



Research Paper 63/09

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TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE URBAN REGENERATION INQUIRY

This Research Paper relates to an Inquiry into urban regeneration conducted by the Northern Ireland Assembly Social Development Committee. It highlights the key issues to emerge from consultation responses and evidence provided to the Committee by interest groups.

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SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

The Committee for Social Development decided in October 2007 to conduct an inquiry into town centre regeneration, which forms a part of the overall Urban Development Strategy of the Department for Social Development. Advertisements were placed in the local press inviting submissions from interested parties with a deadline for responses of 29 November 2007.

From written submissions and oral evidence presented to the Committee the following key issues emerged.

- ❑ Town centre regeneration tends to be driven by single issue projects which can be carried out in a 'piecemeal fashion' and there is a need, therefore, for an overall strategic framework for town centre regeneration. ;
- ❑ There is a need for key performance indicators for town centre regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal, in order to measure the success of programmes and projects for possible replication in other towns.
- ❑ There has been a lack of progress in reviewing Planning Policy Statement 5: Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial leisure Developments.
- ❑ There has also been a lack of progress in implementing the 27 recommendations made in the EDAW Report published in January 2000.
- ❑ There was a call for legislation to be passed in the Northern Ireland Assembly to allow for the introduction of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Northern Ireland.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Having agreed terms of reference in October 2007, the Social Development Committee invited submissions from interested parties to assist with its inquiry into the Department for Social Development's ('the Department') Town Centre Regeneration Strategy. Written and oral submissions were received from a range of bodies and this paper examines some of the key issues to emerge, under each of the following terms of reference.

- 1) Assess the scope and effectiveness of the programmes and policies adopted by the Department to regenerate town centres.
- 2) Identify areas where the application of regeneration funding has failed to address disadvantage and poverty.
- 3) Consider the nature and effectiveness of engagement with local communities and other key stakeholders when developing and taking forward regeneration initiatives.
- 4) Identify and consider relevant experience elsewhere in terms of effectiveness of policy interventions.

This paper is not intended to give the impression that consultation responses to the Inquiry gave a wholly negative view of the Department's Urban Regeneration Programme, as there were many positive experiences highlighted by consultees. However, the paper concentrates on aspects of town centre regeneration where there is potential for improvement or change.

2.0 CONSULTATION

TOR 1) ASSESS THE SCOPE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES ADOPTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO REGENERATE TOWN CENTRES.

OVERALL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

In oral evidence to the Committee, the Association of Town Centre Management (ACTM) in Northern Ireland¹ said that intervention in town centre regeneration in the past has been driven by single issues as opposed to being as a result of an overarching strategic framework. The ACTM argued that, in the absence of a clear retailing planning policy, it was difficult for town and city centre managers to apply strategies at an operational level. ATCM believe that lack of policy has hindered the growth of town centres.

This was raised by other consultees who also highlighted single issue projects with no clear strategy, delays in approving Area Plans (up to 10 years plus) and a lack of expertise among the Department's staff in relation to planning and development. One Town Centre Partnership said that in its experience:

DSD staff are generally found to have little understanding of the risks and difficulties associated with property development and the regeneration process. They were therefore tentative, indecisive, and concerned more with the process than the successful outcome of the project.

This particular Partnership felt that the Department, rather than being part of the partnership, were an obstacle to the project. They recommended that the Department make wider use of professionals in assessing project proposals.

An absence of an overall strategic framework and a perceived lack of an inter-departmental approach to town centre regeneration were also blamed for what was described as the 'ad hoc piecemeal style of public realm work on street by street basis.'

¹ ATCM presented oral evidence to the Social Development Committee on 13 December 2007.
Providing research and information services to the Northern Ireland Assembly

One respondent stated that:

... the frequency and speed of DSD interventions in terms of vesting and developing vacant sites and derelict properties varies between areas. In addition there appears to be inconsistencies in how DSD financial support is made available to Town Centre Partnerships and for development of strategic plans outside the cities of Belfast and Derry.²

In 'Vital and Viable'³ under the heading 'Critical Success Factors for Regeneration', it is stated that a '*number of key elements ... need to be addressed to promote successful regeneration*'. For '*Local Planning and Delivery: Town centre health checks, strategic plans with effective town centre management*' are considered vital. 'Vital and Viable' is viewed by the Department as the overarching framework for town centre regeneration.

JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

Criticism was made of a lack of 'joined-up' government. This was illustrated by a quote from a Council:

... Councils are continually frustrated at delivering a scheme which meets the aspirations of the community and fits within the rules and regulations of DRD Roads Service who invariably own the majority of the Public realm to be improved. Materials, street furniture, foot paths and car park layout are all controlled by the Roads Service who tends to veto materials etc which are not standard issue. Where the Council has obtained agreement on deviation the Council must purchase materials, hold surplus supplies and sign a management agreement with Roads Service on maintenance and replacement of the same. This is costly and difficult to implement and reflects badly on a joined-up public service.

The lack of a joined-up approach to town centre regeneration between the Department, the Department for Regional Development (DRD) and the Department of the Environment (DOE) was also blamed for a continued lack of movement on a review of PPS5. This had been a key recommendation of the EDAW Report in 2000⁴. A draft consultation was published by DRD⁵ in July 2006 but respondents complained that there has been no progress since then.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

Many respondents saw a need for improvement in the evaluation of projects and identification of 'good practice'. With no key performance indicators (KPIs), respondents felt it was difficult to identify and replicate success in Departmental intervention in town centre regeneration initiatives. Some also said that they found it impossible to judge whether regeneration had impacted on disadvantage and poverty, since there were no KPIs to evaluate the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme.

FUNDING OF TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Responses from Town Centre Management Partnerships called for DSD to provide core funding for town centre management. They argue that town centre management partnership

² Written evidence to Committee Inquiry from a District Council 29 November 2007.

³ 'Vital and Viable: A Good Practice Guide For Breathing New Life Into Cities And Towns' (2007) DSD (P7) available at: <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/urcdg-vital-and-viable.htm>

⁴ EDAW 2000 was the Report from a study into the regeneration of town centres in Northern Ireland that was commissioned by DOE in 1999 available at: http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/reinvisg_town_centres_report.pdf

⁵ Public Consultation on Draft Planning Policy Statement 5: Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial leisure Developments available of DRD website at: <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/publications-details.htm?docid=2955>

companies should be seen as the main drivers for the process of creating and delivering master plans for town centre regeneration.

Currently town centre management is funded from a variety of sources, but none provide the stability needed to plan ahead and carry initiatives forward with confidence. One town centre management company was funded by the EU Peace monies and their local council. Since EU funding stopped in 2001, the Council have provided 75% of core funding with the remainder coming from their local Chamber of Commerce and tenders for funding individual projects from central government and other agencies.

One Council stated that:

Councils have taken various initiatives since 1995 to help regenerate their town centres including establishing town centre management partnerships and using the EU Structural Funds towards staffing and running costs. Due to the limited funding available many of these partnerships have been unable to undertake physical projects and have largely been restricted to local marketing activities that have had relatively low impact. These partnerships may also not survive given that the latest round EU funding for local economic development cannot be used by councils for town centre regeneration (correct at the time of writing).

In this context, one Town Centre Partnership pointed out that the Department consistently recognise, across a range of their publications, *'the important role that Town Centre Partnerships can play as the most effective method of engagement with local communities and key stakeholders'*.

The recent publication from the Department on town centre regeneration outside of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry⁶ states:

At a Strategic level an effective partnership between government, district councils, the private sector and the local community will be best placed to deliver the objectives required for making cities and towns vibrant. Councils will become a lead stakeholder in this arrangement.

Consultees called for long-term funding for town centre regeneration of ten years to allow for long-term planning.

OPPOSITION TO OUT-OF-TOWN SHOPPING CENTRES

Out-of-town shopping centres were seen as a major threat to town centres, although one Council reported that a major out-of-town development had not had a detrimental effect on the nearby town centre and had even led to an increase in footfall.

A report from the University of Ulster published on 17 April 2008 estimates that over 7,000 shop jobs could be lost in Northern Ireland over the next five years. The report's author⁷ is quoted as saying *'I am quite frankly astounded that we still haven't seen publication of a new PPS5'* and *'Whilst there is an absence of action, the multiples are making applications, which wouldn't stand a chance in the Irish Republic or elsewhere in Europe'*⁸.

⁶ 'Vital and Viable: A Good Practice Guide For Breathing New Life Into Cities And Towns' (2007) DSD (P10) available at: <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/urcdg-vital-and-viable.htm>

⁷ Donald McFetridge, University of Ulster.

