait until we get all the responses back in case there is something else? We could put a question mark beside that paragraph indicating that, although you are not satisfied with it, we will wait to see what other responses are first.
555. **The Committee Clerk:** Does paragraph 6.3 go in? That states:
- “The Committee is keen...that the progress of departments in delivering their commitments is clearly demonstrated and reflects accurately what is happening ‘on the ground’.”*
556. **The Chairperson:** I suppose that it is saying that the Executive need to find a mechanism and a way.
557. **The Committee Clerk:** There is quite a bit on that in the Committee for Finance and Personnel’s response, if members want to have a look at that for next week.
558. **The Chairperson:** I think that the initial draft of our response says that we are not happy with what was there but that we have not found a mechanism that will make a difference.
559. OK, members. The only other point that I thought we should mention was the social investment fund. Maybe we need to put a bit of pressure on the Executive to ensure that there is a proper delivery of that and to maybe get more of an explanation about why half of it goes into the dereliction area alone. I am just not sure what is meant by that. To be fair, the Department is coming to brief us at some stage. I am just wondering whether we can put in a reference about that. We do not have to go very far aside from putting a reference in.
560. Are there any other points, members? All right, thank you. We will have a redraft by next week, and, hopefully, we will get the document finalised.

15 February 2012

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Tom Elliott (Chairperson)
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

561. **The Chairperson:** The next item is the Committee's response to the draft Programme for Government (PFG), which members will find in their papers. Included are the amendments that were agreed last week, as well as the response of the Committee for Social Development to the draft PFG.
562. I do not anticipate that we will go through this paragraph by paragraph. I will ask members whether they have any comments. The Committee Clerk has recommended an addition, which was tabled today and is listed as possible paragraph 5.9. It is just to get a reference to Europe into the PFG. I had a look at that just before the meeting, and it appears to be OK to me.
563. **Mr A Maskey:** I take it, Chairman, that increasing the uptake of European funding by 20% is what Paul Geddis was explaining previously? I was going to ask why we are going for 20%, but he explained that. I read the proposed amendment. I was going to suggest the word "maximising", but if this fits with what they are already doing, I am happy enough to go along with it.
564. **The Chairperson:** I think that that figure has been rationalised. Where did that figure come from?
565. **The Assistant Committee Clerk:** It is in the priorities document.
566. **The Chairperson:** Yes. I had heard it before.
567. **Mr A Maskey:** I am happy enough to go with that.
568. **The Chairperson:** It was actually an Executive announcement.
569. **The Assistant Committee Clerk:** It is in the Budget.
570. **The Chairperson:** Yes.
571. **Mr A Maskey:** Chairman, can I raise a point about paragraph 5.4? It is about the race and disability. Obviously, as you know, Caitriona Ruane has raised this issue a couple of times with the Equality Commission. Even within our own party, we have been discussing this. There are arguments for and against some of the stuff that is in legislation. We are not always sure which bit of legislation is most appropriate so I am looking to amend that slightly. It mentions legislation that:
- "would at least bring parity with the rest of the UK."*
572. I have talked to Evelyn Collins since the previous meeting. Even within our own party there is a wee bit of uncertainty around some of this. I was hoping to suggest that we would say that the Committee was briefed by the Equality Commission on the gaps in legislation and asks the Department to consider "bringing forward legislation". I would hope to put in there:
- "to bring us in line with the appropriate international standards."*
573. That does not commit us to anything. What is in England and the UK might be best, but something else might be more suitable for our needs. My amendment only asks the Department to consider that. What is in the UK, or, as some would say, the rest of the UK, may be best, but, a lot of the time, legislation is a moveable feast. I just want to ask OFMDFM to consider it. It may consider it and say that what is there is great and is the best, or it might say that is has looked at good practice elsewhere and that it is better. It is a minor amendment.

574. **The Chairperson:** Are there any comments, members?
575. **Mr Spratt:** Just remind us where that came from originally?
576. **The Chairperson:** From memory, that came from the Equality Commission's briefing. It indicated that it was concerned that there was not legislation specific to race and disability in the PFG. I do not have the Hansard report in front of me but, from my recollection, the witnesses did mention the UK.
577. **Mr A Maskey:** If you remember, they said that, even if we bring it to that standard, it is not necessarily the best. It is a moveable feast. I put in a call to Evelyn Collins to clarify that. They are asking us to just bring it to that point. They are not entirely sure, because some people argue that what we have here is more appropriate and suits us better. I am just suggesting that the Department is asked to look at what is considered to be the best international standard. If it determines that the standard that is applied in the UK is the best, that is fine by me. We are asking the Department to consider what is best.
578. **Mr Spratt:** We could put in, "or international", but I do not see it as a die-in-a-ditch issue.
579. **Mr A Maskey:** It is partly to do with sensitivity of language for everybody concerned.
580. **The Chairperson:** Perhaps we could insert:
"to consider bringing forward legislation in relation to disability and race which would significantly improve the current legislation."
581. **Mr Spratt:** I am a wee bit concerned about "international". Use of "the legislation" might, perhaps, be a way round it.
582. **Mr A Maskey:** Perhaps, "the highest standard of legislation."
583. **The Chairperson:** Or, "bringing forward improved legislation."
584. **Mr A Maskey:** The difficulty is that people might argue that what we have is best and can be interpreted in a certain way, but the legislation can change. You might be more advanced than someone today, and, six months later, discover that you are not. In some cases, it is determined by a case law, when someone goes to court and another precedent is set. At that stage, we work out that we are lagging behind again.
585. **The Chairperson:** I am concerned about the international standards, because you do not know what you might get into.
586. **Mr A Maskey:** That is why I say "appropriate". We are asking OFMDFM to consider this; we are not dictating or determining. OFMDFM might do a read-across and say that what we have is the best; it might say that what is happening in England is the best; it might say that what is coming down the track from Europe is the best. It will consider the issue and make a judgement. It will not be done overnight, because it requires consensus and the agreement of parties. This is not dictating anything to anyone.
587. **The Chairperson:** Are you making that proposal, Alex?
588. **Mr A Maskey:** Yes.
589. **The Chairperson:** Are there any other proposals?
590. **Mr Spratt:** How will it read?
591. **Mr A Maskey:** Paragraph 5.4 of the draft report states:
"The Committee was briefed by the Equality Commission on the gaps in legislation and would ask the Department to consider bringing forward legislation in relation to disability and race".
592. I am suggesting that, at that point, we insert:
"to bring us in line with the appropriate international standards."
Or, insert:
"to bring us in line with the highest standard of legislation."

593. It is a simple amendment.
594. **Mr Spratt:** Is that not changing what the Equality Commission said?
595. **Mr A Maskey:** Yes, but this is our submission.
596. **Mr Spratt:** We took that from the Hansard report, did we not?
597. **Mr Nesbitt:** What if it was something along the lines of:
“ask the Department to consider bringing forward a flexible framework capable of reflecting changes in best practice.”?
598. Or, perhaps, “changing best practice.” It leaves you with some wriggle room.
599. **Mr Spratt:** I am still concerned about the word “international”; I think it would open a minefield. That might be a way around it.
600. **The Chairperson:** Would we take out “legislation”?
601. **Mr Nesbitt:** Yes.
602. **The Chairperson:** But would we not have to retain the part referring to disability and race?
603. **Mr Nesbitt:** Sorry; yes. We would have to include:
“in relation to disability and race.”
604. **The Committee Clerk:** Mike, will you read that back to the Committee?
605. **Mr Nesbitt:** “The Committee was briefed by the Equality Commission on the gaps in legislation and would ask the Department to consider bringing forward a flexible framework capable of reflecting changing best practice in relation to disability and race.”
606. **The Chairperson:** Alex, are you happy with that?
607. **Mr A Maskey:** Yes, that is fine.
608. **Mr Spratt:** Before I finally make up my mind, can you remind us what was said in the Hansard report?
609. **The Chairperson:** On 11 January, Bob Collins said:
“That was corrected in Great Britain, but not in Northern Ireland, in the Equality Act 2010. That is why, in this respect, the rest of the UK is absolutely the correct comparator to look at. It would be relatively simple to make a similar enactment in Northern Ireland, and that would overcome the disadvantage that those with disabilities in Northern Ireland have been put at, relative to those with disabilities in Great Britain. That is a simple issue.”
- He continued:
“There are issues with the definition and coverage of race, and there are inconsistencies in the legislation in Northern Ireland and between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.”
610. So he was specifically referring to GB legislation.
611. **Mr A Maskey:** The problem is that the current text just adopts what was said. We are not just passing on what the Equality Commission is saying; we are adopting a position. If I had my way, the text would include the phrase “highest international standards”, but I am happy to go with Mike’s amendment.
612. **The Chairperson:** Yes. In our current text, we are taking the Equality Commission’s suggestion and making it our proposal.
613. **Mr A Maskey:** I do not necessarily agree with the Equality Commission’s suggestion. That is why I put in a call to them. My ideal amendment would include the phrase, “highest international standards”. However, if people are a bit unsure about where that might bring us, I am more than happy to accept the proposal that Mike is making.
614. **Mr Spratt:** Will you read out again what Mike said?
615. **The Committee Clerk:** “The Committee was briefed by the Equality Commission on the gaps in legislation and would ask the Department to consider bringing forward a flexible framework capable of reflecting changing best practice in relation to disability and race.”
616. I am not sure whether we can have a flexible piece of legislation. Legislation may state x or y.

617. **Mr A Maskey:** Let the Department consider that and come back and say, "You are talking nonsense".

618. **Mr Spratt:** Bob Collins was very clear. He said:

"It would be relatively simple to make a similar enactment in Northern Ireland, and that would overcome the disadvantage that those with disabilities in Northern Ireland have been put at, relative to those with disabilities in Great Britain. That is a simple issue."

619. In other words, he was talking about a very simple enactment or a regulation.

620. **The Chairperson:** What we are saying in our current draft is what the Equality Commission has asked for. So we are adopting its position and making it our position. Alex does not feel that that goes far enough and would like to include provision to allow for the adoption of better practice outside the UK if it exists. Mike's suggestion is that we need to adopt a more flexible framework.

621. **The Committee Clerk:** His suggestion is:

"a more flexible framework capable of reflecting changing best practice in relation to disability and race."

622. **The Chairperson:** However, it does not mention the legislation.

623. **Mr Spratt:** I am happy enough to allow others to argue about it in another place.

624. **The Chairperson:** Are we all agreed on Mike's proposal?

Members indicated assent.

625. **The Chairperson:** Are there any other points, members? I note that, in paragraph 6.2, which relates to the UK City of Culture, the "UK" part is missing.

626. I do not want to open a huge debate about this, but we mention benefit entitlement, and I think we have covered part of that in paragraph 5.7. It may be complicating it a bit, but I think that social workers and home helps often offer a good opportunity to provide advice and assistance to people who

need benefits. It may be too complicated to write in, but it is something that we need to look at in the future. It is something for your Committee, Alex. I know that, in some cases, they do that on a voluntary basis and they are quite up to speed, whereas others are not. It would be useful if there were something between the Health Department and the Department for Social Development that allowed them to do that in a proper capacity.

627. **Mr A Maskey:** Funnily, enough, we had the Macmillan Cancer Support people at the Committee for Social Development last week. They were arguing that there is a need for cancer patients to get some quick advice. I think that there was a pilot scheme somewhere around Altnagelvin between the Health Department and the Social Security Agency. We are saying to the Department that it should look at that, because it is obvious. It is almost a no-brainer that people should have some type of process on site. I am quite satisfied that, when we are dealing with the Welfare Reform Bill, we will be looking for some structured response from the Department, and for it to have an automatic trigger mechanism so that there will be an automatic benefit check for people engaged with the Department. That does not happen at the moment. There are a number of interfaces for people, whether they are a pensioner, or whatever the case may be. We will be arguing that the Department needs to find a way of doing a quick check for that person's benefit entitlement. We are hoping that that will become the done thing right across the board.

628. **The Chairperson:** OK. So there is no need to pursue that today.

629. **Mr A Maskey:** I will take a note of that, because that is another one of the trigger points that needs to be mentioned.

630. **Mr Spratt:** As well as benefits, the number of older people who are not getting the 20% rate relief never ceases to amaze me. Pensioners, once they

reach a certain age, are entitled to 20% rate relief, in rural areas and what have you.

631. **The Chairperson:** OK. Members, if you are broadly agreed on the discussion that we have had, we need to formally agree the Committee report. I propose that we agree the introduction, paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3.

Members indicated assent.

632. **The Chairperson:** Do Members agree paragraphs 2.1 to 2.4, dealing with the approach?

Members indicated assent.

633. **The Chairperson:** Do Members agree paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2, outlining the responses from the Statutory Committees?

Members indicated assent.

634. **The Chairperson:** Do Members agree paragraphs 4.1 to 4.3, outlining the strategic priorities?

Members indicated assent.

635. **The Chairperson:** Do Members agree paragraph 5, including 5.1 to 5.8, as amended, dealing with the gaps in the PFG?

Members indicated assent.

636. **Mr Nesbitt:** Is paragraph 5.9 going in?

637. **The Chairperson:** Yes, and new paragraph 5.9; sorry.

Members indicated assent.

638. **The Chairperson:** Do Members agree to paragraph 6, including 6.1 to 6.10, outlining comments on milestones and outcomes?

Members indicated assent.

639. **The Chairperson:** Do Members agree to paragraph 7.1 to 7.4, on monitoring progress?

Members indicated assent.

640. **The Chairperson:** Are members agreed that we include the following appendices: appendix 1, which comprises minutes of proceedings; appendix 2, which comprises minutes of evidence; appendix 3, which is the Statutory Committees' written submissions; appendix 4, which is a list of witnesses; and appendix 5, which comprises any other papers?

Members indicated assent.

641. **The Chairperson:** Thank you very much for that.

642. Do you agree that an extract from today's minutes of proceedings should be included at Appendix 1?

Members indicated assent.

643. **The Chairperson:** Do you agree that I agree those minutes on the Committee's behalf?

