



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

Report on the Inquiry into Building a United Community – Volume One

Together with Minutes of Proceedings relating to the Report and Minutes of Evidence

Ordered by the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and
deputy First Minister to be printed on 1 July 2015

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COMMENCEMENT OF THE DEBATE IN PLENARY.**

Membership and Powers

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. Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)^{1,2}

Mr. Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr. Alex Attwood¹⁴

Mr. Michael Copeland^{3,10,11,12,16,17}

Miss Megan Fearon⁵

Mrs. Brenda Hale⁸

Mr. Alex Maskey

Ms. Bronwyn McGahan⁶

Mr. David McIlveen¹⁵

Mr. Stephen Moutray⁷

Mr. Jimmy Spratt^{4,9,13}

- 1 With effect from 26 September 2011 Mr Mike Nesbitt replaced Ms Sandra Overend
- 2 With effect from 17 April 2012 Mr Mike Nesbitt replaced Mr Tom Elliott as Chairperson
- 3 With effect from 23 April 2012 Mr Danny Kinahan was appointed to the committee
- 4 With effect from 21 May 2012 Mr Tom Buchanan replaced Mr Jimmy Spratt
- 5 With effect from 10 September 2012 Ms Megan Fearon replaced Mr Francie Molloy
- 6 With effect from 10 September 2012 Ms Bronwyn McGahan replaced Ms Caitriona Ruane
- 7 With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr Stephen Moutray replaced Mr William Humphrey
- 8 With effect from 01 October 2012 Mrs Brenda Hale replaced Mr Trevor Clarke
- 9 With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr Paul Givan replaced Mr Tom Buchanan
- 10 With effect from 15 October 2012 Mr John McCallister replaced Mr Danny Kinahan
- 11 With effect from 25 February 2013 Mr Robin Swann replaced Mr John McCallister
- 12 With effect from 11 March 2013 Mr Leslie Cree replaced Mr Robin Swann
- 13 With effect from 15 April 2013 Mr Jimmy Spratt replaced Mr Paul Givan
- 14 With effect from 07 October 2013 Mr Alex Attwood replaced Mr Colum Eastwood
- 15 With effect from 06 October 2014 Mr David McIlveen replaced Mr George Robinson
- 16 With effect from 06 October 2014 Mr Roy Beggs replaced Mr Leslie Cree
- 17 With effect from 13 October 2014 Mr Michael Copeland replaced Mr Roy Beggs

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List of Abbreviations

ACNI	Arts Council Northern Ireland
AoH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
BCDA	Ballynafeigh Community Development Association
BCRC	Ballymoney Community Resource Centre
BME	Black Minority Ethnic
BRIC	Building Relationships in Communities
CAJ	Committee on the Administration of Justice
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CERD	Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CoE	Council of Europe
CRED	Community Relations and Diversity in Education
CRIS	Community Relations in Schools
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CLC	Children's Law Centre
CoE	Council of Europe
CRC	Community Relations Council
CR/CD	Community Relations / Community Development
CRED	Community Relations Equality and Diversity
CSI	Cohesion, Sharing and Integration
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DCGRP	District Councils Good Relations Programme
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel
DOE	Department of the Environment
DoJ	Department of Justice
DPCSP	District Policing and Community Safety Partnership
DPP	District Policing Partnership
DRD	Department for Regional Development
DSD	Department for Social Development
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECNI	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessment
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
FETO	Fair Employment and Treatment Order
FSME	Free School Meals Entitlement
GB	Great Britain
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GFA	Good Friday Agreement
GRMF	Good Relations Measurement Framework

GRO	Good Relations Officer
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICR	Institute for Conflict Research
ICRED	International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
IRFU	Irish Rugby Football Association
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender
LGD	Local Government District
LGR	Local Government Reform
LINI	Landscape Institute Northern Ireland
LORAG	Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group
MIFC	Media Initiative for Children
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NBCAU	North Belfast Community Action Unit
NEET	Not in Education Employment or Training
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NICEM	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIHRC	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NIYF	Northern Ireland Youth Forum
NUS – USI	National Union of Students – Union of Students in Ireland
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
PCSP	Policing and Community Safety Partnership
PfG	Programme for Government
PHA	Public Health Agency
PSNI	Police Service for Northern Ireland
PUP	Progressive Unionist Party
RCN	Rural Community Network
RoI	Republic of Ireland
RRO	Race Relations Order
RUC GC	Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board
SF	Sinn Fein
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers
T:BUC	Together: Building a United Community
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UPRG	Ulster Political Research Group
WHO	World Health Organisation
YCNI	Youth Council Northern Ireland
YLT	Young Life and Times

Executive Summary

Together: Building a United Community is the Executive's strategy, launched in May 2013, to achieve *"a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, freed from prejudice, hate and intolerance."*

Noting its long term nature, the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister agreed in September 2013 that scrutiny of this strategy should form one of its strategic priorities. This developed into the consideration of an Inquiry to seek to inform the Executive's approach to building a united and shared society. The Committee agreed its terms of reference for an Inquiry into Building a United Community in July 2014. The Inquiry is not intended as a review of the T:BUC strategy, but an opportunity for Members to hear from government, statutory agencies, the community and voluntary sector and interested individuals; and make recommendations to support and enhance policy in building a united community.

Led by the themes emerging through written and oral evidence from a diverse range of stakeholders, the Committee has considered a wide variety of issues and challenges, from funding through to opportunities for sharing good practice; from shared space through to the role of local government in building a united community. The Committee acknowledges the passion, energy and enthusiasm that many individuals bring to developing the vision of a united community within their own spheres of influence, and wishes to thank all those who have participated through written submissions, oral evidence and attending stakeholder events. Whilst tensions between communities, particularly at urban interfaces, often attract negative press, there are many positive stories to share of efforts to build a united and shared community, which often take place all year round.

What has been clear to Members throughout the Inquiry process is that there is no single approach to building a united community. Each local community requires a uniquely tailored approach, and programmes and initiatives must be flexible enough to accommodate these nuances whilst still working towards the same goal.

What also became evident through Members' engagement with practitioners was the burden placed on organisations and individuals through short-term funding cycles. The Committee acknowledges the financial pressures currently faced by all those reliant on public funding due to the uncertain economic climate, but also recognises the importance of placing funding mechanisms targeted at building a united community on a more stable footing in order to achieve the objectives outlined in T:BUC.

The Committee also noted renewed energy around the involvement of local communities in decision making and policy development, particularly with regard to the introduction of community planning as a key power of the new District Councils. The Committee recognises the pivotal role that local government can and should play in supporting and enhancing policy to unite communities.

This report represents the first time that a Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly has undertaken extensive scrutiny of these matters. The Committee notes the words of the First Minister who, in launching T:BUC, said *"It would be idealistic to think that any initiative, no matter how significant, can heal all of society's divisions and problems"*. Similarly this report is not the end of the conversation; but having considered the evidence presented, the Committee has proposed a number of recommendations which it hopes will contribute to the ongoing discussions and development of policy aimed at building a united community.

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

General comments on “Together: Building a United Community”

1. The Committee notes the publication of Together: Building a United Community as a devolved strategy aimed at improving community relations and building a united and shared society. The Committee commends those individuals and organisations working towards building a united community, and the Government Departments and statutory agencies that support them in this work.
2. The Committee acknowledges that many different activities across all Departments do make a contribution to building a shared and united society, whether or not they are specifically badged as good relations activity. What is important, however, is that there is a joined-up approach across the Executive to ensure the best outcomes possible.
3. The Committee recognises the important role of the Ministerial Panel, not least because working towards building a united community is not confined to the remit of just one Department, and it is vital that these issues are regularly considered at this level. The Committee stresses the need for regular meetings of the Ministerial Panel with transparent outcomes; and recommends that OFMDFM lay an annual report on T:BUC in the NI Assembly, with contributions from other Departments, as the basis for an annual ‘take note’ debate. This would allow an opportunity for progress to be identified and recognised, and for good news stories to be heard.
4. The Committee recommends that all NI Assembly statutory committees make it core business to include good relations as part of their regular scrutiny of departmental activity, including the monitoring of T:BUC headline actions where Departments have responsibility for delivery.

Consultation and Co-design

5. The Committee considers that, ideally, stakeholders should have the ability to shape policy at a formative stage before key decisions are made and policy documents are written. However, the Committee supports the process of co-design in principle as a positive way to engage with stakeholders in the design and implementation of programmes. Given the long term nature of many of the headline actions, the Committee considers it important that this engagement is meaningful and continues through the lifetime of the strategy. The Committee therefore recommends that OFMDFM consider the creation of a “T:BUC Forum” as an opportunity for the sector to engage constructively with the Department. The Committee suggests the “NEETS Forum” established by the Department for Employment and Learning as a useful model in this regard. Should such a forum be established, it is recommended that it is chaired by a representative from the sector.

Building a United Community: Theory and Practice

6. The Committee acknowledges, and commends, the positive working relationship between the Department and academic experts who have a particular interest in researching issues related to sectarianism, division and the pursuit of good relations; and notes that good, helpful research is regularly produced. However the Committee is surprised that this work does not seem to be widely disseminated or receive local recognition. The Committee recommends that OFMDFM proactively seeks ways to share this expertise across Departments; and explores opportunities to promote and publish this academic work as extensively as possible.

7. The Committee recognises that programmes and initiatives that work in a particular geographical area may not automatically be appropriate for another location. However the Committee strongly urges those designing policy and initiatives to further a united and shared society to look to best practice available locally and build on the learning and expertise that already exists during the early stages of policy development.

Definitions and Terminology

8. The Committee notes the support from the written evidence received and through the stakeholder event for the introduction of definitions for ‘sectarianism’ and ‘good relations.’ The Committee recognises that agreed definitions are useful for the purposes of the monitoring and evaluation of T:BUC programmes, and that the proper place for defining these terms is in the context of legislation. The Committee therefore supports the intention of Ministers, stated within Together: Building a United Community, to “seek to find an appropriate consensus around a definition of sectarianism, based on this Strategy.”

Resourcing T:BUC

9. The Committee recognises the constrained financial situation within which all Departments are seeking to deliver on programmes and priorities and encourages the Executive not to lose sight of priorities to support building a united and shared community amongst other budgetary pressures. In addition the Committee supports the development of a budget profile for each headline action across the lifetime of the strategy, with associated milestones to add transparency to the T:BUC expenditure.
10. The Committee notes that T:BUC recognises that work is required to ensure the allocation of good relations funding is in line with strategic objectives, and also with any future funding model. However the Committee is also aware that delays in terms of receipt of funding, alongside short-term funding cycles, can create uncertainty. The Committee recommends that the Funders’ Advisory Group, which will be established to sit alongside the Ministerial Panel, is brought forward as soon as possible to progress work on the review of good relations funding and the development of a good relations funding model. In developing this model the Committee recommends that OFMDFM takes account of the burden faced by individuals and organisations through short-term funding cycles and considers ways to alleviate these pressures. The Committee also recommends that the Department works to promote transparency in allocation of funding at departmental level, and also through local councils and arm’s-length bodies.
11. The Committee recognises the wisdom, both in terms of public expenditure and strategic planning, of piloting initiatives under the headline actions of T:BUC. However the Committee considers that it is important, not least in terms of the potential for increased confidence in the T:BUC strategy, that programmes and initiatives are moved from the pilot phase to solid state as soon as is practically possible, with those projects that are successful up-scaled appropriately.

District Council Good Relations Programme

12. The Committee acknowledges the valuable contribution that local government has made, and continues to make, to building a united and shared community across Northern Ireland. Members also welcome the inclusion of the District Council Good Relations Programme within the Together: Building a United Community strategy, and recognise the flexibility the programme affords to local councils to work out what building good relations means in the context of their own areas.

13. The Committee recommends that OFMDFM continues to support the District Council Good Relations Programme, and specifically through the ongoing implementation of the NISRA Evaluation Report recommendations; ensuring that letters of offer with regard to the DCGRP are issued at the start of a new financial year; and continuing to provide high quality support from OFMDFM officials.
14. The Committee also recognises the potential of the District Council Good Relations Programme to make small scale interventions in local communities, which can have a major impact. The Committee recommends that OFMDFM reviews the District Council small grants scheme to ensure consistency of provision across local government, and to ensure that these funds are maximised to deliver positive good relations outcomes.
15. Whilst recognising that one size does not fit all, the Committee recommends that opportunities to share best practice between local government areas should be enhanced, through opportunities for increased face to face interactions between Good Relations Officers and harnessing new technologies, for example through an online resource bank. The Committee also recommends that the annual reports prepared by each District Council as part of their monitoring and evaluation obligations with OFMDFM are circulated widely amongst those involved in the DCGRP to further the development of that programme.

Community Planning and the Involvement of Communities in Decision Making

16. The Committee notes the perception that the role women have played in building peace has not always been acknowledged by policy makers, and the view that this is also true of the Together: Building a United Community strategy document. Discussion on building shared and safe communities should acknowledge and promote the participation of women in politics and wider peacebuilding.
17. With regard to wider policy development and decision making the Committee recognises that, for some groups, access to elected representatives, government departments and statutory agencies can be difficult. The Committee recommends therefore that OFMDFM brings forward policy development guidance for Departments which ensures that policy and decision makers develop and maintain a clear focus on identifying hard to reach groups; and that they assess and meet their capacity needs recognising that this may, at times, require external facilitation.
18. The Committee acknowledges that local communities have an important part to play in decision making relating to their own areas and notes that community planning has the potential to allow communities to influence decision making in their areas. The Committee recognises that responsibility for community planning rests with local councils and the Department of the Environment and recommends that the First Minister and deputy First Minister work with the Minister of the Environment to ensure that community planning as a departmental priority is focused on the aims and objectives of T:BUC, which could include the inclusion of a specific commitment in the next Programme for Government. The Committee also strongly encourages the Committee for the Environment to monitor the implementation and development of community planning as a vehicle for communities to be involved in decision making, with good relations at its core.

Exploring Shared Issues: Contested Spaces/Interfaces Programme

19. The Committee recognises the merit in bringing groups together around issues of common concern like parenting, supporting children through education, or a shared anxiety around drug and alcohol misuse; and commends the Contested Spaces/Interfaces Programme as an innovative approach to building good relations between communities. The Committee recommends that the Department gives full consideration to the evaluation of the Contested

Spaces/Interfaces Programme and applies the learning to the development of future programmes and initiatives, including prioritising areas for funding.

Single Identity Approach

20. The Committee acknowledges that there are different views about the role of single identity work in building a united and shared community. The Committee recognises the importance of respecting the pace at which people are willing to travel in relation to building a united community, and that this will differ depending on local circumstances. The Committee therefore recommends that single identity groups are provided with the tools to build confidence and capacity; and, at the same time, are helped to understand the value of moving beyond a single identity approach, and provided with opportunities for this to happen.

Shared Space

21. The Committee acknowledges the creative and innovative ways in which some organisations and community groups are creating shared space. The Committee believes that shared space has meaning where it offers something purposeful and is not created artificially around a contrived concept. The Committee recognises the role which the Department of the Environment can play in shaping the built environment, most recently through the Living Spaces Design Guide, and welcomes the proposal that further clarification will be brought forward within the new Strategic Planning Policy Statement. The Committee therefore recommends that the development of meaningful shared space is incorporated as an essential component in delivering a united and shared community.

Relationship Building and Trust

22. The Committee notes that time is needed to build relationships, respect and trust between all those involved in building a united community, and that this process is often more untidy than neatly defined funding cycles. The Committee also expresses its concern regarding the high level of burnout affecting those working within the sector, including a heavy reliance on specific individuals, albeit individuals with enthusiasm and passion for the task in hand. The Committee therefore recommends that Departments, arm's-length bodies, and statutory agencies have an appropriate support mechanism in place for the organisations that they are funding; and that they strongly encourage their funded organisations to consider suitable succession planning.
23. The Committee recommends that the Department gives consideration to adopting the term 'good relationships' as a broader framework in which to consider delivering policies and programmes to promote a united and shared society.

Urban Interfaces

24. The Committee recognises that the issues that need to be addressed in order for interface barriers to be removed are complex, and like other areas of good relations work, there is no uniform approach. The Committee notes the concerns of those living immediately beside interface areas who feel that the physical barriers provide a certain amount of security and safety; recognises that malevolent forces continue to have influence in some communities, which in turn contributes to the desire to maintain physical manifestations of division in urban areas; and acknowledges the challenge in communicating a vision for a united and shared society to communities at interfaces. The Committee commends the consultation and preparatory work that is ongoing with regard to the commitment within Together: Building a United Community to reduce the number of interface barriers, in conjunction with local communities. The Committee respects the views of those who do not yet feel secure enough

to progress on the removal of interface barriers, and supports the view that no peace wall should be removed without the consent and support of the communities that are living immediately beside it.

25. The Committee recommends that work to liaise with those living at interfaces to understand why they do not feel safe; and to encourage them to develop a vision for building a united and shared community continues. The Committee also encourages the Committee for Justice to undertake scrutiny of the work of the Department of Justice in this regard to ensure that the Assembly is fully appraised, and can input into this work as appropriate.
26. The Committee further notes concerns from stakeholders that too much emphasis is being placed on the removal of physical interface barriers, with little thought being given to the social and economic needs of those living closest to the peace walls. In taking this area of work forward the Committee recommends a holistic approach to the reduction of interface barriers, which might include localised regeneration initiatives, support for education and access to employment for everyone, and in particular young people.

Contested Space in Rural Communities

27. Members commend the work of those organisations, large and small, dedicated to building a united and shared society within rural communities. The Committee notes the view that there is a lack of recognition amongst policy and decision makers that sectarianism exists in rural communities; and the view that initiatives designed to deal with issues of contested space in rural areas receive disproportionately less funding than communities at interfaces in urban areas. The Committee also acknowledges that there is a subtlety in addressing sectarianism in rural areas which may not have the same manifestations as seen in urban areas; and the perception that, historically, there has been a lack of creative thought and commitment as to how programmes designed to build a united community can be better catered for in a rural context.
28. The Committee recommends that the seven headline actions of T:BUC are rural-proofed by OFMDFM as soon as possible, and that any remedial action identified is carried out quickly. Further the Committee recommends that Executive Departments, statutory agencies and arm's-length bodies tasked with the development of programmes aimed at building a united community proactively mitigate against a perceived urban bias.

Mixed Communities

29. The Committee recommends that a greater emphasis is placed on the lessons learned by those who have something to contribute to the wider discussions about developing shared neighbourhoods; and in particular that representatives from these mixed communities should participate in the relevant thematic groups to be established under the auspices of the Ministerial Panel. Further the Committee recommends that, in establishing a T:BUC forum, consideration is given to specifically inviting representatives from mixed communities to participate.

General Comments on Approaches to Addressing Sectarianism and Division

30. The Committee acknowledges the breadth and depth of approaches to addressing sectarianism and division and the rich contribution that this work makes to building a united community. The Committee recognises that there is no uniform approach to addressing sectarianism and division; and recommends that the Department continues to deploy flexibility when developing policy and devising programmes relating to these matters.

31. In considering approaches to addressing sectarianism and division the Committee notes the need for careful monitoring of the balance between the Ministerial Panel co-ordinating the processes around pursuing a united and shared community, and the community and voluntary sector which is often charged with the delivery of the outcomes of this agenda. The Committee strongly urges the Department to develop, and continue to build on, good relationships with the community and voluntary sector in this regard.

Mental Health/Intergenerational Trauma

32. The Committee acknowledges that many individuals across society in Northern Ireland cope with conflict-related mental health and trauma related issues; and that efforts to build a united and shared society require a holistic approach. The Committee recommends that the Executive undertakes closer cross-departmental consideration of issues relating to mental health and intergenerational trauma in a way that links to the trauma initiative of the Stormont House Agreement.

Good Relations Indicators

33. The Committee recommends that OFMDFM conducts an interim evaluation of Together: Building a United Community to assess the progress of the seven headline actions to identify good news stories, and to ensure that any alterations required are identified early with time to make any adjustments that may be necessary.

Introduction

Together: Building a United Community

1. On 9 May 2013 the First Minister and deputy First Minister announced a package of “significant and strategic actions”¹ as part of a broader good relations strategy, “Together: Building a United Community” (T:BUC). These actions included:
 - i. The creation of 10,000 one year placements as part of the United Youth Programme;
 - ii. 100 Shared Summer Schools/Camps to be held across NI by 2015 for post primary young people;
 - iii. 4 Urban Village Regeneration Projects for large scale urban regeneration in targeted areas of deprivation;
 - iv. 10 shared educational campuses to be commenced within 5 years;
 - v. Proposals to be brought forward on 10 new shared neighbourhood developments;
 - vi. Creation of a significant cross-community sports programme;
 - vii. A 10 year programme to reduce, and eventually remove, all interface barriers, working together with the local community.

2. The First Minister made a statement to the Assembly on 14 May 2013 regarding the proposals during which he commented that

“It would be idealistic to think that any initiative, no matter how significant, can heal all of society’s divisions and problems, but I believe that it is a significant step forward that demonstrates our confidence that the people of Northern Ireland are determined to live, work and socialise together as a single united community.”²

3. The “Together: Building a United Community” strategy document was published on 23 May 2013,³ and outlines the principles to underpin the implementation of the strategy and drive forward actions at all levels of Government.

Underlying principles

4. There are eleven agreed underlying principles for the T:BUC strategy and these are detailed in the table below.

Table 1: Underlying principles of Together: Building a United Community

Cohesion	Respect
Diversity	Responsibilities
Fairness	Rights
Inclusion	Sharing
Integration	Tolerance
Interdependence	

1 <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/es/index/media-centre/executive-statements/statement-090513-together-building.htm> [Accessed 30 April 2015]

2 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/reports-12-13/14-may-2013/#2> [Accessed 9 June 2015]

3 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> [Accessed 9 June 2015]

Key Priorities and Aims

5. The document also outlined the key priorities and shared aims of T:BUC.

Table 2: Key Priorities and Aims of Together: Building a United Community

Our Children and Young People	to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations
Our Shared Community	to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone
Our Safe Community	to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety
Our Cultural Expression	to create a community, which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced

Budget allocation

6. During his statement to the Assembly on 14 May 2013 the First Minister advised that “*Since devolution, approximately £500m has been spent on supporting valuable good relations work across Northern Ireland.*” He went on to say that, “*As we move forward [officials] will not only design and develop the schemes that we announced, but will cost them, as best one can.*”⁴
7. However, during the course of the Inquiry, and through routine scrutiny of financial and budgetary matters by the Committee, it has not been possible to obtain a budget profile for the lifetime of T:BUC, or against each of the seven headline actions. The Committee wrote to the Department several times on this matter, and although it did receive a budget profile for the 2015/16 financial year,⁵ a breakdown of funding over the lifetime of the strategy has not been provided.

Committee Approach

8. The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (COFMDFM) was briefed by Junior Ministers on Together: Building a United Community at its meeting on 22 May 2013, and by officials on two subsequent occasions, namely 25 September 2013 and 5 February 2014. At its planning meeting for the 2013/14 session in September 2013 the Committee agreed that the consideration of this document should be a strategic priority, and noted that the long term nature of the strategy could allow Members to usefully undertake a piece of work that would seek to inform the Executive’s approach in this regard. In his statement on 14 May 2013 the First Minister advised Members that “*we regard it [T:BUC] very much as a living strategy... it can change, be updated and grow.*”⁶
9. In January 2014 the Committee identified two distinct areas which merited deeper scrutiny. These were the review of the Barroso Taskforce and the T:BUC strategy. At that time, in respect of T:BUC, the Committee commissioned Assembly Research to explore examples of peace building initiatives outside of Northern Ireland, with a more in-depth look at peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These research papers are available to read at **Appendix 5**. Having opted to take the European issue first, the Committee subsequently

4 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/reports-12-13/14-may-2013/#2>
[Accessed 9 June 2015]

5 Appendix 4: OFMDFM Papers and Correspondence - 23 April 2015

6 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/reports-12-13/14-may-2013/#2>
[Accessed 9 June 2015]

agreed the aim of its Inquiry into Building a United Community and the terms of reference at its meeting on 2 July 2014.⁷

Aim

10. The agreed aim of the Inquiry is to inform the Executive's approach in the actions it takes to tackle sectarianism, racism and other forms of intolerance, and to make recommendations in order to support and enhance policy in uniting communities and community integration, including how communities are involved in decision making.

Terms of Reference

11. The agreed terms of reference of the Inquiry are to:
- i. Explore perspectives on sectarianism, division and good relations including:
 - a. an examination of theory and practice with regard to good relations, shared space and shared services;
 - b. consideration of best practice, both locally and internationally, in bringing divided communities together, and in developing shared space and shared services;
 - ii. Seek views on what good relations means and how sectarianism and division can be addressed, with a particular focus on the challenges at interface areas, both urban and rural. This might include:
 - a. seeking views on what issues need to be addressed in order for interface barriers to be removed;
 - b. examining the role of communities in policy and decision making in relation to community integration and particularly, the removal of interface barriers; and
 - c. consideration of the effectiveness of the Good Relations Indicators in monitoring and measuring the progress of government interventions.
 - iii. Make recommendations in order to support and enhance policy and decision-making with regard to building a united community, including on actions to tackle sectarianism, racism and other forms of intolerance, and to help deliver the Executive's commitment on removing interface barriers.

Call for evidence

12. Following agreement of the terms of reference the Committee agreed to formally call for evidence in relation to the Inquiry. Notifications were published in three local newspapers and on the Committee's webpages, and relevant stakeholders were informed by email with an invitation to respond by Friday 26 September 2014. At its meeting on 17 September 2014 the Committee agreed to extend the closing date for written submissions to Friday 10 October 2014.⁸
13. The Committee was pleased to receive over 70 written submissions from a variety of sectors including government departments, statutory agencies and a range of voluntary and community sector organisations. These submissions were published on the Committee's webpages during the course of the Inquiry and are available to view at **Appendix 3**.

7 Appendix 1: Minutes of Proceedings

8 Appendix 1: Minutes of Proceedings

Evidence gathering

14. At its meeting on 5 November 2014 the Committee considered the themes emerging from the written submissions which were wide-ranging, reflecting the diversity of organisations and individuals that responded. At that meeting Members noted that the Committee for Education was undertaking an Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education, and restated its position, first agreed on 1 October 2014, that any issues arising in the course of the Inquiry into Building a United Community relating to education, should be passed to that Committee for information.
15. The Committee noted that a number of organisations had responded specifically to the Inquiry on the matter of a definition for the term ‘good relations’ and also ‘sectarianism’. Members agreed not to explore this issue in detail through oral evidence, but to revisit issues relating to a definition of good relations at a later stage. Other emerging themes in the written evidence included issues relating to mental health and inter-generational trauma. The Committee agreed that, while these areas are both important and merit further consideration, it would be unlikely that the Committee would be able to consider them in depth during the course of the Inquiry.
16. With those considerations in mind, the Committee identified witnesses to be invited to provide oral evidence to the Committee. The Committee also decided to host a stakeholder event with those who had provided written evidence; agreed to an informal meeting with young people; and asked staff to explore the possibility of external meetings at an interface area and in a rural area. Members also identified a number of academics to invite to give oral evidence, following consideration of a paper from Assembly Research. Due to time constraints the Committee opted not to undertake a study visit outside of Northern Ireland as part of its evidence gathering. The minutes of proceedings of the Committee’s consideration of the Inquiry at all stages can be found at **Appendix 1**; Minutes of Evidence from the oral evidence sessions can be found at **Appendix 2**; and the reports from the two events are available at **Appendix 6**. Again, the Committee made all this information available during the course of the Inquiry on its webpages.