⁸ 'Job fears over out-of-town growth' 17.4.2008 on BBC website at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7351850.stm

PPS6, which is the equivalent in England to Northern Ireland's PPS5, ensures that there is an impact assessment undertaken for any out-of-town retail development and that all options for it to be situated in the town centre are examined.

The EDAW 2000 consultation report in January 2000 saw the potential threat to small retailers of out-of-town retail development:

A key feature of the increasing dominance of the multiples is the growth in the average size of retail outlets. The average net sales area of a new Sainsbury's store was 5,800 sq. ft. in 1960 but had increased to around 32,300 sq. ft. by 1990. Larger stores offer clear benefits in the form of increased and more flexible product ranges, economies of scale in stockholding terms...and greater flexibility in the use of labour.⁹

In oral evidence to the Committee, the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Association pointed out that in the Republic of Ireland there is a cap on floor space of 30,000 sq. ft. Sainsbury's at Sprucefield has approximately 75,000 sq. ft. of floor space¹⁰. An issue raised by the trader associations was that out of town retail outlets or single multiples stock such a diverse range of goods that the impact is felt by all the businesses in nearby town centres. Not only do they affect food retailers, but also pharmacies and hardware and clothing retailers. The case was made for preserving the unique character of smaller town centres, particularly where there is a threat from large out-of-town retailers. All town centres looking like clones of each other was something respondents wanted to be avoided.

Out-of-town centres also highlight the problem town centre retailers face in relation to parking. EDAW 2000 states, *'Town centres by virtue of their inability to cater effectively for the private car have faced increasing competition to retain their share of retail and leisure spending.'*¹¹ Recommendation 11 of the Report says: *'Parking controls are considered to be the key area for short term action and attention should be given to developing a consistent approach but one which recognises the specific circumstances of each town centre.'*

Respondents to the Inquiry felt that there needed to be more parking facilities on town centre perimeters or that parking in the town centre should be less expensive.

TO R 2) IDENTIFY AREAS WHERE THE APPLICATION OF REGENERATION FUNDING HAS FAILED TO ADDRESS DISADVANTAGE AND POVERTY.

Consultees generally felt that the Department had focused too much on areas of high deprivation rather than viewing the importance of all town centres as areas providing community cohesion. One town centre management response again raised the issue of KPIs saying that their absence meant it was impossible to assess whether funding had failed to address disadvantage and poverty.

One district council believed that their area scheme, in achieving its objectives, had made a beneficial contribution to the town. The fact that 95% of the jobs created by the town centre regeneration scheme are held by local people shows that the scheme has had a positive effect on disadvantage and poverty.

⁹ EDAW 2000 (Para: 2.29) http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/reinvisg_town_centres_report.pdf

¹⁰ The Commercial Property Market in Northern Ireland' in The Property Valuer: Winter 2005 at: http://www.magico.ie/files/admin/uploads/W153_Field_2_18606.pdf

¹¹ EDAW 2000 (Para: 2.27) http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/reinvisg_town_centres_report.pdf

TO R 3) CONSIDER THE NATURE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS WHEN DEVELOPING AND TAKING FORWARD REGENERATION INITIATIVES.

Several respondents reported very poor experiences of local engagement. One Chamber of Commerce felt that there had been very little consultation and that local people felt they had no way of influencing outcome. Another Chamber of Commerce felt that there was a lot of expertise and knowledge among local business and professional people that had been wasted due to *'non-existent public participation'*. It was argued that this was not due to apathy on behalf of the local community who were keen to be engaged in the process. They described regeneration of their town centre as taking place in a policy vacuum with piecemeal projects undertaken because a grant had become available.

A Council which had been part of a partnership for major regeneration in their town thought that the *'effectiveness of engagement with the local community and key stakeholders is shown by the Departments represented on the Area Partnership Board which managed the scheme, and by the range of community led activity available in the area'*. Their scheme was recognised as a finalist in the 2007 British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) best practice awards, and their management Board identified as a successful and replicable model for future developments.

TO R 4) IDENTIFY AND CONSIDER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE IN TERMS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICY INTERVENTIONS.