Members indicated assent.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 3

Written Submissions

Submission from the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development



Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Room 412
Parliament Buildings

Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 1784
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From: Stephen Graham
Clerk to the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date: 19 December 2011

To: Peter Hall
Clerk to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and
Deputy First Minister

Subject: **Draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy**

At its meeting of 13 December 2011, the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development considered correspondence from your Committee in relation to the Draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy.

The Committee had decided, previously, that it did not plan to take evidence and that its approach, in relation to the draft PfG, and associated economic development and investment strategies, is such that it would prefer to wait and see what the Executive's formal public consultation reveals, before it reaches a final view.

However, you may be interested to know that, in its first formal, and detailed, scrutiny of the DARD Business Plan, last week, the ARD Committee exposed, what it considers to be, a number of shortcomings in the Plan, and which it intends to investigate further. In that regard, the Committee has invited the Minister to attend Committee to discuss the Business Plan in the context of the draft PfG. Before this happens, the Committee will explore its concerns with the relevant Senior Responsible Officers, starting at its meeting on 10 January. Taken alongside that, I am mindful that oral and written questions have been asked of Minister O'Neill, recently, as to why the draft PfG does not include a specific target to eradicate Bovine TB. All that being the case, I want to confirm that the ARD Committee will not be in a position to submit its view in the timeframe envisaged in the letter to Chairs of Statutory Committees, or for some time after that.

If you have any queries or questions please feel free to contact me on Ext 21784.

Stephen Graham

Committee Clerk

Submission from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Room 344
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX
Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 1783
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From: Alison Ross
Clerk to the CAL Committee

Date: 3 February 2012

To: Alyn Hicks
Clerk to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister
and deputy First Minister

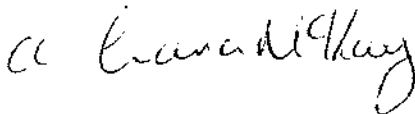
Subject: CAL Committee Response to Draft Programme for
Government and Investment Strategy

Alyn

At its meeting on 2 February 2012, the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure agreed its response to the draft Programme for Government and draft Investment Strategy.

A copy of this response is enclosed.

Regards



Alison Ross
Clerk to the Committee



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Mr Tom Elliott
Chairperson to Committee for OFMDFM
Room 435
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
BT4 3XX

Our Ref: C36/12

3 February 2012

Dear Mr Elliott

**Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 and Draft Investment Strategy
2011-2021**

Thank you for your letter dated 8 December 2011 seeking Statutory Committee views on the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and draft Investment Strategy (ISNI).

The Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure agreed its response to the draft strategies at its meeting on 2 February 2012.

A copy of the response is enclosed.

Yours sincerely

Michelle McIlveen

Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Response to Committee for OFMDFM on Draft Programme for Government

2 February 2012

Background

1. On 15 December 2011, the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure considered correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) seeking views from all Statutory Committees on the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and draft Investment Strategy (ISNI) for inclusion in a published report to the First Minister and deputy First Minister. The Committee agreed to provide a response to COFMDFM.
2. In anticipation of receiving this correspondence, on 1 December 2011 the Committee agreed to write to all of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's (DCAL) Arm's Length Bodies to seek their views on the draft strategies. The Committee specifically requested views on any gaps in PfG; for comments on milestones and outputs; and how best to monitor progress.
3. The Committee received responses from the following organisations:
 - a. Arts Council of Northern Ireland;
 - b. Foras na Gaeilge;
 - c. Libraries NI;
 - d. NI Screen;
 - e. National Museums Northern Ireland;
 - f. Northern Ireland Museums Council; and
 - g. Sport NI.
4. The Committee considered these responses at its meeting on 19 January.
5. Also, at its meeting on 19 January 2012, the Committee took evidence from Departmental officials on the draft PfG and draft ISNI, with particular focus on DCAL's commitments within these strategies.
6. The Committee formally agreed its response to the draft PfG and ISNI at its meeting on 2 February 2012.

Committee Views

7. The Committee expressed concern that, out of the 76 commitments within PfG, DCAL was responsible for the delivery of 3 commitments, representing just 4% of the Executive targets. The 3 commitments are to:
 - a. Support 200 projects through the Creative Industries Innovation Fund;
 - b. Develop sports stadiums as agreed with the IFA, GAA and Ulster Rugby; and
 - c. Host the World Police and Fire Games in 2013.
8. The Committee acknowledges that the main priority within PfG is to build a strong vibrant economy and the Committee recognises the potential economic benefits of each of these commitments.

9. It is widely accepted that the Creative Industries has the potential to make significant economic and social contributions to society. With its capacity for job and wealth creation, it is essential that the correct supporting mechanisms are in place to ensure conditions are right to stimulate industry and growth and maximise and harness economic benefits. The Committee's ongoing Inquiry into Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries will investigate the policies, strategies and frameworks which oversee the development and growth of the creative industries, and examine whether they are fit for purpose and effective.
10. The Committee recognises that the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) is one such mechanism in supporting the growth of our creative industries; and that 200 projects will benefit. The Committee noted, however, comments from the Arts Council that the current fund of £4m over 4 years is a 40% reduction of the previous CIIF fund, which was £5m over 3 years. The Committee echoes the views of the Arts Council in relation to the value of CIIF, evidenced by the tangible economic benefits and growth in turnover among CIIF assisted companies¹.
11. The Committee also acknowledges the contribution that the three sports stadiums and World Police and Fire Games will have on the economy. The stadiums could bring increased revenue from spectators and immediate benefits to the construction sector. Also, benefits from hosting the World Police and Fire Games are estimated at £15.5m.
12. The Committee does not underestimate the huge task now facing the Department to successfully implement these projects, and the contribution that they will make to the Northern Ireland economy. The Committee is aware, however, that these projects are not new and are already well advanced in terms of their implementation. Therefore, the Committee questions whether three commitments are sufficiently challenging for the Department over 2011-2015.
13. The Committee notes that it was the Executive's intention to have a more focused and structured approach to the PfG Commitments. However the Committee commented that the three commitments did not fully reflect Department's contribution to the five strategic priorities. Sport NI commented that PfG failed to appropriately recognise the significant contribution of DCAL's Sport Matters strategy in addressing all, and not just one, of PfG's priorities. The Northern Ireland Museums Council did not believe that museums receives significant recognition in PfG.
14. Other gaps in the PfG were noted in the areas of grassroot sports and physical recreation, film, attendance at arts events, angling and the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This is at odds with the previous PfG commitments.
15. With 85% of the Department's work delivered through its Arm's Length Bodies, issues of accountability and delivery of the projects were raised. CIIF is administered by the Arts Council, in association with Digital Circle and NI Screen. The delivery of the World Police and Fire Games is the responsibility of the World Police and Fire Games 2013, and the three sports stadiums will be delivered by the IFA, GAA and Ulster Rugby. Responsibility and accountability for delivery lies with these bodies, while DCAL has responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate systems, processes, policies and funding are in place. DCAL must put in place the appropriate support, set targets and milestones for the delivery of these projects in line with SMART objectives, and retain a robust oversight role. There must also be accountability at a Departmental level.
16. As the World Police and Fire Games and the three stadiums will be in Belfast, comments were made that the Department's commitments were focused in one area of Northern Ireland. The Committee suggests will the Department will wish to satisfy itself that these commitments are equitable and benefit all of Northern Ireland.

1 Evaluation of the Creative Industries Innovation Fund, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Final Report, Sept 11

17. The Committee notes that major investment of inland waterways, canals and fisheries is expected during 2016-2021. The Committee recognises the economic potential through the regeneration of these waterways and looks forward to learning of any progress in this area as it develops.
18. The Committee looks forward to the publication of the approach for the delivery of PfG's targets, specifically the process for effective monitoring and regular reporting mechanisms.

Submission from the Committee for Education

Mr Mervyn Storey

Chairperson, Committee for Education
 Mr Tom Elliott
 Chairperson of Committee for the Office of the First
 and deputy First Minister,
 Parliament Buildings
 Ballymiscaw
 Stormont
 Belfast BT4 3XX



19 January 2012

Ref : 287/11/19

Dear Tom

1. At its meeting on 30 November 2011 the Committee for Education (the Committee) welcomed the opportunity to provide its comments to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) in respect of the draft Programme for Government (PfG) in Northern Ireland.
2. In preparation for this, the Committee wrote to stakeholders, inviting them to comment on the draft PfG , focusing on the following areas:
 - gaps in PfG;
 - comments on milestones and outputs; and
 - how best to monitor progress.
3. The Committee has taken stakeholders comments into consideration in its comments below and has also encouraged stakeholders to respond directly to the public consultation on the PfG.
4. Whilst the Committee welcomes the PfG in principle it has reservations about its ability to deliver. The Committee notes that the only milestone that references “secure funding” is that relating to the Omagh, Lisanelly complex. The Committee believes that other programme initiatives should have a similar commitment if the PfG is to be successfully delivered. The Committee is concerned that schools are being expected to deliver savings in an already constrained economic climate. Unprecedented budget reductions are leading to sustained pressure on class sizes, redundancies and school projects that require financing.
5. The Committee recognises the Executive is facing financial constraints and challenges, and consequently all departments must make best use of the allocated resources. The Committee is disappointed to see there is no requirement on departments to collaborate or to achieve outcomes which have relevance to two or more departments - as an efficiency measure this should have been expected. Generally, the Committee would urge the Department to take a more thoroughly coordinated and consistent approach to policy development.
6. In a response to the ‘Review of Financial Process in NI’ the Committee previously raised the issue that the Budget must be developed in the context of a Programme for Government and, to take this a step further, would wish to place a requirement on departments to publish an Implementation Plan which is linked to the PfG. Members continue to be of the view that all efforts should be made to align the Programme for Government and budget allocations more closely to a desired outcome.
7. On a positive note, the Committee recognises that the commitment to the creation of ESA does promise a structural change which aims to make a contribution to the delivery of high quality and efficient services.

8. The Committee also welcomes the pending delivery of the Early Years 0-6 Strategy and hopes this will create a unified strategy to promote early and/or timely intervention to prevent or improve disadvantage and underperformance.

Gaps in Programme for Government

9. The Committee recognises that the PfG is a strategic document and therefore not every detail of departmental policy would be expected. In identifying gaps the Committee has focussed on those issues which it believes are significant and necessary to achieve required change. These include:

- Agree a definition of 'Shared Education';
- A commitment that the work of the Ministerial advisory group to explore and bring forward recommendations to the Minister of Education to advance shared education will be delivered in time, to inform decisions taken on foot of the work commissioned by the Minister on viability of schools and area based planning.
- In preparation for establishing the Education and Skills Authority by 2013, form a 'Teacher Education Committee' (representing all Teacher Education providers), to advise and work with the Minister and officials;
- Numeracy and Literacy should be dealt with as a continuum from early years through to the adult learner (the Committee believes the present split between the Literacy and Numeracy strategy which has been developed in the Department of Education and the Essential Skills strategy which has been developed within the Department of Employment and Learning is unhelpful);
- A wider focus in the PfG on improving the achievement of multiple underachieving groups, rather than just those from "disadvantaged backgrounds".
- The Executive and DE/DEL should set an objective to get the supply/demand of teachers into reasonable equilibrium by 2020, coupled with a strategic teacher workforce development plan;
- The commitment in the PfG to ensuring that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it should make it clear how this commitment will be realized and that this will be a pre-school place within a reasonable/manageable distance of the family home;
- A mandatory requirement for physical education;
- An agreed 14-19 policy with the Department of Employment and Learning to ensure that at the interface of formal education and higher/further education and employment there is a focus on the economically necessary skills, subjects and courses which will contribute to rebalancing and rebuilding the NI economy;
- Area Based Planning and Shared Education to include the community use of schools;
- A commitment to joined-up working from the Departments of Education, Regional Development and Employment and Learning to develop a policy to support the 'safe routes to school' commitment, incorporating a 'cycle/walk to school' scheme.

Comments on Milestones and Outputs


10. Although the Committee regards the milestones and outputs identified for the education sector as generally realistic and robust, there is a sense that departments often fail to carry through agreed policies with a sense of urgency.
11. The Committee believes that the Executive should be required to produce a 10 year strategy for children and young People, rather than piecemeal policies which are introduced and scrapped within a short time in favour of another.

How to Best Monitor Progress

12. The traffic light system (red, amber, green) used to measure delivery of policy commitments in the previous PfG has been criticised as being too blunt an instrument to accurately reflect progress and too amenable to subjective interpretation by civil servants. The role of the Education Committee in monitoring progress towards cross-departmental education commitments in the agreed PfG is therefore critical. We suggest that the Department of Education provide the Education Committee with a quarterly report on progress against agreed performance indicators which are much more specific than the aspirational milestones in the draft PfG commitments. The Committee would suggest that in those areas where departments are or should be working together to deliver commitments/services there should be a joint report to the relevant statutory committees.
13. The Committee believes there is little point in having commitments and milestones unless there is a robust monitoring process in place to ensure implementation. Commitments outlined should be captured through measurable performance indicators. We suggest that quantifiable indicators become the composite basis for monitoring progress towards the delivery of PfG; for instance there is no indication as to how the Department and the Education Training Inspectorate (ETI) will measure whether Literacy and Numeracy will have been improved or whether additional resources have been successfully targeted.
14. The Committee suggest the Department develop a detailed road map with specific timelines, indicating how each stated milestone will be achieved.
15. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft PfG.

Yours sincerely

Mr Mervyn Storey MLA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mervyn Storey', written in a cursive style.