Deliberations

17. Having collated the evidence received through written submissions, oral evidence sessions and during the stakeholder events the Committee considered an issues paper at its meeting on 25 March, and released it to OFMDFM prior to a final evidence session with departmental officials on Wednesday 13 May. At that meeting officials had an opportunity to respond to the key issues emerging from the evidence. The Committee considered areas for potential recommendations at its meeting on 3 June, and tasked staff to prepare an initial draft report including the findings and draft recommendations as discussed by Members. The Committee considered the initial draft report at its meeting on 24 June 2015.
18. The Committee’s report on the Inquiry was agreed at its meeting on 1 July 2015, and a motion for debate in plenary, to be scheduled for early in the 2015/16 session, was also agreed that day.
19. The Committee would wish to express its sincere thanks to all those organisations and individuals who have engaged with this Inquiry, and departmental officials for responding to queries which arose during the course of its consideration.

20. During the course of this Inquiry the Committee noted that the Stormont House Agreement included a commitment that:

“The Northern Ireland Executive will ensure full implementation of the Together: Building a United Community strategy, and beyond that will commit to a continuing effort to eradicate sectarianism in all its forms.”⁹

21. Members also noted the announcement by the First Minister to the Assembly on Monday 2 March 2015¹⁰ regarding the proposed names and structures of future departments within the Northern Ireland Executive. Under the proposals responsibility for the delivery and operational aspects of Building a United Community will transfer from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the proposed Department of Communities. It is the Committee’s view that the recommendations of this Inquiry could helpfully inform the future design and delivery of policies and programmes aimed at building a united community in Northern Ireland.

9 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390672/Stormont_House_Agreement.pdf [Accessed 25 June 2015]

10 <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2015/03/02&docID=226152> [Accessed 25 June 2015]

Consideration of the Evidence

General Comments on “Together: Building a United Community”

22. A wide variety of the Committee’s stakeholders responded positively to the publication of “Together: Building a United Community”. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, for example, stated that it is pleased with the explicit recognition in T:BUC of the huge importance of a forward looking, cohesive society.¹¹ Feedback from the stakeholder event indicated that some welcomed T:BUC as a promising strategy with a good vision, being led at a strategic level.
23. During oral evidence Professor Hamber from Ulster University commended the Executive for *“this bold vision and the steps that they have started to take to realise that.”* He went on to say that:
- “It is also right that, as the strategy says, this is understood as a journey towards a more united and shared society. The idea of a journey is consistent with the notion of process, and most of the international literature on peace building and reconciliation talks about concepts as essentially processes, rather than destinations in themselves.”¹²*
24. Similarly representatives of organisations working in Derry/Londonderry told the Committee that:
- “We are fully aware that it [T:BUC] is the strategy that is in place to help positively to shape our society for the future, and we are committed to working with OFMDFM and other partners to strive towards a society that is, as stated in the document, a united community based on equality of opportunity, desirability of good relations and reconciliation.”¹³*
25. During oral evidence the Chairperson of the Community Relations Council (CRC) noted that *“T:BUC is a devolved document. That is an achievement in itself. It provides a framework.”* This was echoed by the Chief Executive of CRC who welcomed T:BUC as a *“large-scale intervention.”¹⁴*
26. The terms of reference for the Inquiry included ‘consideration of best practice, both locally and internationally in bringing divided communities together, and in developing shared space and shared services’. Through all the evidence the Committee received it was evident to Members that a huge amount of work takes place at departmental, statutory and community level with the purpose of building a united community. While it would be impossible to list all the examples of the work which Members considered throughout the course of this Inquiry, it is worth highlighting a few to give a flavour of the diversity of the programmes on offer. Further examples can be found in both the oral and written evidence received by the Committee at **Appendices 2** and **3** respectively.

11 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Presbyterian Church in Ireland

12 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Pete Shirlow & Professor Bandon Hamber

13 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Peace and Reconciliation Group, The Junction & Holywell Trust

14 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project and Groundwork NI

Table 3: Examples of programmes and initiatives working towards building a united community

<p>GAA/IFA/IRFU (Ulster Branch) Game of Three Halves (GO3H)/ Belfast Interface Games (BIG)</p>	<p>The GO3H is a collaborative partnership between Ulster GAA, the IFA and the IRFU (Ulster Branch) that aims to provide opportunities for people from different backgrounds to have positive interactions through sport. The BIG uses the model of GO3H to deliver a summer intervention programme in partnership with the three disciplines and PeacePlayers International NI (PPINI). The purpose of the programme is to offer young people the opportunity to participate in Gaelic Football, Rugby Union and Soccer in a summer camp setting. A number of sport themed good relations workshops are delivered during the camps.</p>
<p>Inter Action Belfast Mobile Phone Network Interface violence/incidents protocols</p>	<p>The Mobile Phone Network was established in 1996 as an innovative, organic project designed to address sectarian incidents and violence at interface areas. Phones were distributed to a diverse group of voluntary community activists. When an incident occurred phone holders would contact each other across the interface in order to resolve the issues that had contributed to the outbreak. A set of protocols were developed in 2006 with both communities and the local district police for joint dealing with interface violence and incidents of intimidation.</p>
<p>Armoyn Community Association</p>	<p>The development of shared community space which now incorporates Surestart programmes, a community pharmacy, hair salon and Mother and Toddler groups.</p>
<p>Strabane District Council - Good Relations Partnership</p>	<p>The Good Relations Partnership is an interagency group that oversees the work of the Good Relations section of Strabane District Council. The purpose of the Partnership is to provide a forum for local civic, commercial, statutory and community representatives to discuss how to progress the development of local communities in an environment where religious, political, racial and cultural expression and differences are understood and expressed in a way that is sensitive to others. The partnership consists of elected members, community representatives, a BME representative and a representative from the LGBT sector. The following agencies are represented: PSNI, NIHE, Western Health and Social Care Trust, WELB and DoE Roads Service.</p>
<p>Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure - Droichead Projcet</p>	<p>An integral part of the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture events programme was a cross-community event which brought together communities to ensure that the Fleadh, Tattoo, and Pan Celtic Festival showcased both traditional Irish and Ulster Scots marching bands culture.</p>

27. **The Committee notes the publication of *Together: Building a United Community* as a devolved strategy aimed at improving community relations and building a united and shared society. The Committee commends those individuals and organisations working towards building a united community, and the Government Departments and statutory agencies that support them in this work.**

Narrow focus

28. That said, concern was expressed by some giving evidence to the Committee that T:BUC is too narrowly focused on divisions between the two main communities in Northern Ireland. This was reflected in the submission from the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership which considered that this approach risked sending a message that the only cultures and diversity which are to be protected are the two majority communities in Northern Ireland.¹⁵ This view was also reflected by some attending the stakeholder event, while the young people from the Bytes project who attended an informal stakeholder event with Members also advised that *“there are more than Catholic and Protestant – there are other groups.”*¹⁶
29. Additionally, during the stakeholder event Members heard that while the T:BUC vision was considered to be ambitious, there was little public confidence that anything would change or that there would be delivery on commitments. At the event a concern was also expressed that the headline actions do not go far enough to meet the vision and aspirations of the strategy, and that the headline actions will not create sustainable outcomes.
30. There was also a perception that initiatives included in T:BUC to address sectarianism and division are simply existing government initiatives repackaged as good relations activity. This was a view expressed during the stakeholder event and echoed during oral evidence:

*“Some of the headline actions here read as though some Departments will do some of this stuff anyway, so they will rebadge it as good relations.”*¹⁷

31. **The Committee acknowledges that many different activities across all Departments do make a contribution to building a shared and united society, whether or not they are specifically badged as good relations activity. What is important, however, is that there is a joined-up approach across the Executive to ensure the best outcomes possible.** This latter point is explored further through discussion on the Ministerial Panel later in this report.

Consultation and co-design

32. Another recurring theme raised in oral and written evidence as well as through the stakeholder event was that, despite the good work that already exists, there was a lack of consultation in preparation for the publication of T:BUC and a lack of recognition of current work being undertaken across the voluntary, community and statutory sector in this area. Some attending the stakeholder event suggested that those with relevant expertise were not asked for their input into the delivery of T:BUC outcomes, although this view was countered by those who felt that the co-design process implemented for the development of the headline actions was a good opportunity for the community and voluntary sector to be heard.
33. During oral evidence the groups from Derry/Londonderry expressed the view that *“it would have been nice to have been able to share our experience and to have had a constructive conversation in which we could have outlined what is happening at grass-roots level.”*¹⁸ This was echoed by groups working at urban interfaces in Belfast who suggested that:

*“T:BUC misses out completely on two things that do not cost a lot: the ordinary people who are prepared to pay a personal rather than a financial price to achieve progress; and the home-grown mechanisms developed from learned and lived experiences on interfaces.”*¹⁹

34. This view was not confined to organisations working within urban areas. During the Committee’s visit to Ballymoney Members also heard from organisations working in

15 Appendix 3: Written Submissions - Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership

16 Appendix 6: Other Papers and Correspondence - Bytes Project: Informal event

17 Appendix 6: Other Papers and Correspondence - Stakeholder Event

18 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Peace and Reconciliation Group, The Junction & Holywell Trust

19 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - InterAction Belfast, Suffolk Community Group & Forthspring InterCommunity Group

predominantly rural areas that “one criticism we might make of the strategy is that there is not enough involvement at civic and community level for us to inform some of the ideas as to how T:BUC might be rolled out.”²⁰ However, it is important to note that this is not a universal experience and the Rural Community Network (RCN) in particular cited a very positive working relationship with the Department, including opportunities to feed in at various times to discussions regarding the development and roll out of T:BUC.

35. In response to these criticisms the Committee notes the following commitments within the T:BUC strategy document regarding the design of strategy implementation:
- Establish a Panel comprising all Ministers from the Executive in addition to senior representatives from a range of statutory agencies and community partners;
 - Establish thematic subgroups under the auspices of the Ministerial Panel to reflect the key priorities of this strategy; and
 - Ensure that the membership of both the Ministerial Panel and associated subgroups will seek to reflect the range of sectors across our community who can contribute to building good relations here.²¹
36. In evidence to the Committee in May 2015 departmental officials advised that the Ministerial Panel is supported by an inter-departmental programme board, alongside proposals for thematic subgroups, with the Housing and Community Tensions subgroups in operation by June 2015. Officials also advised that NICVA, SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) and NIHE were represented on the Ministerial panel.²² Following an evidence session on Programme for Government (PfG) targets on 10 June 2015, officials have committed to provide more detail to the Committee of how the CRC feeds into the work of the Ministerial Panel. This information was not available in time for completion of this Report.
37. **The Committee recognises the important role of the Ministerial Panel, not least because working towards building a united community is not confined to the remit of just one Department, and it is vital that these issues are regularly considered at this level. The Committee stresses the need for regular meetings of the Ministerial Panel with transparent outcomes; and recommends that OFMDFM lay an annual report on T:BUC in the NI Assembly, with contributions from other Departments, as the basis for an annual ‘take note’ debate. This would allow an opportunity for progress to be identified and recognised, and for good news stories to be heard.**
38. **Following on from this, the Committee recommends that all NI Assembly statutory committees make it core business to include good relations as part of their regular scrutiny of departmental activity, including the monitoring of T:BUC headline actions where Departments have responsibility for delivery.**
39. The Committee notes that a “co-design” process has been employed by the lead Departments for a number of the key actions. In its response to the Committee, the Department for Employment and Learning advised that co-design “involves end users and programme deliverers in every stage of the policy/programme design process”²³; and the Department’s engagement in respect of the United Youth Programme was cited by attendees at the stakeholder event as a positive example of a good co-design process. OFMDFM has also undertaken a co-design approach with regard to summer camps and the Department of Justice has been actively working with communities at interfaces with regard to the proposed reduction in physical interface barriers. Those attending the stakeholder event noted that

20 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Rural Community Network

21 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> p.30 [Accessed 11 June 2015]

22 Appendix 4: OFMDFM Papers and Correspondence - 13 May 2015

23 Appendix 3: Written Submissions - Department for Employment and Learning

engagement on a specific issue like interface barriers may be more straightforward as the motivation behind the headline action is clearer to see.

40. In evidence to the Committee officials advised that:

“The approach that we have used through co-design has involved more of a blank page and saying ‘Here is what we are trying to do. Here’s the outcome that we are trying to get to which is linked to T:BUC. Now, tell us from your experience how that can best be designed and delivered’.”²⁴

41. This was a key area discussed during the stakeholder event and, while co-design was described as the latest iteration of consultation and partnership, some felt that it did promote the active engagement of communities. And while not a panacea, it was acknowledged that co-design does have the potential to engage groups that do not normally get involved.

42. **The Committee considers that, ideally, stakeholders should have the ability to shape policy at a formative stage before key decisions are made and policy documents are written. However, the Committee supports the process of co-design in principle as a positive way to engage with stakeholders in the design and implementation of programmes. Given the long term nature of many of the headline actions, the Committee considers it important that this engagement is meaningful and continues through the lifetime of the strategy. The Committee therefore recommends that OFMDFM consider the creation of a “T:BUC Forum” as an opportunity for the sector to engage constructively with the Department. The Committee suggests the “NEETS Forum” established by the Department for Employment and Learning as a useful model in this regard. Should such a forum be established, it is recommended that it is chaired by a representative from the sector.**

Building a United Community: Theory and Practice

Academic Research and Good Practice

43. In its terms of reference the Committee sought information on theory and practice with regard to good relations, shared space and shared services; and on best practice, both locally and internationally in bringing divided communities together in developing shared services. Through written and oral evidence the Committee identified a constructive working relationship between OFMDFM and relevant academics; and noted that OFMDFM plays a proactive role in the research that it commissions. However, it was not clear how widely this research is disseminated and this was summed up by Professor Pete Shirlow who told the Committee:

“OFMDFM has played a role in the research it has commissioned. There is a series of pieces of research commissioned that show us exactly what the problem is... I would be surprised if the OFMDFM research were known by all MLAs. Are they aware of the research that has been done? Maybe that is an issue.”²⁵

44. Conversely the Committee also heard from some organisations, often visited as part of broader international study visits focused on peace and reconciliation, that they find themselves ignored when policy is developed at a local level. Michael Doherty from the Peace and Reconciliation Group told Members that *“many people do not understand some of the work that we have been involved in, because they do not know about it.”²⁶* During the stakeholder event held in January 2015 an organisation heavily involved in developing and providing summer camps for a number of years indicated that it had not been approached by OFMDFM for advice or input into the development of the T:BUC summer camps initiative.

24 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Departmental officials 13 May 2015

25 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Peter Shirlow & Professor Brandon Hamber

26 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Peace and Reconciliation Group, The Junction & Holywell Trust

45. As noted elsewhere in this report, the Committee recognises that one size does not fit all and that best practice in one community may not automatically transfer to a different location. However the learning from these programmes and initiatives should be captured to inform future policy and shape potential interventions.
46. **The Committee acknowledges, and commends, the positive working relationship between the Department and academic experts who have a particular interest in researching issues related to sectarianism, division and the pursuit of good relations; and notes that good, helpful research is regularly produced. However the Committee is surprised that this work does not seem to be widely disseminated or receive local recognition. The Committee recommends that OFMDFM proactively seeks ways to share this expertise across Departments; and explores opportunities to promote and publish this academic work as extensively as possible.**
47. **The Committee recognises that programmes and initiatives that work in a particular geographical area may not automatically be appropriate for another location. However the Committee strongly urges those designing policy and initiatives to further a united and shared society to look to best practice available locally and build on the learning and expertise that already exists during the early stages of policy development.**

Definitions and Terminology

48. In its terms of reference the Committee sought views on what good relations means. Whilst the Committee did not subsequently pursue this in detail through oral evidence, a number of organisations addressed this matter specifically in their written submissions and it was also discussed during the stakeholder event.
49. T:BUC refers to Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) which states that:
- “without prejudice to its obligations under Section 75 (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.”²⁷*
50. For the purposes of the strategy sectarianism is defined as *“threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour or attitudes towards a person by reasons of that person’s religious belief or political opinion; or to an individual as a member of such a group.”²⁸* However, the strategy document goes on to indicate that legislation to establish the Equality and Good Relations Commission will seek to find an appropriate consensus around a definition of sectarianism, based on the strategy, to be included in that legislation.
51. At the time of completing this report the legislation has not been forthcoming. However, it may be useful to articulate some of the views of those responding to the Inquiry on defining terms.
52. Overall there was strong support for agreed definitions for ‘sectarianism’ and ‘good relations’, including from the Equality Commission and RCN; and agreed definitions could, according to Co-operation Ireland, *“become a driver of change in policy and practice.”²⁹*
53. The Children’s Law Centre (CLC) indicated its support for this approach as it believes that clarity of law and measurement of success can only be achieved through the adoption of a clear definition. This was a view echoed by the Committee for the Administration of Justice (a submission endorsed by UNISON) which suggested that it is contradictory to suggest that good relations is both highly important, but impossible to define.³⁰

27 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> p.14 [Accessed 11 June 2015]

28 Ibid p.19

29 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Equality Commission for Northern Ireland; Rural Community Network; Co-operation Ireland

30 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Children’s Law Centre; Committee for the Administration of Justice

54. CRC recommended that definitions of good relations and sectarianism should conform to international standards, a view supported by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), Youth Council NI, Holywell Trust, Peace and Reconciliation Group and the Junction; while Co-operation Ireland pointed to the work of Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly as a useful starting point in framing an agreed definition of good relations.³¹
55. Some highlighted a perceived tension between the statutory equality duty and wider good relations obligations with concern expressed by some, including the Equality Coalition that a focus on good relations may be to the detriment of equality obligations. The Equality Coalition also suggests that, for the purposes of human rights law, sectarian identity should be regarded as an ethnicity and sectarianism, therefore, as a form of racism.³²
56. The Equality Commission suggested that the intention signalled in T:BUC to provide a definition of sectarianism needs to be considered in relation to the conduct or legally defined actions to which the definition would apply. The importance of significant consultation on this matter was stressed by a number of respondents including NIACRO, who specifically highlighted the need to engage with young people in defining what good relations is, and how the concept can be embraced by them.³³
57. The NIHRC and others recommended that the duty to promote good relations be extended beyond the current remit of religious belief, political opinion or racial group, to include the categories detailed in the equality obligations.
58. Forthspring InterCommunity Group suggested a two-pronged approach - a legislative framework that includes clear definitions of sectarianism and good relations alongside a broad vision of a peaceful and reconciled society within which people can agree to disagree on constitutional and contentious issues based on respect for each other.³⁴ This was reiterated in oral evidence to the Committee when they stated *“We need a legal definition of good relations for a start so that it can be promoted in a way that supports and underpins equality... which gives us a sense of the society that we want.”*³⁵ This was echoed by Professor Shirlow from Queen’s University during oral evidence to the Committee when he said *“I am not sure that we really have proper working definitions of what we are trying to change.”*³⁶
59. Concern about definitions and their use was also raised during the stakeholder event hosted by the Committee in January 2015. Opinions expressed during the discussions included a view that other terms used in the context of T:BUC such as “shared housing” and “shared neighbourhoods”, or indeed “shared space,” required more clarity, particularly where there is a concern that these terms suggest people may be forced together against their will.
60. **The Committee notes the support from the written evidence received and through the stakeholder event for the introduction of definitions for ‘sectarianism’ and ‘good relations.’ The Committee recognises that agreed definitions are useful for the purposes of the monitoring and evaluation of T:BUC programmes, and that the proper place for defining these terms is in the context of legislation. The Committee therefore supports the intention of Ministers, stated within Together: Building a United Community, to “seek to find an appropriate consensus around a definition of sectarianism, based on this Strategy”.**³⁷

31 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Community Relations Council; NI Human Rights Commission; Youth Council NI; Holywell Trust, Peace & Reconciliation Group, The Junction; Co-operation Ireland

32 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Equality Coalition

33 Appendix 3: Written submissions - NIACRO

34 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Forthspring InterCommunity Group

35 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - InterAction Belfast, Suffolk Community Forum & Forthspring InterCommunity Group

36 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Peter Shirlow and Professor Brandon Hamber

37 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> p.19 [Accessed 11 June 2015]

Resourcing T:BUC

Financing Together: Building a United Community

61. In his statement to the Assembly on T:BUC the First Minister noted that *“since devolution, approximately £500m has been spent on supporting good relations work across Northern Ireland.”*³⁸
62. Whilst the Committee terms of reference did not explicitly refer to the budget allocation for T:BUC or funding for good relations initiatives, a consistent theme emerging from oral and written evidence across all sectors, and also raised in briefings with OFMDFM officials, was concern about the resourcing of T:BUC and funding available for local community and voluntary sector organisations. To gain a better understanding the Committee commissioned Assembly Research to prepare a paper on the funding framework for Good Relations activity in Northern Ireland. This is available at **Appendix 5**.
63. Members of the Committee explored the issues of a budget for T:BUC with witnesses in oral evidence to the Inquiry. For example when the Chair questioned representatives from the Community Relations Council by asking *“If I were to ask you what you think the budget is for T:BUC, what would you say?”* The response was *“Probably not enough”*, followed by *“I don’t know.”*³⁹
64. That said, all those contributing to the Inquiry were fully cognisant of the challenging economic situation which the NI Executive currently faces. As was noted by the Chief Executive of CRC,
*“Your review is also to be welcomed. It is a very timely moment to draw breath because in the conditions in which the policy moved forward, more resources were available at that time...This is not where we are now.”*⁴⁰
65. The Assembly Research Paper detailed the funding provided through OFMDFM resourced programmes over the course of this mandate.⁴¹

38 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/reports-12-13/14-may-2013/#2>
[Accessed 12 June 2015]

39 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project and Groundwork NI

40 Ibid

41 Appendix 5: Assembly Research Papers - Community Relations Funding in Northern Ireland

Table 4: Community Relations Programmes Administered by OFMDFM 2011 - 2015⁴²

Programme	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
District Councils Good Relations ⁴³	£3,150,000.00	£3,300,000.00	£3,400,000.00	£2,800,000.00
North Belfast Strategic Good Relations	£750,785.00	£770,000.00	£770,000.00	£670,000.00
Contested Spaces Programme ⁴⁴	£617,770.00	£1,109,791.00	£1,509,567.00	£710,000.00
Central and Other Good Relations	£234,768.00	£472,000.00	£1,100,000.00	£1,321,000.00
Summer Intervention Programme ⁴⁵	£400,000.00	£536,000.00	£500,000.00	£700,000.00
Total Direct Funding	£5,153,323.00	£6,187,791.00	£7,279,567.00	£6,201,000.00
CRC Allocation	£3,588,000.00	£4,360,000.00	£3,510,000.00	£3,476,000.00
Total OFMDFM Funding	£8,741,323.00	£10,547,791.00	£10,789,567.00	£9,677,000.00

66. Through questioning of Departmental officials, and also through written correspondence, the Committee has attempted to ascertain the breakdown of proposed budget allocations in relation to the T:BUC headline actions, over the lifetime of the strategy. In April 2015 the Department advised Members through correspondence of the budget profile for progressing the headline actions for 2015/16 and indicated that, as the full costs of all actions are not yet known, it was not possible to provide a full budget profile beyond this. The figures provided at that time for revenue expenditure throughout 2015/16 were:
- United Youth Programme £3m
 - 100 Summer Schools/Camps £1.2m
 - 10 Shared Educational Campuses £0.2m
 - 10 Shared Neighbourhoods £0.29m
 - Cross Community Sporting Programme £0.545m
 - Urban Villages Programme £2.46m
 - Removal of Interface Barriers £0.77m⁴⁶
67. The Committee noted that expenditure in relation to the headline actions is held centrally and distributed to the relevant departments on request through bids in the regular monitoring rounds.
68. The Department also provided figures in June 2015 regarding the funding provided by OFMDFM for good relations activity in 2013/14 and 2014/15, including identification of additional spend allocated in year 2014/15 following successful bids for delivery of priorities

42 Information provided by OFMDFM 2 October 2014.

43 This figure is matched by district councils at 25%, therefore the figures shown here are 75% of the total programme

44 This includes 50% match funding from Atlantic Philanthropies.

45 The Summer Intervention Programme includes annual technical transfer to the Department of Education.

46 Appendix 4: OFMDFM Papers and Correspondence - 23 April 2015

of T:BUC.⁴⁷ These figures do not include expenditure by the Community Relations Council in 2014/15 (£3.256m) or by other Departments in respect of the T:BUC headline actions for which they have lead responsibility.

Table 5: OFMDFM expenditure on good relations activity in 2013/14 and 2014/15

Programme	2013/14 (£)	2014/15 Opening Position (£)	2014/15 Final Position (£)	Additional expenditure 2014/15 (£)
District Councils Good Relations Programme	3,400,000	2,590,000	3,268,975	678,975
North Belfast Strategic Good Relations	770,000	670,000	750,000	80,000
Contested Spaces Programme	1,505,207	535,000	747,899	212,899
Central and Other Good Relations	1,100,000	576,000	1,756,247	1,180,247
Summer Intervention Programme	500,000	400,000	500,000	100,000
Summer Camps/Schools	nil	nil	200,000	200,000
Urban Villages	nil	nil	350,000	350,000
North Belfast City Learning Centre	92,000	92,000	92,000	Nil
Total Direct Funding	7,275,207	4,863,000	7,665,121	2,802,121

69. **The Committee recognises the constrained financial situation within which all Departments are seeking to deliver on programmes and priorities and encourages the Executive not to lose sight of priorities to support building a united and shared community amongst other budgetary pressures. In addition the Committee supports the development of a budget profile for each headline action across the lifetime of the strategy, with associated milestones to add transparency to the T:BUC expenditure.**

Provision of Funding

70. Primary amongst the concerns raised by stakeholders was the impact of uncertainty around funding on the sustainability of provision. This was articulated by the Chairperson of CRC who in oral evidence stated

“We also believe that is important to recognise the need to build, rather than erode, the infrastructure that is delivering some of its work on the ground.”⁴⁸

71. It was also put to the Committee that existing best practice is being challenged because of uncertainty regarding funding, including delays in hearing the outcome of funding applications, and very short funding cycles. Sylvia Gordon from Groundwork NI advised Members that *“if we are committed to peace-building, which we are...we have to put the strategic vision forward, rather than being busy, busy, busy looking for the next small pot of funding.”⁴⁹*

72. A concern expressed during the stakeholder event was that, due to uncertainty over funding, those with expertise in cross-community work are moving to other sectors, echoing concerns heard from Council representatives (discussed elsewhere in this report). Attendees also advised that organisations with years of collective experience are facing closure. Another matter raised with Members was that if an organisation working at an interface was in receipt

47 Appendix 4: OFMDFM Papers and Correspondence - 11 June 2015

48 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project and Groundwork NI

49 Ibid

of funding and the situation in that area subsequently improved, funding can sometimes be cut or removed, undermining the work carried out to date and potentially impacting on the long-term sustainability of good relations in an area. Attendees at the stakeholder event noted a more efficient and effective way of using resources is to “nip things in the bud”, rather than dealing with the aftermath of a negative event. Similarly during oral evidence with representatives working in rural communities Members were told that “*we have paid a terrible price for being peaceful.*”⁵⁰ Those working in rural areas also suggested that there was a perception that funding rural programmes was seen to be more ‘expensive’ compared to urban projects.