Leaside Development Ltd is the developer selected by the Department to take forward the retail led regeneration of Belfast's North East Quarter. As an international development company their submission to the Inquiry in relation to policy interventions elsewhere states:

Our experience and knowledge of projects elsewhere demonstrates the need for effective policy intervention and public sector taking the initiative in partnership with private and voluntary groups to ensure the full delivery of successful regeneration programmes.

The Main Streets Programme in America and recent examples of policy intervention in Europe are included in a later section of the paper.

3.0 EDAW 2000

Widespread criticism was directed at the Department by consultees for not disseminating the EDAW 2000 Report and for failing to act on its 27 recommendations. The Committee asked for a response from the Department setting out the progress on the recommendations that were made in the EDAW 2000 report. The Department responded to the Committee's request on 4 February 2008 and the table below shows the main issues consultees raised along with the Department's response.

Table 1: Implementation of recommendations from 2000 EDAW Report

EDAW 2000 Recommendations	Consultation Responses	Departmental Response
No: 1 There is a strong case for	Consultees called for this	For DOE to take the lead

<p>PPS5 to be reviewed as a priority with an emphasis on the onus on planning applicants to prove that out-of-town retail developments are unavoidable and will have limited impact on town centre retail and the commissioning of a Retail Capacity Assessment for Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>recommendation to be implemented in order to provide clarity.</p>	<p>on and not to be included in DSD stocktake¹² of urban regeneration policies and programmes.</p>
<p>No: 3 A common monitoring and evaluation system</p>	<p>There were criticisms that there were no Key Performance Indicators to assess the success of programmes in relation to regeneration.</p>	<p>The Department say that this is important in terms of identifying the health of towns and need for intervention by DSD and will be included in the stocktake of urban regeneration policies and programmes.</p>
<p>No: 4 Town centre management should be considered as an element of town centre reinvigoration in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Some town centre management funding is under threat and some consultees said that funding was not long-term or secure enough to allow for effective planning.</p> <p>Some consultees called for core funding for town centre managers to be provided by DSD and could lever in private funding.</p>	<p>‘Town centre management is now well established in Northern Ireland with structures in place in most major towns.’ and ‘The Department considers the presence of a Town Centre Partnership as one of the tests when assessing projects for support. However, DSD has no powers to impose or require such a structure to be set up.’ The Department will be looking more closely at this issue in the context of the stocktake.</p>
<p>No: 5 Town centres are of significance across the communities they serve and urban regeneration strategy should address their reinvigoration as a corollary to targeted strategies for neighbourhood regeneration.</p>	<p>Several consultees felt that there was too much focus on small pockets of deprivation.</p>	<p>This has been reflected in the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. The Department will examine the issue of key performance indicators and systematic evaluation in the course of the stocktake.</p>
<p>No: 14 Town centre strategies should be prepared to guide future public and private sector investment in town centres.</p>		<p>This will be included in the stocktake with a view to developing a programme to ensure all appropriate towns have a suitable strategy.</p>
<p>No: 23 Town Centre Management as an approach should be promoted as</p>	<p>There was a strong consensus among</p>	<p>Vital and Viable indicates that good town centre</p>

¹² The Department are intending to conduct a ‘stocktake’ in due course of how some recommendations they view as within their remit and relevant are progressing.

<p>an essential prerequisite to funding being provided for town centre schemes. This need not involve the appointment of a town Centre Manager but this should be considered for larger town centres or groups of smaller town centres.</p>	<p>consultees of the benefits of town centre management.</p>	<p>management and leadership structures are a requirement for DSD support for town centre projects.</p> <p>We are currently looking at our policy on Town Centre Management. This will include such initiatives as BIDs.</p>
<p>No: 24 Town Centre Partnerships should be established for all major town centres or where the local authority proposes to prepare a Town Centre Strategy.</p>		<p>Town Centre partnerships have been established in all major towns with the exception of Enniskillen. No town centre strategy has been prepared for any town without a Town Centre Partnership or management in place. Not for stocktake.</p>

4.0 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) allow businesses in a district to group together to plan and finance ways of improving their local area. BIDs originated in Canada in the 1960s and are currently operating in some towns in Northern Ireland on an informal basis. Their official implementation would require legislation which does not exist in Northern Ireland. Legislation was passed in England and Wales in 2003 (with subsequent regulations in 2004)¹³, in the Republic of Ireland in 2006¹⁴ and in Scotland in 2007¹⁵. A National BIDs Advisory Service, which is operated by the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM), has also been established in England¹⁶

BIDs are pre-defined areas of streets where the local businesses have chosen to establish their own BID in partnership with their local authority. BIDs activities are additional to those already provided by the local council and primarily focus on environmental management (street cleaning, planting of trees, flowers etc.), capital improvements such as shop front improvements and street furniture.