Chairperson, Committee for Education

Submission from the Committee for Employment and Learning

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning

Response on the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (February 2012)

Response to the draft Programme for Government

Introduction

1. The response set out below indicates the views of the Committee for Employment and Learning on the draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland in response to the consultation document released by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 17 November 2011.
2. The Committee considered the draft Programme for Government at its meeting on 23 November 2011, and agreed to write out to key stakeholders for comments. The Committee considered these responses, together with a briefing from the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) on 25 January 2012, and agreed that this response should be sent to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister at its meeting on 8 February 2012. The Committee will respond more fully during the Plenary debate on this matter.
3. The Committee notes that the Department for Employment and Learning has responsibility for 4 key commitments in the draft Programme for Government as opposed to 13 in the 2008-2011 Programme for Government, which denotes a significant reduction in the responsibilities the Department will deliver. The Committee is concerned that the Programme for Government is very aspirational and does not contain a sufficient level of detail to enable the Committee to adequately scrutinise the milestones and outputs contained within it. The Committee believes that the Programme should refer specifically to training to be focussed on meeting the needs of new industry; on the role of social enterprise, and on employability issues
4. The Committee, however, welcomes the emphasis within the Programme for Government on acknowledging and prioritising skills as a key driver for the future of a sustainable economy. The Committee also welcomes the commitment to examine the issue of Corporation Tax reform but believes that there is a need to explore fully the implications of such reform in relation to the future demand for skills and Foreign Direct Investment.
5. The Committee believes that childcare is an economic and labour market issue, and as such merits inclusion in the Programme for Government. A lack of affordable childcare is the single biggest barrier to parents, especially mothers, being able to access and stay in work. The Committee considers that, when the Childcare Strategy is implemented by

the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, it will lead to increased employment levels, but the Committee has heard from stakeholders that neither employers nor parents are aware of the tax credits and childcare vouchers available to them. The Committee would welcome a role for DEL in raising awareness of this financial assistance towards childcare costs.

6. This response focusses on the relevant key commitments within the Programme for Government, and on areas that the Committee feels should be prioritised within the remit of DEL in this document.

KEY COMMITMENTS IN PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT: PRIORITY ONE

- **Increase uptake in economically relevant Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) places (DEL) – 180 additional places (2012/13); 360 (13/14); 540 (14/15)**
 7. The Committee welcomes the commitment to increase STEM places but believes that there needs to be a clearer definition of what is deemed STEM, and that this definition should be linked to the priority skills. This is currently not the case. For example, applied science and related areas of the curriculum, although falling under what would be understood and accepted as STEM, are not priority areas. The University of Ulster has also suggested to the Committee that economically relevant subjects do not only include STEM areas and that subjects such as finance, economics, the creative industries and modern languages are also economically relevant.
 8. Although the Committee was encouraged by a briefing from the Department indicating that it will not only exceed the commitment to create 540 places in STEM areas by 2015 but that it expected to have extra funding available for a further 160 places, the Committee believes that there should be clarification on how these places are to be allocated between Higher Education and Further Education. The Further Education (FE) sector has expressed its disappointment to the Committee that the low allocation to FE of full-time places announced in December 2011 did not allow for the development of innovative new STEM related courses or support the further development of 2-year Foundation Degree programmes, which are critical in addressing the skills deficit at Level 4 and 5 (sub-degree programmes).
 9. The Committee expressed its concerns as to what actions are being taken to encourage students to take up STEM places and to what qualification level they are going to be taught. To promote this uptake the Committee would also welcome closer working together between DEL and DE to enhance the status and recognition of vocational STEM routes.
- **Upskill the working age population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications (DEL) - 105,000 qualifications (2012/13); 53,000 (13/14); 53,000 (14/15)**

10. The Committee welcomes the fact that the Executive is committed to creating over 200,000 qualifications by 2015, in order to rebalance and rebuild the economy. The Department is committed to fulfilling this commitment through both the Higher Education and Further Education sectors in conjunction with local training providers, and will also include the Department's Essential Skills programmes on literacy, numeracy and Information Technology. However, the Committee would appreciate further information on what areas these qualifications are to be aimed at, what levels of attainment are to be achieved and how DEL intends to upskill those currently in employment.

KEY COMMITMENTS IN PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT: PRIORITY TWO

- **Support people (with an emphasis on young people) in to employment by providing skills and training (DEL) – 65,000 (2012/13); 89,000 cumulative (13/14); 114,000 (14/15)**
11. The Committee is encouraged to see that the Executive is committed to move 114,000 people into work by 2015, and that it exceeded targets set in the previous Programme for Government by over 20,000. However, the Committee is concerned that these targets may become meaningless unless they are linked to job creation strategies, particularly with those areas identified by the Executive as key economic drivers. Colleges NI makes reference to the priority skills areas identified by Richard Barnett (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ulster and Chair of IREP) in his Report, which do not include hospitality and tourism, yet these areas are identified by DETI as key economic drivers.
 12. The Committee would like to see more detail regarding the type of training to be provided, whether it will always lead to a qualification, and if so, if these have also been included in the previous key commitment in Priority 1. The Committee recognises the importance of raising the skills profile of the workforce to meet the challenges of an evolving economy and it has met with the Skills Adviser for Northern Ireland to learn of his plans for engaging with employers, particularly SMEs, to identify their development needs. The Committee also heard from the DEL Employment Service on how it is developing tailor-made solutions for employers to address their recruitment needs, and it would endorse the close working relationship with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Invest NI in providing a cohesive approach for skills that is advocated in the draft Strategy.
 13. The proposed Pathways to Success strategy to address the number of young people not in education, employment or training (so-called NEETs) is included in this Priority as a Building Block. The Committee fully endorses the need for this Strategy and has urged the Department to expedite its development and implementation – the stated target date is April 2012. The Committee has expressed its concerns at the protracted pace at which this issue is progressing and that related research has not yet been completed. The Committee urged full co-operation between the departments on this strategy as an urgent priority, as the issues identified impact on young people in so many areas of their lives,

not just upon their employment prospects. The Committee was particularly concerned that the Minister has indicated that there was no dedicated budget within his Department for the implementation of a NEETs strategy.

14. The Committee agreed that this commitment may require to be extended beyond the current period of the draft Programme for Government, possibly over five rather than three years, to deal with the nature and extent of the issue.
15. The Committee has also raised its concerns with the Department regarding the level of financial support to be provided throughout this skill training. This is particularly crucial for young people undergoing pre-vocational training who are not currently entitled to any level of financial assistance. The Committee has recommended to the Department that this should be taken into consideration in its on-going review of EMA.

- **Ensure that there are no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation for Northern Ireland students studying here**

16. The Committee believes that a policy of keeping fees at current levels will encourage young people to enter and to remain in Higher Education, although the Department's on-going Review of Widening Participation in Higher Education has yet to highlight underlying issues discouraging those from lower socio-economic backgrounds from accessing a university education. The legal aspect of introducing a fee differential between Northern Ireland and GB-domiciled students also remains untested in a court of law. Similarly, the impact of this fee differential on student flows, both to and from the Republic of Ireland, and Great Britain, has yet to be determined. Such flows are not necessarily elective and the Committee expressed its concerns regarding the situation of students who opt for courses such as veterinary studies which are not available in Northern Ireland.
17. The Committee was disappointed in the number of additional places in Higher Education announced by the Minister as it believes that, given the fact that Northern Ireland already has the smallest Higher Education sector per head of the population in the UK, the higher tuition fees in GB may increase the demand for places in local universities. The Committee has also heard from a number of stakeholders, including the University Of Ulster, of the case for the expansion of Magee College. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ulster has questioned how the Programme for Government's commitment to "Develop the One Plan" for the regeneration of Derry/Londonderry can be delivered without specifically addressing this issue.

RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

18. The Committee notes that there is significantly less capital funding available in the current draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland than in the previous Strategy, and that, in this context, DEL has been allocated a relatively small amount (£128m). The

Committee is supportive of the Department's on-going work in the Further Education sector and recognises that there is still some improvement required to the Colleges estate to deliver a cutting-edge service.

Submission from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment,

Room 375,
Parliament Buildings

Tel. 028 9052 1230

Email jim.mcmanus@niassembly.gov.uk

To: Alan Hicks
Clerk to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and the
deputy First Minister

From: Jim McManus
Clerk to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment

Date: 26 January 2012

Subject: Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-2015 and Draft Investment
Strategy 2011-2021

1. I refer to your correspondence dated 8th December 2011 seeking the views of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment on the draft Programme for Government and Draft Investment Strategy 2011-2021.
2. At its meeting on the 26th January 2012, the Committee agreed to forward the attached response to your Committee for consideration.

Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

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Mr Tom Elliott MLA

Chair of the Committee for OFMDFM
Room 435
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26th January 2012

Draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2011-2015 and Draft Investment Strategy 2011-2021

Thank you for your correspondence of 8th December 2011 seeking the views of the Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment on the draft Programme for Government and Investment Strategy.

At the meeting on 24th November 2011, the Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment agreed to coordinate responses from other committees on the Draft Economic Strategy and bring these to the attention of the Department for Enterprise, Trade & Investment. The Committee considered the draft Comprehensive Action Plan for the Economic Strategy at its meeting on 12th January 2012 and has sought the views of key stakeholders and other statutory committees on the Action Plan.

As the majority of PfG actions for which DETI has responsibility make up the draft Economic Strategy, the Committee will not be in a position to comment on the PfG until it has had the opportunity to fully consider the draft Action Plan for the Economic Strategy. The Committee does not see its primary role as a scrutiny of the Draft Economic Strategy document. The Committee will concentrate its efforts on scrutinising and advising on the development and implementation of a robust Action Plan for the Strategy.

DETI has developed a draft Action Plan which contains some clear targets and timescales. The Committee has welcomed the draft Economic Strategy but has asked DETI to include interim targets, milestones, qualitative and quantitative measures and performance indicators along with the current status of each action in the Strategy. The Committee would urge the Committee for OFMDFM to ensure that the PfG is supported by departmental actions plans for implementation which include clear, measurable targets, milestones and performance indicators. Given the long-term, strategic importance of the PfG the Committee considers it essential that action plans are developed which demonstrate for each action, the current status, interim targets and milestones and clear quantitative and qualitative measures supported by an overall intended outcome for what will be achieved. This should be underpinned by individual responsibility for the achievement of the action.

In relation to the Investment Strategy, the Committee is content that the investments planned in telecoms and energy networks along with those planned for enterprise innovation, tourism and industry focus on the key strategic areas need to assist in rebalancing and rebuilding the economy. The Committee does however have some concerns in relation to the ability of companies to avail of support offered by Invest NI in the current economic climate. Investment Strategy also refers (page 43, first bullet point) to 'Invest NI clients'. This terminology suggests that some companies are entitled to assistance from Invest NI and others are not. The Independent Review of Economic Policy recommended that the concept

of 'Invest NI clients' should be removed. It is therefore disappointing to see the terminology used in the draft Investment Strategy.

The Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the Development of the Northern Ireland economy through innovation, research and development. While the inquiry is still in the early stages, it may result in recommendations being brought forward for greater investment by the Executive in R&D. The Committee will inform you when the Inquiry is completed.

I hope you find this submission helpful in your Committee's consideration of the draft Programme for Government.

Yours Sincerely,

Alban Maginness MLA

Chair

Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Submission from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment - Supplementary Response

Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment

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Northern Ireland
Assembly

To: Alan Hicks
Clerk to the OFMDFM Committee

From: Jim McManus
Clerk to the Enterprise, Trade & Investment Committee

Date: 2nd February 2012

Subject: **Committee Response to Draft PfG – Additional Information**

1. At its meeting on the 2nd February, the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment considered a response from the Green New Deal on the Programme for Government. The Committee agreed to forward the response for the attention of the Committee for OFMDFM as a follow-up to its previous response.
2. The paper states that, despite the allocation of £12m from April 2012, the Green New Deal is not referred to in the draft Programme for Government. It also details concerns in relation to uncertainty surrounding the Green New Deal and calls on the Executive to make a policy decision in favour of the Green New Deal.
3. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Northern Ireland Green New Deal Group

The Green New Deal and the Programme for Government

January 2012

Draft Response

Green New Deal absent from draft Programme for Government despite cross party support:

*The Green New Deal is an ambitious investment programme which will leverage in significant amounts of private sector funding to deliver energy efficiency measures, and create several thousand jobs over a three year period. This scheme aims to reduce waste, cut bills for participating households, sustain employment through the recession and modernise our housing stock. In light of this the Executive has agreed in principle to engage and resources have been set aside accordingly. **NI Budget 2011-15***

*DUP Ministers will...Commence a Province-wide retrofit programme providing a range of energy efficiency measures thereby creating jobs, combating fuel poverty, reducing carbon emissions and cutting domestic energy bills. **DUP Manifesto 2011.***

*Implement the 'Green New Deal' proposals, with the potential to create thousands of green collar jobs...Provide adequate resources for the Green New Deal. **Sinn Féin Manifesto 2011.***

*The Ulster Unionist Party is committed to the Green New Deal and we want to see Northern Ireland becoming less dependent on imported fossil fuels. **UUP proposals for 2011-15 Pfg.***

*Implementing the Green New Deal: The SDLP is absolutely committed to this sustainability and job creation plan. **SDLP Manifesto 2011.***

*Alliance will support and fund the Green New Deal Group housing proposal. **Alliance Party Manifesto 2011.***

*The Green Party is fully committed to delivering the Green New Deal insulation scheme. **Green Party Manifesto 2011.***

Summary

Despite the allocation of £12m to the Green New Deal from April 2012 in Budget 2011-15, the Green New Deal is not mentioned in the draft Programme for Government.

Considerable uncertainty has surrounded the future of the Green New Deal since DSD and DETI Ministers indicated their intention in June 2011 to examine alternative uses of the £12 million allocated in the budget.

The Green New Deal Group submitted a business proposal to Government in October 2011 (see annex) at the request of DSD and this is currently being subjected to economic appraisal. The Department is judging it against other options for the use of the £12 million allocated, such as an energy advice service or an extension to the Warm Homes budget.

There is a danger that the nature of the appraisal process will weigh against the innovative features of Green New Deal finance and in favour of other strictly conventional approaches.

£12 million spent by Government on the Green New Deal will:

The Green New Deal is a cross sectoral initiative led by:
CBI, ICTU, Institute of Directors, NICVA, Ulster Farmers Union, Bryson Group,
Energy Saving Trust, Friends of the Earth, NI Housing Executive

- Ensure a total investment of over **£80 million** in domestic energy retrofit
- Save over 50,000 households an average of **£350 on energy bills**
- Alleviate and prevent **fuel poverty** in over 25,000 homes
- Sustain up to **1100** jobs in the construction industry
- **Cut carbon dioxide** emissions by 2 tonnes per household per annum
- Return **£440 million** in lifetime savings to the Northern Ireland economy

This represents excellent value for money and would be a modest but significant step towards cutting energy consumption and tackling fuel poverty – issues that the Programme for Government contains little in the way of concrete proposals to address.