73. The Committee recognises that making applications to funding programmes is a resource and time intensive process for individuals, and can distract from the task of delivering programmes on the ground. With regard to the Central Good Relations Fund those attending the stakeholder event expressed unease regarding the length of time it took for decisions to be made. Attendees felt that it was better to know the outcome, either positive or negative, sooner rather than later to allow for proper planning. These frustrations were echoed by a number of witnesses through oral evidence including Maureen Hetherington from The Junction in Derry/Londonderry who told the Committee that “*we put in an application and three months later we have still not had word on whether or not we were successful.*”⁵¹ Johnston Price from Forthspring InterCommunity Group told Members that:

*“There has been a series of delays, an absence of transparency and there is no appeal process. There is a widely held belief that it is, at best, a political carve-up and, at worst, a sectarian carve-up. In the absence of transparency, people will talk.”*⁵²

74. At central government level the Committee was urged to consider the need for appropriate policy levers to ensure that money across all headline actions is spent effectively. During the stakeholder event Members heard about a peace wall that was to be opened up in consultation with the local community, but which required traffic calming measures. It was reported that the process of engaging other departments and acquiring the resources necessary to do this was not straightforward, and yet only a relatively small amount of funding was required.
75. Those providing evidence to the Committee acknowledged that there could be duplication of provision within the sector, and that there needs to be more collaboration between groups. However some felt that a competitive funding environment was a barrier to collaboration and sharing good practice. The need for proper and effective evaluation was also highlighted as it was noted that the same amount of funding might be awarded to two separate projects, with very different outcomes. Effective evaluation should consider what other factors are at play in these situations.
76. Responding to some of these concerns the Department informed the Committee that T:BUC commits to the establishment of a Funders’ Advisory Group that would sit alongside the Ministerial Panel within the delivery and implementation architecture of the strategy. The Funders’ Advisory Group would work with the Ministerial Panel to ensure the strategic allocation of good relations funding in line with strategic objectives; and contribute to discussions on good relations funding, and any future funding delivery model.
77. Departmental officials also advised that T:BUC gave a commitment to commission a comprehensive review of the structure, delivery and impact of existing funding delivery mechanisms; and that the T:BUC strategy acknowledges that adequately resourcing good relations activity is critical to the effective implementation of its objectives. T:BUC also recognises the need to ensure that funding is directed in a way that secures sustainability

50 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Rural Community Network

51 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Peace and Reconciliation Group, The Junction & Holywell Trust

52 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - InterAction Belfast, Suffolk Community Forum & Forthspring InterCommunity Group

of the infrastructure that has been established at local level and that continues to develop capacity of individuals and organisations working to build good relations across our society.

78. **The Committee notes that T:BUC recognises that work is required to ensure the allocation of good relations funding is in line with strategic objectives and also with any future funding model. However the Committee is also aware that delays in terms of receipt of funding, alongside short-term funding cycles, can create uncertainty. The Committee recommends that the Funders' Advisory Group, which will be established to sit alongside the Ministerial Panel, is brought forward as soon as possible to progress work on the review of good relations funding and the development of a good relations funding model. In developing this model the Committee recommends that OFMDFM takes account of the burden faced by individuals and organisations through short-term funding cycles and considers ways to alleviate these pressures. The Committee also recommends that the Department works to promote transparency in allocation of funding at departmental level, and also through local councils and arm's-length bodies.**

79. The Committee has also noted from stakeholders concerns that T:BUC is over-reliant on pilot programmes which either do not have the opportunity to develop into something more sustainable, or which are developed to fit a particular funding stream. Ms Irwin, Chief Executive of CRC noted, "We've probably reached the end of experimental peacebuilding."⁵³ Members heard that while some of the T:BUC initiatives have a pilot phase, the experience of, and learning from, organisations involved in similar activities has not been taken into consideration. Professor Knox told the Committee,

*"One of the things that surprised us a little about the lead-in to T:BUC was the focus on running pilots...one of the questions that we have asked is why it needs to do pilots if a programme is already being funded that has essentially done some of that work to test out some of those ideas."*⁵⁴

80. **The Committee recognises the wisdom, both in terms of public expenditure and strategic planning, of piloting initiatives under the headline actions of T:BUC. However the Committee considers that it is important, not least in terms of the potential for increased confidence in the T:BUC strategy, that programmes and initiatives are moved from the pilot phase to solid state as soon as is practically possible, with those projects that are successful up-scaled appropriately.**

Role of Local Government

81. The Committee recognises that Local Government has had an important policy implementation and delivery role in relation to building a united and shared community through the District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP). This contribution is also acknowledged through T:BUC which makes specific commitments relating to the District Council Good Relations Programme. Furthermore, the Committee realises that the re-organisation of local government across Northern Ireland presents new opportunities for communities to be involved in policy and decision making at a local level through community planning. The Committee was therefore pleased to receive written submissions from six of the former District Councils and it was no surprise that the main areas raised were in relation to the DCGRP and community planning.⁵⁵ The Committee invited the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) to present oral evidence on behalf of local government representatives.

53 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project and Groundwork NI

54 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams

55 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Ballymena Borough Council; Banbridge District Council; Belfast City Council; Derry City Council; Newtownabbey Borough Council; Strabane District Council

82. Each of the Councils that responded to the Committee's call for evidence provided details of a wide variety of programmes and initiatives designed to tackle local manifestations of sectarianism and promote a united community within each of their contexts, including through sports and arts; intergenerational work; capacity building and mentoring; work relating to bands and bonfires; and engagement with minority ethnic communities and LGBT groups.
83. Recognising the significant work undertaken at local government level, the Committee commissioned Assembly Research to provide information on the grants provided by councils to local voluntary and community groups for the purposes of good relations activity. This research paper, which is available at **Appendix 5**, illustrates the breadth of organisations that undertake activities to build a united community, and also reinforces the view that there is no 'one size fits all' approach in relation to this work.

District Council Good Relations Programme

84. In August 2012 the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) prepared a draft Evaluation of the District Council Good Relations Programme, and a copy was sent to the Committee by OFMDFM in April 2014. The Evaluation Report includes some useful background information on the DCGRP which began as the District Council Community Relations Programme (DCCRP), developed by central Government in 1989. At that time the aims of the programme were to develop cross-community contact and co-operation; promote greater mutual understanding; and increase respect for cultural traditions. The Programme has extended in scope in recent years and has changed its name to reflect the focus on *good relations* across society rather than what can be interpreted as the somewhat narrower term of *community relations*.⁵⁶ The DCGRP does not exist as a single or overarching Programme - rather it is a series of individually developed and administered programmes across each of the local authorities in Northern Ireland. The main activities delivered through the DCGRP can be summarised as *"engaging with communities and encouraging communications across divided communities as well as delivering training and supporting cultural events and local community groups."*⁵⁷
85. In the years 2008/09 to 2010/11 funding for the DCGRP increased by 28% (from £2.5million to £3.2million respectively). Funding is provided on a match basis with the majority (75%) coming from central Government through OFMDFM, and the remainder (25%) coming from Local Government budgets.⁵⁸ In correspondence in April 2014 OFMDFM advised that the evaluation was completed in August 2012 and that all 29 recommendations had been accepted by the Department. The Department also indicated that the future direction of the DCGRP was being considered as part of the Review of Good Relations Funding being undertaken by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB). In further correspondence with the Committee the Department advised in March 2015 that it had
- "accepted the recommendations of the NISRA evaluation and the majority of these have been implemented, primarily as the result of the DCGRP being fully aligned with the Together: Building a United Community Strategy... The... Strategy has provided a strong overarching structure for the DCGRP which the Department regards as an important means of delivering the objectives of the strategy at a local level."*⁵⁹
86. Paragraphs 6.32 - 6.38 of "Together: Building a United Community" deal specifically with the DCGRP and include the following commitments:
- "The findings and recommendations from this [NISRA] evaluation will help inform an enhanced District Council Programme that reflects the strategic priorities of the strategy.

56 Draft Report of the Evaluation of the District Council Good Relations Programme, NISRA, April 2012 p.iii

57 Ibid p.iii-iv

58 Ibid p.56

59 Appendix 4: OFMDFM Papers and Correspondence - 19 March 2015

- We will ensure that good relations considerations are mainstreamed into the revised arrangements under the Review of Public Administration.”⁶⁰
87. T:BUC also suggests the development of Good Relations Action Plans and indicates that the revised DCGRP would be structured as follows:
- “The Ministerial Panel will issue centralised guidance on completing Action Plans and will require District Councils to complete action plans that meet the strategic priorities of this Strategy but that allow a degree of flexibility to respond to localised issues;
 - robustness of Action Plans will be assessed in terms of meeting the headline actions and commitments of this Strategy; and
 - progress against Action Plans will be monitored against the revised Good Relations indicators.”⁶¹
88. **The Committee acknowledges the valuable contribution that local government has made, and continues to make, to building a united and shared community across Northern Ireland. Members also welcome the inclusion of the District Council Good Relations Programme within the Together: Building a United Community strategy, and recognise the flexibility the programme affords to local councils to work out what building good relations means in the context of their own areas.**
89. In oral evidence to the Committee, officials from Derry City Council indicated that they were delighted to see the DCGRP highlighted and included as a vehicle for building a united community. They also highlighted the good support received from the OFMDFM officials in charge of delivering the programme.
90. However, the council representatives also wished to advise the Committee of areas for potential improvement. Members were apprised of specific issues relating to the letters of offer received by councils (75% from OFMDFM with 25% match funding from the council) for the DCGRP, and were advised that letters of offer usually arrive half way through the financial year meaning that councils operate their good relations programmes at risk, particularly through the challenging summer period. Difficulties caused by this delay include the inability to plan strategically, with some Good Relations Officers being put on notice on an annual basis whilst waiting for notification of the grant award from OFMDFM. The challenge was summed up like this:
- “If we cannot work strategically on things like interfaces, flags, parades and marching, which are the types of issues that come up generally, before we receive a letter of offer... it is very difficult for us to function effectively or as effectively as we could... In the past some local authorities were willing to work at risk to mitigate this and still get the work done. Given the funding climate we are all experiencing, that is going to be impacted on now, especially over the summer months, where a lot of our work is so necessary in dealing with key issues.”⁶²*
91. These issues were also reflected in the written submission from Derry City Council which highlighted concern that there was a lack of transparency regarding the allocation of funding to the DCGRP, and whether or not this was a competitive process.⁶³

60 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> p.107-109 [Accessed 11 June 2015]

61 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> p.108-109 [Accessed 11 June 2015]

62 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Good Relations Programmes: NILGA

63 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Derry City Council

92. During oral evidence, the Committee heard that another consequence of uncertainty over funding was high staff turnover. The Council representatives advised,
- “You then have a reasonably high turnover of staff; you have a drain on the expertise of good relations staff working for local councils. It is a vicious circle; it is not improving if people cannot stay in post, stay committed and build their skills.”*⁶⁴
93. Another challenge presented by high staff turnover is that relationships with the local community and voluntary sector, statutory agencies and relevant government departments, must be rebuilt each time, an activity which is both resource and time intensive.
94. Correspondence received by the Committee from OFMDFM in March 2015 acknowledged that more needs to be done to ensure letters of offer that issue to councils are not subject to undue delay. There was a commitment to endeavour to ensure that letters of offer in 2015/16 are issued as quickly as possible. The Committee was therefore pleased to hear from OFMDFM officials during a subsequent oral briefing on 13 May 2015 that letters of offer in relation to the DCGRP were issued to six Councils in April, with the remaining five expected to be complete by the end of May.⁶⁵
95. The Assembly Research paper on grants provided by local government for good relations highlighted that Councils choose to use their DCGRP funding in different ways. For example some councils deliver a programme of small grants to community and voluntary sector groups working in the local community, whilst others like Dungannon and South Tyrone use the funding solely to deliver programmes. The Committee heard that there can be pressure on local council small grants programme to pick up the slack when gaps in funding from other sources emerge, for example between peace programmes, or when an international funding body revises its priorities with knock on effects.
- “District councils tend to get the flak when other good relations funding cycles close and start. For example, when one round of Peace funding closes and there is a six- or nine-month gap until the next one, everybody looks at the council to fulfil that”.*⁶⁶
96. Correspondence from the Department in October 2014 indicated that officials are working with the SIB to finalise the report on the delivery of all good relations funding, including that provided through the DCGRP; and that following Ministers’ consideration of the report, further engagement with stakeholders will take place at which stage a copy of the final report will be forwarded to the Committee.⁶⁷
97. Despite the breadth of experience in promoting a united and shared community at local government level the Committee heard that opportunities to share good practice between council districts were becoming increasingly limited. A previous two-day annual conference for Good Relations practitioners across Northern Ireland has been condensed to a half-day programme. However, Members also heard that Councils are required to submit an annual report to OFMDFM as part of the monitoring of grant aide. Whilst it does not always follow that what works well in one area can be readily replicated in another, it was suggested that good practice from these reports could be circulated to help inform and improve approaches to building a united community.
98. **The Committee recommends that OFMDFM continues to support the District Council Good Relations Programme, and specifically through the ongoing implementation of the NISRA Evaluation Report recommendations; ensuring that letters of offer with regard to the DCGRP are issued at the start of a new financial year; and continuing to provide high quality support from OFMDFM officials.**

64 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Good Relations Programmes: NILGA

65 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Departmental officials - 13 May 2015

66 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence

67 Appendix 4: OFMDFM papers and correspondence - 21 October 2014

99. **The Committee also recognises the potential of the District Council Good Relations Programme to make small scale interventions in local communities, which can have a major impact. The Committee recommends that OFMDFM reviews the District Council small grants scheme to ensure consistency of provision across local government, and to ensure that these funds are maximised to deliver positive good relations outcomes.**
100. **Whilst recognising that one size does not fit all, the Committee recommends that opportunities to share best practice between local government areas should be enhanced, through opportunities for increased face to face interactions between Good Relations Officers and harnessing new technologies, for example through an online resource bank. The Committee also recommends that the annual reports prepared by each District Council as part of their monitoring and evaluation obligations with OFMDFM are circulated widely amongst those involved in the DCGRP to further the development of that programme.**

Community Planning & the involvement of communities in decision making

101. The Inquiry terms of reference called for views “examining the role of communities in policy and decision making in relation to community integration and particularly, the removal of interface barriers.” The importance of engaging with local communities was acknowledged in responses from government departments. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) noted its experience that involvement by communities themselves in policy development is critical where integration and good relations are concerned.⁶⁸ The unique nature of local community involvement in arts and sports organisations was noted by those attending the stakeholder event. Similarly the Department for Regional Development (DRD) advised that in regard to flags and emblems, effective resolution is more likely to be achieved through co-operation with local communities.⁶⁹ This was also a theme explored during the Committee’s stakeholder event in January 2015. Those attending told Members that communities have to be at the front and centre of local decision making. They suggested that answers to localised issues often sit within communities, who can often propose the most cost effective and easy way to implement a solution.
102. During their oral evidence Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams provided the Committee with an example of how local communities have been empowered to make decisions about their own areas. They spoke of a group of parents of school pupils involved in a project with Community Relations in Schools where, due to the presence of a physical interface barrier, children from one participating school had to get a bus to travel to the other participating school. However following consultation with parents a local supermarket was approached to open a gate to facilitate access on foot. This reduced the cost of the initiative and demonstrated that a simple, cost-effective action can have a big impact.⁷⁰ However, those working on the ground like Ballymoney Community Resource Centre and Participation and Practice of Rights, cautioned against attempts to engage communities in decision making which has a pre-determined point; and expressed concern that local communities can be cast in support roles to statutory agencies rather than included as key players.⁷¹
103. Community planning is described in a Department of the Environment guidance document as:
- “a process led by councils in conjunction with partners and communities to develop and implement a shared vision for their area, a long term vision which relates to all aspects of community life and which also involves working together to plan and deliver better services which make a real difference to people’s lives.”⁷²*

68 Appendix 2: Written submission - Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

69 Appendix 2: Written submission - Department for Regional Development

70 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Colin Knox & Ms Sarah McWilliams

71 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Ballymoney Community Resource Centre; Participation and Practice of Rights

72 *Local Government Reform, Guidance to Councils: Community Planning Foundation Programme, DOENI, October 2013*
http://www.doeni.gov.uk/community_planning_foundation_programme_-_oct_2013.pdf

104. The new community planning powers delegated to councils under Local Government Reform were cited in many of the written submissions as a way in which local communities could engage in policy and decision making. Unsurprisingly this view was supported in the submissions from local councils. Ballymena Borough Council suggested that *“community planning will be an excellent vehicle for each new council to use for the delivery of a comprehensive, cohesive, local solution to the issue of interfaces.”*⁷³ This was echoed by Newtownabbey Borough Council which stated that,
- “each new Council area is diverse with different good relations issues which are specific to their communities; therefore, community planning should ensure that all voices are considered when planning and agreeing local interventions and solutions.”*⁷⁴
105. The potential for community planning within the new councils to provide opportunities to be involved in policy and decision making at local level was shared by a number of groups and organisations. Whilst not a panacea those at the stakeholder event acknowledged that the process of community planning could help to build relationships and promote engagement, facilitating communities to come together to discuss areas of mutual interest. However, they also noted that communities are not homogenous and that some communities are difficult to reach; for example, those that are socially excluded, minority ethnic communities and young people. There was a perception by some that policies are already written before community input is considered and that submissions to consultations are ignored. It was also noted that policy documents can often be too detailed and complex for the public to understand, and that many citizens are not aware of the work of politicians in developing policy and legislation. Suggestions from stakeholders included using social media more to find out what people think and to get feedback, holding focus groups, encouraging youth councils, and finding more ways to engage women in decision making. In responding to the Committee’s call for written evidence Glenree Women’s Project observed that a real fear persists within and between communities which makes it difficult for women to raise their head above the parapet and speak out.⁷⁵
106. Indeed, the Committee recognises the important contribution that women have made to promoting good relations and towards building a united and shared community. The Committee was pleased to receive a number of submissions from organisations representing the women’s sector, including in-depth reports from the Women’s Resource and Development Agency (WRDA).⁷⁶ Members were also pleased to host representatives from these groups at the stakeholder event and hear their specific views on these matters. **The Committee notes the perception that the role women have played in building peace has not always been acknowledged by policy makers, and the view that this is also true of the Together: Building a United Community strategy document. Discussion on building shared and safe communities should acknowledge and promote the participation of women in politics and wider peacebuilding;** not least in recognition that women experience conflict differently and therefore have very different post-conflict needs.
107. In acknowledging that some groups are hard to reach for policy and decision makers, the Committee recognises that the opposite can also be true with elected representatives, government departments and statutory agencies being hard to reach for some groups. An informal meeting held in conjunction with the Bytes project during the course of the Inquiry allowed Members the opportunity to hear directly from ‘at risk’ young people on their views about good relations and building a united and shared community. A report of this event can be found at **Appendix 6**. Suggestions for more proactive engagement with young people included better use of social media and online platforms; offering young people the

73 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Ballymoney Borough Council

74 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Newtownabbey Borough Council

75 Appendix 3: Written Submissions - Glenree Women’s Project

76 Appendix 3: Written Submission - Women’s Resource and Development Agency

opportunity to meet with elected representatives once or twice a year; and better engagement with groups and organisations working with young people.

108. **With regard to wider policy development and decision making the Committee recognises that, for some groups, access to elected representatives, government departments and statutory agencies can be difficult. The Committee recommends therefore that OFMDFM brings forward policy development guidance for Departments which ensures that policy and decision makers develop and maintain a clear focus on identifying hard to reach groups; and that they assess and meet their capacity needs recognising that this may, at times, require external facilitation.**

109. In oral evidence to the Committee NILGA noted that one of the strengths of community planning is the ability to bring key players together to work on themes or specific areas. However, the witnesses sounded a note of caution as they felt it was unclear how government departments are tied into the process and indicated that, to work effectively, community planning has to move outside traditional departmental silos.⁷⁷

110. Ballymoney Community Resource Centre suggested that the T:BUC strategy should become part of the foundation for each new council's community planning process. Meanwhile in its written submission NI Environment Link (NIEL) emphasised the important potential of community planning in local government reform. The new two-tier planning system structures will allow communities to become more involved in the development of the vision for their council area, and the implementation of that vision.

111. The T:BUC strategy acknowledges that *"building a truly united community can only be possible when people feel safe and secure in all neighbourhoods and spaces within our community."*⁷⁸ In so doing the strategy notes the need for an interagency approach to community safety, particularly through the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs). In a written submission to the Committee the PSNI welcomed that the role of PCSPs and District PCSPs in delivering safer, shared and confident communities at local level had been highlighted in T:BUC. The PSNI went on to suggest that T:BUC will need to inform the work of the new District Councils under community planning provisions to address underlying community issues on a partnership bases to deliver locally the strategic outcomes.⁷⁹

112. In written evidence the NI Strategic Migration Partnership noted that community planning provides *"a key opportunity through which the creation of more diverse and inclusive neighbourhoods might take place with the support of those individuals living and working locally."*⁸⁰

113. The Committee chose to explore these ideas through oral evidence with representatives from NILGA. Members heard that:

*"the ability of local government to work locally is incredibly important... Although we need the strategy to be set at a central level, it also needs to be fed by what happens at ground level. So, that reciprocal relationship is incredibly important and can be worked out through the community planning process..."*⁸¹

114. **The Committee acknowledges that local communities have an important part to play in decision making relating to their own areas and notes that community planning has the potential to allow communities to influence decision making in their areas. The Committee**

77 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Planning: Northern Ireland Local Government Association, Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership

78 <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/together-building-a-united-community-strategy.pdf> p.77 [Accessed 11 June 2015]

79 Appendix 3: Written submissions - PSNI

80 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership

81 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Planning: Northern Ireland Local Government Association, Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership

recognises that responsibility for community planning rests with local councils and the Department of the Environment and recommends that the First Minister and deputy First Minister work with the Minister of the Environment to ensure that community planning as a departmental priority is focused on the aims and objectives of T:BUC, which could include the inclusion of a specific commitment in the next Programme for Government. The Committee also strongly encourages the Committee for the Environment to monitor the implementation and development of community planning as a vehicle for communities to be involved in decision making, with good relations at its core.

Approaches to addressing sectarianism and division

115. As part of its terms of reference the Committee asked for views on how sectarianism and division can be addressed. In responding, stakeholders provided Members with a wealth of information about how sectarianism and division is being addressed through a wide variety of programmes and initiatives across cities, towns and villages throughout Northern Ireland. The practitioners who presented Members with further evidence during formal Committee meetings, along with those attending stakeholder events, represent only a fraction of the personnel involved in building relationships across communities up and down the country. The detailed written submissions available at **Appendix 3** provide more information in this regard.
116. The variety of information received confirmed to Members that there is no uniform approach to addressing sectarianism and division and that factors relating to location, demography, capacity and confidence must all be taken into account in seeking to deal with these issues. Whilst it is not possible to reflect each of the programmes that Members considered during the course of the Inquiry the next section discusses some of the broad themes emerging from their deliberations on the evidence.

Exploring shared issues: Contested Spaces/Interfaces Programme

117. During one evidence session Members heard from Professor Knox and Ms McWilliams who have undertaken an evaluation of the Contested Spaces/Interfaces Programme, which began in 2011 and is jointly funded by OFMDFM and Atlantic Philanthropies.⁸² The witnesses advised Members that the key aim of the programme was:

“to promote and improve relations between and across disadvantaged contested space/interface communities. The programme provides these communities with opportunities to shape and influence how children and youth services are provided in a way that encourages reconciliation, increases participation of communities in policy making, and contributes to better outcomes for children, young people and families.”

118. The evidence presented by Prof Knox and Ms McWilliams suggested to Members that there is benefit in bringing communities together to discuss common issues like parenting or education and skills outcomes, rather than focusing primarily on issues of sectarianism or difference. Members heard that, in spite of external pressures including times of civil unrest, those participating in these initiatives were still keen to continue because they realised the overall benefit of the programme to their families and community. Whilst the focus of programmes may not have been on issues relating to community relations, over time, as trust and relationships improved, these difficult areas became part of conversation. The witnesses advised that,

“We have found that uniting people and communities on common shared issues rather than through a direct, head-on good-relations approach, has been very effective in building relationships between communities. By shared issues, we mean things such as education, parenting, childcare, bullying, drugs and alcohol”.

82 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams

119. The range of programmes and activities delivered through Contested Spaces/Interfaces is highlighted in the table below.⁸³

Table 6: Programmes funded through Contested Spaces/Interfaces

Project	Area	Aim
Achieving Personal Potential	Shankill/Carrickhill, Ballysillan/Ligoniel, Skegoniell/Glandore, Whitewell/Whitecity	To provide opportunities for young people to build relationships through: team building, drama, music, personal development, arts and crafts, and educational homework and revision workshops
Active Respectful Communities	Six schools in Ardoyne and Shankill	Early years and parenting, community relations education linked into the curriculum, focused residential programmes for families
Aspire	Inner North Belfast	Shared service programme focused on increased parental engagement & skills to support children's learning; improving educational outcomes for children engaged in the programme; raises expectations of children and parents
Faces and Spaces	Falls Road/Shankill Road; Castlederry/Newtownstewart; Waterside/Cityside; Ballymena; Short Strand/East Belfast	Early Years approach to good relations operating through community-led partnerships, based around the Media Initiative for Children, Respecting Difference Programme
Foyle Contested Space	Derry/Londonderry - three post primary & five primary schools	Shared education including shared delivery of curriculum activities, provision of shared teacher training, and issues of common concern in sexual health, internet/mobile phone safety and alcohol awareness
Communities Unite in Reconciling and Building Societies	Craigavon	Collaborative partner engagement, and a range of cross-community and cross-cultural activities based around sport, art and media
South Armagh Childcare Consortium	South Armagh	Focus on young families and children. Cross community after schools project, Media Initiative for Children, Respecting Difference Programme, Incredible Years parenting programme and summer scheme
Spaces to Be: Playboard NI	Four primary schools in East Belfast	Focused diversity in play project
Waterside Partnership - Parents and Communities Together (PACT)	Derry/Londonderry	PACT provides support to very young children and their parents. Its main elements are an eight week group programme and individual support to parents/families at home.

120. In presenting the emerging findings from his Northern Ireland Project research to the Committee, Professor Shirlow indicated that the family plays an important role in developing emotional security and building cohesiveness. He posed the question "*should we not be doing more at the site of the family... relationship with the family seems to be very important in how people behave and their attitudes and how they cope in their societies?*"⁸⁴

83 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams

84 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Peter Shirlow & Professor Brandon Hamber

121. **The Committee recognises the merit in bringing groups together around issues of common concern like parenting, supporting children through education, or a shared anxiety around drug and alcohol misuse; and commends the Contested Spaces/Interfaces Programme as an innovative approach to building good relations between communities. The Committee recommends that the Department gives full consideration to the evaluation of the Contested Spaces/Interfaces Programme and applies the learning to the development of future programmes and initiatives, including prioritising areas for funding.**

Single Identity Approach

122. During oral evidence Members explored the place of single identity approaches⁸⁵ within a broader good relations framework and were interested to observe that there was no consensus amongst witnesses in this regard. This was clearly evident during the briefing from representatives of the RCN in Ballymoney in March 2015. When asked whether single identity work needs to be emphasised to build up resilience and capacity before moving to cross-community work, witnesses indicated that in a private discussion prior to giving evidence there had been no agreement amongst themselves on the issue. There was general recognition that single identity work is often a necessary pre-cursor to a broader cross community agenda as reflected by the Peace Walls Programme, who in written evidence advised that the starting point of any good relations work should always be single identity training and instilling respect for your own community.⁸⁶ However one witness found that *“rather than building confidence to come out and espouse other groups, it [single identity work] is entrenching ideas and ideals.”*⁸⁷ This echoed the view of Professor Shirlow who noted that the findings from the Northern Ireland Project were indicating that *“identity buffers you and makes you feel part of the community, but it also makes you outplay your actions against the other community.”*⁸⁸
123. In discussing the findings from the Contested Spaces/Interfaces Programme Professor Knox advised the Committee that it was his view that *“we have reached the political circumstances where single identity work should be very much a minor lead in to stuff that is cross community.”*⁸⁹ The Glenree Women’s Group, in written evidence, felt that high levels of segregation leave little room for more mixed relationships among children and grandchildren, thereby perpetuating segregation for another generation.
124. **The Committee acknowledges that there are different views about the role of single identity work in building a united and shared community. The Committee recognises the importance of respecting the pace at which people are willing to travel in relation to building a united community, and that this will differ depending on local circumstances. The Committee therefore recommends that single identity groups are provided with the tools to build confidence and capacity; and, at the same time, are helped to understand the value of moving beyond a single identity approach, and provided with opportunities for this to happen.**

Shared Space

125. During the stakeholder event with young people from the Bytes project Members heard a number of comments about the perceived lack of shared space in Belfast, and the consequent lack of opportunities to meet people from other communities.⁹⁰ This was a

85 “Single identity work refers to those projects, programmes and initiatives that engage their participant members solely from one side of the divide in Northern Ireland. Though not always the case, single identity work often involves exploring and affirming issues related to cultural identity”. (Single Identity Work: An approach to conflict resolution in Northern Ireland, Church, C., Visser, A. and Johnson, L. (2002, August), INCORE Working Paper.)