When BID managers in England were asked to indicate the key needs of businesses that created the stimulus to establish a BID the three needs most frequently identified were environmental improvements, crime and safety and attracting more visitors or customers¹⁷.

¹³ Local Government Act 2003 Part 4 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2003/ukpga_20030026_en_1 and The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004

¹⁴ Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2006
<http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2006/a4206.pdf>

¹⁵ The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 (Business Improvement Districts Levy) Order 2007
http://www.oqps.gov.uk/legislation/uk/si/si2007/uksi_20070772_en_1

¹⁶ <http://www.ukbids.org/legislation.php>

¹⁷ 'The Development and Implementation of Business Improvement Districts' (January 2007) Department for Communities and Local Government: London (p15) and available on Communities Website:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/developmentimplementation>

BIDs are established when the majority of businesses in the designated area votes in favour. Once a majority of businesses have voted in favour of a BID at a ballot, all the businesses in the designated area must make a contribution. This is generally between 1% and 2.5% of the rateable value of their property. BIDs are in place for no longer than a five year period when they either are ended or there is a re-ballot to continue a BID for the area.

BIDs must be additional to services already provided by local councils. In Liverpool, Base Agreements have been drawn up with partners who already provide services that they will remain in place and BIDs services will be additional¹⁸. Baseline Agreements are in place with the local council, Merseyside Police and the Chamber of Commerce who were already providing services to businesses in the city centre.

It is too early to assess the performance of BIDs, although early impressions are encouraging. Key research findings¹⁹ from a survey carried out in 2006 found that there had been reduced crime levels, a higher business profile and a cleaner environment in areas where BIDs were operating. Local authorities reported that they had closer relationships with businesses which were helping to overcome some of the difficulties they had experienced in working with local businesses.

In Alliance Boots' submission to the Committee they argue that their approach to BIDs has been to ensure that they only move forward where they are going to make a real difference. Their submission states that:

In the case of BIDs, it is our belief that they may be one way of providing the opportunity needed for Town Centre Management schemes to achieve the long-term sustainability required in Northern Ireland. By moving away from a voluntary contribution system toward an agreed levy driven by a majority membership vote, business-led local partnerships could generate the levels of funding needed for the establishment of truly successful community schemes. This system creates a guaranteed income stream which can be used as leverage to attract other sources of funding. We have observed many BIDs schemes where up to 50% of turnover comes from non-BIDs income in the form of match funding and through exploiting other commercial opportunities.

Alliance Boots have developed 'key criteria' which they believe are essential to a successful BID programme. These key criteria include for example:

- Commitment from local authorities and statutory bodies;
- Genuine partnership and inclusivity;
- Robust business planning; and
- Real consultation.

They do not promote BIDs, but recognise that in certain circumstances they may contribute to establishing effective and sustainable local partnerships. They note that recent research in Northern Ireland²⁰ showed that businesses were in the main supportive of BIDs with the following conditions viewed as crucial:

¹⁸ <http://www.citycentralbid.com/city/baseline-agreements.html>

¹⁹ 'The Development and Implementation of Business Improvement Districts' (January 2007) Department for Communities and Local Government: London and available Communities Website: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/developmentimplementation>

²⁰ The Development Brief: Business Improvement Districts, Belfast City Council at: www.belfastcity.gov.uk/stateofthecity

- ❑ a genuine public-private sector partnership based on a clear, focused and measurable business plan;
- ❑ a structure to deliver the business plan;
- ❑ trust amongst the private and public sectors illustrated by significant funding and engagement being established in advance of BID development; and
- ❑ a level of communication and dialogue on a broad range of services with value added potential to the business community.

Alliance Boots argue that these principles would seem essential components of whichever mechanisms are chosen to regenerate town and city centres in Northern Ireland.

Research carried out by the University of Ulster in 2006 on behalf of Belfast City Council on introducing BIDs in NI²¹ found that operating a BID necessitates:

- ❑ A lead in time of eighteen months minimum prior to the ballot;
- ❑ A resource provision of at least one full time equivalent employed to working exclusively on the BID;
- ❑ Quality leadership within the BID management team; and
- ❑ A committed business 'champion' to chair the BID Board.