The Green Deal has been launched for consultation in England, Scotland and Wales – the result of nearly 3 years work by DECC. Northern Ireland is in danger of being left far behind.

All parties in the Executive have supported the Green New Deal in manifestos or elsewhere. These commitments can now be translated into action through a policy decision by Ministers that the Green New Deal is their preferred way forward and by providing resources to enable the scheme to progress to the next stage.

Economic Appraisal

There is a danger that in comparing the relatively complex and innovative Green New Deal with other more traditional approaches using conventional economic appraisal methods, Government will be in danger of stifling precisely the kind of innovation that is needed to tackle the inter-related challenges of energy efficiency, fuel poverty, carbon emissions and job creation.

The development of the Green Deal in England, Wales and Scotland has involved a team of between 50 and 60 civil servants over nearly three years. In contrast the Green New Deal in Northern Ireland has been resourced by contributions from group members, a very modest sum from DSD and a great deal of pro bono work.

Given the very limited resources available, it has not been feasible to produce a 'green book' business case; work remains to be done on securing funding from the Green Investment Bank and putting in place mechanisms for absorbing the risk associated with loan default by customers.

Accordingly the Green New Deal Group is asking Ministers to use the economic appraisal process to identify any outstanding issues in the proposal and to allocate resources to resolving those issues. Such resources were announced by the Minister for Finance and Personnel in March 2011.¹

Energy Supplier Obligation

DETI is currently exploring the potential of funding energy efficiency through a 'supplier obligation' – a requirement for energy suppliers to cut energy use in households through energy efficiency schemes. Such a scheme exists in GB and is being expanded as part of the Green Deal. In addition to the £200 million cost to Government, the scheme is funded through a 'levy' on the average household energy bill of approximately £70.

While such a supplier obligation may prove to be a helpful way forward for Northern Ireland in the longer term, placing such a burden on all households is likely to be controversial and will require legislation. It is also problematic in that for a supplier obligation to work in Northern

1 "I want to make it clear that the savings associated with the schemes will not be taken out of the Budget altogether but will be transferred to the green new deal project." Minister for Finance and Personnel on use of savings from withdrawal of energy efficiency rates rebates, NI Assembly, 15 March 2011.

Ireland, regulation of oil suppliers will be required. Thus any such scheme is likely to involve considerable negotiation and consultation and is unlikely to be ready for implementation for up to three years from now.

In the meantime a supplier obligation should not be a distraction from the urgent need to commence domestic energy retrofit at scale across Northern Ireland for which the Green New Deal is the only option on the table.

Green New Deal Myths

Myth 1: *The Green New Deal mutual company will be an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.*

The Green New Deal achieves its impressive leverage of public to private investment through commercial loans. The scheme must be independent of Government in order to keep these loans off the public sector balance sheet.

Myth 2: *The Green New Deal has high overheads.*

Overheads attributed to the mutual company will be 1.5% of the total spend. The main overhead is that paid to providers who will deliver the scheme – no different from management fees currently paid to Warm Homes providers, for example. Government's £12m investment will be distributed in grant support to households.

Myth 3: *The 'Green Deal' model in England, Scotland and Wales, based on an Energy Company Obligation, will be delivered at no cost to Government.*

The UK Government has now allocated £200m in incentives to the Green Deal and costs will be passed through to household energy bills – about £70 a year.

The Green New Deal and Fuel Poverty

The Green New Deal will impact on fuel poverty and health in four ways:

- higher indoor temperatures and therefore better health and well-being;
- a smaller proportion of household income spent on energy;
- the switch from solid fuel to cleaner sources of heating can have significant health impacts on whole communities when it is done at an areas-based level;
- employment created will remove many households from fuel poverty by virtue of income gains.

The Green New Deal will not tackle all fuel poverty in the owner-occupied sector, however. Pay-as-you-save loans will often not be suitable for households in severe fuel poverty if a very high proportion of energy savings are taken in improved comfort.

The area-based approach: A unique feature of the Green New Deal is that it will take an area-based 'street by street' approach which will enable it to reach all fuel poor households and refer those that are eligible to Warm Homes and appropriate NISEP schemes.

This means, however, that different homes in the same street will be treated by a number of different providers: Warm Homes, Housing Executive, NISEP (several providers) and Green New Deal.

Effective and efficient delivery: The solution is to integrate all programmes under the umbrella of the Green New Deal and to deliver via a single provider in any one area. This integrated area-based method will enable a systematic approach to both fuel poverty and

general energy efficiency with households benefiting from the efficiency and economies of scale achieved.

Conclusion

While the information currently available to the Executive is unlikely to be sufficient for them to confirm the commitment of £12 million from April 2012, a policy decision is now needed that the Green New Deal is their preferred way forward. This will enable the Minister for Finance and Personnel to release the funding he allocated to the Green New Deal for the current financial year and for negotiations to take place in earnest with financial institutions and district councils.

Annex: Summary of Green New Deal Proposals for Housing (October 2011)

Business proposal: 52,500 homes will be retrofitted over three years from April 2012 with the assistance of £12 million in grant support alongside pay-as-you-save loans enabling a total investment in energy saving measures of over £80 million.

The offer to householders: The Green New Deal will offer a 'one-stop-shop' service for owner-occupied households comprising free energy assessment; installation of measures; grant assistance; loan finance; inspection and after sales service.

Pay-As-You-Save is central to the proposal. Instead of paying for energy investments in their homes up-front, householders will be able to use the savings they make on their energy bills to repay a loan over a number of years. Usually they will see an immediate saving on their annual energy bill as well.

A mutual company: Established as a mutual company for customer benefit, the role of the Green New Deal Trust will be to assemble the necessary finance and outsource its application and administration to experienced partner organisations.

District Councils: Northern Ireland's councils have a new power to promote energy efficiency in domestic housing (including the power to make grants and loans) under Section 23 of the Housing (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. District councils will be invited to propose neighbourhoods for Green New Deal projects and to form partnerships with Green New Deal 'Providers' selected through a procurement process.

Finance: The Green New Deal Trust will raise loans of £33 million to finance total lending to households of £45 million. Raising £33 million in unsecured borrowing is particularly challenging in the current economic climate. The Green New Deal Group and its financial advisors have constructed a package based on loans from commercial banks and the Green Investment Bank.

Scale: The Green New Deal proposals are at a much more modest scale than originally proposed and will be of little lasting value unless there is a Government commitment to progressively retrofit at least 500,000 homes. A rate of at least 60,000 homes a year is needed rather than 17,000 under the current proposals constrained as they are by the limited contribution from Government.

Benefits: Even at this modest scale, however, the benefits are not insignificant and include:

- An average household annual energy saving of 6,700 kWh worth over £350.

- £440 million in lifetime savings to the Northern Ireland economy.
- By year 3 between 750 and 1100 jobs will be sustained.
- An annual reduction in carbon emissions of 2 tonnes of CO₂e per household.
- A ratio of public expenditure to private investment of 1:7
- Alleviation and prevention of fuel poverty in at least 25,000 homes.

Submission from the Committee for the Environment

Committee for the Environment

Room 245
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Tel: 028 9052 1347

Mr Tom Elliott MLA
Chairperson
Committee for the Office of the First
Minister and deputy First Minister
Committee Office Room 404
Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3XX

7 February 2012

Dear Tom

Committee for the Environment Response on the draft Programme for Government 2011 – 2015

Context

The Committee for the Environment recognises the Programme for Government (the Programme) as an overarching document that sets a framework for Government over the next four years as well as some of its longer term aspirations and intentions. As such, the Committee accepts that it is not appropriate to include details of how its objectives will be achieved.

Nonetheless the Committee firmly believes that the Programme is meaningless without a mechanism for its delivery. The Committee would therefore like to see each Department required to produce an accompanying detailed action plan, including challenging targets and timelines, of how they will deliver their commitments within the Programme.

General comments on the Programme

The Committee welcomes the over-arching aim to build a vibrant economy which can transform our society while dealing with deprivation and poverty.

The Committee believes that this focus on the economy should be done in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment and use resources as effectively and sustainably as possible.

The Committee welcomes, subject to proper resources, the priorities in the Programme relating to:

- The inclusion of social clauses in all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction
- Ensure 90% of large scale investment planning decisions are made within 6 months
- Continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% on 1990 levels by 2013
- Encourage industry to achieve 20% of electricity consumption from renewable electricity and 4% renewable heat by 2015

- Protect and enhance our natural environment by working to halt the loss of biodiversity
- Reduce the environmental impacts from the waste we generate

The Committee invited comments on the draft Programme from over 150 stakeholders and held an event for the 21 that provided substantive responses on 12 January 2012.

In general, whilst the stakeholders welcomed the draft Programme most felt that the language used was vague, that there was a lack of vision, that it was ambiguous and that the Programme itself was unambitious and would not be achieved without proper funding and resources.

The Committee asked for views on 3 particular topics – perceived gaps, milestones and monitoring. Annex 1 summarises the comments made by the 21 respondents in their written submissions and orally.

Perceived Gaps

There were a number of perceived gaps highlighted by stakeholders:

Waste

The lack of targets for dealing with waste, other than household waste, was an issue as was the provision of waste management infrastructure and funding. There was also a feeling that the current waste management strategy needed to be reviewed. Whilst stakeholders felt that the emphasis on recycling in the document was appropriate, they felt that commitment to the higher level approaches to managing waste, prevention and re-use, had been omitted.

There was a feeling that the focus on domestic waste should be widened to include other waste streams such as commercial and agricultural. Stakeholders also felt that the policy on waste as a resource needed to be integrated with other policy areas, particularly energy.

It was also the view of several stakeholders that the targets set out for recycling of household waste are contrary to those stated in the current Northern Ireland Waste Strategy and the EC Waste Framework Directive. Any targets and milestones set out in the Programme should be associated with those laid down by Europe. As local councils are responsible for recycling household waste, there was a call for better communication of the targets and milestones to ensure consistency across council areas.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee endorses the comments from the stakeholders and recommends that targets for non-domestic waste, which accounts for a significant proportion of total waste arisings, are introduced into the programme along with a target for the provision of waste management infrastructure and a commitment to measures that encourage prevention and re-use.

Local Government Reform

Stakeholders were concerned that the focus of local government reform in the Programme was confined only to the number of councils.

Stakeholders felt that more detail is required and commitments given on funding, transfer of functions, implementation and resources.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee endorses the comments from stakeholders and recommends that the Programme includes more detail and commitment on the local government reform process.

Planning

Whilst stakeholders felt that there were a number of credible commitments in relation to planning, development plans were a major area of concern as were spatial development and the absence of any mention to community planning in the Programme. A commitment to councillor, and community, training to ensure a smooth transition to new planning legislation was also called for.

There was also a feeling that there was a lack of targets within the Programme to ensure area plan coverage across Northern Ireland and that there was no mention of a planning reform bill.

Several felt that the idea of giving additional weight to planning applications that could lead to job creation was fundamentally flawed on the basis that this would put pressure on social and environmental aspects of development. They argued that current planning policy statements provide a balanced approach and that to give more weight to a single policy would be detrimental in the longer term.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee welcomes the commitment to faster decisions on planning applications that could lead to job creation and economic development whilst still giving consideration to social and environmental impact. The Committee recommends a commitment to councillor and community training to ensure they are fully prepared for the transfer of planning functions. Members also recommend the introduction of targets for area plan coverage as many are out of date.

Sustainability

There was a feeling among stakeholders that although sustainability is listed as an underlying principle of the Programme there are limited actions attributed to it and that these need to be improved. A focus on sustainability through the Green New Deal could lead to the provision of new jobs and to Northern Ireland becoming an innovator and leader in green technology. Stakeholders were also concerned about the definition of sustainability in the Programme as they felt it was too complex.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee is supportive of the view that priority should be given to job creation opportunities from a low carbon economy and the Green New Deal and recommends a stronger emphasis on sustainability in the Programme with specific actions aimed at promoting this.

Climate change

Stakeholders felt that there needs to be more explicit measures in the Programme for climate change mitigation and adaptation. There was a feeling among several stakeholders that commitment to a climate change act with legally binding targets for Northern Ireland should be included in the Programme and that without it, there would no possibility of achieving the carbon emission reduction targets identified.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee believes there is a need to identify challenging but realistic sectoral greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for Northern Ireland and to consider their inclusion in legislation as more information becomes available. It would recommend that the Programme highlights the implications of climate change for society and identifies the significant opportunities to address this issue through the introduction of new policies.

Marine Bill

The majority of stakeholders expressed concern that a marine bill was not included in the Programme. Northern Ireland remains the only region in the UK not to have a marine bill

and stakeholders are concerned at its omission and fear that, despite a Departmental commitment to introduce legislation in 2012, this may no longer be feasible.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee recommends that a marine bill is included in the Programme and shares stakeholder concerns around the delay in the introduction of a bill which leaves Northern Ireland lagging behind the rest of the UK.

Food security

Several stakeholders stated that there should be a food security policy within the Programme to ensure that more local food is produced to lessen the reliance on imported food.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee endorses the comments of stakeholders recognising that local food is better for the environment and recommends that, with the impact of climate change on food production and the cost and carbon emissions produced in the importation of food, the Programme should focus on the need for more locally produced food.

Environment Protection Agency

Several stakeholders noted the absence of a commitment to the establishment of an independent environment agency in the Programme. The feeling was that an independent environment agency would prevent costly indecision and slow action on safeguarding the environment which leaves Northern Ireland exposed to the risk of enormous fines for breach of EU environmental law.

Committee Recommendation

Whilst the majority of members are supportive, the Committee has not reached a consensus on the establishment of an independent environment protection agency. Nonetheless members are acutely aware of the potential of infraction fines and feel that the Programme should ensure that departments co-ordinate work on cross-cutting issues to implement EU legislation fully and in a timely manner to achieve acceptable environmental standards for society and avoid infraction fines.