86 Appendix 3: Written Submissions - Peace Walls Programme

87 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Rural Community Network

88 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Peter Shirlow & Professor Brandon Hamber

89 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Colin Knox & Ms Sarah McWilliams

90 Appendix 6: Other Papers and Correspondence - Bytes Project event

theme that the Committee had an opportunity to explore further with representatives from the Landscape Institute NI (LINI) and NIEL, who through oral and written evidence informed Members on matters relating to the development and maintenance of shared space.⁹¹ They advised that “*research demonstrates that the environment is a key factor in building community cohesion*”; and that “*green shared space is recognised as a key factor in developing a sense of community - it provides us with venues for neighbourliness and social cohesion.*”

126. NIEL signposted the Committee to the NI Environment Agency Challenge Fund as an important vehicle for building a sense of community and civic pride. They highlighted the ‘Suffolk Interface Pocket Plots’ initiative - a proposal to develop cross-community plots on the interface zone between the Suffolk estate and the Suffolk Crescent/Ladybrook area - as a good example of this. Having had their interest piqued by this project Members invited representatives from Suffolk Community Forum to brief the Committee during their visit to West Belfast.⁹² They were advised that this project has been a long time in coming to fruition and that since 2009 NIHE has been providing support to help Suffolk Community Forum transform the land for shared use. The pocket plots initiative is part of a wider plan for development, and Members were informed that, after almost a year of negotiations with all stakeholders, an agreement has been reached for pedestrian access for plot holders from both sides of the interface.
127. In oral evidence to the Committee Mr Pete Mullin from LINI told Members that a key message from a conference held earlier in the year was that “*building relationships matter in urban planning.*” He was keen to point out that this wasn’t simply a focus on the relationship between local communities, but also the relationship around funding, procurement and departmental silos.
128. Both Mr Mullin and Dr McCabe directed Members to a DOE publication “Living Places - an Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland.”⁹³ It aims to
- “assist in the planning process by clearly establishing key principles behind good place-making in order to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing (stewardship) and making (design) urban places, with a view to raising standards across Northern Ireland.”*⁹⁴
129. The Committee subsequently wrote to the DOE to seek information on how ‘Living Places’ connects with Together: Building a United Community. In responding DOE advised that it considers ‘Living Places’ to connect with the intentions of T:BUC in a number of ways including its focus on “*creating places that are high quality, distinctive, safe, welcoming and healthy, where communities flourish and enjoy a shared sense of belonging.*”⁹⁵ DOE also recognises the important role that the planning system plays in addressing the issues highlighted by T:BUC through its influence on the type, location, siting and design of development. The Department goes on to indicate that
- “further clarification on how the planning system can contribute to the creation of an environment that is accessible to all and enhances opportunities for shared communities (including assisting with the removal of barriers to shared space) will be set out within the new Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)”.*
130. In recognising programmes and policy that promote constructive shared space the Committee also notes the view expressed during the stakeholder event that shared space should not be forced on communities and those that feel safe living in their own areas should be left to do so.

91 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence & Appendix 3: Written submission - Northern Ireland Environment Link & Landscape Institute

92 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - InterAction Belfast, Suffolk Community Forum, Forthspring InterCommunity Group

93 http://www.planningni.gov.uk/downloads/livingplaces_-_web.pdf

94 Appendix 6: Other Papers and Correspondence - Department of the Environment

95 Ibid

131. **The Committee acknowledges the creative and innovative ways in which some organisations and community groups are creating shared space. The Committee believes that shared space has meaning where it offers something purposeful and is not created artificially around a contrived concept. The Committee recognises the role which the Department of the Environment can play in shaping the built environment, most recently through the Living Spaces Design Guide, and welcomes the proposal that further clarification will be brought forward within the new Strategic Planning Policy Statement. The Committee therefore recommends that the development of meaningful shared space is incorporated as an essential component in delivering a united and shared community.**

Relationship building and trust

132. Throughout the course of the Inquiry the Committee heard that developing relationships and trust was a key requisite for building a united community. And whilst this may be a less tangible aspect of good relations work, its importance was emphasised to Members by witnesses through their written and oral evidence, and the stakeholder events.
133. The calls from stakeholders and practitioners for an opportunity to engage with policy development and decision making reflect a need for positive, strong relationships between sectors, as well as between and within communities. This sentiment was reflected during the oral briefings when NILGA told Members that *“building relationships and sustaining the structures and the relationships is important in the long term.”*⁹⁶ Sylvia Gordon from Groundwork NI reminded the Committee that *“You do not build relationships with organisations - you build relationships with people and individuals within organisations.”* She went on to say *“over the years there has been a huge investment in relationships in North Belfast...we have been working to build those relationships, build trust and build respect.”*⁹⁷ Her views were echoed by Maureen Hetherington from the Junction in Derry/Londonderry who said *“For organisations that have been built up on trust and mutual respect over a long time, that is a really important part of peace building.”*⁹⁸
134. In its consideration of issues around funding, discussed earlier in this report, the Committee became aware of the pressures faced by organisations through high turnover of staff and the constant chase for financial resources. Members also heard anecdotally of increased levels of burnout in the sector with a heavy reliance on individuals with enthusiasm and passion for the task in hand. Given the time required to build relationships and the importance of trust in developing good relations work the Committee notes the challenges that these issues bring to furthering this agenda. During evidence with representatives from RCN Members were advised that those involved in good relations activity are ‘ageing and tiring out’, and that there is not a cohort of younger people coming up behind to carry on the work.⁹⁹ Recognising the contribution of individuals within the sector Peter Osborne from CRC said, *“I am genuinely amazed by the commitment of people who do this work. By and large, the people who do it could be better paid and have different job satisfaction if they went off and did something else”*.¹⁰⁰
135. Indeed a view emerged from several organisations, also echoed at the stakeholder event, that terminology around building a united and shared community should evolve from good relations to ‘good relationships.’ Evangelical Alliance noted that research points to the vital contribution good community relationships make to a balanced and healthy life, and to physical and mental health; and suggested that all policies should be ‘relationship-proofed’ for their potential impact on community and family relationships.¹⁰¹ Forthspring Inter Community Group supported the need for relationship building as a necessary pre-condition

96 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Good Relations Programme: Northern Ireland Local Government Association

97 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project, Groundwork NI

98 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Peace & Reconciliation Group, The Junction, Holywell Trust

99 Appendix 6: Other Papers and Correspondence - Record of Informal RCN evidence

100 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project, Groundwork NI

101 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland

for tackling issues at interfaces.¹⁰² The RCN suggested that relationship building and trust at a local level are crucial, a view also supported by the Youth Council NI which stated that *“relationship building across divided communities remains central to the process of maintaining lasting reconciliation.”*¹⁰³

136. During the stakeholder event Members were reminded that involving communities in decision-making is much a more time and resource intensive process; and whilst not the final solution to building a united and shared community, aids the building of relationships and promotes engagement. The Committee notes the approach of the Department of Justice in this regard as it makes progress on the headline action to reduce the number of physical interface barriers by 2023, which officials relayed to Members during the stakeholder event. Officials also advised that there is soon to be an evaluation of the three year period of work to date, to help shape and inform the future direction of that programme.
137. **The Committee notes that time is needed to build relationships, respect and trust between all those involved in building a united community, and that this process is often more untidy than neatly defined funding cycles. The Committee also expresses its concern regarding the high level of burnout affecting those working within the sector, including a heavy reliance on specific individuals, albeit individuals with enthusiasm and passion for the task in hand. The Committee therefore recommends that Departments, arm’s-length bodies, and statutory agencies have an appropriate support mechanism in place for the organisations that they are funding; and that they strongly encourage their funded organisations to consider suitable succession planning.**
138. **Furthermore the Committee recommends that the Department gives consideration to adopting the term ‘good relationships’ as a broader framework in which to consider delivering policies and programmes to promote a united and shared society.**

Urban interfaces

139. In its terms of reference the Committee sought views on what issues need to be addressed in order for interface barriers to be removed, and the role of communities in policy and decision making in relation to the removal of interface barriers. Stakeholders addressed this issue through their written evidence and this was explored in oral evidence sessions, and also during the stakeholder events. The Committee also held an external meeting at the premises of InterAction Belfast in West Belfast to specifically explore these issues further. Broader consideration of matters relating to the involvement of communities in decision making is discussed elsewhere in this report.¹⁰⁴ In its written response the Presbyterian Church in Ireland indicated that the aspiration to remove the physical barriers in interface areas over a ten year period is to be commended.¹⁰⁵
140. In written evidence the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) advised that there are 88 peace walls in Belfast, mostly within or adjacent to Housing Executive estates, with 20 of these in NIHE ownership. In evidence to the Committee representing NILGA, Alderman Tom Ekin told Members in oral evidence that *“When I asked the junior Minister, “Who do I speak to about T:BUC in Belfast?”, I was given the names of three people to speak to, but I wanted one name; the name of the most responsible person. Belfast has found that it has been general. There are no specific targets or goals. There is nobody in charge; it is left to the council to find its own way.”*¹⁰⁶

102 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Forthspring Inter Community Group

103 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Youth Council NI

104 See “Community Planning and teh Involvement of communities in decision making

105 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Presbyterian Church in Ireland

106 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Good Relations Programme - Northern Ireland Local Government Association

141. This highlights both the wide geographical spread of urban interfaces and that there is no one central point of contact in respect of them all, which in turn reflects the complexity of addressing issues at urban interfaces.
142. In its written evidence to the Committee the Institute for Research in Social Sciences - Ulster University provided information on its 2012 research *“Attitudes to Peace Walls”*¹⁰⁷ conducted by Dr Byrne, Dr Gormley-Heenan and Professor Robinson, and funded by OFMDFM. The research, which was finalised prior to the development of the T:BUC strategy, found that the single-minded focus on physical barriers creates a significant policy risk including insufficient emphasis on the requirement to generate significant social and economic change to achieve the wider target; a lack of a mechanism to allow for a staged approach which takes account of very different local circumstances; and a lack of a mechanism for a graduated response to changing local circumstances.¹⁰⁸
143. These perceived risks were reflected in the evidence received by the Committee. In written evidence CRC noted that segregation at interfaces has other consequences - such as sustained and ingrained patterns of poverty.¹⁰⁹ Groups working in Derry/Londonderry suggested that focusing on the physical element of interfaces without addressing the psychological challenges would be potentially damaging.¹¹⁰ Other organisations not traditionally associated with community relations also sounded a note of caution with the NI Association for Mental Health warning that *“creating a society characterised by good relations and community integration where interface barriers are removed is impossible without taking the psychological impact of Northern Ireland’s history into account”*.¹¹¹
144. These views were echoed in oral evidence to the Committee. Sylvia Gordon advised that *“tackling interfaces is not just about tackling the physical interface but about tackling the social issues that are on either side of those issues”*¹¹²; whilst Professor Knox told Members that *“these peace walls will not be tackled just by pulling down the wall – these communities are the most deprived and they feel it.”*¹¹³
145. The *Attitudes to Peacewalls* research also indicated that communities living near the walls had not yet been reassured that they would not be negatively affected by the removal of the walls; and that the level of fears between communities has not reduced sufficiently since the beginning of the peace process or that trauma in the past creates significant grounds for suspicion of anything which promotes integration.¹¹⁴
146. Again, these findings were reflected in the views considered by the Committee. For example the NI Youth Forum observed that *“the fear you might have of the ‘other side’ is nearly directly proportionate to the distance you live from an interface.”*¹¹⁵ Indeed this was a concern that had been raised by Members during a briefing with junior Ministers following the announcement of the T:BUC strategy in May 2013.¹¹⁶ The Committee also notes views from stakeholders that malevolent forces continue to have influence in some communities.
147. The young people from the Bytes project had some innovative ideas on how to approach the process of removing physical interface barriers on an incremental basis. One suggestion

107 <http://www.ark.ac.uk/peacewalls2012/peacewalls2012.pdf> [Accessed 18 June 2015]

108 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Institute for Research in Social Sciences, Ulster University

109 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Community Relations Council

110 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Peace & Reconciliation Group, The Junction, Holywell Trust

111 Appendix 3: Written submissions - NI Association for Mental Health

112 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project, Groundwork NI

113 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams

114 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Institute for Research in Social Sciences, Ulster University

115 Appendix 3: Written submissions - NI Youth Forum

116 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/official-report/committee-minutes-of-evidence/session-2012-2013/may-2013/together—building-a-united-community-ministerial-briefing/> [Accessed 18 June 2015]

was a ‘clear wall’ with those living on either side of the wall having an opportunity to see people going about their daily lives and recognise that many of the same social and economic challenges are the same. Another proposal was to open a gate in a physical interface barrier for a couple of days with an event organised to encourage people to come and walk through. The young people recognised the risks involved in these approaches but suggested that, while some people may feel insecure once the walls are gone, maybe now was the time to take the risk. However this was not a universal view and others felt that by taking down the walls between the Falls and the Shankill there would be ‘mayhem’.

148. In tackling issues at interfaces witnesses from Derry/Londonderry advised of a strong relationship between statutory agencies and key community workers through the Interface Monitoring Forum which advocates an approach of regularly sitting around a table to talk about the issues.¹¹⁷ The witnesses believed that this forum has been a positive vehicle through which to address issues as they arise.
149. Another view expressed by an organisation working at an interface in Belfast was that, once a situation has been diffused, support from statutory and other agencies dissipates:
- “When anything happens at an interface area... the policy and community workers are called out. However, when there is nothing happening we are building the peace and making sure that things are happening properly, suddenly everybody disappears, there is no money available, and we are scrabbling around for pennies”.*¹¹⁸
150. **The Committee recognises that the issues that need to be addressed in order for interface barriers to be removed are complex, and like other areas of good relations work, there is no uniform approach. The Committee notes the concerns of those living immediately beside interface areas who feel that the physical barriers provide a certain amount of security and safety; recognises that malevolent forces continue to have influence in some communities, which in turn contributes to the desire to maintain physical manifestations of division in urban areas; and acknowledges the challenge in communicating a vision for a united and shared society to communities at interfaces. The Committee commends the consultation and preparatory work that is ongoing with regard to the commitment within Together: Building a United Community to reduce the number of interface barriers, in conjunction with local communities. The Committee respects the views of those who do not yet feel secure enough to progress on the removal of interface barriers, and supports the view that no peace wall should be removed without the consent and support of the communities that are living immediately beside it.**
151. **The Committee recommends that work to liaise with those living at interfaces to understand why they do not feel safe; and to encourage them to develop a vision for building a united and shared community continues. The Committee also encourages the Committee for Justice to undertake scrutiny of the work of the Department of Justice in this regard to ensure that the Assembly is fully appraised, and can input into this work as appropriate.**
152. **The Committee further notes concerns from stakeholders that too much emphasis is being placed on the removal of physical interface barriers, with little thought being given to the social and economic needs of those living closest to the peace walls. In taking this area of work forward the Committee recommends a holistic approach to the reduction of interface barriers, which might include localised regeneration initiatives, support for education and access to employment for everyone, and in particular young people.**

Contested space in rural communities

153. The Committee also sought views on how sectarianism and division can be addressed with a particular focus on the challenges at interface areas, both urban and rural. Through written

117 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Peace & Reconciliation Group, The Junction & Holywell Trust

118 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - InterAction Belfast, Suffolk Community Group, Forthspring InterCommunity Group

evidence the Committee heard that there can be a lack of recognition that sectarianism exists in rural communities both from policy and decision makers, and amongst those who live in rural areas. In oral evidence Professor Hamber noted that:

*“Broadly speaking there is significantly less focus on rural communities than there is on urban communities. You might say that more people live in urban areas, but in academia and a whole range of other fields there seems to be a lot less focus on rural areas.”*¹¹⁹

154. During the stakeholder event Members heard that many within rural areas themselves do not recognise that there is a sectarian divide. This is indicative of the subtlety in addressing sectarianism in rural areas which may not have the same manifestations as physical barriers in urban areas, but where issues of attachment to area, locality and in some cases the very land itself can be emotive.¹²⁰
155. In written evidence the RCN advised that, whilst physical barriers do not exist as they do in some urban areas, segregation is still widespread but can be harder for those living outside the area to perceive. Indicators of where segregation and sectarianism may be an issue in rural areas include communities where flags, emblems and memorials are perceived as ‘marking territory’; land and property are only sold to members of the same community; contentious marches take place; or where attacks are carried out on symbolic buildings (like Orange Halls or GAA premises).
156. In 2009 CRC and RCN commissioned research to explore the issue of contested space outside Belfast.¹²¹ The *Beyond Belfast* report found that barriers do exist in many rural communities, and while they may not be physical or visible, they have real effects in constraining and shaping the behaviour and attitudes of both individuals and communities.
157. The Committee explored issues relating to rural communities further through its external meeting at Ballymoney Community Resource Centre where it took evidence from a range of organisations working to build a united and shared community in that area.¹²² The witnesses confirmed that just because a physical barrier does not exist, it did not follow that there were no issues regarding contested space in rural areas. Members heard one witness reflect that *“the work that we do, particularly on building community relations and addressing community tension, happens in all those areas. It is not just an urban issue”*; while another said *“I have worked with different groups of young people and have had similar conversations about their feelings that a shop, a street or a field in their area was a no-go area.”*
158. There was a view that the seven headline actions of T:BUC had not been ‘rural-proofed’ along with a strong perception from the witnesses that rural communities receive disproportionately less in funding than interface communities in urban areas. Commenting on work that she had been involved with involving rural women in Co. Armagh, Charmain Jones from RCN observed that *“if I were to place that group in a very urban setting in Belfast, I would probably have thousands of pounds thrown at me”*.¹²³
159. Ms Jones also highlighted some of the challenges in building a united community in dispersed rural areas, including a lack of incentive for communities to come together, alongside an awareness that good relations issues in rural areas are constantly shifting.
160. The breadth and depth of discussion between Members and representatives of the RCN reflects the reality that the experience of those working to promote good relations in rural

119 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Peter Shirlow & Professor Brandon Hamber

120 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Rural Community Network

121 <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/master-beyond-report-web.pdf>
[Accessed 18 June 2015]

122 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Rural Community Network

123 Ibid

communities has much to contribute to the wider debate on building a united and shared society.

161. **Members commend the work of those organisations, large and small, dedicated to building a united and shared society within rural communities. The Committee notes the view that there is a lack of recognition amongst policy and decision makers that sectarianism exists in rural communities; and the view that initiatives designed to deal with issues of contested space in rural areas receive disproportionately less funding that communities at interfaces in urban areas. The Committee also acknowledges that there is a subtlety in addressing sectarianism in rural areas which may not have the same manifestations as seen in urban areas; and the perception that, historically, there has been a lack of creative thought and commitment as to how programmes designed to build a united community can be better catered for in a rural context.**
162. **In light of this, the Committee recommends that the seven headline actions of T:BUC are rural-proofed by OFMDFM as soon as possible, and that any remedial action identified is carried out quickly. Further the Committee recommends that Executive Departments, statutory agencies and arm’s-length bodies tasked with the development of programmes aimed at building a united community proactively mitigate against a perceived urban bias.**

Mixed Communities

163. In response to a call for evidence on the challenges faced by those at interfaces in both urban and rural areas, the Committee received submissions and heard oral evidence from people living, and working, in communities that are mixed. Whilst not specifically part of the terms of reference the Committee notes the headline action within T:BUC for the development of shared neighbourhoods and support for shared communities throughout the strategy.
164. During the stakeholder event Members heard a perception from those working in mixed communities that shared neighbourhoods are not considered as ‘valuable’ as divided communities. Some of those attending also expressed disappointment at the focus on new shared spaces when they felt that many existing shared spaces need support to be sustained.
165. In written evidence to the Committee Ballynafeigh Community Development Association (BCDA) advised Members that shared neighbourhoods do not happen by accident and cautioned that: *“it is not enough to build housing estates and designate them as ‘shared’ or to create a ‘charter’ for a shared neighbourhood and ask residents to ‘sign up to’ or ‘buy into’ it.”*¹²⁴ BCDA also advised that, just because neighbourhoods are shared, it does not follow that dealing with difficult issues is any less challenging. A resident and trader from Rathfriland advised Members in a written submission that mixed communities *“have to be proactive and build a ‘normal’ society street by street.”*¹²⁵
166. In its written submission Armoyn Community Association (ACA) indicated that,
- “single identity areas and facilities are backed on either side of the divide. However a ...mixed identity group with a shared facility...operating at an interface does not have the luxury for volunteer support similar to the social capital existing in a single identity community”.*¹²⁶
167. ACA went on to observe that *“to run with a cross community agenda is still out of kilter with the political context currently operational”.*

124 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

125 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Rathfriland resident

126 Appendix3: Written submissions - Armoyn Community Association

168. During oral evidence with the RCN Members heard a perception that mixed communities ‘pay the price’ for being peaceful.¹²⁷ Through evidence the Committee also noted the view that that it can be difficult for voices from mixed communities to input into policy and decision making on matters relating to building a united community with BCDA noting that “*there is much attention paid to establishing new shared neighbourhoods and urban villages but no attention paid to the learning from existing practice and the networks that have been built over time*”.
169. The Committee acknowledges the efforts of local community and voluntary groups in maintaining mixed communities and commends those who have worked hard to sustain those communities, often in challenging circumstances. Members note the perception that these communities have ‘paid a price’ for being peaceful, and that it can be difficult for voices from mixed communities to be heard in discussions about building a united and shared community. **The Committee recommends that a greater emphasis is placed on the lessons learned by those who have something to contribute to the wider discussions about developing shared neighbourhoods; and in particular that representatives from these mixed communities should participate in the relevant thematic groups to be established under the auspices of the Ministerial Panel. Further the Committee recommends that, in establishing a T:BUC forum, consideration is given to specifically inviting representatives from mixed communities to participate.**

General comments on approaches to addressing sectarianism and division

170. **The Committee acknowledges the breadth and depth of approaches to addressing sectarianism and division and the rich contribution that this work makes to building a united community. The Committee recognises that there is no uniform approach to addressing sectarianism and division; and recommends that the Department continues to deploy flexibility when developing policy and devising programmes relating to these matters.**
171. **In considering approaches to addressing sectarianism and division the Committee notes the need for careful monitoring of the balance between the Ministerial Panel co-ordinating the processes around pursuing a united and shared community, and the community and voluntary sector which is often charged with the delivery of the outcomes of this agenda. The Committee strongly urges the Department to develop, and continue to build on, good relationships with the community and voluntary sector in this regard.**

Mental Health/Intergenerational Trauma

172. Issues relating to mental health and intergenerational trauma were raised consistently through written and oral evidence and the stakeholder event. Whilst the Committee took a decision early on in its Inquiry that it would not take specific oral or stakeholder evidence in relation to mental health/intergenerational trauma, it would be a mistake to discern from this that Members have low regard for these matters. On the contrary the Committee felt that it would be impossible to deal with this subject fairly in an already wide-ranging Inquiry.
173. That notwithstanding, the Committee is keen to reflect the written evidence it did receive in this regard. The Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH) advised the Committee that “*creating a society characterised by good relations and community integration where interface barriers are removed is impossible without taking the psychological impact of this history into account.*”¹²⁸ This was echoed by the WRDA which highlighted the issue of “*trans-generational trauma*” whereby the events experienced by an older generation are transmitted to, and affect, subsequent generations even though the latter have no direct experience of the events that are relayed. WRDA also highlighted a growing legacy issue in communities manifest through increasing levels of mental ill-health, intergenerational trauma,

127 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Rural Community Network

128 Appendix 3: Written submissions - NI Association for Mental Health

increasing suicide levels (affecting all ages), drug and alcohol abuse, depression and anxiety. This was a view also shared by young people who responded to the Committee's call for evidence. The Youth Councils of Newry, Mourne and Armagh highlighted mental disability and illness as the "great unspoken prejudice"¹²⁹ whilst the young people participating in the Bytes event noted the challenges faced by friends and peers who find themselves homeless and without the necessary support to find housing and employment.

174. In evidence to the Committee Professor Shirlow from Queen's University, Belfast, apprised Members of his research conducted in partnership with the University of Notre Dame, the Catholic University of America in Washington DC and Ulster University, which considered a longitudinal study of relationships between political violence, sectarianism and the well-being of children living in segregated communities in Belfast. He advised that:

*"if we go down that route of looking at family, we can show that, in families where there are mental health problems amongst the parents, some of it being trauma-related from the past that is being reproduced."*¹³⁰

175. He went on to suggest:

"I still think that in politicising the conflict in our society, the one thing we missed out on was care for the people who were harmed... We should have been building a society around coping and caring. Much of this is reflected by the fact that many of these families, who are producing kids who behave in this way, are very traumatised by the past. We should have based our whole process on trauma recovery and harm intervention."

176. During the same evidence session Professor Hamber noted that, whilst Northern Ireland is considered to be a relatively low-crime society, the statistics for suicide and mental health are higher than those for the rest of the UK. Professor Hamber subsequently provided the Committee with three research papers relating to this area:

- Tomlinson, M (2007) "The Trouble with Suicide - Mental Health, Suicide and the Northern Ireland Conflict: A Review of the Evidence"
- O'Neill, S, Ferry F, Murphy S, Corry C, Bolton, D et al (2014) "Patterns of Suicidal Ideation and Behaviour in Northern Ireland and Associations with Conflict Related Trauma"
- Hamber, B Gallagher E (2014) "Ships passing in the night: psychosocial programming and macro peacebuilding strategies with young men in Northern Ireland".

177. The Carnegie UK Trust submitted its "Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland Report"¹³¹ to the Committee as written evidence to the Inquiry. The report explores the importance of wellbeing and the positive impact it can have on policy development, and highlights three specific areas of negative wellbeing in communities across Northern Ireland. These include:

- Social isolation and loneliness - a general breakdown of communication across society including lack of family and peer support and physical isolation;
- Mental ill-health - many barriers to progress are rooted in experiences of people during the Troubles;
- Fear - personal safety, future, quality of life.

178. Carnegie UK Trust suggests that a focus on "wellbeing" would provide a more holistic and inclusive agenda and approach to policymaking, with the potential to help the Executive get beyond the concept of a divided community, to one that embraces diversity and includes a politics that re-engages groups which are currently alienated.