5.0 EXAMPLES OF POLICIES IN US AND EUROPE

In providing oral evidence to the Committee the Federation of Small Businesses gave the example of city centre regeneration in Boston, Massachusetts. At the Committee's request they provided additional written information on the Main Streets Programme in the US. The section below on the main Streets Programme is based on the information provided.

The European information has been recently published and is based on case studies of regeneration in three European cities. It contains points that the authors of the report judge to be relevant to regeneration in the UK.

MAIN STREETS PROGRAMME

The Boston Main Street Programme is one of a number of initiatives adopted by 40 US States. The Main Streets Programme adopts a partnership approach engaging with stakeholders. A key element in the success of the programme is the presence of a business 'Champion'. This is a person with vision and enthusiasm who can motivate others.

The programme is community driven with a comprehensive methodology used to revitalise older, traditional business districts. As with BIDs, it is not suitable for every town centre but is an incremental long-term approach that has eight guiding principles; comprehensive, incremental, self-help, partnership, identifying and capitalising on unique assets, quality, change and implementation. It is not a quick fix choice, but requires long-term commitment, leadership and local capacity building

Successful programmes gain national recognition. There is a system of accreditation against 10 established basic performance standards which provide realistic goals and a tangible incentive for achievement in the form of a certificate and press release.

²¹ The Development Brief: Business Improvement Districts, Belfast City Council at: www.belfastcity.gov.uk/stateofthecity

Several models for central organising bodies are suggested to run Main Streets programmes which would equate in Northern Ireland to local councils, Chamber of Commerce or town Centre Partnerships.²²

EUROPEAN REGENERATION

A recently published research study on regeneration in European cities²³ focused primarily on case studies of major urban regeneration schemes in Gothenburg (Sweden), Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and Roubaix (France). The research found that there was no single 'European model' for successful urban regeneration, but that there was a consistent approach running through all the case studies. Most notable was a strong local authority in charge of the schemes that were not only improving a run-down area but also changing the image of the city and transforming its strategic economic position.

The research identified ten key messages for current 'urban and regional policy debates' in the UK:

- Recognise that cities are in competition;
- Focus on the wider metropolitan area (or city region);
- Work together across boundaries, sectors and professions;
- Devolve real power and resources to city authorities;
- Provide incentives for sustainable success;
- Create attractive and balanced residential neighbourhoods;
- Invest in high quality infrastructure and public realm;
- Spread the benefits of regeneration and economic development throughout the community;
- Build permanent delivery organisations and skills; and
- Value the role of culture in regeneration.

6.0 POTENTIAL AREAS FOR COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER

The Association of Town Centre Management pointed to the lack of a strategic framework for the regeneration of town centres in Northern Ireland. Criticism was also made of the lack of key performance indicators (KPIs), both in assessing need and in measuring success. They went on to suggest the following framework hierarchy for town centre regeneration:

- Regional Development Strategy with regional and sub-regional hubs - to identify the level and type of intervention needed from the Department.
- Area Plans – there should be a legislative requirement that the Department be consulted on area plans.
- Localised Masterplans – with a delivery period of 10 years which are funded by the Department and led by Town Centre Partnerships.
- Localised Regeneration Strategy (3-5 years) – generated from Masterplan – lead body Town Centre Partnership.
- Operational Plans (annual) – Led by Town Centre Partnership with a long term budget rather than annual as these schemes can take 4 – 5 years to deliver.

²² Information on Main Streets Programme provided to Social Development Committee by the Federation of Small Businesses.

²³ 'Regeneration in European cities: making connections' (April 2008) Joseph Rowntree Foundation Ref: 2217. <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/2217.asp>

Criticism of a lack of inter-departmental planning and working along with single issue initiatives was widespread in responses from town centre management groups to the Inquiry.

POSSIBLE COMMITTEE ACTION POINTS FROM INQUIRY -

There were calls for:

- ❑ Legislation to introduce Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Northern Ireland.
- ❑ Key Performance Indicators to measure performance.
- ❑ Revision of PPS5 as the principal policy statement in relation to town centre planning.
- ❑ The Department to vest land and derelict buildings for town centre regeneration.

A key area where the Committee has powers to instigate change is in the introduction of legislation to allow BIDs.

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