Milestones

In relation to local government, there was a feeling amongst stakeholders that milestones were missing for the establishment of shadow councils and the introduction of a Programme structure to manage the change. Also, there is no milestone in relation to community planning and the role of local government in leading this process.

On transport, there was a welcome for the commitment to invest more than £500m to promote more sustainable methods of transport but that the milestones lack the detail required to show how the money can be apportioned across Northern Ireland and how priority will be given to new or developing schemes.

One stakeholder felt that whilst the commitment in the Programme to reduce greenhouse gases by 35% by 2025 was to be welcomed, that there should be a longer term target reflective of that in the UK Climate Change Act.

There was also a call for milestones to be introduced for the eradication of fuel poverty.

In general, stakeholders felt that the milestones and outputs were not sufficiently detailed or challenging and that they need to be made 'SMART' – Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and Timebound, with interim targets where possible. Without sufficient milestones and outputs progress will be difficult to measure.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee recommends the introduction of SMART targets to ensure total transparency and to enable the targets to be measured. The Committee supports the commitment to invest £500m on sustainable transport but would like to see more detail on how the money will be spent. Members also recommend that milestones are introduced for the eradication of fuel poverty.

Monitoring

Stakeholders felt that monitoring needed to be tailored to the audience at which it was aimed so different monitoring mechanisms may be required for the public, politicians and those directly involved in the Programme. There was also a call for a full and open annual monitoring report to the Executive, Assembly and the public and the use of a traffic lights system for a quick and easy understanding of progress.

One stakeholder felt that it was unclear from the Programme as to what criteria would be used to measure its success and the organisation felt that more detailed information was needed to monitor progress.

The Scottish Government's model of an 'outcomes' based approach was cited as an example of good practice for monitoring as it has a core set of indicators and outcomes to monitor progress.

Committee Recommendation

As referred to earlier the Committee would like to see each Department required to produce a detailed action plan that includes challenging targets and timelines of how and when they will deliver their commitments within the Programme. This should provide a mechanism both for delivery and facilitating scrutiny and monitoring.

The introduction of SMART targets should ensure that progress against targets can be easily and clearly monitored.

Members also feel that a traffic lights system should be introduced to enable a quick assessment of progress. The Committee has previously expressed its concerns around the self-reporting mechanism used by Departments to report on progress against targets and feels that this system needs to be changed to make monitoring more transparent and that more action needs to be taken when Departments fail to meet agreed targets. The Committee suggests that Assembly Committees should have a clearly recognised role in the monitoring and sanctioning process.

The Committee also recommends that an annual monitoring report is published on the progress of the Programme which should include measures that the Executive is taking to deal with any slippage that is identified.

I hope you find these comments helpful in compiling a joint Assembly response to the consultation and I look forward to outlining the Committee's position on the Programme for Government in future debates.

Yours sincerely

Anna Lo MLA

Chairperson

Submission from the Committee for Finance and Personnel

Committee for Finance and Personnel

1 February 2012

Submission to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister on the FPp Input to the Draft Programme for Government & Draft Investment Strategy

Background

1. The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) agreed to liaise with other statutory committees to co-ordinate and collate their responses to the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and draft Investment Strategy (ISNI) in a published report.
2. To inform this submission, the Committee for Finance and Personnel (CFP) considered each of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) related commitments within the PfG, received a briefing from the DFP Permanent Secretary on the Department's input to PfG and ISNI and subsequently raised a number of detailed issues in written correspondence with DFP. The Committee also wrote to a list of key stakeholders requesting that it be copied into any responses they are making which relate specifically to DFP commitments or actions identified in the PfG and ISNI. In addition, the Committee requested that DFP copy to the Committee the responses it received in relation to its commitments. To date the Committee has received four responses directly from stakeholders. A number of stakeholders have indicated that they will be responding through the wider OFMDFM consultation process. The Department also provided a response to the issues raised by the Committee which is referenced throughout this submission.
3. The key commitments for DFP are in relation to the devolution of corporation tax, the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme and various commitments in relation to social clauses in public procurement. The Committee also discussed the need for monitoring and reporting arrangements to underpin the PfG which are yet to be produced and has made a number of recommendations in this regard. The Committee finalised and agreed its response at its meeting on 1 February 2012.

Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

4. The Executive has yet to define the delivery and reporting arrangements in relation to the PfG 2011-15. The draft PfG states that *"clearly defined lines of accountability, supported by effective monitoring and regular (quarterly) reporting regimes, are a prerequisite of this PfG (Page 54). The Executive is to agree on the approach to delivery and the mechanisms to support this, and detailed guidance will be produced"*. The introduction to the PfG states that *"the previous Executive made significant progress towards the achievement of its Key Goals and Commitments and Public Service Agreements set out in the previous Programme for Government"*. A Performance Management Framework was taken forward by DFP's Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) and OFMDFM to monitor and drive delivery against targets in relation to the PfG 2008-11. Public Service Agreements (PSAs) were therefore a key reporting mechanism in each of the Delivery Reports in relation to the previous PfG 2008-11.
5. It is noted that the current PfG does not contain accompanying PSAs similar to the previous PfG and that the majority of the "Key Commitments" set out in the draft PfG are attributable

to a single Department, each with attached milestones/outputs to be achieved up until 2015. The Committee intends to examine the future reporting mechanisms and, in particular, has agreed to take evidence from PEDU on its role in this regard.

6. Members are aware that the absence of appropriate data to measure progress was a key weakness which the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) identified with the previous monitoring system¹. The Department's response to CFP in this regard explains that it will be for OFMDFM to bring the proposed monitoring and reporting mechanisms for PfG 2011-15 to the Executive for approval. The Department also states that the observations of PAC will be taken into account in the development of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms.
7. **It is essential that robust and effective monitoring and reporting arrangements are brought forward to underpin the PfG 2011-15. The Committee looks forward to scrutinising the monitoring and reporting arrangements, in particular the operational part of the delivery framework to be implemented at departmental level and any support role provided by PEDU at a cross-departmental level.**

Linkages with the Budget

8. The Committee's recently agreed Report on the Response to the Executive's Review of the Financial Process makes a number of relevant recommendations in relation to the need for read-across between the PfG and the budget.² Recommendation 7 of the Executive's Review of the Financial Process states that "*Performance outcomes and the delivery of the Programme for Government should not be directly attributable to allocations in budgets but should be monitored and delivered regardless of budget inputs*".
9. However, the Committee has noted that, in his statement to the Assembly on 17 January 2012 on the 2011-12 January Monitoring Round, the Finance Minister advised that his officials would be undertaking a comparison of departments' current financial positions and their original allocations in the Budget 2011-15. The Minister stated that this "*will provide the Executive with an opportunity to review departmental allocations for 2013-14 and 2014-15 in light of the PfG priorities.*"³ The Committee observed that the Minister's statement suggests that a link can therefore be drawn between budget allocations and PfG priorities.
10. In its response, the Committee stated that it firmly believes that there should be clear, visible linkages between Budget allocations and the PfG, and is unable to endorse Review Recommendation 7. In noting the difficulties cited by DFP in linking spending to priorities and outcomes, the Committee is mindful of previous evidence from DFP which runs contrary to the current proposal that "*performance outcomes and the delivery of the Programme for Government should not be directly attributable to allocations in budgets*", including the advice that the Account NI system had the capability to map expenditure to outputs and outcomes. The Committee, therefore, reiterates the call by its predecessor that work is undertaken to exploit the Account NI system to its full potential in this regard.
11. The Committee also endorsed the view of its predecessor that budget allocations should be driven by priorities, not the other way around. In this regard, it supports the recommendation that the Budget should be developed in the context of a PfG agreed by the Executive. Moreover, the Committee considers that it is not simply "desirable" but is in fact essential that the PfG is developed prior to, or at least in tandem with, a draft Budget and wishes to see this reflected in any agreed Budget framework.

1 The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) issued a report in February 2009 on 'Public Service Agreements: Measuring Performance' which was subsequently considered by the PAC with a report and recommendations following in November 2009.

2 Printed copies of the Committee report will be issued to Members under embargo ahead of a forthcoming plenary debated

3 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-11-12/1030-1100am-17-January-2012/>

12. The Committee also received a submission from the Green New Deal Group which highlights the commitment in principle in the Budget 2011-15 to provide resources to the Green New Deal from April 2012. The predecessor Committee, in its Report on the Executive's Draft Budget 2011-15, considered the funding to be allocated to the Green New Deal and welcomed the Executive's agreement "in principle" to engage in this initiative. The Finance Minister also clarified in the Assembly on 15 March 2011 that savings associated with the energy efficient homes scheme and the low carbon homes scheme will not be taken out of the Budget altogether but will be transferred to the Green New Deal project. The Committee wishes to highlight the fact that, despite the commitments noted above, there is no mention of the Green New Deal in the draft PfG. The Committee has also sought a response from DFP to the Green New Deal Group's submission, including clarification from the Department as to how the savings from the earlier schemes are to be reallocated and how this fits within the draft PfG commitments.
13. The Committee believes that scrutiny and monitoring of the PfG would be more meaningful if it was clear how resources were allocated in relation to each key commitment. This would both facilitate a greater understanding of the Executive's relative priorities and demonstrate how the Budget is being used as a tool to achieve these priorities. The Committee calls for further work to be carried out in relation to the role of Account NI in linking expenditure to key commitments in the PfG. Clear links between objectives and spending would also facilitate more effective scrutiny by Assembly committees.

Priority 1: Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future:

Key Commitment: Devolution of Corporation Tax and Reducing its Level

14. Members have noted that the devolution of corporation tax is a central commitment within the draft PfG, the draft Investment Strategy and the draft Economic Strategy. The Committee understands that the Ministerial Working Group will be the mechanism by which agreement will be reached in relation to this issue. The Department informed the Committee that officials from OFMDFM, DETI and DFP met with HMT/HMRC Officials on 10 January 2012 and have agreed six separate but interrelated work streams. The workplan currently anticipates that work will be completed in May and would report to Ministers after that.
15. In recent evidence to the Committee,⁴ DFP stated that the current estimated cost to the NI block grant of devolving corporation tax is £500m but that the Minister considers this figure to be high. The Department explained that there have been difficulties in calculating the estimate because Treasury does not normally accumulate the figures for NI separately. However, the Committee understands that there may be an updated position from Treasury regarding the estimated cost and will seek clarification from the Department.
16. The Department's response to the Committee in relation to draft PfG issues stated that no revised overall estimate of the costs has been produced and that *"all aspects of the first four of the work streams could impact on the estimate of costs. The Committee may wish to note that the Government published revised downward projections of future overall UK corporation tax receipts alongside the Autumn Statement in November 2011. As a key aspect of the methodology to estimate the cost of devolving corporation tax is based on our share of overall UK receipts this downward revision would reduce this element of our costs"*. The Committee has sought a further oral briefing from the Department on progress on this matter.
17. Members note that Manufacturing NI, in its response to the draft PfG, stated that *"there are increasing indications that European wide policies including the call for common business tax rates in the EU, together with internal UK politics, particularly in relation to similar calls for tax deciding powers from Scotland, may have a major impact on any decision. The impact of EU*

4 Official Report, Wednesday 11 January 2012

pressure for an increase in the rate of Corporation Tax in RoI has the potential to minimise the potential benefits of possible lower rates here”.

18. The NI Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA), in its response to the draft PfG, supported the Economic Reform Group Report on the need to reduce the rate of corporation tax in NI to urged OFMDFM to engage with the Treasury on its recommendations.
19. Chartered Accountants Ireland has also written to the Committee to highlight work it has undertaken regarding the economic benefits of a reduced rate of corporation tax. This work puts forward the case for a reduced rate of corporation tax.
20. **The Committee believes that it is essential that the negotiations on devolving corporation tax are concluded in a timely manner and that clarification is provided on the precise implications for the NI block grant, given that estimates of the annual cost have varied from £200m to £500m. While supportive, in principle, of the case for the devolution of corporation tax, the Committee wishes to see the commitment within the PfG based on a clear analysis of affordability and on fair and reasonable working arrangements for implementation of the devolved power.**

Key Commitment: Introduce Extension of Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

21. The Committee published a Report on the Proposed Large Retail Levy and Expansion of the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme (SBRR) in December 2011. The Committee is supportive of the extension of SBRR as part of the PfG but acknowledges that the SBRR scheme is a blunt instrument and is concerned to ensure that DFP addresses a number of issues in relation to this commitment, as agreed by the Department in its response to the Committee report.
22. The Department is to initiate an evaluation of the existing scheme in 2012 and will make any necessary changes to the scheme in time for rates bills in 2012/13. The evaluation is also to consider the business case for small industrial units benefitting from both industrial de-rating and small business rates relief. It is noted that Manufacturing NI, in its response to the draft PfG, wished to see a commitment to maintain manufacturing business rate relief beyond 2015.
23. The Committee recommended that steps should be taken to identify longer-term alternatives to the SBRR scheme to align with the Executive's future policy direction, including priorities in the economic strategy and any changed context in the event of the devolution of corporation tax, from which small business could benefit.
24. The Department advised the Committee that the non-domestic revaluation scheduled for 2015 will rebalance the rating system. The Department, in recent evidence to the Committee,⁵ stated that the Commissioner for Valuation had only begun preparatory work and that the Executive had yet to give the go-ahead for the revaluation. The Department's response to the Committee in relation to draft PfG issues states that *“the plan is for the revaluation to take effect in April 2015, but its impact on business ratepayers, in terms of sectors and locations should be known around 6 months before the bills issue”.*
25. Members note that the NIIRTA response to the draft PfG reiterates the views put forward as part of the consultation on the extension of SBRR. NIIRTA believes that the level of NAV which qualifies small businesses for the scheme should be extended on a yearly basis to include more small businesses.
26. **The Committee believes that it is essential that the necessary preparatory work in relation to the non-domestic revaluation, including provision for reviews and appeals, is carried out to ensure that the revaluation takes effect in 2015. The Committee will also wish to examine the outcome of the evaluation of the existing SBRR scheme to ensure that**

5 Official Report, Wednesday 11 January 2012

any changes to the scheme are implemented in time for rates bills in 2012/13 and that alternatives are identified to deal more strategically with economic issues in the longer-term.