129 Appendix 3: Written submissions - Women's Resource and Development Agency

130 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Peter Shirlow & Professor Brandon Hamber

131 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Carnegie UK Trust

179. The Committee notes that the Stormont House Agreement¹³² includes a commitment that the Commission for Victims and Survivors' recommendation for a comprehensive Mental Trauma Service be implemented. It is anticipated that this service would operate within the NHS but work closely with the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS), and other organisations and groups who work directly with victims and survivors.
180. **The Committee acknowledges that many individuals across society in Northern Ireland cope with conflict-related mental health and trauma related issues; and that efforts to build a united and shared society require a holistic approach. The Committee recommends that the Executive undertakes closer cross-departmental consideration of issues relating to mental health and intergenerational trauma in a way that links to the trauma initiative of the Stormont House Agreement.**

Good Relations Indicators

181. The final aspect of the Committee's terms of reference was a request for evidence on the perceived effectiveness of the draft Good Relations Indicators in monitoring and measuring the progress of government interventions. The draft indicators were out for consultation from January to March 2014 and views expressed to the Committee during the Inquiry were on the basis of these draft indicators.
182. In oral evidence CRC advised that:
- "I think that everybody accepts that the indicators that are there at the moment are probably making the best of what is available and that they fall short of making a very clear and causal relationship between the information that is gathered and the impact of the implementation of the policy".*¹³³
183. Professor Shirlow noted that without proper working definitions of what is trying to be changed, measurement of that change would be difficult¹³⁴, while some at the stakeholder event cautioned that the sort of change that T:BUC wants to achieve can be hard to measure.
184. Representatives from Derry City Council suggested that there could be greater synergy between the District Council Good Relations Programme and the Good Relations Indicators and noted that the indicators as drafted *"are very high level for us to be able to measure at a local level without employing researchers... it would be very difficult for councils to measure those indicators, because it would require university level analysis"*.¹³⁵
185. Those attending the stakeholder event suggested that T:BUC would benefit from an interim evaluation to highlight areas where a change in approach or direction might be required, and to identify good news stories.
186. The final agreed Good Relations Indicators were issued by the Department to the Committee in June 2015¹³⁶ and the Committee intends to discuss these further with officials early in the 2015/2016 Assembly session.

132 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390672/Stormont_House_Agreement.pdf [Accessed 12 June 2015]

133 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Community Relations Council, Belfast Interface Project, Groundwork NI

134 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Professor Peter Shirlow & Professor Brandon Hamber

135 Appendix 2: Minutes of Evidence - Good Relations Programme: NI Local Government Association

136 Appendix 4: OFMDFM Papers and Correspondence - 11 June 2015

187. **The Committee recommends that OFMDFM conducts an interim evaluation of Together: Building a United Community to assess the progress of the seven headline actions to identify good news stories, and to ensure that any alterations required are identified early with time to make any adjustments that may be necessary.**



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 1

Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee Relating to the Report

Wednesday 2 July 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Leslie Cree
Miss Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Mike Nesbitt

In Attendance: Ms Karen Jardine (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Keith McBride (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Joe Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Sabra Wray (Clerical Officer)
Ms Shauna Mageean (European Project Manager) Item 2 only
Ms Roisin Kelly (Bill Clerk) Item 3 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 3 only
Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Advisor) Item 3 only

2:31pm Mr Attwood left the meeting.

10. Forward Work Programme

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee considered the draft Terms of Reference for an Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Terms of Reference for its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make a call for evidence on the Terms of Reference to a list of stakeholders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a draft notice be published in local papers in line with Assembly protocol and that the notice inviting submissions be placed on the Committee's webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Office would scope options for a study visit with regard to the Inquiry.

5:02pm The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 17 September 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Leslie Cree
Miss Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr George Robinson

In Attendance: Ms Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2:27pm The meeting began in public session.

3:43pm Mr Attwood left the meeting.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted a list responses received to date with regard to its Inquiry into Building a United Community, and instructions on how to access papers relating to the Inquiry through the Electronic Committee Pack system.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a weekly update on submissions received to date; and that written submissions to the Inquiry would be uploaded to the Committee's webpages each Tuesday, except in exceptional circumstance where the Committee may be consulted before publications.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Community Relations Council requesting an extension to the closing date for written submissions to the Inquiry, and noted that similar requests had been received from others.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to extend the closing date for written submissions to its consultation to Friday 10 October 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask Assembly Research to compile a list of expert witnesses with regard to the Inquiry from whom it could consider requesting oral evidence.

4:54pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 24 September 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Leslie Cree
Miss Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr George Robinson

Apologies: Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Jimmy Spratt

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2.02 pm The meeting began in public session.

4. Matters Arising

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted the current list of submissions received in response to its call for evidence to its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

2.08pm Mr Lyttle joined the meeting.

3.12 pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 1 October 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Miss Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr George Robinson
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies Mr Leslie Cree
Mr Alex Maskey

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2:04pm The meeting began in public session.

4. **Matters Arising**

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted the current list of submissions received in response to its call for evidence to its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee noted its earlier decision to copy any issues or submissions relating to shared/integrated education to the Committee for Education for consideration, and agreed to forward the submission from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education to that Committee.

2:25pm Mrs Hale joined the meeting.

3:46pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 8 October 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2:01pm The meeting began in closed session.

5. Matters Arising

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted the current list of submissions received in response to its call for evidence to the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

3:30pm Mr Beggs joined the meeting.

4:25pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 15 October 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Bill Clerk) Item 2 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 2 only

2:05pm The meeting began in closed session.

6. **Matters Arising**

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted the current list of submissions received in response to its call for evidence to the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee noted its earlier decision to copy any issues or submissions relating to shared/integrated education to the Committee for Education for consideration, and agreed to forward a number of submissions to that Committee.

3:01pm. The Chairperson adjourned the meeting

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 22 October 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

- Present:** Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Apologies:** Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Alex Attwood
- In Attendance:** Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Marion Johnson (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Bill Clerk) Item 1 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

2:01pm The meeting began in closed session.

2:21pm The meeting moved into public session.

3:00pm Mrs Hale left the meeting.

8. Committee Inquiry into Building a United Community

3:05pm Departmental officials joined the meeting.

Departmental officials Ms Linsey Farrell, Mr Michael McGinley and Ms Donna Blaney appeared before the Committee for questions and discussion on the Together: Building a United Community Strategy. The briefing was recorded by Hansard.

3:15pm Mrs Hale re-joined the meeting.

The officials agreed to provide further information as requested on a number of issues

3:40pm Departmental officials left the meeting.

9. Committee Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted that over 60 written submissions had been received with regard to its Inquiry into Building a United Community, and noted late submissions from Belfast City Council, the Department of Justice and the Department for Social Development.

3:42pm Mrs Hale left the meeting.

The Committee noted a draft plan with regard to taking oral evidence in relation to the Inquiry and areas for potential visits.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the draft plan and return to the issue at the next Committee meeting.

4:03pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 5 November 2014 Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mrs Brenda Hale

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2:01pm The meeting began in closed session.

1. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted the themes emerging from the written evidence to its Inquiry into Building a United Community and considered proposals for the next phase of evidence gathering. The Committee noted the Inquiry into Shared and Integrated Education currently being undertaken by the Committee for Education, and noted its previous agreement to pass any issues arising in the course of its own Inquiry relating to education to that Committee for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to host a roundtable event with Departments and statutory agencies responsible for headline actions within the Together: Building a United Community strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to approach NILGA with regard to receiving oral evidence from local councils during a formal Committee meeting.

2:17pm Ms Fearon joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Community Relations Council to give oral evidence during a formal Committee meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to explore the possibility of hosting a roundtable event with organisations involved in community relations work across Northern Ireland.

The Committee considered a paper from Assembly Research which suggested a number of academics from whom the Committee might consider inviting to give oral evidence.

2:20pm Mr Attwood left the meeting.

Mr Lyttle proposed the motion: "That Dr Duncan Morrow be invited to provide evidence to the Committee with regard to its Inquiry into Building a United Community."

The Committee divided on the motion:

Ayes 1;

Noes 4;

AYES

Mr Lyttle (Deputy Chair)

NOES

Mr McIlveen

Mr Moutray

Mr Nesbitt (Chair)

Mr Spratt

Ms McGahan and Ms Fearon did not vote.

Members noted that, prior to leaving the meeting, Mr Attwood had indicated his support for inviting Dr Morrow to provide evidence.

The motion fell.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Professor Brandon Hamber, Dr Neil Jarman, Professor Colin Knox and Professor Peter Shirlow to give evidence to the Committee, subject to their availability.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to explore the possibility of inviting evidence from Northern Ireland Environment Link and the Landscape Institute Northern Ireland, including the possibility of a site visit to a project.

The Committee noted that a number of organisations had responded specifically to the Inquiry on the matter of a definition for the term ‘good relations’.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider issues relating to a definition of good relations at a later stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to engage with the Rural Community Network regarding the challenges faced at rural interface areas; and agreed to consider the possibility of a visit to a rural area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite oral evidence from InterAction Belfast, Forthspring InterCommunity Project and the Peace Walls Programme with regard to the challenges at urban interface areas and the role of communities in decision making.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to explore the possibility of a roundtable event with young people in conjunction with the Assembly Education Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite oral evidence with regard to the role of women in good relations and their involvement in policy and decision making.

The Committee noted that other emerging themes in the written evidence included the role for civic society within Building a United Community; and issues relating to mental health and inter-generational trauma.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, while these areas are both important and merit further consideration, it is unlikely that the Committee will be able to consider them in depth during the course of the Inquiry.

2:41pm The meeting moved into public session.

3:42pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 12 November 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Michael Copeland

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

2:01pm The meeting began in closed session.

2:27pm Mr Attwood left the meeting.

2:36pm The meeting moved into public session.

4. **Matters Arising**

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted two additional submissions to its Inquiry into Building a United Community from the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

2:46pm Mr Attwood returned to the meeting.

2:59pm Mr Maskey joined the meeting.

3:22pm The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 19 November 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

- Present:** Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Apologies:** Mr Michael Copeland
Mr David McIlveen
- In Attendance:** Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Mr Colin Pidgeon (Research Officer) Item 1 only
Ms Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk) Item 11 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 11 only

2.02 pm The meeting began in closed session.

3. Chairperson's Business

T:BUC Summer Camps/Co-design workshops

The Committee noted an invitation from OFMDFM to the co-design workshops to help inform the development and design of the programme of 100 summer schools/camps in summer 2015.

4.57 pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 26 November 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2.10 pm The meeting began in public session.

5. Correspondence

OFMDFM: Together: Building a United Community

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM on a range of issues on the implementation of Together: Building a United Community

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the response to the papers relating to its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

2.27pm Mr Maskey joined the meeting.

4.06 pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 3 December 2014

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk) Item 3 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 3 only
Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Adviser) Item 3 only

2.27pm The meeting began in open session. In the absence of a decision-making quorum the proceedings commenced in line with Standing Order 49(5) and moved to agenda item 2.

The Committee moved to agenda item 8.

2 Inquiry into Building a United Community - Briefing from Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

2.28pm Representatives from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council joined the meeting.

Mr Peter Osborne, Chairperson, Community Relations Council; Ms Jacqueline Irwin, Chief Executive, Community Relations Council; Ms Sylvia Gordon, Director Groundwork NI; and Mr Joe O'Donnell, Director, Belfast Interface Partnership appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

2:45pm Ms Fearon joined the meeting.

Agreed: Ms Irwin agreed to provide further information on a query relating to funding provided by CRC.

3:40pm The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: With regard to the Inquiry the Committee agreed:

- (i) The draft timetable for gathering oral evidence;
- (ii) That the roundtable event scheduled for Wednesday 28 January should include Departments, statutory agencies and community organisations;
- (iii) The draft agenda and invitation letter for the stakeholder event; and
- (iv) To provide the names and details of additional groups to Committee staff by 5 December.

5:24pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 14 January 2015

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mrs Brenda Hale

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Ms Roisin Kelly (Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

2:06pm The meeting began in closed session.

2:40pm The meeting moved into public session.

9. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by Professor Knox and Ms McWilliams

3:02pm Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams joined the meeting.

Professor Colin Knox and Ms Sarah McWilliams appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community, and specifically in relation to the evaluation of the Contested Spaces / Interface Programme, funded jointly by OFMDFM and Atlantic Philanthropies. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

5:01pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 21 January 2015

Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2:00pm The meeting began in closed session.

2:08pm Mr Spratt left the meeting.

2:09pm Mr McIlveen left the meeting.

2:12pm Mr Moutray left the meeting.

2:15pm The meeting moved into open session.

3. **Chairperson's Business**

Inquiry into Building a United Community - Stakeholder event

2:30pm The Chairperson reminded Members of the Stakeholder event scheduled for Wednesday 28 January with regard to the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The Committee noted the table plan and agenda for the event, and the Chairperson asked Members to indicate their availability to participate.

2:27pm Mr Spratt returned to the meeting.

2:36pm Ms Fearon left the meeting.

9. **Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by Professor Shirlow and Professor Hamber**

2:40pm Professor Peter Shirlow, Queens University Belfast and Professor Brandon Hamber, Ulster University joined the meeting.

Professor Peter Shirlow and Professor Brandon Hamber appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

2:43pm Ms Fearon returned to the meeting.

2:50pm Mr Attwood joined the meeting.

The witnesses agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues.

4:00pm The witnesses left the meeting

4:56pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 4 February 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

2.02pm The meeting began in closed session.

7. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by NILGA representatives on the District Councils Good Relations Programme

The Chairperson thanked those who had participated in the stakeholder event held on 28 January and the Committee discussed arrangements for the planned external meeting on Wednesday 18 February.

2.21pm Witnesses from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association joined the meeting.

Alderman Tom Ekin, NILGA Vice President and Belfast City Council; Ms Sue Divin, Good Relations Officer, Derry City Council; and Ms Angela Askin, Good Relations Officer, Derry City Council appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

The witnesses agreed to provide further information on a number of issues as requested.

3.12pm The witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to OFMDFM to ask if the Department has accepted the recommendations contained within the NISRA evaluation of the District Council Good Relations Programme which was completed in 2012, and when those recommendations will be implemented.

8. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by NILGA representatives on Community Planning

3.13pm Witnesses from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association joined the meeting.

Ms Karen Smyth Head of Policy NILGA, Ms Jackie Patton Mid and East Antrim Council and Ms Mary Kerr NI Strategic Migration Partnership appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

3.17pm Mr Attwood left the meeting.

3.27pm Mr Moutray left the meeting.

3.29pm Mrs Hale joined the meeting.

The witnesses agreed to provide further information on a number of issues as requested.

3.42pm The witnesses left the meeting.

3.42pm Ms McGahan left the meeting.

4.30pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 11 February 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copelan
Mr Alex Maskey

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2.03pm The meeting began in open session.

4. **Matters Arising**

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted responses from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association regarding membership of the Political Partnership Panel and lobbying of OFMDFM Ministers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include both items of correspondence in the papers for its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

9. **Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by Northern Ireland Environment Link and the Landscape Institute**

2.19pm Witnesses from Northern Ireland Environment Link and the Landscape Institute NI joined the meeting.

The Committee noted a number of research papers provided by Professor Hamber following the briefing on 21 January 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the research papers to the evidence base of its Inquiry.

Dr Stephen McCabe Northern Ireland Environment Link and Mr Pete Mullin from the Landscape Institute appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

2.24pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting due to plenary business.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 18 February 2015

Interaction Belfast, 638 Springfield Road, Belfast

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Jimmy Spratt
Ms Megan Fearon

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2.30pm The meeting began in public session with the following Members present:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson), Mr Alex Attwood, Mr Alex Maskey and Mr Stephen Moutray. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings commenced in line with Standing Order 49(5), and the Committee moved to the first evidence session.

8. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by Interaction Belfast, Suffolk Community Forum and Forthspring Inter Community Group

The Chairperson thanked Inter-Action Belfast for hosting the meeting and facilitating the necessary arrangements.

2.31pm Witnesses from Inter-Action Belfast, Suffolk Community Forum and Forthspring Inter Community Group joined the meeting.

Ms Roisin McGlone, Chief Executive Officer, Inter-Action Belfast; Ms Caroline Murphy Team leader Suffolk Community Forum; Mr Terry Donaghy, Chair, Suffolk Community Forum; and Mr Johnston Price, Project Worker, Forthspring Inter Community Group, appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

2.40pm Ms McGahan joined the meeting.

3.00pm Mr Lyttle joined the meeting.

3.02pm Mrs Hale joined the meeting.

3.47pm The witnesses left the meeting.

3.27pm Mr Moutray left the meeting.

3.54pm Mrs Hale returned to the meeting.

3.56pm Mr Maskey left the meeting.

9. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by Peace and Reconciliation Group, The Junction and Holywell Trust

The Committee noted a report of the stakeholder event held on 28 January 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue the report to those invited to attend the stakeholder event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the report on its webpages relating to the Inquiry; and to include the report in the papers for its Inquiry report.

The Committee noted correspondence from a member of the public recommending the 'Street Games UK' concept as an appropriate model of engagement with regard to the summer camps proposed under Together: Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department and ask it to consider Street Games UK in the design of summer camps for 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in the papers for its Inquiry report.

The Committee noted correspondence from Ballynafeigh Community Development Association requesting a meeting with Members to discuss the organisation's work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chair would arrange an informal briefing with an invitation open to all Members to attend.

3.58pm Witnesses from Peace and Reconciliation Group, The Junction and Holywell Trust joined the meeting.

Ms Maureen Hetherington, The Junction; Mr Michael Doherty, Director, Peace and Reconciliation Group; and Mr Gerard Deane, Manager, Holywell Trust, appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

4.03pm Mr Maskey returned to the meeting.

4.04pm Mrs Hale left the meeting.

4.48pm Ms McGahan left the meeting. The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in line with Standing Order 49(5).

4.52pm Ms McGahan returned to the meeting.

4.57pm The witnesses left the meeting.

5.04pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Monday 2 March 2015

Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only

1:32pm The meeting began in closed session.

1:36pm Mr Lyttle joined the meeting.

1:40pm Mrs Hale joined the meeting.

1:45pm Mr McIlveen left the meeting.

1:46pm The meeting moved into open session.

5. **Matters Arising**

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted papers that had been provided by Suffolk Community Forum at the previous meeting which gave more information about the Suffolk Community Pocket Plots initiative.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the papers in its Inquiry report.

1:59pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 4 March 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr David McIlveen
Mrs Brenda Hale

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 2 only
Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Adviser) Item 2 only

1:41pm The meeting began in public session with the following Members present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson), Mr Alex Maskey, Ms Bronwyn McGahan and Mr Stephen Moutray. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings commenced in line with Standing Order 49(5), and the Committee moved to the first evidence session.

7. Correspondence

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted correspondence from the Director of the Bytes Project thanking the Committee for the opportunity for young people from Bytes to attend an event with the Committee on Together: Building a United Community.

The Chairperson advised Members that he had received a phone call from Inter-Action Belfast advising that funding from the Community Relations Council has not been renewed beyond the end of March 2015.

Agreed: Members agreed to invite Inter-Action Belfast to write to the Committee providing detail of the situation; and to forward that letter with a brief cover note from the Committee Chair requesting the views of the Department on the situation and clarification of whether the Pathfinder funding scheme provide a short-term solution.

2:53pm Mr Maskey left the meeting.

9. Date, Time and Location of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 2.00pm in Ballymoney Resource Centre on Wednesday 11 March 2015.

4:23pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

**Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
(EXTRACT)**

Wednesday 11 March 2015

Ballymoney Resource Centre, Acorn Business Centre, Ballymoney

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Maskey

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only
Mr Jonathan McMillen (Legal Adviser) Item 1 only

2:00pm The meeting began in closed session.

10. Inquiry into Building a United Community – Briefing by representatives from the Rural Community Network

Agreed: The Committee to include a summary note of the informal meeting with the Bytes Project in the Inquiry report and to upload it to the website.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to combine the two scheduled evidence sessions with representative organisations from the Rural Community Network.

3:15pm Witnesses from representative organisations from the Rural Community Network joined the meeting.

Mr Gerry Burns, Armoy Community Association; Mr Colin Craig, Corrymeela; Ms Charmain Jones, Rural Community Network; Ms Lynn Moffett Ballymoney Community Resource Centre; Ms Rose Smyth Causeway Rural and Urban Network; and Mr Sandy Wilson North Antrim Community Network appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community, and specifically in relation to rural issues. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

3:30pm Mr McIlveen left the meeting.

The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in accordance with Standing Order 49(5).

3:38pm Mr McIlveen returned to the meeting.

4:13pm Ms McGahan left the meeting.

The Committee lost its decision-making quorum. In the absence of a decision-making quorum proceedings continued in accordance with Standing Order 49(5).

4:21pm Mr Moutray left the meeting.

4:21pm As the quorum to take evidence was lost the Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

(EXTRACT)

Wednesday 18 March 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Ms Bronwyn McGahan

In Attendance: Ms Stella McArdle (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Zuzana Polackova (Clerical Officer)

2:15pm The meeting began in public session.

5. Correspondence

Together: Building a United Community

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding Street Games UK.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the response to the Manager of Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues and to include the papers in the Committee's Report on its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

6. Inquiry into Building a United Community

2:28pm Witnesses from Northern Ireland Environment Link and the Landscape Institute joined the meeting.

Dr Stephen McCabe, Policy and Projects Officer, Northern Ireland Environment Link; and Mr Pete Mullin, Policy Representative, Landscape Institute NI, appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Committee's Inquiry into Building a United Community. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

2:53pm Mr Moutray left the meeting.

2:56pm Mr Spratt joined the meeting.

3:09pm Mrs Hale left the meeting.

3:12pm The witnesses left the meeting at.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of the Environment to request information on how the recently published 'Living Places - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland' connects with Together: Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to seek an update on the design of the urban villages, as proposed

in Together: Building a United Community; and seek information on how organisations can engage with the design process.

5:00pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 25 March 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr David McIlveen

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mrs Marion Johnson (Clerical Supervisor)

2:06pm The meeting began in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

6. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee considered a paper on issues arising from its Inquiry into Building a United Community

Agreed: The Committee agreed to release the issues paper to OFMDFM officials prior to the evidence session scheduled following the Easter recess.

The Committee noted a summary of the discussion held informally with representatives of the Rural Community Network following the adjournment of the meeting on 11 March.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the summary discussion with the Inquiry papers.

The Committee noted a response from the Department to its queries regarding the implementation of the recommendations contained with the NISRA evaluation of the District Council Good Relations Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to NILGA for information; and to include the response in the Inquiry papers.

The Committee noted an update on the summer camp co-design workshops which were held in December and January; and noted that £1m has been secured to implement the Summer Camp Pilot Programme 2015.

Agreed: The Committee to include this correspondence in the Inquiry papers and agreed to write to the Department to request: a written briefing on the proposed summer camps; and a budget profile for T:BUC initiatives over the lifetime of the strategy.

4:48pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 13 May 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

- Present:** Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Mr David McIlveen
- Apologies:** Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Michael Copeland
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- In Attendance:** Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Item 1 only
Ms Éilís Haughey (Bill Clerk) Item 2 only

2:11pm The meeting began in closed session.

7. **Correspondence**

Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted a response from the Department of the Environment regarding its Inquiry into Building a United Community and 'Living Places' - An Urban Stewardship and design guide for Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the response in the papers for the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

9. **Inquiry into Building a United Community.**

3:17pm Departmental officials joined the meeting.

Ms Linsey Farrell, Ms Donna Blaney, Mr Michael McGinley and Mr Peter Robinson appeared before the Committee for discussion and questions on the Inquiry into Building a United Community, and specifically in relation to the themes which have emerged from written and oral evidence received from stakeholders. The evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues including comparative figures regarding funding for good relations activity in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and the identification of additional spend due to the Together: Building a United Community strategy; an update on the progress of finalising the Good Relations indicators; and an update on the Buddy Scheme, administered by the Department of Education.

4:00pm The officials left the meeting.

4:01pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 20 May 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Michael Copeland
Mr David McIlveen

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Richard Reid (Clerical Officer)

2:03pm The meeting began in closed session.

1. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee considered a confidential paper outlining areas for potential recommendations on the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring the paper back for a fuller discussion at next week's meeting.

2:05pm The meeting moved into open session.

2:12pm Mr Maskey joined the meeting.

2:14pm Mr Spratt joined the meeting.

3:34pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 27 May 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Allison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

2.00pm The meeting began in closed session.

1. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee considered a confidential paper outlining areas for potential recommendations on the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to bring the paper back for a fuller discussion at next week's meeting.

2.02pm The meeting moved into open session

6. Correspondence

Together: Building a United Community

The Committee noted a response from OFMDFM regarding the content of the Summer Camps Pilot Programme; and a further response from the Department following a request for information those organising summer camps and the geographical spread of the camps.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include both items of correspondence in the Building a United Community Inquiry papers.

3.58pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

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

[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 3 June 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

- Present:** Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt
- Apologies:** Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Alex Maskey
- In Attendance:** Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Bill Team - for agenda item 2 only)

2.05 pm The meeting began in closed session.

1. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee discussed a confidential paper which set out the emerging issues arising from the evidence received in regard to the Inquiry into Building a United Community; the departmental response where this was available; and draft areas for potential recommendations.

2.48pm Mr Spratt joined the meeting.

3.10pm Ms McGahan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for staff to prepare an initial draft report on the Inquiry including the findings and draft recommendations as discussed

3.22pm Ms McGahan returned to the meeting.

4.42 pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 17 June 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Ms Megan Fearon
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Alex Maskey

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)

2.08 pm The meeting began in closed session.

2. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted an initial draft of the Report on the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward any comments on the draft to staff before Friday lunchtime.

3.56 pm The meeting moved into open session.

7. Correspondence

Together: Building a United Community

The Committee noted correspondence from OFMDFM following a briefing from Departmental officials on the progress of Together: Building a United Community, which included the final, agreed Good Relations Indicators.

Agreed: Members agreed to include the response in its Inquiry into Building a United Community papers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to invite officials to brief the Committee on the final Good Relations Indicators, including how they will be monitored; and to ask why the Buddy Scheme was not deemed eligible for funding through the £50m shared education programme funded jointly by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Department of Education.

5.39 pm The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 24 June 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray

Apologies: Mr Michael Copeland
Mr Jimmy Spratt

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)

3.39pm Mr Moutray left the meeting.

3.45pm Mr Maskey left the meeting.

3.51pm Ms Fearon left the meeting.

3.52pm The meeting moved into closed session.

12. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee noted a late submission from the Community Arts Partnership to the Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the submission in the papers for the Inquiry Report.

The Committee noted a discussion at the Committee for Employment and Learning regarding a bid to PEACE IV for the United Youth Programme.

4.00pm Ms Fearon returned to the meeting.

The Committee considered a draft of its Report on its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

4.14pm Mr Maskey returned to the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide comments to Committee staff by noon on Friday 26 June.

4.34pm The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]

Wednesday 1 July 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Alex Attwood
Mrs Brenda Hale
Mr Alex Maskey
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr David McIlveen
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Jimmy Spratt

Apologies: Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
Mr Michael Copeland
Ms Megan Fearon

In Attendance: Mrs Kathy O'Hanlon (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Karen Jardine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Stephen Magee (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Alyn Hicks (Bill Team - for item 1 only)

2.02pm The meeting began in closed session.

11. Inquiry into Building a United Community

The Committee considered the final draft of its Report on its Inquiry into Building a United Community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 1 - 21 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 22 - 27 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 28 - 31 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 32 - 42 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 43 - 47 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 48 - 60 of the report.

Agreed: Members noted that a line had been inadvertently deleted from the initial draft report that had been considered on 24 June and agreed that it would be reinserted at paragraph 63.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 61 - 69 of the report as amended.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 70 - 75 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 76 - 80 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 81 - 100 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to substitute "groups" for "communities including women and young people" at paragraph 108.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 101- 114 of the report as amended.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 115 - 121 of the report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed paragraphs 122 - 124 of the report.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 125 - 131 of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 132 - 138 of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to substitute “closest to” for “in the shadow of” at paragraph 152; and to add “for everyone, and in particular young people” to the end of that paragraph.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 139 - 152 of the report as amended.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 153 - 162 of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 163 - 171 of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 172 - 180 of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed paragraphs 181 - 187 of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Executive Summary.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the list of appendices to be included in the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Deputy Chairperson should approve the relevant extract from the Minutes of Proceedings of this meeting for inclusion in Appendix 1 of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Report be the fifteenth Report of the Committee, and ordered the report to be printed and published.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to lay a typescript copy of the Report in the Business Office; and to issue a typescript copy to the Department, with a request to respond to the key conclusions and recommendations contained in the report within 12 weeks.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to table the following motion for a debate on the Report in the next Assembly session:
- “That this Assembly notes the Report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (NIA 257/11-15) on its Inquiry into Building a United Community; and calls on the First Minister and deputy First Minister, along with their Executive colleagues, to implement the recommendations contained in the Report”.*
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request that the debate be scheduled for the week commencing 28 September to coincide with Community Relations Week.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to embargo the Report until the debate in Plenary.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to share an embargoed copy of the Executive Summary and Key Conclusions and Recommendations with other statutory committees, given that the Inquiry has looked at a cross-cutting issue and the report includes a recommendation for other Committees.

4.02pm The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

**Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
[EXTRACT]**



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 2

Minutes of Evidence

22 October 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mrs Brenda Hale
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Miss Donna Blaney	<i>Office of the First</i>
Mrs Linsey Farrell	<i>Minister and deputy</i>
Mr Michael McGinley	<i>First Minister</i>

1. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I welcome Donna Blaney, Michael McGinley and Linsey Farrell to the Committee. Linsey, we received your paper at 5.00 pm yesterday. What was the issue with the late delivery?
2. **Mrs Linsey Farrell (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** There was no issue other than that was the time that it was issued on behalf of Ministers.
3. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** On behalf of Ministers.
4. **Mrs Farrell:** Ministers clear the briefing.
5. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** At 5.00 pm yesterday. When was the briefing given to them for clearance?
6. **Mrs Farrell:** I do not have the exact date that we put it up to the private office.
7. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Roughly.
8. **Mrs Farrell:** About a week to 10 days ago. I can check the exact date and get back to you.
9. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I would be interested in that. I do not think that there is anything contentious about the papers, so why should we not get them in a timely manner? We have expended a lot of effort in the last 12 months on liaising with the head of the Civil Service, the junior Ministers and the principal Ministers in an attempt to receive papers in a timely manner.
10. **Mrs Farrell:** I will check the exact date and get back to you.
11. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you. Would you care to make some opening remarks?
12. **Mrs Farrell:** Thank you, Chair, for your introduction and the invitation to appear today to update the Committee on progress on Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC).
13. As you know, the strategy was published on 23 May last year following the announcement of seven strategic headline actions by the First Minister and deputy First Minister. We had the opportunity to brief the Committee in February and welcome the opportunity to provide a further update today.
14. The strategy sets out a range of actions and commitments against four strategic priorities: children and young people; shared community; safe community; and cultural expression. However, the range of commitments and actions extends well beyond the seven strategic headlines. In total, there are in the region of 42 other actions and commitments that, compositely, will contribute to achieving our collective vision of a shared, united and reconciled community.
15. With the agreement of members, I propose to focus on progress against the seven headline actions, the delivery architecture required to monitor implementation and other key commitments arising from the strategy. Members of the Committee have acknowledged that they received a copy of a briefing paper in advance of the meeting. Hopefully, you have been given an opportunity to look at the areas that I will cover in the briefing.

16. Senior responsible owners (SROs) for the seven headline actions have been appointed by Departments with lead responsibility. Compositely, they make up the membership of the good relations programme board, which has met on six occasions to date. The programme board reports directly to the ministerial panel on the implementation and delivery of the strategy.
17. I will now move, in no particular order, to the headline actions. The first is the United Youth programme. The design day on 23 January, which the Committee was made aware of during our last visit, was the culmination of an extensive period of stakeholder engagement, and almost 300 participants attended. The co-design process begun by OFMDFM at that time is being continued by the lead Department, which is the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). DEL has appointed a United Youth adviser to take forward the next design stage, and that process is being supported by a design team that comprises representatives from a number of Departments and statutory agencies. Young people have been engaged with separately up to this point, and it is intended that they will also be invited shortly to become part of the design team. The design team has produced a draft outcomes and principles framework, and that will be tested during the forthcoming 2015 pilot phase. OFMDFM funded the first United Youth pilot through the central good relations fund, with 50 young people taking part in the Headstart initiative. Findings from the evaluation of that initiative so far are very positive.
18. The Department of Education (DE) leads on the headline action of 10 shared education campuses. The Department received 16 expressions of interest under the programme, and, on 1 July this year, the Minister announced the first three projects to be supported. They are St Mary's High School, Limavady and Limavady High School; a shared education campus for Moy Regional Primary School and St John's Primary School in Moy; and a shared education campus for Ballycastle High School and Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle. Those projects will now proceed to the planning stage, and the target is to have three business cases submitted and approved by the end of 2014. A second call for applications opened on 1 October, and the deadline for submissions for further proposals is 30 January 2015. In addition to that, good progress is also being made on the Lisanelly shared education campus programme, which is over and above the 10 shared education campuses.
19. The Department for Social Development is leading on the coordination of the headline action on urban villages. A high-level design specification has been developed, and the first two locations identified are Colin and the Lower Newtownards Road. A strategic board chaired by OFMDFM junior Ministers has been set up to meet monthly. Its membership includes representatives from DSD, OFMDFM, the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) and Belfast City Council. Resources were secured through June monitoring to allow SIB to take forward the all-important stakeholder engagement to enable work to continue in the two urban village locations.
20. OFMDFM is responsible for taking forward work on the headline action of 100 summer schools and camps. A number of summer schools and camps took place during this summer, and further schemes are scheduled for the Halloween mid-term break. An additional £300,000 was secured in June monitoring to enable further work on summer schools and camps. Belfast City Council and the Department of Education will run further schemes and pilots, primarily at Halloween. Expressions of interest have been invited from other councils, and decisions on those will be taken in the coming weeks. A programme board has been established to oversee progress on this headline action, and the board had its first meeting on 18 August. External members of the board are from DE, Belfast City Council and the Community Relations Council (CRC),

- and we have just secured agreement for Youthnet to be represented. OFMDFM has worked very closely with Belfast City Council, and a consultant has been identified and appointed to carry out an evaluation of the schemes that have taken place. That evaluation will inform the final design of the summer schools and camps programme. Co-design workshops with a range of key stakeholders are planned for early December, and we hope to engage specifically with young people as part of that process.
21. The Department for Social Development is leading on the 10 shared neighbourhoods and, through an initial scoping exercise, has identified potential sites and a timeline. Eleven potential sites have been identified that could deliver more than 600 social homes, but the Department is also exploring major mixed-tenure developments through joint ventures by housing associations and private developers. The first social housing development at Ravenhill Road is scheduled to open shortly, and construction work has commenced on a further three sites.
 22. The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) has been appointed to take forward the cross-community sports programme. The purpose of the programme is to use sport as a tool in building good relations across our community and to break down divisions. A pilot will be delivered during this financial year, and it will be in areas that have experienced specific interface tensions and significant deprivation.
 23. Finally, there is the headline action on the removal of interface barriers by 2023. Work on the removal of barriers commenced in 2011, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) has been taking forward a lot of that work, both before and since that date. Design proposals are at an advanced stage to start work towards establishing a 10-year programme to reduce and eventually remove the interface barriers. An important point is that this will involve working very closely with the local community. The number of interface structures has been reduced from 59 to 53, and engagement is ongoing and very active in 40 of the 53 remaining areas. There have been some positive developments this year. Security fencing was removed from the North City Business Centre in April and from Moyard Crescent in May, and the upper vehicle and pedestrian gates at Springmartin Road were removed in August.
 24. That brings me to the end of the updates on the seven headline actions, and I will now briefly bring the Committee up to date with progress on other aspects, including the establishment of an equality and good relations commission. The strategy included a commitment to establish a commission that would act as an independent statutorily based organisation to provide policy advice and a challenge to government. Following a gateway project management review, a transition board was established to oversee the change management process relating to the establishment of the new commission. The membership of the board includes the chairs of the Equality Commission (ECNI) and CRC, representatives from OFMDFM and the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO), along with an independent member. The objective of the board is to ensure that T:BUC objectives relating to the establishment of the commission are successfully delivered within an agreed timescale. Members of the transition board are concentrating on exploring approaches to delivering the relevant T:BUC objectives in advance of the new primary legislation being enacted.
 25. The review of good relations funding was a core commitment in Together: Building a United Community. The review was taken forward in two phases. Phase 1 concluded at the end of March this year, and the SIB team commissioned to take forward the work drew upon existing evaluation and review material to inform phase 2, which involved substantial stakeholder engagement, including four geographic sessions held across Belfast, the north-west,

- mid-Ulster and Fermanagh, which were attended by a total 144 participants. A final session in Crumlin Road Gaol involved a further 112 participants. Feedback was extremely positive, and stakeholders reported being very welcoming of the opportunity to engage. The second phase of the review ended at the end of June, and, since then, we have been working closely with the SIB to finalise the report, which will go to Ministers shortly. Further engagement with stakeholders will be taken forward on foot of Ministers' consideration of the report.
26. Before I conclude, I can also report that the ministerial panel has met on two occasions. It is the central part of the delivery architecture set up to drive forward and oversee the implementation of Together: Building a United Community. As I mentioned at the outset, this panel is supported by a good relations programme board, which comprises senior responsible owners from all Departments, not just those with responsibility from headline actions. This group has now met six times, and the next meeting is planned for mid-November.
27. Work is also at an advanced stage to establish the range of thematic subgroups outlined in Together: Building a United Community, and, compositely, these structures will drive forward on the implementation and facilitate a fresh approach to stakeholder engagement and collaborative leadership on building good relations across our community. I welcome the Committee's ongoing interest in the implementation of a strategy that is, as I think that we all agree, vital to everyone. We look forward to working closely with the Committee as the implementation phase develops across all strands of the strategy. Thank you again for the opportunity, and I am happy to take any questions.
28. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Linsey, thank you very much for that very comprehensive and welcome brief. It is a very exciting strategy. Can you update us on the budget, please?
29. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes, certainly. We have allocated good relations funding of almost £10 million in this year. All OFMDFM funding streams application criteria have been closely aligned with the four key themes of the strategy, as I outlined earlier, to ensure that projects being delivered by our stakeholders are focused on the delivery of the strategy's objectives. As I also mentioned, a number of Departments were successful in securing money through June monitoring as well. Those were OFMDFM, DCAL and DOJ, and that money was secured specifically to take forward work on Together: Building a United Community.
30. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** What is the budget for the 10 shared campuses?
31. **Mrs Farrell:** DE is leading on that, so I do not have that information here, but I can find it and write back to you on the specific budget.
32. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** There are 10 shared campuses in addition to Liasanelly, which is going ahead. As far as I know, the cost of Liasanelly is £120 million. If we take that as the template, the 10 shared campuses, which is one of seven T:BUC initiatives, will cost £1.2 billion. I put it to you, Linsey, that we do not have it.
33. **Mrs Farrell:** That has been under consideration by the ministerial panel.
34. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, you accept that we do not have that money.
35. **Mrs Farrell:** We accept that there is an issue with resourcing across all Departments.
36. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I will tell you what the issue is: the money does not exist.
37. **Mrs Farrell:** We are working with Departments very closely and actively on assessing the resource that they need each year so that we have a very detailed profile. We will interrogate those figures very closely to ensure that we inject some realism into what

- Departments are telling us and match that with what is available. It was noted at the last ministerial panel meeting that relying on the normal budgetary processes of applying for funding in monitoring rounds is putting Departments in a very difficult position. We will discuss that in more detail when a more detailed analysis of the resource implications will be brought to the next ministerial panel meeting.
38. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** This is in the context of the Executive having to go to Treasury exceptionally and ask for a loan of £100 million, which is less than the cost of one of the 10 shared campuses, which is one of only seven initiatives under T:BUC. I put it to you again that the money does not exist for Together: Building a United Community.
39. **Mrs Farrell:** We accept that the public expenditure environment is very difficult and challenging, and that has been noted by all Departments at the ministerial panel. As I said, we are working proactively with Departments to produce the realistic financial data that we need but also to look at what work can be taken forward on a no-cost/ low-cost basis. I accept that a lot of the headline actions require huge expenditure, but in the shared education campuses, for example, the ethos is sharing, so that is what we are working on with Departments. We are looking at outcomes and at what we can achieve with the resources available to us, notwithstanding the huge challenge that is still before us and the need to constantly be putting up the need for financial resources to support this. That is why we are doing that work through Departments, through the programme board and at the ministerial panel.
40. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, you are asking Departments what is achievable in the short term.
41. **Mrs Farrell:** We are looking at the short term, medium term and longer term.
42. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I am hearing an acceptance that there is not enough money for these big ambitious projects but that you will do what you can.
43. **Mrs Farrell:** No, we accept that there is a scalability issue, which is about looking at how we roll things out and the timing of the roll-out. We are absolutely not going back from the challenge to us in Together: Building a United Community. We recognise the challenging context that we are all in, and the Departments are all fully committed.
44. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is there a timeline for digging the sods of the 10 campuses?
45. **Mrs Farrell:** That is what we are looking at with Departments. We need a detailed timeline from them and an analysis of the initial costs.
46. A lot of the costs, as you can appreciate, and DE is a good example of this, were estimates before the call for expressions of interest. So, at that stage, the Department could not accurately anticipate what would come forward in those applications. Now that those three applications have come in and there will be a second call, there will be a lot more information and data for the Department to go on when making an accurate assessment of the resource requirements and a more realistic and accurate associated timeline. It is that sort of work that we are taking forward with all Departments.
47. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It is over a year and a half since OFMDFM said to the people of Northern Ireland, “Be of good heart. We’ve got a great idea. We’re going to build 10 new shared school campuses”. A year and a half later, you do not have the money or the timeline. You do not have anything to give the people.
48. **Mrs Farrell:** Very clear projects have been submitted and accepted by the Department of Education, and there has been a commitment to complete the business cases by the end of this year. There is a second call for shared education campuses, which sends a very clear message about DE and the

- Executive's commitment to the good relations agenda. We all accept the difficult economic climate that we are in, but that is not an excuse for inaction. We have lots of evidence of the amount of work by all Departments to continue to push forward this agenda.
49. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I remain of the view that the money does not exist.
50. **Mr Lyttle:** I agree. I am on record as saying that the strategy is inadequate. I still do not see a comprehensive action plan or targets and deadlines with budget allocations, and it is difficult for the public or MLAs to assess progress in that context. I think that it is weaker than the shared future strategy, which had a triennial action plan attached to it.
51. However, to engage with what is available to us, there were 16 expressions of interest in the shared education campuses and three projects were awarded some type of funds, whatever they were. What were the selection criteria used to make those decisions?
52. **Mrs Farrell:** Again, as DE had the lead responsibility, it set those criteria. DE has advised that the Minister of Education was keen to ensure that the chosen projects would be of a high standard and meet all the criteria that it had set. To ensure the best chance of successful long-term and sustainable collaboration among the schools involved, the Minister wanted to ensure that the projects were building on a foundation of sharing that had already been established in those three areas, and that there would be support in the local community for the proposals. It is my understanding that that was the basis of the choice of those three. That is why only three were picked from the 16 that were submitted and a decision was taken to go out for a second call.
53. **Mr Lyttle:** Maybe I did not catch it there, but are unsuccessful proposals being assisted to try to develop them into successful proposals?
54. **Mrs Farrell:** I am not totally sure of that, but we can go back to the Department and find out what the process is for doing that.
55. **Mr Lyttle:** OK. I am not clear on what an urban village is, but I am not going to ask you to tell me because that might take a while. What two urban villages have been selected? What were the criteria used to select those two areas — Newtownards Road and Colin? I have endeavoured to seek this clarification, but I am not sure if I ever got it: does the Newtownards Road urban village include the Short Strand area?
56. **Mrs Farrell:** The core aspects of the urban village concept were to create community space; improve the area and its aesthetics; provide a range of uses within the area; and create a community focus, hence the term urban village. It was felt that Colin and the lower Newtownards Road met those criteria through work that had been done previously, levels of deprivation in the area, or community infrastructure. The actual boundaries of the lower Newtownards Road urban village are still being considered. I can seek some certainty around that and get back to you.
57. **Mr Lyttle:** That would be helpful. I am a bit concerned that, having now asked about my fifth question of that nature, no one has been able to answer it just yet. It would seem quite strange that a strategy seeking to build a united community would identify an area as an urban village and not encompass an area of interface tension within that urban village, but maybe you can clarify that for us.
58. It says that 11 potential sites have been identified for the shared neighbourhoods. Do you know what those sites are? What criteria were used to select those?
59. **Mrs Farrell:** We can get a list of the 11 sent to you. I can tell you that construction works have commenced on Ravenhill phase 2; Felden Mill, Newtownabbey; and Crossgar, Saintfield.

- I can get a list of the 11 sites from DSD and report that back to the Committee.
60. **Mr Lyttle:** It says that membership of the ministerial panel has been widened to include local government, the voluntary and community sector, and key statutory organisations. Do you know what those organisations are?
61. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes. The ministerial panel held a meeting on 2 October. The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) was represented at that meeting. Local government, through the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), was invited but unfortunately had to send apologies. The Housing Executive also nominated a representative onto the ministerial panel. It is the intention that, once the thematic subgroups are established, the chairs of those groups will be represented on the ministerial panel to ensure that other voices and perspectives on good relations are at the table.
62. **Mr Lyttle:** Was the Community Relations Council approached about membership of the ministerial panel?
63. **Mrs Farrell:** It was not approached for the last meeting, but that is something that we are actively considering in the context of establishing the equality and good relations commission.
64. **Mr Lyttle:** Is it possible to get a list of where the summer schools took place in the summer of 2014 and the budget that was allocated to them?
65. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes, we can do that.
66. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Do you know the number of summer schools off the top of your head?
67. **Miss Donna Blaney (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** There have been 125 so far. They would not all be classed exactly as summer schools or camps, but they are summer interventions involving children and young people that will inform the design of the pure summer schools camps next year.
68. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Would any of those 125 have happened anyway?
69. **Miss Blaney:** A number of them would have happened anyway through our planned interventions programme, but we have allocated an additional £300,000 to interventions to be delivered that will
70. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** How many of the 125 would have happened anyway this summer?
71. **Miss Blaney:** I do not know about the numbers of camps, but certainly our baseline budget for that was £300,000.
72. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Right, but you know that there were 125 summer camps.
73. **Miss Blaney:** That have been delivered to date; yes.
74. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** But you do not know how many would have happened anyway? Surely you know.
75. **Miss Blaney:** It is just about when the funding came through. We had baseline funding of £300,000, and we then increased the level of funding to deliver some more. I do not have the breakdown of that with me, but we can get it for you.
76. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Again, that would be useful. We understand that some of the questions that you are being asked will mean that you have to liaise with other Departments. I appreciate that we cannot, therefore, expect you to come back in 10 days and that you may need a bit longer.
77. **Mr D McIlveen:** Going back to the budgetary side of things, a lot of the progress that has happened already on Together: Building a United Community already has been underwritten by PEACE moneys, Atlantic Philanthropies and other organisations. How much government money do you expect to be short by in order to take each of these 10 campus projects forward? Have there been any commitments from other organisations to support it? It sounds like a colossal amount of money

- when you talk about £120 million per campus. How is that money actually broken down? How much of it is coming from the Department? How much of it is being sourced from other places?
78. **Mrs Farrell:** That is part of the exercise that we are taking forward with Departments at the minute. We are asking them for their profile for each year, but also where they have sought funding from alternative sources such as PEACE IV when it is operational, to identify what the amount is, if that is relevant, and to assess the funding gap from there. That is something that we are taking forward with Departments across all the headline actions.
79. **Mr D McIlveen:** So the success or failure of these projects is not based solely on the Executive budget; is that what you are saying?
80. **Mrs Farrell:** Not solely. In some cases, there will be alternative sources of funding identified.
81. **Mr D McIlveen:** OK. There was also a point raised about the Community Relations Council a little bit earlier. It is something that I wanted to raise anyway. I am paraphrasing slightly here, but it was suggested recently that not enough was being done on good relations and so on. A figure that was discussed with me is that, since the Belfast Agreement, somewhere in the region of £3 billion has been spent on promoting good relations in Northern Ireland. Is that a figure that you recognise? If it is not, have any figures been estimated within the Department that suggest how much money has been spent?
82. **Mrs Farrell:** I have certainly heard that figure referenced before. I have also heard the figure of in and around £36 million to £40 million over the current CSR period. That is just what OFMDFM has directly invested in promoting good relations; it does not take into account the external funding from funding sources like PEACE. OFMDFM provides match funding with PEACE as well, so that is also a significant contribution on behalf of the Department. Even more recently, through June monitoring, we in the Department allocated an additional £220,000 to the Community Relations Council to support good relations activity on the ground through its pathfinder scheme. Some £70,000 of that was specifically targeted towards race hate interventions in light of recent circumstances.
83. So I do not think that the Department would accept that it has not been showing leadership on this issue. We can show clearly that £1.4 million has been made available this year to the central good relations fund. That is going straight to the delivery of good relations work on the ground and to community groups and practitioners who are taking this work forward. A lot of that is being delivered through the Community Relations Council.
84. **Mr D McIlveen:** That is very helpful; thank you.
85. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I will just follow up on that, Linsey, because this session is being reported by Hansard. On the budgets for those 10 campuses, David asked a very valid question about other potential sources of income. David mentioned Atlantic Philanthropies, and you mentioned PEACE IV. I heard you say that other sources would, 100% for sure, contribute to the creation of those campuses. Are you content that that goes on the record?
86. **Mrs Farrell:** They will be explored as opportunities.
87. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Ah, well, you see, I think you —
88. **Mrs Farrell:** We cannot give any certainty around Peace IV —
89. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I thought you did, you see.
90. **Mrs Farrell:** — because it is not operational as yet.
91. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I thought that, in your answer to David, you did suggest that definitely —

92. **Mrs Farrell:** That was not the intention, because Peace IV is not operational yet.
93. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Just to avoid doubt, which may only be in my mind, that is being explored but there is no guarantee at the moment that a single penny will come from anywhere else but Departments.
94. **Mrs Farrell:** Not at this point.
95. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is great. Thank you very much.
96. **Ms McGahan:** Thank you for your presentation. I am familiar with Moy Regional Primary School in County Tyrone. I had a number of engagements with the school. I know that if the groundwork had not been done over the last number of years, a shared education model would not have worked for them. Therefore, the groundwork was absolutely vital. I would appreciate it if you could give me any more information that you have on the development of that campus. You said that you hoped to receive businesses cases by the end of 2014.
97. **Mrs Farrell:** The Department of Education will be completing that business case process. We can certainly get any information that the Department has on the development work with those three campuses. We will see what we can find out and get back to you on that. However, the business cases will go specifically to the Department of Education.
98. **Ms McGahan:** With regard to developing a significant programme of cross-community sporting events, I would like you to give serious consideration to my constituency in Dungannon where we have the fastest-growing population in the North, which is down to the ethnic minority population. I know that the soccer clubs in the Dungannon area do a significant amount of work with that population. Therefore, it would be important to consider that, because it is a rural area as well.
99. **Mrs Farrell:** DCAL is taking forward the cross-community sports programme, and I reported earlier that it is running out a pilot. It has not released the areas that that will be in, but it has said that it will concentrate on participation from minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities and young women. We are very conscious of the whole urban/rural issue within the context of implementing the strategy, and we have been working very closely with the rural community network to ensure that we are engaging on those specific rural issues.
100. **Mrs Hale:** Apologies for missing part of your presentation. If you have to repeat yourself, I apologise again. My question is on the back of what Chris said about the urban villages. Obviously we are waiting for another two to be identified. Are they going to be specific to greater Belfast? Is one of the essential criteria that they have to be an interface area? I know that many areas in my constituency of Lagan Valley would benefit greatly from the core aspects of the programme, but they are not interface areas.
101. **Mrs Farrell:** The other two have not been announced, and I have not seen any suggested locations for those. That is not to say that they will all be in the Belfast area or, indeed, that they have to be what would traditionally be viewed as an interface community.
102. **Mr Spratt:** Thank you for the presentation. I have a couple of minor points. I want to go back quickly to the 10 shared campuses. Am I right in understanding that three of those are at business case?
103. **Mrs Farrell:** They have started the business case process, and the hope is that those will be completed by the end of this year.
104. **Mr Spratt:** With regard to the Pathways to Work programme, which DEL is leading on, I understood that there was hope that that would increase to 10,000 places a year. Where are we with that, and what has DEL delivered?
105. **Mrs Farrell:** At the minute, it has been doing a lot of stakeholder engagement to inform the design of the programme. Proposals were submitted for pilots

- at the end of September, and DEL is probably in the process of selecting those at the minute. Following a development phase during October and November, pilot applications will be submitted in early December with a view to commencing pilots in January next year. I understand from DEL colleagues that those pilots will take a number of formats and structures, and the Department is very keen to get a variety in terms of delivery, to find out what ultimately will work really well in the final programme. It is very much a case of no one size fits all. That is why they are looking at various delivery mechanisms for those pilots. There will be very important work going on through the Department for Employment and Learning to evaluate what is coming out of all those pilots to inform the final design and to make sure that we get the best possible good relations outcomes from the programme.
106. **Mr Spratt:** I will just go to another aspect that you mentioned: the taking down of barriers and the opening of gates. You gave us a few examples. It has been made public that, in lots of areas, communities are not ready for barriers to be taken down. What has the Department of Justice done to liaise with those areas to try to get some of those barriers down, given that, in some areas, there are ongoing problems?
107. **Mrs Farrell:** That is absolutely right. The key component of all this is having community buy-in and involvement before any barrier can come down. There are some areas where stakeholder engagement and buy-in has been quite minimal. We are actively working with DOJ to see how best to take forward engagement in those specific areas.
108. Donna, you might be across more of the detail.
109. **Mr Spratt:** Do you know exactly what DOJ has done?
110. **Miss Blaney:** It is working very closely with the IFI-funded peace walls programme with the seven partners. Those are across Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. It is now working with us to explore where we can increase that engagement with the community where it has not been done, perhaps in east Belfast or the Shankill, outside the greater Belfast area. We have tried to ring-fence some additional funding that we might be able to use to get some expansion of that programme of seven groups rolled out this year.
111. **Mr Spratt:** Has anything been done in the south Belfast area?
112. **Miss Blaney:** We do not have a group in the south Belfast area at the moment.
113. **Mr Spratt:** There are some barriers there. Do you not think that DOJ should be there?
114. **Miss Blaney:** We have established a good model and want to actively roll that out and get more engagement with the community. You are right to say that sometimes the community is not ready to go to full engagement over the removal of the barriers. It is about peace building and the creation of the conditions to remove the peace walls. DOJ and ourselves are working with IFI on the peace impact programme, which is sort of a stage earlier than the peace walls programme and about bringing a community together that perhaps has not been engaged in peace building to start discussions with the relevant agencies.
115. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Linsey, back in March, we were advised that the seven headline actions were under consideration within the Department in advance of a ministerial panel meeting on 27 March. Can you update us on the status of those plans? Indeed, can we have sight of them?
116. **Mrs Farrell:** Again, that ministerial panel meeting did not happen at the end of March due to unforeseen circumstances. The meeting happened on 2 October. For that reason, we are working with Departments to revise their costs and final project plan designs. I can certainly find out whether those are something that could be shared with the Committee.

117. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It had to be postponed on 27 March and could not be convened until 2 October?
118. **Mrs Farrell:** It was challenging getting a date. We were very keen, as I said, to have all Ministers there and all Departments represented; that was the challenge.
119. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is that reflective of the challenge of trying to work on a cross-departmental basis?
120. **Mrs Farrell:** Not at all. We actually have very good and positive working relationships. I should say that, during that time, the good relations programme board continued to meet on a bimonthly basis in the absence of the ministerial panel being able to secure a date agreeable to everyone.
121. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I do not ask to imply that there is anything other than good relations. I just ask about the logistical difficulty of pulling everybody together. We tend to work vertically, and you are trying to work horizontally through government.
122. **Mrs Farrell:** That is why it is vital to have the programme board there and meeting regularly.
123. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We are obviously very interested in what people think of the urban villages. Concern was expressed that “the two urban villages programmes announced appear to have little or no good relations content and local minority communities appear to be excluded from the areas of benefit”. Is that a valid criticism?
124. **Mrs Farrell:** It is certainly something that we are very conscious of and a criticism that we have heard. For that reason, we are working very closely with the Strategic Investment Board at this stage in structuring the stakeholder engagement and building in the good relations outcomes that we clearly want to see from urban villages. As it is a headline action in Together: Building a United Community, good relations is a key outcome that we will look for. It will be very important to factor that in at the design stage with stakeholders and all sections of the community.
125. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Another general observation was that, to a certain extent, it is top-heavy in terms of statutory input and that civic society has not had the role that it might have had.
126. **Mrs Farrell:** As we are at a very advanced stage in setting up the thematic subgroups, that will be the key place where other sectors, organisations, stakeholders and the all-important practitioners will be involved.
127. We are working actively with the Community Relations Council to develop a structured and constructive programme of stakeholder engagement across the four strategic priorities of Together: Building a United Community in an attempt to engage much more and recognise the practice and work that has gone in over very many years and find out what we can learn from that practice to ensure that we have practice-informed policy.
128. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** In terms of engagement, the codesign process for United Youth seemed to be a very good model. Is that being rolled out across the other six?
129. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes, to lesser and stronger extents —
130. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** To the extent that it fits.
131. **Mrs Farrell:** It certainly is, and it is something that we rolled out in light of the review of good relations funding.
132. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** At that January event, you had 300 youths at the Waterfront Hall. Do you update them?
133. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes. In fact, the Department for Employment and Learning has stayed in touch and carried forward that engagement. It held a follow-up youth event — a two- or three-night residential in Corrymeela at the beginning of September — and re-engaged with the vast majority of the young people whom we had engaged with in January at the Waterfront through the organisations

- that we had engaged with to ensure that continuity. It will be important for them to build on that.
134. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is there no frustration coming back about nothing happening?
135. **Mrs Farrell:** There have been frustrations voiced, but more in terms of the engagement. The young people very much welcome being part of the process, and they will be part of the DEL design team. Our own junior Minister McCann attended that residential and was able to hear at first hand the views of the young people.
136. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** My interest is more in the extent to which they understand and accept the process and the length of time that goes into a process. If I promised one of my teenagers in January, “I’m going to do something good for you” and got to February without delivering, I would be in trouble.
137. **Mrs Farrell:** That has been balanced against them appreciating and welcoming the opportunity to be engaged and to contribute to the design to make sure that it is something that is right and meets their specific needs as young people.
138. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So that they see the value.
139. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes.
140. **Mr Lyttle:** I have a quick supplementary. You said that the Community Relations Council was not invited to the ministerial panel. Given that, out of a budget of approximately £10 million a year for good relations funding, you direct approximately £6 million to the Community Relations Council, and given the length of time it has been engaged in community relations work in Northern Ireland, why was it not asked to put forward a representative onto the ministerial panel?
141. **Mrs Farrell:** It was not invited because at the time it was thought that, within the context of establishing the equality and good relations commission — and we are actively looking at it should be one person from each of those organisations at the next ministerial panel meeting, or how best that representation can be included at the next meeting.
142. **Mr Lyttle:** So it may be included at a future date.
143. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes, that is something we are looking at.
144. **Mr Lyttle:** There was a comprehensive review of the structure, delivery and impact of existing funding delivery mechanisms carried out, which I understand has been completed. Is there a date for the publication of the report?
145. **Mrs Farrell:** We have been working with the Strategic Investment Board over the last number of weeks to finalise that report. That will shortly be with our Ministers, and we hope to re-engage with stakeholders following that.
146. **Mr Lyttle:** Are we not stakeholders?
147. **Mrs Farrell:** Yes.
148. **Mr Lyttle:** Why were we not engaged prior to the writing of the final report?
149. **Mrs Farrell:** I believe the Committee was invited to the stakeholder engagement sessions.
150. **Mr Lyttle:** OK.
151. **Mr Spratt:** You did not go, Chris.
152. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Donna, Michael and Linsey, thank you very much.

3 December 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Megan Fearon
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mr Joe O'Donnell	<i>Belfast Interface Project</i>
Ms Jacqueline Irwin	<i>Community Relations Council</i>
Mr Peter Osborne	<i>Council</i>
Ms Sylvia Gordon	<i>Groundwork NI</i>

153. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** With us today are Peter Osborne, the chairperson of the Community Relations Council (CRC); Jacqui Irwin, CRC chief executive; Sylvia Gordon, director of Groundwork NI; and Joe O'Donnell, director of the Belfast Interface Project.
154. You are all very welcome. Peter, I invite you to lead off with some short opening remarks.
155. **Mr Peter Osborne (Community Relations Council):** Chairman, thanks very much for inviting us along this afternoon. It is good to be here.
156. I will start by reinforcing with the Committee the importance of the work that it does and the importance of the review of Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) that it is undertaking. The various people on the delegation today will have some input into the brief introductory comments, if that is OK, and will share some of the responses to questions. I say that because the Community Relations Council, with Jacqueline and me, is doing its work at regional level, but Sylvia and Joe are from organisations that have funding from the CRC and are really very active on the ground, getting their hands dirty doing coalface work.
- T:BUC is the strategy that supports that sort of work.
157. It is important that we recognise how far we have come as a society. When we engage on some of the issues and talk about some of the good relations, reconciliation and peace-building work that we almost automatically do now as individuals in this society, that is work that we could not imagine being able to do in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s. It is important that we recognise the achievements not just of civil society in doing that work but of politicians across all the political parties in this place and in other places. It has been very significant. We sometimes get caught up in the short term or in the issues of the day and do not realise, or recognise sufficiently, the long-term strategic changes that have taken place in this society. This is not easy work, though. Although we have come some way in the past 20 years, there is an awful long way to go. I keep saying, and I make no apology for it, that, when we talk about getting to the sort of reconciled society that we want to see, it will take 20, 30, 40 or even 50 years to achieve that, because these are long-standing and deeply felt issues that touch the emotions as well as the everyday life of people across the community in the place in which we live. In some ways, it will be the young people — the youth — of today, who are perhaps not as caught up with the memories that we who lived through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s have, who will be able eventually to deliver that reconciled society and, if you like, carry the burden, while also enjoying the benefit and bounty of a peaceful and reconciled society.
158. I want to touch on two or three issues very briefly before handing over to Sylvia, Joe and Jacqueline. One is to remind the Committee of some of the things that the peace monitoring report that the Community Relations Council produced

- a few months ago stated. It talked about the moral basis of the Good Friday Agreement having been eroded. It talked about a lack of trust leading to a lack of progress. It talked about, in some respects in recent times, community relations having taken a backward step and the fact that we are not in a continually forward-looking, upward trajectory around some of the issues. There are ebbs and flows. I think that the responsibility on us all is to try to look strategically as well as specifically at issues and at how to get the ebb back into reconciliation and peace-building in the area.
159. The challenge for us is to build on the T:BUC document. T:BUC is a devolved document. That is an achievement in itself. It provides a framework. It provides some ambitious targets. We need to build on T:BUC, however. We need to take that as where we are at the minute and look even more strategically at where we need to go as a government and a civil society. We believe that reconciliation needs to be recognised as a greater priority in government and civil society, with greater ambition, more energy and vision around it that involves everybody — politicians and civil society as a whole.
160. We also believe that it is important to recognise the need to build rather than erode the infrastructure that is delivering some of the work on the ground. That takes us back to the need for long-term, outcome-focused resourcing. I touch on that briefly, and we may touch on it again. Resourcing also needs to be reasonably significant in the context of other things that government does, such as the targets for peace walls that the T:BUC strategy contains. If we allow the infrastructure to erode, society will pay the price for that in years to come. In some ways, that will create the context in which we could be looking at a more violent future. We need to engage the disengaged. The peace monitoring report referred to that. A report that came out today refers to it again. There are people on all sides of the community who feel detached or dislocated from, or, in some way, not enveloped by, the sort of processes that we have in this society at the minute.
161. We need to understand the cost of failure to address those issues. It is not just the cost — some of it physical and some of it financial — of a more segregated society now but the cost of creating the conditions in which we might go back to something that we do not want to go back to, which is a more divided society or even violence in the future.
162. Those are my brief comments. I will hand over to Sylvia first and then to Joe and Jacqueline, who will go into this in a little bit more detail and talk about some of the practice that there is and some of the needs in communities at the minute.
163. **Ms Sylvia Gordon (Groundwork NI):** I am the director of Groundwork. We are a regional organisation, but we are based in north Belfast. Whenever I became the director of Groundwork, I thought that it was very important to make a difference locally, albeit that I was working for a regional organisation.
164. It is important to say as a caveat that I have to reference the partnerships that I work with and the collaborations that I undertake, because this is not about just one organisation. You do not build relationships with organisations; you build relationships with people and individuals within organisations. Therefore, whenever I talk about the “work”, I will be referring to the work of Duncairn Community Partnership, of which Groundwork Northern Ireland is one of a number of founding members. We are a cross-community partnership based, as I said, in north Belfast.
165. Over the years, there has been huge investment in relationships in north Belfast, particularly at a number of what were once very contentious interfaces, including the one between the Limestone Road and Duncairn Gardens. We have been working to build those relationships, build trust and build respect, recognising that we have our differences. We want to achieve the

- same vision and get to the same place. We have been fit to do remarkable things under the radar. It is important to note that that was a local effort undertaken by local people to make a difference to their neighbourhoods.
166. Therefore, the challenge, not only for us at a community level but for those here on the hill at Stormont, is to start getting our stars strategically aligned. We need investment and vision from the top down and the bottom up, and we need the two to join. We need investment in relationships and in the infrastructure that Peter referred to, and we need investment in regeneration.
167. Yesterday, the partnership hosted Senator Hart. There was cross-community representation at that meeting, along with representation from the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). Over the past three years, through IFI funding, we have been fit to engage locally about vision and what a place might look like if we came together and started looking pragmatically at interfaces. However, there have been real challenges with the capital funding and regeneration work that needs to happen. For example, there is a huge linear site opposite Groundwork where there is a green fence that is owned by the DOJ. Ongoing consultation was undertaken by local people, and there was agreement reached to take that interface down and replace it with something more pleasing and more in line with what is up and down the street. We found huge challenges in getting that small part of capital funding. I am not talking about millions but about £50,000 to £70,000.
168. That is where our stars are not aligned, and we are not strategically aligned when it comes to investment and the type of models that we need in Northern Ireland to make regeneration happen. It is very obvious, given the cuts in public funding, that that funding will not be sourced from the public sector. There is less resource and more competition. How do we deal with that? How do we attract inward investment into an area, and how does the voluntary sector work in partnership with the private sector to inspire and create regeneration? Those are the types of conversations that we need to start having. There has been talk about asset transfer, and we have had some models of asset transfer. In itself, asset transfer is all right, but we need large-scale investment. Through our consultation through the partnership, we know that people want to see investment in their local neighbourhoods. They want to see improvements, not only in the place itself but in the opportunities that are there. They want to traverse one area to the other, and they are doing so. However, tackling interfaces is not just about tackling the physical interface but about tackling the social issues that are on either side of those interfaces.
169. Duncairn Community Partnership can and will provide examples of work that we has done. The Alexandra Park gate is one such initiative. Last week, we had the removal of the barrier in Newington Street in north Belfast at the Limestone Road. What I am saying is that communities are in a certain place but that they are getting very frustrated at the lack of strategic vision coming from Stormont. We need to see confidence, we need to see strategy and we need to see a plan that is resourced in order to help us achieve. We are in a dire situation, as we can see by looking at the papers and at the news every night. What is going on is not good, and it makes people very frustrated.
170. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thanks, Sylvia.
171. Peter, you should have received a message that we allow 10 minutes for the opening remarks.
172. **Mr Osborne:** Yes, we did. I am not sure how much time we have taken.
173. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Over 10 minutes. We will take Joe, and, if you do not mind, Jacqueline, we will pick up your views in the question-and-answer session.
174. **Mr Joe O'Donnell (Belfast Interface Project):** Thank you very much. I

- appreciate that and will try to keep this as brief as possible.
175. I am the director of the Belfast Interface Project, which is the only city-wide structure that works across Belfast and all its interfaces. We work in both communities. We are apolitical and non-aligned, and we have a membership made up of approximately 50 community organisations in the city.
176. I endorse what Sylvia and Peter have already said. We see ourselves, collectively and individually, as critical friends. We appreciate the opportunity to speak here today. We see the future of the work that we are trying to do. The partnership between the community sector that we represent and the politicians who are working in the Assembly is vital to the success of what we are trying to do.
177. We are also saying that we want to move up another gear. We want to step up the work that is already happening. We have touched on some of the very positive work that is not often seen, not often realised and certainly not often on our television screens or in the media. For example, this year and last year, we went through some pretty difficult times in the city because of different events that happened. In all that time, our work continued, although it did not always get the airtime. The work of the partnerships at interfaces continued, and people shook themselves down, got on with it and picked up the pieces when very difficult circumstances made that almost impossible.
178. We want to see a plan for change. However, if you were to speak to any of your constituents or to people who live at any of the interfaces in our city, or even regionally, and ask them whether they understand, see or know of the plan for change that needs to happen or whether they have a vision of a plan for that change that needs to happen, I doubt that they would be able to say yes. The people who live in those communities — in Belfast, there are 100 interface barriers — cannot say what they see as being a vision for change. That throws up the three key factors in how we move forward. First, there is the issue of policing and how that needs to happen in interface communities. The police would say that they are not in a position to deal with the problem entirely on their own. Secondly, the partnerships need to be encouraged, developed and resourced within the communities. Finally, and this is probably the most vital factor, trust needs to be encouraged within those communities.
179. I know that we are stuck for time, so I will finish on this point: the best way to move forward is through long-term, strategic, resourced intervention that will provide a wrap-around for communities. Take, for example, the work with young people that is needed to provide a vehicle forward. Can they be referred on to further education or employment opportunities? Can they be skilled in good citizenship? Can they be encouraged to change if they are involved or caught up in inter-community violence? The things that provide effective signage to other opportunities in those communities are probably the best ways in which to progress. I can go into that in some more detail later.
180. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I have a couple of follow-up questions, and I will then bring in Jacqueline. Joe, you talked about there being 50 organisations. What is the split between those representing one or other traditional community, those that are cross-community and those not representing either of our traditional communities?
181. **Mr O'Donnell:** The whole ethos of the Belfast Interface Project has been to include that process not only in our staff and on our board but in the membership of organisations. For both main cultural traditions, it is about 50:50. We have been in existence now for approximately 20 years. We were founded out of the CRC around 1995, and we became a stand-alone organisation in 2000. I have been director for only about four or five years. The previous director, Chris O'Halloran, has been there for 15 or 20 years. The integrity of the organisation

- has always been to maintain that ethos. We have done that quite successfully.
182. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thanks. It was just for information.
183. Sylvia, you said that there was great frustration in the community about a lack of strategic vision coming out of Stormont. Does that mean that T:BUC is not the strategic vision?
184. **Ms Gordon:** We need to see things happening. We need to be able to point to stuff and say, “As a result of T:BUC, this is what we have been able to achieve”. Therefore, T:BUC needs to be resourced, and it needs an implementation plan. It needs critical partners to allow its vision, aims and objectives to be achieved.
185. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** If I were to ask what you think the budget is for T:BUC, what would you say?
186. **Ms Gordon:** Probably not enough.
187. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** But, in round figures, do you know what it is?
188. **Ms Gordon:** I do not know. It relies on Peace IV funding quite substantially.
189. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Although I was not here last week, as far as I understand from the briefing, it is reliant very much on —
190. **Mr Lyttle:** There is not one.
191. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** — monitoring rounds. There is no budget line, as such, for T:BUC.
192. Peter, you said that the fact that T:BUC is a devolved document is an achievement in itself. Perhaps that is not fully endorsed by what Sylvia said from her perspective.
193. **Mr Osborne:** I support everything that has been said so far. You have to give credit where it is due for how far we have come so far. I am talking about everybody in the Assembly and across all political parties.
194. The fact that OFMDFM achieved the production of the T:BUC document, and the fact that there are certain targets in it, such as the removal of the interface barriers, are achievements, and you have to recognise that. However, you then have to dig beneath that a little bit. You, Sylvia and Joe touched on aspects of that, too. How are you going to remove interface barriers? A strategy talks about how you are going to do something; it does not just set a target. You need to address certain critical issues. You need to ensure that, on both sides of an interface, people understand what interdependence is. They need to understand that, if they are to make progress in their area, that has to be done with each other across the community divide. Issues around safety and security have to be resolved. That means that people need to feel safer about the removal of the interface barriers. There has to be an inclusive process. That means that no gatekeepers and that everybody on both sides of the barriers is involved. There has to be political stability here, and that has to work its way out on to the ground so that people understand that a better vision for the future has been bought into by everybody across the political divide. There has to be relationship building across the barriers, and there has to be regeneration.
195. You need to achieve that with at least two very significant things coming into play: you need structures that are able to cut through and deliver on the ground, and you need resourcing. That will not be done without money. There are difficult times for us all around this, but, if we are serious about taking down interface barriers, it needs to be resourced. There needs to be significant long-term, outcome-focused resourcing. In that way — I come back to one other thing I said — the priority in government to achieve that needs to be higher than it is. Ultimately, it needs to be about making resources available.
196. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I want to bring Jacqueline in. Jacqueline, you have been a senior official in the CRC for a number of years. How and when did you hear about T:BUC?

197. **Ms Jacqueline Irwin (Community Relations Council):** The review of the policy was in gestation for very many years. It depends on whether you say “united community” or the development of a strategy. It took a long time to come to fruition. I cannot even remember. There was probably talk about it when I first started in the organisation.
198. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** What about the actual strategy Together: Building a United Community?
199. **Ms J Irwin:** In 2013, just prior to the announcements that the Secretary of State made, that was the moment at which we knew that there was going to be a policy, that it would be called united communities and that it had headline actions and so on.
200. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** What was your gut reaction?
201. **Ms J Irwin:** At the time, two things struck me about the policy. One was that it lacked the cross-governmental component that had been described under what was then the existing shared future policy. At least it had an implementation plan. It viewed most of what was coming through from the remainder of the Programme for Government and so on as being part of what the delivery of a peaceful society would look like.
202. Its other big characteristic was that it recognised that it was going to need large-scale intervention, initiatives and programmes delivered out to young people across the range of categories in united communities at the moment. That was welcome. It seemed to be saying, “We’ve probably reached the end of the experimental peace-building and the small programmes and so on. We need something that is more collaborative, more large scale and a wholesale change across society.” That was to be welcomed.
203. Your review is also to be welcomed. It is a very timely moment to draw breath because, in the conditions in which the policy came forward, more resources were available at that time. There was the possibility of additional resources; it seemed to be at least spoken about that there might have been at that stage. That is not where we are at now. The domestic financial situation is as difficult as you all know it is.
204. As for the international resources, there is a gap between Peace III and Peace IV. Peace III is coming to an end now, but Peace IV is probably at least a year and a half from delivery on the ground. It is possibly more; you might know better than I do about that. It is likely to be a smaller fund. As grateful as we all were to receive the American resources, they are not of the same order. The planning assumptions are different from what they were.
205. That means that, while the collaborative approach, which has been spoken about around the room, is still absolutely vital, we are finding that most of the groups on the ground are consumed with survival questions at the moment. To a certain extent, the public sector also is; it has had to turn its attention to decreasing budgets and trying to save what can be saved. We are in a very different place from where we were even a year and a half ago. All is not lost, however. This is a good opportunity to pay even more attention to the question of collaboration. We probably need to review what can be done now and what may need to be left for a little while longer; at least until we have more resources. I absolutely agree with what Sylvia said: the vision of united communities has not communicated itself to people in their ordinary, everyday lives. That is where we will measure its success. Has it made a difference to somebody’s life in the ordinary, everyday world? I do not think that they fully understand.
206. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I would like to explore the idea of collaborative working and how we allocate resources and how that impacts on the ability to collaborate. That works at two levels: you have the need for Departments to collaborate if we are going to deliver on Together: Building a United Community, because OFMDFM really

- only leads on United Youth. The rest are providing a vision, a collaborative role or a coordinating role — whatever way you want to describe that. So, there is a piece for us in the Executive and Assembly to ensure that, rather than working in our vertical silos, we deliver horizontal government.
207. On the ground, Sylvia and Joe, there is an expectation that your organisations will all work collaboratively. Basically, we allocate funding on a competitive basis. How can you share best practice when you are a brother-and-sister organisation one day but then are competing for increasingly diminishing resources the next?
208. **Mr O'Donnell:** That is where we become partners in terms of government and the community together. We have shown some very good examples of how we can do that in interface communities. For example, we have, in partnership with the CRC, set up the Interface Community Partners. We are also represented on the inter-agency group here at the Assembly, which is a cross-departmental group. We are involved in those two projects to simplify the process of barrier removal, or certainly to work in partnership.
209. Belfast Interface Project recently set up eight cluster partnerships across the city. We have broken down Belfast into 13 clusters, which are areas where peace walls or barriers cluster together. The only caveat in each of those partnerships is that they are on a cross-community basis and that the action plan that will come out of them will be agreed through a cross-community process. We feel that that is the best way to do it.
210. You are absolutely right: currently, organisations like ours are being forced to compete for quite small pots of funding. Smaller community-based organisations are going into survival mode; they say, "Look, I need to think about my own community before I think about working on a cross-community basis, and I think, to try and survive, I want to compete for that pot of money."
- Collectively, we can come up with a better strategy than that.
211. **Ms Gordon:** A lot of organisations are now taking strategic pauses to look at where they are at and how they go forward. There is less funding, and it is more competitive. How do you react to that? I concur with Joe: it is about collaboration. It is about the sum of the total good out there; the sum of what, for example, Groundwork can bring in its skills and experience, and how I can collaborate with Joe and the Belfast Interface Project. It has to be about the aims and vision of any organisation. As I said, in my organisation, it is not about the people first; it is about the aims and objectives, and where we want to get to as an organisation. If we are committed to peace-building, which we are, and regeneration, we have to put the strategic vision forward, rather than being busy, busy, busy looking for the next small pot of funding. If you are doing that, I am frantically busy; I am taking my eye off the ball when I could be doing other stuff much more effectively.
212. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** At the risk of jumping on one of my little hobby horses, you would get funding only if you prove that there is a need that the Department or Executive accept needs to be addressed. It is probably a need that they believe can be measured and your intervention monitored. In that case, having ticked all the boxes, why is it limited to a year, or whatever? Why do we not say that it will be open-ended support, in the same way as we commit to open-ended support for the National Health Service? That would mean that the exact budget varies, but the commitment is going to be there until the need is met. That would take away the competitive nature of it, or a large degree of it, and it might open up the sharing of best practice, which, understandably, is difficult in a situation where you are looking at somebody and going, "Well, if I tell you, you could take the money off me next April".
213. **Ms Gordon:** Or, "What's your big idea? I'll copy that." It is very competitive. The

- sector has to step up to the mark in terms of the voluntary and community sector. We recognise that we need to do things differently and work differently.
214. **Mr O'Donnell:** Not only is that a good idea, but, to make it even better in terms of accountability, good governance and management, it could be reviewed on a two- or three-yearly basis. So, you could be open-ended funded but be subject to reviews.
215. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Yes, continuous monitoring and targets.
216. **Mr O'Donnell:** That could be the way forward.
217. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Then, if there was ever a feeling that the need was going to be met — in other words, that you had succeeded — you would give notice of three, six or nine months that the funding is to come to an end. That also means that you can retain staff and not have them worrying every year about whether the funding is coming to keep them. I am sure you lose a lot of staff to the statutory sector because people are fearful about whether they will get a second contract.
218. **Mr Osborne:** As I go around and talk to groups, I am genuinely amazed by the commitment of people who do this work. By and large, the people who do it could be paid better and have different job satisfaction if they went off and did something else. However, they keep at it, and they do so because of the commitment they have to the needs in the area. Many of them have been doing this for decades, sometimes in a voluntary capacity, and have been doing an awful lot of great stuff on the ground, sometimes at personal risk. So, I agree with what has been said, but the funding and chasing of the jobs is one aspect of a great number of people who are putting a huge amount of personal sacrifice into what they do; it is not all about money and it is not all about funding.
219. There is also a significant degree of sharing. The projects that CRC funds are brought together quarterly, and
- there is a huge amount of sharing between the organisations that are doing that work on the ground. That is done with willingness and in a way that enhances the work that each of those organisations does. It is quite impressive, and the Committee is very welcome to come to some of those sharing meetings to hear about the work that is happening with those funded projects.
220. There is an issue: there is an awful lot of work going on with a lot of different funders. There is something on a regional basis about the coordination of that work: we can do what we do with our funded projects, but we cannot do it with everybody else.
221. **Mr Lyttle:** Thanks for your presentation so far. What involvement has the Community Relations Council had with the ministerial panel and the project board that was established to oversee the implementation of Together: Building a United Community?
222. **Ms J Irwin:** None.
223. **Mr Lyttle:** So, you do not know what the activity of the ministerial panel has been since the publication of the strategy.
224. **Ms J Irwin:** I understand that it has met and that it did so relatively recently but nothing else.
225. **Mr Lyttle:** There could be any degree of communication between each Department on that. Given that you have said that there is a real reach for cross-departmental cooperation on the strategy, that is a bit of a concern.
226. **Ms J Irwin:** One of the things that I suggested to officials in the Department, to address the question of building solidarity with the policy at the community level, was the wide circulation of communiqués that came out of those meetings so that people can see that there is work going on. There is work going on behind the scenes, but the general public are relatively unaware of that. That sort of communication would be very helpful.