Key Commitment: Hold the Regional Rate Increases to the Rate of Inflation

27. The Department has pointed out that the Executive agreed on 14 December 2010 that the regional rate should increase by the level of inflation over the four year budget period.
28. **The Committee supports the key commitment of holding the regional rate increase to the rate of inflation and notes that, while the legislation is subject to Assembly approval, the Department has no concerns regarding potential risks to this commitment.**

Key Commitment: Eliminate Air Passenger Duty on Direct Long-Haul Flights

29. The Department has confirmed that discussions are on-going with Treasury to agree the arrangements for the devolution of these powers, including which aspects will be devolved, precise costs and the administrative arrangements for its collection.
30. The Committee notes the Department's assertion that views have been sought on the devolution of powers in relation to Air Passenger Duty. However, the Committee has some concern that much of the detail in relation to this key commitment is subject to negotiation with Treasury. The Committee has sought a further oral briefing from the Department on this matter.
31. **As is the case with Corporation Tax, the Committee supports, in principle, the devolution of powers in respect of Air Passenger Duty. However, members are keen to see the commitment within the PfG based on a clear analysis of affordability and on fair and reasonable working arrangements in relation to the administration of Air Passenger Duty. The Committee looks forward to further detail from the Department in relation to the powers that are to be devolved as well as the administrative arrangements.**

Priority 5: Delivering High Quality and Efficient Services

Key Commitment: Include Social Clauses in public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction

32. This commitment relates to the inclusion of social clauses in public procurement contracts. A parallel commitment is included as a DFP responsibility in the draft Economic Strategy Action Plan (No. F21), though it refers to *"the inclusion of social clauses in **all** public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction"* (emphasis added).
33. Members note from the DFP Minister's statement on 16 January 2011 that a new Protocol for Managing Poor Contractor Performance is to apply to social clauses in government contracts underpinning the PfG commitment. The Minister stated:

"The protocol gives CoPEs the authority to issue a Certificate of Unsatisfactory Performance to contractors who persistently fail to deliver on key contractual requirements. These will be defined in the contract and will include fair payment to subcontractors. The protocol will also apply to compliance with social clauses in contracts and will help underpin the Programme for Government commitment of including social clauses in all public procurement contracts".

The Committee supports the introduction of Certificates of Unsatisfactory Performance, in particular their application in terms of compliance with key contractual requirements regarding both social clauses and fair payment to subcontractors.

34. Members have welcomed this announcement and note the confirmation from the Minister that the social clauses will apply in all public procurement contracts. On this latter point, however, the Department has clarified that *"all contracts will include standard social clauses requiring compliance with applicable fair employment, equality of treatment, anti-discrimination and health & safety legislation. Standard wording for these clauses will be specified in guidance*

to be issued shortly." The Committee believes that these types of standard social clauses are a minimum requirement and would, in any event, have expected them to be included in all public sector contracts already. Members therefore believe that it will be important not to confuse the use of these standard social clauses with the need to make progress in using social clauses to maximise the potential social, economic and environmental benefits from public procurement. 67.

35. The previous Committee's Inquiry into Public Procurement gave qualified support for the application of social causes within public sector procurement contracts and raised concerns about "a lack of definition of social value". In its recent response on this PfG Key Commitment, the Department stated that *"OFMDFM is in the lead with CPD support in developing a working definition of, and methodology for, measuring "social value" in Northern Ireland. This will focus on the consideration of social value at the business case stage prior to the actual procurement"*.
36. **While supportive of the commitment to include social clauses in public procurement contracts, the Committee would emphasise the importance of this going beyond the use of standard clauses, dealing with equality and health & safety issues, to include social clauses aimed at maximising the potential social, economic and environmental benefits from government spend. The Committee will wish to review the forthcoming guidance on social value to ensure that it sets out a clear definition and measurement methodology and that it promotes the greater use of social clauses. The Committee believes that the inclusion of social value at the business case stage will provide the best opportunity for social aspects to be embedded within the contract as it is developed.**
37. Members note the confirmation from DFP that CPD has reviewed the application of existing social clauses and found that, while they have been included in a number of contracts, there has been limited take-up across other CoPEs. CPD has also reviewed the nature and the effectiveness of clauses agreed with industry and, as a result, clauses used in construction contracts have been revised to facilitate more opportunities for the implementation of social clauses. These revised clauses were agreed with the Construction Industry Forum for NI (CIFNI) in 2011.
38. The guidance being developed by CPD will include a range of model clauses which can be taken and adopted by CoPEs in all suitable contacts, including the clauses agreed with CIFNI. It is the intention that this guidance will facilitate a greater use of social clauses in all contracts. While welcoming this commitment, members are also mindful that the predecessor Committee noted from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) guidance on delivering social benefits through public procurement, that procurement contracts should require only social benefits that are appropriate to the size of the contract and the expertise of the contractors.
39. **The Committee calls on the Procurement Board and CPD to establish monitoring and reporting arrangements to ensure the ongoing evaluation of the use and take-up of social clauses to ensure that all CoPEs operate a best practice approach in this area going forward.**

Key Commitment: Improve Online Access to Government Services

40. The Department has explained that much of the underlying work to be carried out in relation to this commitment will be at an individual departmental level. Each department will identify services for migration to online and will be informed by research, customer feedback and potential volumes of transactions. The development of smartphone mobile applications and the use of SMS and social media will also be to the fore.
41. DFP has also stated that, as the target applies to each Department, the Committee will have the opportunity to scrutinise DFP's plans for online services and receive regular updates. It is anticipated that the other committees will do likewise for their respective departments. The Committee is to be kept updated when the detailed reporting and communication arrangements are agreed.

42. **The Committee welcomes clarification from DFP that lower-level targets should be set in relation to this key commitment and actual usage monitored to encourage uptake year-on-year – e.g. the targets in relation to the number of people accessing government services online. The Committee recommends that departments keep committees updated as to the proposals in relation to online services.**

Key Commitment: Further Reduce the Levels of Sickness Absence Across the NICS

43. Members believe that the monitoring and reporting arrangements across departments in relation to this key commitment are essential. DFP will have the lead role in monitoring the performance of departments in meeting these targets. Lower level targets will also have to be developed within departments.
44. The Committee notes that, during a recent evidence session with DFP's Corporate HR officials, it was stated that 71% of absences are due to a small number of staff absent on a long-term basis, mainly due to psychiatric related illness. The Committee expressed the view that, if the target of 9.5 days is to be met, co-ordinated policies will need to be implemented across departments, including distinguishing between the measures to target long-term and short-term absence.
45. **The Committee re-enforces the importance of DFP's role in ensuring that all departments are recording sick absence in a robust, accurate and consistent way. The Committee will continue to closely monitor the strategic role of DFP in managing sickness absence to meet this key commitment.**

Response to the Draft Investment Strategy

46. Members are mindful that one of the findings of DFP's Review of NI Executive Budget Process 2008-11 was that there should be clearer linkages between the PfG and ISNI consultation documents. The Department's responded to the Committee explaining that the DFP commitments within the PfG and associated actions within ISNI are intended to support the overall objective of re-balancing the NI economy. However, it is difficult to establish any clear linkages between the two strategies.
47. In its response, Manufacturing NI expressed surprise that there is no clear link between the draft Economic Strategy and the draft Investment Strategy and that *"the government capital programme, as represented by the investment strategy, is a critical factor in stimulating growth in the economy and generating business for local firms, not just those in the construction industry"*.
48. In its response to the Committee, DFP confirmed that it has taken the lead role in developing capital investment proposals during the budget process in close cooperation with the SIB. The Department also points out that the capital budget allocations agreed by the Executive set the first four years of the 2011-2021 ISNI and explains that:
- "The figures and allocations beyond the 2014-15 financial year are indicative mainly because the overall funding envelope will not be known until the conclusion of the next UK Spending Review (and local Budget process thereafter). It will be for the Executive to agree the Capital allocations beyond 2014-15 in the context of the outcome of the next UK Spending Review. Clearly, there is uncertainty in terms of each department's allocation beyond 2014-15 as outlined above"*.
49. Funding allocations for the first four years are consistent with the figures published in the Executive's Final Budget. The departmental analysis of the investment allocations at the Appendix to ISNI states that *"the figures and allocations for this latter period are indicative only"*.

50. **The Committee notes that there remains a degree of uncertainty around the ISNI allocations beyond 2015 because of the impact of the UK Spending Review and in light of the fact that the Executive has now agreed to a review of capital investment allocations. The Committee believes it essential that Assembly statutory committees are consulted fully on the impact of the reviews, including any proposed changes to the existing and future capital allocations of the individual departments.**

Strategic Estates Planning Model

51. The draft ISNI states that information on vacant space in one area of government will be available to all departments. This is to be achieved through the "Strategic Estates Planning Models". The Department has advised the Committee that Strategic Estate Planning is separate from the central asset register currently being implemented by the Asset Management Unit across every Department. DFP stated that "*Strategic Estate Planning is a separate exercise to use knowledge of the Government estate and demand for services to assist Government in planning where aspects of its estate should be located in future to meet demand*". The Committee notes that one exercise has so far been taken forward with DEL undertaken by SIB with no external costs.
52. **The Committee considers that this is an important piece of work given that significant decisions could be made based on the knowledge gathered in relation to estates. The Committee notes that, while this work appears to be in the early stages, it has not been consulted on Strategic Estates Planning and will seek a detailed briefing from DFP in this regard. The Committee believes that the other Assembly statutory committees should also be kept informed regarding the areas within their departmental remits which will be subject to strategic estates planning.**

Joining Up of Services

53. The draft ISNI states that there is to be more focus on joining up services delivered by different public bodies to ensure more convenient access to services. In this regard, the Department has informed the Committee that "*the implications of the joining up of services on the location of public sector jobs will be considered as individual proposals by departments are put forward*".

The previous Committee called for the development of an affirmative policy for the dispersal of public sector jobs but recommended that this be approached in a strategic way to maximise benefits throughout NI. Arising from the Independent Review of Policy on the Location of Public Sector Jobs, led by Professor Sir George Bain, the predecessor Committee also pursued the issue of the development of an NICS-wide homeworking, or flexible-working policy, aimed at realising further efficiencies from accommodation expenditure.

54. **Members would reiterate the call from the previous Committee, in its *Report on the Preliminary Inquiry into Public Sector Efficiencies*, for a flexible working policy for NICS to be established promptly, including in terms of implementation targets. The Committee would wish to consider the impact of the ISNI commitment on joining up services as it is developed and believes that any proposals brought forward in this regard should take account of the applicable recommendations of the previous Committee.**

Additional Comments

55. The Committee notes that it is not evident in either the draft PfG or the draft ISNI how the DFP commitments will contribute to tackling social disadvantage. The Committee will be seeking clarification from DFP in this regard.

Submission from the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Committee for Health Social Services and Public Safety

Room 410
Parliament Buildings

Tel: +44 (0) 28 90521841

From: Kathryn Bell

To: Alyn Hicks

Date: 18 January 2012

Subject: HSSPS Committee response on draft PfG and draft ISNI



Alyn,

Please see Committee response below.

Kathryn

Response

The Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety took evidence from departmental officials on the draft PfG on 14 December 2011 and evidence on the draft ISNI on 11 January 2012.

In relation to the draft PfG, the Committee would make the following points:

1. Of the 76 key commitments only five of these relate to the DHSSPS, yet it spends over 40% of the total resource budget across all the departments. The Committee is unanimously of the view that given the amount of resource the DHSSPS is responsible for, it should be subject to a greater number of key commitments. The Committee would wish to see further commitments added to the draft PfG in respect of the DHSSPS.
2. The key commitment for the Department under Priority 5 is: "Reconfigure our network of health and social care services to improve patient outcomes and access to new treatments". This proposed reconfiguration will be driven by the Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland which was published on 13 December 2011. The Committee is concerned that at present there does not seem to be a clear linkage between the Programme for Government and the recommendations coming from the Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. In particular, it is not clear how the Programme for Government can be used in this respect to monitor or measure the changes that will emanate from the Review.
3. The key commitment for the Department under Priority 1 is: "Allocate an increasing percentage of the overall health budget to public health". However, the targets quote cash figures rather than growth in percentage terms. The Committee is of the view that the planned increases should also be provided in percentage terms to provide more transparency.

In relation to the draft ISNI, the Committee is supportive of the projects proposed by the DHSSPS according to the current available monies. However, if additional capital monies should become available to the Executive, the Committee would request that a proportion of this is allocated to the DHSSPS, given the need to urgently upgrade the health and social care estate.

Submission from the Committee for Justice

Committee for Justice

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From: Christine Darrah
Clerk to the Committee for Justice

Date: 10 February 2012

To: Alyn Hicks
Clerk to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Response from the Committee for Justice on the draft Programme for Government

The memo from Peter Hall dated 8 December 2011 regarding responses on the draft Programme for Government refers.

Attached is the response agreed by the Committee for Justice at its meeting on 9 February 2012.

A copy of the response has also been sent to the Minister of Justice for his consideration.

Christine Darrah

Committee Clerk

Response from the Committee for Justice on the Draft Programme for Government

Introduction

1. The Committee for Justice welcomes the publication of the draft Programme for Government which will set the priorities for the Executive over the next 4 years.
2. When scrutinising the proposed Department of Justice commitments and associated milestones the Committee has seen the responses on the draft Programme for Government from a number of key justice stakeholders.

Gaps in the draft Programme for Government

3. A key issue for the justice system is the treatment of and services provided to victims and witnesses. The Justice Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into this topic and the need for a fundamental shift in culture and attitude by all criminal justice agencies and organisations and a recognition that the needs of victims and witnesses matter and they must be treated with dignity and respect has been consistently highlighted in the evidence we have received.
4. The Minister of Justice has given an undertaking to take account of the Committee's findings and recommendations when developing a new strategy for victims and witnesses of crime.
5. The Committee is very strongly of the view that a commitment to improve the services provided to victims and witnesses through delivery of a new strategy must be included in the Programme for Government to ensure the appropriate and necessary focus is placed on this key issue over the next 4 years.
6. The Committee would also recommend the inclusion of a commitment to reduce avoidable delay in the criminal justice system in the Programme for Government. There is ample evidence that this has been an on-going problem for a considerable period of time and appropriate progress is not being made – indeed the most recent Criminal Justice Inspection report indicates that delays in some categories of cases have got worse over the past 12 months despite it apparently being a key priority for action.

Comments on Milestones and Outputs

7. In relation to priority 3 – Protecting our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities - the Committee questions why the milestone to implement 90% of agreed Youth Justice Review recommendations is included under the commitment to reduce the level of serious crime. The direct association with reducing the level of serious crime is inappropriate and, while the implementation of the Youth Justice Review should be included in the Programme for Government, the Committee is of the view that the milestone relating to it should be moved to a more suitable place in the document.
8. The Committee notes the commitment to reduce the level of serious crime and the inclusion of a target of a 3% decrease in levels of violent crime from the 2010/11 baseline under priority 3. The Committee has been advised by the Policing Board that the Policing Plan for 2012 – 2015, which is currently being finalised, will include an indication and measure in relation to violent crime and would highlight the importance of ensuring that the PfG and Policing Plan targets are consistent and measurable.
9. Under priority 4 – Building a strong and shared community - the Committee recommends that the commitment to “actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of peace walls” is reworded to read “Supporting communities in dealing with peace walls” to ensure that it properly reflects the need for a willingness from the local community to engage to make progress.

Monitoring of Progress

10. The Justice Committee intends to regularly monitor progress on the delivery of the Department of Justice commitments and milestones in the Programme for Government and will expect six-monthly progress reports from the Department.
11. The Committee will also expect to see the Programme for Government commitments and milestones reflected in the Department's annual business plans.
12. With regard to the Youth Justice Review and the Access to Justice Review the Committee will expect to see detailed timelines and implementation plans developed to underpin the milestones. The timelines and implementation plans, together with those for the Prison Review, should be made available to justice stakeholders.
13. The Committee also wishes to highlight that further consideration needs to be given to how progress in relation to the delivery of the inputs required from other Departments to achieve some of the Department of Justice commitments and milestones e.g. "improving community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour" and "deliver joined up oversight, evaluation and publication of reducing offending interventions" will be monitored and evaluated.

Paul Givan MLA

Chairman of the Committee for Justice

Submission from the Committee for Regional Development



Committee for Regional Development

Response to the Consultation on the Draft Programme for Government 2011-15, the Draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21 and the Draft Economic Strategy

[EXTRACT]

Introduction

1. The First and deputy First Ministers announced formal consultation on the draft Programme for Government (PfG), Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) and Economic Strategy (EA) on 17 November 2011. The consultation is scheduled to close on 22 February 2012. The First and deputy First Minister have signalled that the Executive hopes to agree the PfG at its meeting on Thursday 8th March, with a plenary debate on Monday 12th March 2012.
2. The PfG contains 76 commitments, of which six fall to the Department for Regional Development (the Department). These are as follows:
 - Progress the upgrade of key road projects and improve the overall road network to ensure that by March 2015 journey times on key transport corridors reduce by 2.5% against the 2003 baseline;
 - Ensure no additional water charges during this Programme for Government;
 - Upgrade the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line;
 - Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of travel;
 - By 2015 create the conditions to facilitate at least 36% of primary school pupils and 22% of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport; and
 - Maintain a high quality of drinking water and improve compliance with waste water standards by investing £600m in water and sewerage infrastructure.
3. The Committee for Regional Development (the Committee) considered the draft strategies at the meeting of 23 November 2011 and agreed that they would invite the submission of oral and/or written evidence from the Department for Regional Development and a select list of stakeholders. A seminar was held in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings on 12 December 2011 for a selection of invited stakeholders to provide oral evidence, with letters inviting written submissions issued to a wider group of stakeholders.

The Committee Approach

4. In order to provide a structured approach to the consultation, the Committee identified four key areas contained within the Pfg, ISNI and EA documents:
 - Public Transport;
 - Road and Rail Infrastructure and Investment;
 - Sustainable Transport; and
 - Water and Wastewater.
5. The Committee sought focused views in respect of the above categories on the following three points:
 - Gaps in the Programme for Government;
 - Comments on the Milestones and Outputs; and
 - What is the best way to monitor progress?
6. The Department and nine other invited stakeholder organisations were each invited to attend the seminar on 12 December 2011 and to speak specifically to one of the above categories. Each presentation was 8 – 10 minutes in length, followed by up to five minutes of questions from Members of the Committee. Invited stakeholders could also provide written submissions to support their presentations. A full list of stakeholders who provided oral evidence is contained at Appendix 1 of this document.
7. Letters were issued to a further 47 stakeholders asking for written submissions. 23 responses were received. A number of local councils sought extensions to the deadline for response to allow for consideration at full councils and these requests were accommodated. The written submissions received are contained at Appendix 2.

Summary of Consultation Responses

8. Overall, there was a sense of disappointment in the draft strategies. Whilst there was recognition of the progress made since the last PfG, there was a consensus that an opportunity to address the many challenges facing Northern Ireland had been missed. A number of responses suggested that the commitments were based on existing targets and budgets, that these were generic and lacked overall detail and that they did not take into account the current economic climate facing Northern Ireland and the global economy. In addition, it was suggested that the generality of the outputs made measurement of progress extremely difficult.
9. Copies of all written submissions are contained in Appendix 2 to this document.

Public Transport

10. The key departmental commitments with regards to public transport are:
- Invest over £500m to promote more sustainable modes of transport (£174m capital and over £318m revenue funding in respect of on-going commitments for delivery of public transport services); and
 - Upgrade of the Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry railway line.
11. Whilst these commitments were welcomed by the majority of respondents, it was felt that there were a number of gaps that required clarification. There appeared to be a conflict between sustainable transport objectives in the PfG and those contained in major, existing policy documents, such as the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS), in particular with regard to the fact that the budget appears to be moving away from the 65:35 funding split between roads and public transport. It was suggested that approximately 14% - 17% of the budget would only be available now for investment in public transport.
12. Further evidence offered to support the opinion that the PfG did not deliver in respect of sustainable transport included:
- The investment of £500m would be used to maintain passenger numbers at 77m per annum. This target has been in place since 2008 and was said to be indicative that the PfG merely sought to maintain the status quo and would not create (rather than promote, as stated in the commitment) the environment and circumstances that would bring about significant modal shift away from cars to public transport;
 - The target to reduce journey times was deficient in two ways. Firstly, targets exist for the reduction of journey times through the upgrading of key roads, whilst no targets were in place to improve public transport times, where, it was claimed, journey time trends were increasing. Secondly, the reduction of 2.5% was against a 2003 baseline, rather than a more recent starting point. This was not seen as significantly challenging the Department.
13. There was a further belief that public transport was too "Belfast-centred" and that an opportunity had been missed to create priority corridors for public transport in other towns and cities. Additionally, there were calls for the creation of a public transport agency to access the needs of all public transport providers and to ensure accessibility and integration of public transport options.
14. The Department and other executive departments were criticised for not adopting a strategic approach to all facets public transport, including education and health transport arrangements. It was believed that significant economies could be achieved through the efficient operation of the entire public sector transport fleets. This might also include opening the procurement process up to all, in particular to Community Transport Associations (CTA's).

The Department was congratulated on its continued support of CTA's, although it was noted that funding beyond 2015 could not be guaranteed.

Road and Rail Infrastructure and investment

15. Investment allocations to the Department have been spread across two pillars in the draft ISNI, Networks and the Environment. Roads and public transport are categorised under the Networks pillar, whilst water and wastewater fall to the Environment pillar.
16. The Network investment allocation for the period 2011 – 2015 totals £1.386b, whilst 2015 – 2021 is £1.561b. This latter figure includes £118m, representing the deferred balance from the £400m allocated by the Irish Government towards the A5/A8 capital roads project.
17. The Environment investment allocation for 2011 – 2015 is £668m and £600m for the period 2015 – 2021.
18. The Department has pointed out that the vast majority of the £1.2b earmarked for roads is designated towards the A5/A8 project. There are varying forms of opinion in respect of this proposal, from full dualling to commencement of stages to major upgrading of the route. The Department indicated that a new implementation was being developed for consideration at the next North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). The Irish Government has, in the meantime, indicated that it will provide a total of £50m toward this project, spread equally across the 2015 – 2016 and 2016 – 2017 financial years. It was noted that the Departments contribution to the project is spread across the current CSR period, scheduled to complete in 2015.
19. Whilst there is no clarity with regards to the future of the project, there is a concern that the departmental allocations will not be achieved within the relevant financial years and, without End Year Flexibility (EYF), will be lost to the project. Some respondents, therefore, have asked that the Department progress “shovel-ready” projects to allow for reallocation of these monies, arguing that the delay cannot be afforded in respect of damage to the economy and employment.
20. With regards to rail, there is concern that the proposed budgets for 2015 and beyond are significantly less than investments in other regions and jurisdictions. There is a belief that greater investment in roads and integrating rail and the other public transport modes will bring about a re-energising of the local economy and the construction industry.
21. Finally, there was some disappointment that alternative forms of funding and revenue generation had not been explored to fund roads maintenance and infrastructural development.

Sustainable Transport

22. The key commitments and issues in respect of this category have already been recounted in paragraphs 10 – 14 above. Broadly speaking, the Executive were commended on the targets in respect of walking/cycling to school, although some did suggest that there should be a similar commitment and relevant targets in respect of commuting to work.
23. The ISNI contained some deliverables in respect of sustainable travel:
 - Potential investment in sustainable transport initiatives and ICT investment in transport services;
 - 3 – 6 Active Demonstration projects;
 - A number of park and ride projects;
 - Belfast on the Move sustainable transport enabling measures;
 - Rapid Transport enabling measures; and

- Over 100 charge posts for electric cars.
24. Further gaps were identified as:
- Insufficient focus on local travel;
 - No specific targets for reduction in greenhouse gases, including transport-based emissions; and
 - No targets aimed at climate change and reducing dependency on fossil fuels.

Water and Wastewater

25. There are two main commitments in respect of this area:
- No additional charges during this PfG; and
 - Maintain high quality drinking water and improve compliance with wastewater standards by investing over £600m in water and waste infrastructure (with a further £600m for the six years beyond 2015).
26. Concerns were raised with regards to the governance issues within Northern Ireland Water (NIW), with a general view that these hindered strategic planning and hindered the efficient delivery of services.
27. The levels of funding identified in the PfG and ISNI caused grave concern, as they will drop significantly up to and beyond 2015 (currently at £188m p/a, dropping to £167 p/a by 2015 and down to £100m p/a for the period up to 2021). It was estimated that it costs up to £80m p/a just to maintain the asset base, which left very little to invest in the infrastructure, particularly with lack of opportunity to carry capital funding over the financial years.

Milestones and Outcomes

28. A number of respondents stated that the milestones and outcomes were not SMART targets, were vague and unambitious which would therefore lead to difficulty in assessing their progress. Again, it was felt that an opportunity had been lost to use appropriate milestones to drive the PfG commitments that would result in a "tick-box" exercise, rather than a meaningful analysis of progress. It was seen as a priority that clear, measureable, ambitious targets were needed for each commitment.
29. It was also seen as important that delegation of Executive commitments to individual departmental corporate plans should also result in meaningful, measureable and ambitious targets and outcomes.

Monitoring Progress

30. Again, there was some consternation that a clear monitoring mechanism was not evident and, therefore, it would not be possible to ascertain whether these targets had been achieved. There was a general consensus that progress should be reported on at least on an annual basis to both the Executive and the Assembly, and that this process should not be recording progress as being "on target" but with meaningful data showing progress against appropriate baselines.

Submission from the Committee for Social Development

Committee for Social Development

Room 410
Parliament Buildings
Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 1939



Northern Ireland
Assembly

To: Alyn Hicks, Clerk to the Committee for the Office of the First and deputy First Minister

From: Kevin Pelan, Clerk to the Social Development Committee

Date: 13 February 2012

Subject: Programme for Government

At its meeting on 9 February 2012, the Committee considered its initial response on the Programme for Government.

The Committee agreed to forward this to you for your information.

Kevin Pelan

Enc

Committee for Social Development

Room 410
Parliament Buildings
Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 1939



General Comment

1. Based on the Committee's consideration of the Programme for Government (PfG) and submissions from stakeholders, the Committee for Social Development is happy to forward its initial response to the interim PfG. In composing its response the Committee drew on information provided by some of its key stakeholders, however due to the deadline for a response to the OFMdFM Committee the Committee has not yet received all of the responses requested.
2. The Committee welcomes the publication of a draft PfG although it is disappointed in relation to the timing of the publication as it is almost a year after the draft Budget for Northern Ireland 2011-2015.
3. Whilst the Committee concurs with the guiding principles and priorities within the PfG it is concerned with the absence of a legislative programme to implement the strategic priorities and also the general lack of milestones and targets in order to achieve the strategies within a four year period.
4. The Committee recognises that there are a number of complimentary strategies within the PfG and would seek assurance that a joined up approach from Department's and the Assembly be included in the PfG.

Tackling Poverty and Disadvantage

4. The Committee recently received a briefing from the Department on the key themes of its Corporate Plan 2012-2015, one of which was 'Tackling Poverty and Disadvantage'. The Committee welcomes the commitments under Priority 2 to achieve this but it believes that there should be greater clarity on the role of DSD in relation to the stated position that 'OFMdFM will tackle poverty and disadvantage along with other Government departments through a suite of inter-related programmes including the Social Investment Fund and the Social Protection Fund'.

The Committee recognises that greater detail is likely to be forthcoming in DSD's operational plan and it expects targets to be attached to tackling poverty and disadvantage.

Social Enterprise

5. The Committee welcomes the commitment to invest in social enterprise growth to increase sustainability in the broad community sector. However, there are no set targets associated with this. The Committee would like to see more detail on this.
6. The Committee also notes that while the policy statement on Community Asset Transfer is scheduled to be developed implemented in 2012/2013 the policy is not scheduled to be implemented in 2014/2015. There also needs to be clarification given that the Department states that (in 2012/2013) it will 'Provide opportunities to support social enterprise growth' and yet it states that it will 'Commence....opportunities identified' in 2014/2015. The Committee would like clarity on when opportunities will be identified and when they will be provided.

Social and Affordable Housing

7. The Committee welcomes the commitment to deliver 8000 social and affordable homes. However, the Committee recognises that the building of 6000 social homes and 2000 co-ownership homes does not meet the demand. The Committee suggests that additional resources should be allocated to social housing.

-
8. The Committee believes that one of the key commitments of the PfG should be the development and implementation of an overarching Housing Strategy with key targets and actions and social and affordable homes is one part of this. Other strategies such as the Homelessness Strategy, Empty Homes Strategy, Older People's Strategy and Supporting People Strategy also need to be integrated into the Housing Strategy.
 9. The Committee would like to see targets relating to the number of people who will be helped out of housing stress as a result of the building of 8000 homes.
 10. The Committee would also like to see more finance released to deal with the maintenance of homes.

Regeneration

11. The Committee notes that development of the 'One Plan' for the regeneration of Derry/Londonderry involves only OFMdFM and seeks clarity the position on DSD's involvement in setting targets for the development of the Fort George site.
12. The previous Committee conducted an Inquiry into Town Regeneration and this Committee suggests that the recommendations from that inquiry are implemented as part of the PfG.

Fuel Poverty

13. The Committee feels that a 'programme of initiatives' to address fuel poverty is simply not sufficient. The Department must develop a detailed cross-departmental action plan in collaboration with stakeholders and officials under which initiatives can be developed and implemented. This must be time-limited, be fully costed, have key milestones and produce realistic outcomes.
14. The Committee acknowledges that reducing fuel poverty is difficult in practice given the fluctuation in oil prices which could have an erratic effect on fuel poverty rates due to our reliance on home heating oil. However, the Committee would like to see more specific targets in this area. For example, it would like to see targets on how initiatives such as full double glazing of all Housing Executive stock reduce levels of fuel poverty.

Welfare Reform

15. The Committee welcomes the establishment of an advisory group to assist Ministers in alleviating hardship associated with welfare reform but it requires clarity on how this group will interact with the Ministerial sub-committee on welfare reform and indeed the Committee for Social Development.
16. Given the impact that welfare reform is likely to have on the economy, on the basis that potentially hundreds of millions of pounds will be lost from NI benefit recipients by 2014/15 the Committee feels that welfare reform should be factored into Priority 1.

Building Blocks

17. The Committee would draw attention to the number of 'building blocks' that preface each chapter of the draft PfG and would have concerns about the ability to ensure that the aims and objectives of these are strategic and targeted interventions.

Financial Capability

18. The Committee agrees with the Consumer Council views that it is essential that financial capability skills are developed to improve consumer resilience and decision making. It has become evident to the Committee through its consideration of welfare reform that many people in Northern Ireland have great difficulty in debt/financial management yet Northern Ireland is the only region in the UK not to have a financial capability strategy. The Committee agrees that the PfG should contain a commitment to developing and implementing a Financial Capability Strategy.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 4

List of Witnesses

List of Witnesses

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	Mr. Peter Robinson MLA Mr. Martin McGuinness MLA Mr. Jonathan Bell MLA Ms. Martina Anderson MLA
Commission for Victims and Survivors	Mr. Brendan McAllister
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland	Ms. Claire Keatinge Mrs. Kate McCullough
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland	Mr. Bob Collins Mrs. Evelyn Collins
Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People	Mrs. Patricia Lewsley Mooney Ms. Alex Tennant
Strategic Investment Board	Mr. Brett Hannam Mr. Martin Spollen Mr. Scott Wilson



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 5

Other Papers Submitted to Committee

Strategic Investment Board

Briefing for OFMdFM Committee

Introduction

Strategic Investment Board Limited (SIB) comprises of a small team of legal, commercial and technical advisers who support the Executive and government departments to implement reform through co-ordinated investment in our public services and through co-operation with the private and not-for-profit sectors.

SIB typically provides legal, commercial and technical (engineering, project management, etc) expertise to departments – skills not normally found in the public sector but necessary in order to deliver complex projects on time and to budget. By using SIB, the public sector moves quickly, saves on consultant's fees, and can be confident that the advice received is free from conflict of interest. SIB operates across departmental boundaries to support holistic analysis and multi-agency working.

This paper provides an update on the current work of the Strategic Investment Board (SIB). The report covers the three main responsibilities of the organisation:

- The provision of support to investment programmes and projects;
- The production of the Investment Strategy;
- Asset Management

The paper also reports on SIB's funding position.

Support To Programmes And Projects

SIB is currently supporting the delivery of some 45 infrastructure programmes and projects with a total value of over £4bn, (a list of these is attached as an Appendix). The type of support SIB provides varies according to the customer's requirements. It includes the secondment of Programme and Project Directors; the provision of programme delivery support teams and the offer of ad hoc advice on procurement and other issues. Where appropriate, staff are embedded into the customer's organisation and function within its project delivery structures. At other times staff will fulfil specific roles on a part-time basis. In all cases, SIB works solely at the invitation of its customers.

The roles that SIB staff are currently fulfilling include:

- Programme Director, Belfast Rapid Transit;
- Programme Director, Colin Regeneration Projects;
- Programme Director, Desertcreat Training College;
- Programme Director, Lisanelly Educational Campus;
- Project Sponsor, MAC;
- Programme Director, MLK Development Corporation;
- Interim Chief Executive, Titanic Foundation Ltd;
- Project Managers, Arc21 & NWRWMG Waste Disposal Projects; and
- Project Manager, 'Plugged in Places' (eCars NI) Project.

SIB provides advice on the formulation of departmental investment plans. SIB has recently appointed Strategic Advisors to work in the Department of Education on investment planning; to the Prison Service to work on estate planning and to SportNI to advise on the Regional

Stadiums programme. The Health Minister has recently appointed an SIB advisor to sit on the Health Infrastructure Board.

SIB is working on behalf of OFMDFM Ministers to promote improved social outcomes from investment in infrastructure. It has completed the production of toolkits for procuring authorities which will assist them in embedding 'social clauses' in contracts for construction, supplies and services. These toolkits will be formally launched early in 2012 but have already been successfully piloted in projects such as the Peace Bridge and Titanic Belfast (TQSP).

Investment Strategy

Background

The Investment Strategy (ISNI) is a rolling ten-year plan that sets out the Executive's intentions and priorities for capital investment. SIB produces this by drawing together the investment plans of all the government departments and proposing, through a process of analysis, assessment and negotiation, an affordable and deliverable plan that can command the support of Ministers and the Assembly and which delivers the priorities in the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG).

Publication

On 17 November 2011 the Executive agreed the draft ISNI for the period 2011-2021 and published it for consultation. The consultation runs until 22 February, during which period a series of public events will be held in tandem with the consultation on the Executive's draft PfG.

The draft ISNI describes plans to invest £5.3 billion over the four years to 2014/15 and up to £12.5 billion in total by 2021. It lists the major projects that have been delivered since 2008, projects currently underway and the projects that are planned for the future.

Priorities

The latest ISNI aspires to support economic growth and recovery; maximize social benefits from investment programmes; create opportunities and tackle disadvantage; delivery high quality public services and to protect our people and environment.

The funding set out in ISNI is consistent with that published in the Executive's Budget 2011-2015. This reflects the c40% cuts to the Executive's capital budget imposed by the Coalition government last year.

The ISNI also includes a commitment by the Executive to explore fully alternative funding options in order to support the delivery of infrastructure.

A5/A8

It should be noted that, as the investment strategy was going to press, the Irish government notified Ministers that the funding committed to the A5 and A8 roads projects would not be made available according to the original schedule. The Executive will consider the implications of this announcement and will continue to engage with the Irish government during the consultation period. The final document will be updated to reflect the outcome of these engagements.

Structure

The ISNI document presents a strategic picture of the Executive's future investment plans and funding across the following 'Investment Pillars'; Networks, Skills, Health, Social, Environment, Productive. Following the devolution of justice powers to the Executive, this 'pillar' is also included in ISNI.

Progress Reports

A full list of projects with up-to-date status is maintained at the ISNI Information Portal, which is available to the public at www.isni.gov.uk. The system is of particular use to private sector companies interested in bidding for contracts or sub-contracts as it provides details of projects that are in development as well as those that are under construction. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for each project updates this Delivery Tracking System and reports generated by the system are sent to MLAs every month.

Asset Management Unit

Background

In January 2011 the Executive approved the recommendations of Mr. Ed Vernon's asset management report proposing the introduction of new processes and structures to improve asset management across the public sector. The approved recommendations were as follows;

- The creation of a central Asset Management Unit
- The development of a region-wide Asset Management Strategy
- The development of individual departmental Asset Management Plans
- The use of ePIMS (electronic property information mapping system) to create a central asset register across the public sector

A further objective was created during the budget settlement process with the requirement for the AMU to help departments deliver an additional £100m of capital to support the Executive's investment plans over the CSR period.

Progress

SIB established the Asset Management Unit (AMU) at the end of August 2011. It comprises three permanent and three temporary staff. Work began immediately with Land and Property Service and departments to gain an understanding of the status of both surplus and underutilised assets and identify opportunities to raise additional capital over the CSR period.

The AMU held a seminar on 13th October for all departments. The purpose of this was to communicate the Executive's priorities for asset management and to discuss and agree the most effective way of taking forward the key tasks. Engagement with departments since the event has been productive.

Work has now commenced with all departments focusing on programmes for the completion of the asset register and asset management plans. To date, six departments have commenced the upload of property information onto the ePIMS platform and three departments have completed draft asset management plans. It is proposed that these work streams will be completed by summer 2012. ePIMS will provide a robust platform from which to implement improved asset management for the remainder of the CSR period and beyond.

The information gathered in the ePIMS database will enable the Executive to consider publishing a State of the Estate report highlighting the current status of asset management,

benchmark comparisons and plans to deliver efficiencies aligned with an agreed region-wide asset management strategy.

Key Challenges

The key challenge in delivering the additional £100m of capital is the state of the local and international financial and property markets. Delivering substantial receipts through the sale of surplus land and property will be difficult in the current market.

Detailed information on public assets is not currently available in a central source. It will, however, be available once the ePIMS database has been fully populated by all departments and the AMU has created a central asset register. The AMU will then begin work with departments to identify opportunities on a more holistic basis. AMU and departments are therefore placing significant emphasis on the completion of this task.

Funding

The SIB budget comprises two elements. The Operational Budget funds the organisation's salary, accommodation, administrative and other costs. The Enabling Budget is used directly to support the delivery of programmes and projects, for example through the provision of specialist technical or financial advice.

The budget for 2010/11 was £8,561k (£4,913k Enabling & £3,648k Operational). Following the 2010 Spending Review, the budget was reduced to £6,539k for 2011/12 (£3,077k Enabling & £3,462k Operational). This reduction recognised the impact of the severe cuts to the region's capital budget made by the Coalition government and the consequent expected reduction in investment activity.

In order to minimise the impact of these funding reductions, SIB has reviewed its operating model with the intention of reducing the sums spent on external consultancy whilst building its own internal capacity. This has resulted in the employment of additional staff on short-term contracts linked to the completion of specific projects or elements of projects. Two civil servants are currently on secondment to SIB. SIB has also entered into some cost-sharing arrangements with its customer departments. The effect of these measures has been to ensure that SIB, for the moment, remains capable of responding positively to the requirements of its customers.

Appendix: SIB Supported Programmes & Projects

Note: Programmes and Projects are listed alphabetically.

Project	Type of SIB Support
A5, A6, A8 Roads	Advice
An Droichead	Funding & Advice
Apprentice Boys of Derry Centre	Project Manager & Advice
Armagh Educational Campus	Advice
BCC/Holylands Study	Funding & Advice
Belfast Metropolitan College	Advice
Belfast Rapid Transit	Programme Director
Colin Regeneration Projects	Programme Director, Funding & Advice
Commercialisation	Funding & Advice
Connswater Community Greenway	Advice
Council Regeneration Projects	Funding & Advice
Culture Company	Advice
DCAL/Odyssey Trust	Advice
DE/BELB/Belfast Libraries	Advice
Desertcreat Training College	Programme Director, Staff & Funding
DoJ Prison Change Programme	Programme Director
DoJ Prison Estates Programme	Project Manager, Funding & Advice
Downpatrick Town Centre	Advice
DRD/Belfast Bicycle Hire Scheme	Funding & Advice
DRD/NI Water	Funding & Advice
DSD/NIHE Review	Funding & Advice
DVA	Funding & Advice
eCar NI	Programme Director & Funding
Educational Investment Planning	Strategic Advisor
Erne Hospital Shared Services	Funding & Advice
Glen Road Regeneration	Funding & Advice
Health Infrastructure Investment	Advice
Ilex	Funding & Advice
Investment Strategy	Programme Director, Staff & Funding
Lisanelly Educational Campus	Programme Director & Funding
Metropolitan Arts Centre	Staffing, Funding and Advice
MLK Development Corporation	Programme Director & Staff
NI Science Park (DETI)	Advice
Regeneration	Staffing, Funding & Advice

Project	Type of SIB Support
Review of Operational PFI Projects	Advice
Sally Gardens Regeneration	Funding & Advice
'Shatterzone' Regeneration Project	Funding & Advice
Social Clauses Toolkit	Funding & Advice
South West Acute Hospital	Advice
Regional Sports Stadiums Programme	Staffing & Advice
St Comgall's	Advice
Streetscape	Funding & Advice
Templemore Avenue Regeneration	Funding & Advice
The Asset Management Unit	Programme Director, Staff & Funding
The Titanic Quarter Signature Project	Programme Director & Funding
Regional Waste Programme	Project Managers, Staff & Funding



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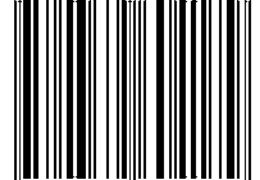
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