227. **Mr Lyttle:** Given the importance of investment and resources to the delivery of the strategy, what input and feedback have you had on the review of good relations funding?
228. **Ms J Irwin:** We had a meeting with officials earlier this week. They are not quite clear yet on the handling of the report and how that will be dealt with. In general terms, the discussion with us related to activities that they wish to see us taking forward in the next year or so. I am aware of that, and I am aware that the report has been received and that Ministers are considering it.
229. **Mr Lyttle:** Is there an identified timescale for publication of the report?
230. **Ms J Irwin:** I am not sure whether that has been decided. Officials would be better able to speak to you about that.
231. **Mr Lyttle:** How important is the measurement of outcomes? How effective have the good relations indicators been in monitoring and measuring progress of Together: Building a United Community? Are the indicators that have been proposed adequately linked to the Together: Building a United Community objectives?
232. **Ms J Irwin:** I think that everybody accepts that the indicators that are there at the moment are probably making the best of what is available and that they fall short of making a very clear and causal relationship between the information that is gathered and the impact of the implementation of the policy. So, there is work to be done.
233. I am also very aware of the fact that, across government, there is a greater interest in measuring outcomes as a means of being clearer about accountability and therefore focussing on the right things. That is one of the things that the Department has spoken to our organisation about.
234. To join the question of measuring impact with the question of what services should be delivered, the other ingredient in there is collaborative planning. So, we have an opportunity coming up in community planning processes, if we can get that right, to begin to take a much more collaborative approach, not only to assessing how far we have got and what the needs are in the local community but, very importantly, what the assets are and what is already there that could have more advantage squeezed out of it, particularly in relation to community and good relations issues, which is our area of interest. If we can get that right and get those who are bringing funding into that environment to also join up their thinking a little bit, we have a better chance of getting to the sort of vision that you are speaking of: a plan that is longer, has other contributing to it and has its outcomes measured in the round. Each contribution that has been made by my organisation or any other should be done in a rounded way that takes all into account. That is a good idea on any day, but it is an essential idea when we are moving forward with limited resources.
235. **Mr Lyttle:** Collaborative planning is best practice in most approaches. It is not encouraging to hear that the body charged with collaborative planning — the ministerial panel — has communicated with you in no great way. There was also to be a funders' body created in the delivery of Together: Building a United Community. Have you had any update on that?
236. **Ms J Irwin:** That group has met twice.
237. **Mr Lyttle:** Do you know who that group includes?
238. **Ms J Irwin:** It includes my organisation, some of the independent funders, such as Atlantic Philanthropies, the Community Foundation, the Special EU Programmes Body, departmental officials and organisations like the National Lottery.
239. **Mr Lyttle:** Presuming that you submitted proposals for the good relations indicators, have you had any feedback as to whether your suggestions have been adopted?
240. **Ms J Irwin:** Not specifically in relation to our suggestions, but the discussion has

- certainly started in relation to everyone improving their approach to outcomes-based accountability. That may take us somewhere else in sorts of things that we measure. That is not quite an answer to your specific question about Together: Building a United Community, but, as the resources that are specifically focussed on good relations diminish, making sure that all the resources spent by Government have a benefit in terms of good relations will be an important achievement.
241. **Mr Lyttle:** I have a quick question for Sylvia about interfaces. You mention that there is a need for public, private and third-sector collaboration and investment in regeneration around interfaces. OFMDFM recently announced the identification of two urban villages: on the Newtownards Road and at Colin. What type of interaction did OFMDFM have with groundwork in relation to the identification of those areas? Have you any information on how other areas may be able to be part of any other regeneration projects?
242. **Ms Gordon:** I did not have any direct communication with OFMDFM. I had conversations with the Strategic Investment Board. I am aware of the new town centre for Colin and have had a number of conversations with the Strategic Investment Board about how organisations such as Groundwork can benefit from social clauses in procurement, particularly in relation to large-scale regeneration programmes. I am aware of one meeting in relation to the Newtownards Road. Again, I know that that was communication from the Strategic Investment Board not OFMDFM.
243. **Mr Lyttle:** How does that type of regeneration facilitate cross-community relationship building?
244. **Ms Gordon:** It is quite difficult. If you take the new town centre for Colin in west Belfast, it is about looking at practice and assets that are already there. There are projects in that area that have a cross-community basis. Therefore, any regeneration should take into consideration those services, how they are enhanced and made better and how the diversity of the people accessing those services is increased. I could give you one very basic example of a project in Colin Glen. It is a huge allotment site on an old Invest NI site. The diversity of the people using that site is remarkable. It is cross-community and crosses all social structures as well. People with disabilities, people with learning difficulties, homeless people and indeed people from the new communities that are coming into Northern Ireland are accessing the site as well. So, in many respects, there is diversity. You have to look for those gems. They should be valued and brought into the bigger debate about regeneration. How does that project that is based on the Glen Road communicate and join with the vision for a new town centre for Colin? How does it actually connect with that?
245. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is the Department asking you about that? Is it listening if you attempt to describe that?
246. **Ms Gordon:** I have described the plans to the Department, particularly around the site off the Glen Road. It has talked about how it appreciates the diversity of the users, the beneficiaries and the need for it to connect with the new town centre for Colin. It is pretty difficult when it actually comes down to implementation and, for example, when SIB has appointed an urban-regeneration company. So, it is up to Groundwork as well as others to step up to the mark and have that conversation with that urban-regeneration company about how we can actually make connections.
247. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I just want to be sure that I am hearing what you are saying, because you have talked about your contact as being more with the Strategic Investment Board.
248. **Ms Gordon:** It has been more with the Strategic Investment Board, yes.
249. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is that the way that you would like it to be?

250. **Ms Gordon:** I would like to take my vision and sell it to OFMDFM.
251. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you.
252. **Mr D McIlveen:** Thank you for your presentation. I am in complete agreement with a lot of what I am hearing, but I suppose that what I want to encourage you to do for a minute or two is to come to this side of the table, metaphorically. *[Laughter.]*
253. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I am sorry: I cannot agree.
254. **Mr D McIlveen:** Joe had mentioned, very rightly, I think, that obviously the sort of long-term or, hopefully, even medium-term objective is effectively to get these communities to a place where they are standing on their own two feet, are able to get into further education and that jobs are then available as a result of that. Peter, very articulately, related that to how everything that they seek to do in the Community Relations Council is based on outcomes rather than outputs. I think that that is a really pragmatic, beneficial way to do things.
255. However, it may be the case that we are in a position where it is a choice of “or” rather than “and”. My understanding is that, in some easements that may come as a result of the budgetary consultation, the choice will probably be to give some extra money to the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) on the basis that it suggests that it may have to cut significant places in further and higher education or not to give it to DEL and to put it somewhere else. I would appreciate your thoughts if you were in that position. You can see the garden: the money tree is not there. We are not hiding it away anywhere. We have what we have as far as the Budget is concerned. Where that very difficult choice is placed in front of us, as elected representatives we have to try to make the right decision when it comes to how that money can be spent. If your vision is an outcome-based approach to this, where jobs are created and educational opportunities are there to be had, where do you see the priority in that regard? I keep highlighting this point: we do not have a choice of both; it is one or the other.
256. **Mr O’Donnell:** One of the most disappointing things I have heard at this meeting is the fact that there is no money in T:BUC. I do not think that people out there in greater society realise that. They think that there is a budget that they believe is significant and available. This will come as a very big shock to quite a lot of organisations and communities out there.
257. I understand the point you make very clearly; that it is an either/or situation. Without directly putting the question back to you, I would say that if you look at the interface areas that we are talking about in Belfast in particular — I will speak on this and Peter might want to take a broader view of what we are talking about — you will see that they have been interface areas in our city for over 50 years; the same areas, the same communities. We have not been able to change them. We have not planned at any stage to change them. They are still in existence. They are also the same areas that are in the top 10 areas of multiple deprivation, and have been over the same period of time and maybe longer. They are also the running sore of the — hopefully — past conflict that we have unfortunately had to live through and which some might, quite rightly, argue were the origin of it.
258. If we are tasked with creating that change and taking on that challenge, and if we are really serious about moving our society forward, then that is a very big decision we have to make. Can we afford to do both? You are making the point that we cannot. Can we afford to change society for the future and for the better, improve it and perhaps fulfil the other side, as you said, by bringing in new ways of creating employment, opportunities and change? When I talk about interfaces and ask people whether they want the wall up or down, quite often, that is not the right question to put to them. It should be whether they want the wall up or whether

- they would consider something else as a better alternative. I think that we need to offer people the better alternative.
259. **Mr Osborne:** Can I comment as well? First of all, respectfully, David, I do not accept the premise of the question: I do not believe that this is an either/or situation. If you are asking whether we should invest in job creation or reconciliation and peace-building work, I think the answer is that we should, obviously, do both. The issue is the priority we give each of them. It is not either/or: it is about the priority or proportion of investment we give to each of them.
260. I apologise if I have said this to the Committee, but I do not think that I have. An example comes to my mind. I have spoken about it before, but not here, I think. Two years ago, quite rightly, £60 million of public investment was put into the Titanic building in Belfast. I have no issue with that. It would take the Community Relations Council 30 years to make that same investment in giving out awards to community organisations like Joe's and Sylvia's and the many other dozens of organisations that the CRC supports. So, that was one investment of £60 million. It would take us 30 years to match that amount of investment.
261. Now, there is some other investment, absolutely, in peace-building work. Even when you take the Peace money and you spend different sections of it over seven or eight years for Peace IV and the different aspects of that strategy, it is not actually a significant amount of money. Looking at interfaces or some of the other areas that it will work in, we see that it will be substantially less than that one piece of investment in the Titanic building. That building is very important and successful. But, the issue is this: if we do not invest properly in peace building and reconciliation, emotionally as well as in monetary terms, then in 30 years' time, there will be a lot fewer visitors to the Titanic building than there are now, because the children of the people who visit now will not come to Belfast to visit it then.
262. We run the risk of recreating the conditions that will create violence and the sort of divisions that we have seen in this society in the past. We have to reprioritise our understanding of why it is important to invest in reconciliation work. What we are doing at the minute is not investing enough in it. We need to understand the cost of not investing in it. That cost will be a future that none of us wants.
263. Take that part of town, at Laganside, 20 or 30 years ago. You are probably not old enough to remember what it was like. I do, and I know that Mike is old enough to remember it, anyway.
264. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Please — this is being recorded by Hansard. *[Laughter.]*
265. **Mr Osborne:** It was full of coal yards. In many ways, it was an unpleasant place to be. The amount of work going on in it was less than it was in the 1950s and 1960s. Government said, "Right, we are now going to sort this problem out. We are going to create structures, and we're going to put investment in. We're going to cut through the red tape, and we're going to make sure that people can deliver in this area". We now have one of the most successful regeneration models in that part of Belfast compared to anywhere else in Europe and even many parts of the world. That was a determination by, and priority for, government to do it. That is what happened at that point. We need to do the same thing with reconciliation. If we do not get the balance right, we are storing up problems for the future.
266. **Mr D McIlveen:** I was talking about the next fifteen-and-a-half-month budgetary period, which, really, is all we can plan for at the moment. I was not talking about broader expense or the cost of investment.
267. I do not mean for this to come across facetiously or anything, Peter, but from what you are telling us, we, effectively, are at ransom: if we do not invest in peace building for the future, violence will return to the streets. On the basis of

- a quarter of a century of the Community Relations Council being in existence, do you think that the outcome of the Community Relations Council has been effective enough if we still find ourselves in that position, 25 years after it was founded?
268. **Mr Osborne:** I will comment briefly, and I will then hand over to colleagues to comment; I do not want to hog all of this part of the conversation.
269. I do not think that I am saying anything around holding to ransom. It is a debate that we need to have in the public square. It is a debate that there has been for decades now, through the peace process and before it. There is a logic in that debate that people need to come to and answer for themselves. Peace building, reconciliation and good relations work is the work of every political party and everybody around the table. We all invest in it, and we all should be investing in it. We will all come to our separate conclusions about what priority that should have compared with other things.
270. You will understand what my priority is and what, I suspect, colleagues' priorities are, and those of the others around the table as well. It is an individual thing. It is not about holding to ransom; it is about how we interpret and implement public policy around this.
271. The £2 million a year that the CRC invests in community organisations to deliver that work, and the £2.5 million a year in the central good relations fund is, in the context of other spend here, a pretty paltry amount of money. We need to look seriously at how that investment can deliver long-term outcomes. When funding is delivered in an ad hoc, piecemeal and short-term way, you cannot talk about long-term outcomes that deal with the complexity of the issues we are dealing with. It just is not possible. We need to shift how we think about resourcing this work.
272. Is the 25 years of the CRC value for money? I think that that was the breadth of your question. From the 12 months
- I have been involved with it, I conclude that it absolutely is. For the amount of funding and resource the CRC has received over those 25 years, and given the complexities of the problems that it and other people have faced, the public purse has got huge value for money out of what the CRC has delivered. Although I am happy to be judged on what is being delivered and the change that has taken place, you also need to judge this on what might have happened if the CRC had not been doing what it has been doing for so long.
273. Sylvia and Joe talked about the challenge for the voluntary and community sector. There is also a challenge for the CRC, as an arm's-length body, to do what it does better than it does at the moment and to take us into a different place as we develop and deepen the peace process. In order to do that, we need the support of government in terms of not just money but structures and the inspiration that government and others provide to the peace process.
274. **Mr D McIlveen:** Sylvia, I mean this in the nicest possible way: I feel terribly sorry for the people in community associations I work with in my constituency, who spend most of their working weeks talking to civil servants and having to fill in forms. They have developed the kind of lingo and speak required to fill in forms. I have heard a lot of statements today like "lack of strategic vision", "corporate governance" and "social clauses in procurement". I understand all that, but I need to hear real everyday speak. The biggest challenge you threw at our door — and you were very right to throw that challenge to us — was the fact that people are opening the newspapers and are saying that this place is just not working for them. Will you elaborate and be a little bit more specific? At a high level, I get that criticism. I know that it is out there; we discuss it day and daily with people in our constituencies. What, specifically, are the issues and challenges for the people you are engaging with? How are the lives of the

- people you are dealing with worse today than they were five years ago?
275. **Ms Gordon:** People are worried about putting food on the table; they are worried about paying bills and they are worried about paying their rent or mortgage. They see the cuts coming. They have heard about the cuts. They feel the cuts. They know that change is out there, and some people manage change more effectively than others. People are concerned about livelihoods. They are concerned about their family. They are concerned about their family's prospects, particularly those of their children and grandchildren.
276. When people voted yes in the referendum and signed up to the process, they believed that things would get better. I am worried that they and I do not necessarily see or feel that. They are quite stressed about that fact. I opened the 'Belfast Telegraph' last week, and the whole middle spread was about cuts to Health, Environment and the public sector. We need to build the private sector, but that needs me to spend my money; it needs me to go into town and shop. This can become very personal to me when you ask me that question, because it is about being fit to provide for your family and give them a decent standard of living in a peaceful and stable society, and with a Government who are stable, connect with their people and understand their people.
277. **Mr D McIlveen:** It is really helpful to hear that as you said it. One of my greatest frustrations in the work we do — and I think the media feed this to a large extent — is that there is a them-and-us mentality. That ignores the fact that I live in my constituency, go to church in my constituency and send my kids to school in my constituency. Those are the things I do. I am not detached from where I live; I am part of where I live, and I hope that I have as much interest in ensuring that this place moves forward as anyone else.
278. I understand that people are worried. My parents were worried about us when we were kids. I am worried for my family as they are growing up. However, I keep bringing it back to real terms. Obviously, there has been an undertaking by the Government that, to their best possible ability, front-line services will not be very adversely affected by the cutbacks that we are now having to make. There will be a voluntary exit scheme that will be launched in the Civil Service; it will not be a matter of mass redundancies or anything like that.
279. Where is the breakdown in the message? I am not sitting here with my head in the sand. We know that there are challenges ahead; we absolutely get that. I need to be convinced that the hurt that people feel is not manufactured in any way and is a real hurt. Once we realise where the specific targeted needs are, we, as a Government, can do something about it, but we cannot do anything with generalisations about us all being rubbish. We have to know exactly where to target. I am not sure that that always feeds back into the —
280. **Ms Gordon:** We need to communicate better. The media have an awful lot of responsibility in creating that feeling in people. If you are under stress, you are more vulnerable to other stresses, which can come in any shape or fashion. We hear and see all these stories, but it is important that a balance is brought to this. It is important that facts and evidence are provided to counter some of the stories that we are hearing about the impact; the impact; the impact. The communication strategy needs to be right.
281. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It is not just the media, Sylvia. Joe said today that he was shocked and surprised to hear us say that there is no budget line for T:BUC. Equally, I am surprised that you, Joe, have not been made aware of that before today. I would have thought that somebody in your position needed to be aware of that. Jacqueline said, in answer to the Deputy Chair, that she is not aware of what is happening at the ministerial subgroup. Somebody in your position should be more than aware of it, so we have a bit of a challenge.

282. I do not want to foreclose this, but an hour is up and we have a long agenda.
283. **Mr D McIlveen:** I appreciate your latitude, Chair.
284. **Mr O'Donnell:** Can I make one final comment?
285. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I have another question for you, Joe, but go ahead.
286. **Mr O'Donnell:** It is on the basis of how people feel and their responses, particularly those living in interface areas. There is currently quite a bit of research is going on — some of you are probably aware of it — in the University of Ulster. It is being conducted by Duncan Morrow, Jonny Byrne and some of their colleagues. They are working on statistics around interface areas and how those feed into some of the challenges we face.
287. At this stage, I say with some considerable confidence that life expectancy is 10 years shorter if you live in an interface community. You are more liable to be open to influence by legal and illegal drugs, alcohol dependency, family breakup, difficulties in the family unit, lack of employment, lack of education and lack of opportunity. All those aspects in those areas are considerably focused by the current economic strife we are feeling and the austerity measures that are kicking in. They do not make it a pleasant situation.
288. A lot of people do not realise that, quite often, interface areas are the site of violence but not the source of violence. The source of violence quite often comes from outside interface areas.
289. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Joe, you said earlier that we have had decades of conflict and division, and decades where the same areas are the ones of multiple deprivation. That league table has not really changed, although money, funding and resource has been put into it. Are we just not doing enough of what we are doing, or are we doing the wrong thing? If so, is T:BUC the answer?
290. **Mr O'Donnell:** To be quite honest, I am not sure whether T:BUC is the answer given some of the conversations we have had today. However, I would like to think that it is part of the answer, the solution and the process. We need a serious cross-departmental focus on these areas. With the greatest respect to the Department of Education, OFMDFM and DSD, I do not think that they can solve the problems, and I do not think that the individual parties can do so either. We really need to see change created by joined-up government, cross-party support and cross-departmental planning.
291. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** And also, surely, by listening to people on the ground.
292. **Mr O'Donnell:** Of course.
293. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Do people agree that there is best practice in tackling sectarianism, division and poor relations?
294. **Ms J Irwin:** Yes. We all agree that there is improving practice. Someone asked earlier whether there is collaboration across the groups, even though the funding creates a divisive model. An awful lot of collaboration goes on, and there is a great deal of interest in improving practice. There is a big appetite, despite the fact that it might mean that some groups or structures disappear, to look for a better way of getting things done.
295. **Mr Lyttle:** I do not normally play the role of defending OFMDFM or anybody else, but there is obviously money for shared education, the United Youth programme and urban villages. The problem appears to be that there is no OFMDFM baseline budget or no resource-targeted action plan so that this Committee and people in the civic sector can, in a coordinated way, identify exactly how that spend is being coordinated and make sense of it.
296. I disassociate myself from the question about the need to be convinced that people in the community think that there are problems with regards to the delivery of the Northern Ireland Executive,

- particularly on this issue. The issues that Joe raised need to be tackled.
297. How important is tackling paramilitarism to building a united community? What do you think the T:BUC strategy is doing or could do in relation to that issue?
298. **Mr O'Donnell:** Quite clearly, in interface areas, for example, we are looking at clear signs now — and this is informed by some of the policing reports — that young people in republican areas can be drawn to dissident republican activity. The same thing can happen quite easily with loyalist paramilitaries in the Protestant/unionist/loyalist (PUL) community. We need to be aware of that. I am not saying that it cannot be overcome. I think that we all want to be part of the process and the solution, but let us be honest: it is there. Its potential to increase is there as well.
299. **Ms Gordon:** This is compounded when people and a community feel vulnerable. Exploitation and radicalisation can happen.
300. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** One of the challenges we are having in giving shape to the inquiry is the huge number of individuals, groups and communities who are impacted by and involved in all this, so we took a look at who the CRC has funded down the years. It is extremely diverse in all sorts of measures, including the amount of money that you fund groups for. This is a serious question, because it leapt off the page at us — and you might need to get back to us, because I do not necessarily think that you will know the answer — but you once funded a group called Leadership in a Diverse Society. The narrative is as follows:
- “a project with 13 young people from all parts of Belfast”.*
301. It ran for eight months and looked at cultural diversity. The amount of money you gave it was £62·93. That fascinates us. That may be the best £62·93 that has ever been spent.
302. **Ms Gordon:** That might be value for money.
303. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** If you are not aware of it —
304. **Ms J Irwin:** I am not.
305. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We are just fascinated.
306. **Ms J Irwin:** I will hazard a guess at what it might be. That may not have been the level of the award that was made; it may have been what the group ended up spending. Sometimes, for a range of reasons, groups never get to expend all they intend to. For very small groups especially, it could be that someone disappeared off the agenda for some family reason, and the work was never completed. I do not know, but we will look at it.
307. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** If you can take 13 people over eight months and it costs that little —
308. **Ms J Irwin:** That will be what the original application would have been for, but I will certainly look into the actual expenditure. That is baffling.
309. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That was the spend in the annual report.
310. **Mr Osborne:** Can I take that question as an opportunity to say two other things? I have no idea what that project is, either. It is quite clear, from looking at some of the projects that are funded, that a lot of activity is going on for not a lot of money. It may not be £62·93; it might be more than that. A lot of people work in this area because they are really committed to it. They will deliver, for a few thousand pounds here or there, much more in value than is very often delivered in other sectors or sections of the community. How much more transformative would it be to put that resourcing into a more significant long-term context, where you can be outcome-focused? That is where the sector needs to go in what it delivers.
311. The second point is to give the Committee an invitation. The CRC would be happy to organise an evidence day or two with the organisations on the ground for the Committee to come out and

meet the groups. I know that you do that individually —

312. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is something that we are doing as part of this inquiry.
313. Peter, Jacqueline, Joe and Sylvia, thank you very much indeed. I am sure that we could have gone on for hours.
314. **Mr Osborne:** We are happy to come back if you want.
315. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It has been valuable for us. Thank you very much.

14 January 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Ms Megan Fearon
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mrs Sarah McWilliams *Juniper Consulting*
 Professor Colin Knox *University of Ulster*

316. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Colin and Sarah, you are very welcome. Thank you for coming along. You are the first witnesses to give oral evidence to our inquiry, so we feel that we are taking a big step forward. I invite you to make some short opening observations.
317. **Mrs Sarah McWilliams (Juniper Consulting):** Thank you, Chair and Committee members. Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to provide oral evidence. We will keep our opening remarks brief, but we wish to give you a short overview of the programme and then to focus on some of the high-level outcomes from the evaluation and some transferable principles or learning.
318. To recap, the programme was launched in March 2011 and was jointly funded by OFMDFM and Atlantic Philanthropies. The budget was £4 million. Its key aim is to promote and improve relations between and across disadvantaged communities. To apply, projects needed involvement of at least one community organisation at each side of the interface and to be in the top 20% of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. There are four areas of focus: early years and parenting; shared space via schools; youth engagement; and shared neighbourhoods. Nine projects were funded across Northern Ireland, in urban and rural areas, and there are two phases. The first phase ended in June last year and the second phase will end in March this year.
319. I will move on to the outcomes. We are going to focus at a high level on six of the key outcomes. The first one is around strengthened relationships and engagement at a personal level, a professional level and a cross-community level. By that, we mean stronger and committed working relationships in which there is trust and sharing. Engagement that may have started out with some reluctance has now developed to a point at which there is a strong desire for participants to engage and a strong growth in the number of people engaging. The second area is around improved quality of outcomes. The programme started with broad outcomes of improving relationships between communities and encouraging reconciliation, but it is now much more than that, and much wider, and we have seen evidence of outcomes for well-being, such as improved confidence, overcoming fears and anxiety, tackling social isolation among vulnerable people and active engagement in communities.
320. The third area is around improved educational and skills outcomes, be they for children, young people, schools or parents. The fourth area is around improved access to services. In addition to the services that the projects themselves provide, they also connect participants to other services in the community, such as parenting services, health services, youth services and access to further courses in education.
321. There is also a greater movement across and through areas of contested space. Where there might have been an initial apprehension, that has changed to a much greater and freer

- movement across the areas that the projects are in, be they in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Portadown, Bessbrook, Newtownstewart or Ballymena.
322. Finally, new shared spaces have been created. The 50:50 basis of the programme has encouraged projects to find shared spaces for their activities, and we are now seeing an increase in, and multiple examples of, new shared spaces, be they a town hall, a youth club, a school or a community centre.
323. I also want to touch on the second area, which is transferable principles or learning. We have found that uniting people and communities on common, shared issues rather than through a direct, head-on good-relations approach, has been very effective in building relationships between communities. By shared issues, we mean things such as education, parenting, childcare, bullying, drugs and alcohol. As research has shown, communities at interfaces are some of the most deprived in Northern Ireland. Good relations and deprivation are interlinked and cannot be addressed in isolation. Therefore, the goal should be to improve quality of life and break the multigenerational cycle of deprivation.
324. We found that the most effective models of working have been in those projects that have engaged and built up relationships with a wide variety of participants, such as children, their parents, teachers, statutory organisations and community groups, thereby securing maximum buy-in and impact. Related to that, we believe that collaboration is important. Projects that have managed to engage successfully and effectively the statutory, community and voluntary sectors to support their work are delivering good outcomes for participants in the communities. Finally, rather than just sustaining the projects in the programme, we believe that we need to identify how to sustain the learning from the ideas, concepts and good models of practice in the programme and transfer those to other areas.
325. To sum up, the projects that are funded through the contested spaces programme are demonstrating very good outcomes for participants and the areas where they operate. We believe that there is learning and ways of working from the programme that can be transferred and used elsewhere. In saying that, there have, of course, been challenges and obstacles to overcome. However, project participants have adapted their approaches and learned from their experiences.
326. Finally, we hope that the continuing implementation of Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) can reflect the experiences of the contesting spaces programme in some way, particularly through its good practice and effective ways of supporting communities.
327. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK. Thank you very much. Would it be fair to say that your analysis of contested spaces is that there is no need to reinvent the wheel as we look at how we deliver T:BUC?
328. **Professor Colin Knox (University of Ulster):** Yes. I suppose that one of the things that surprised us a little bit about the lead-in to T:BUC was the focus on running pilots. The United Youth programme in T:BUC started off with a very traditional model of needing to do pilots, but one of the questions that we have asked is why it needs to do pilots if a programme is already being funded that has essentially done some of that work to test out some of those ideas. That is probably a very traditional approach to new initiatives, but some of the things are not new. I am not suggesting for one moment that all the learning is contained within that programme. However, there are many good examples out there of youth programmes, so my point is this: why would you spend £1 million doing a pilot for a youth programme? That is just one example.
329. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK. Can I drill down to how reluctance was turned

- into a strong desire to participate? Are there key elements that come through?
330. **Professor Knox:** One of the most successful things that we experienced was that this was not seen as, if you like, an upfront community relations or good relations programme. In other words, the programmes that we found to be most effective were those that identified a common need across both sides of the interface rather than those that saw this as a programme that was overtly about good relations or community relations. At interface areas, the social problems are the same, and it is really about identifying what the common social and economic issues are and whether you can tackle those in a way in which both communities benefit and, in a sense, the traditional boundaries become much more porous. Therefore, it is not about saying that we are going in here to make Catholics more Protestant or Protestants more Catholic. Rather, it is to say this: what are, as psychologists call them, the superordinate goals here? What are the things that overarch both those communities? Get that understanding, and, as a consequence, good relations and reconciliation effects follow suit. It is a much more organic way of dealing with it.
331. For instance, we supported a project for two schools on the Limestone Road. Both schools identified themselves as suffering because of poor parenting skills. That was a common issue, and some of the interventions were around helping those parents to help their children to read, to get some routine into their life, and so on. Those are skills that organisations that have some expertise in that area could bring to parents. The benefit of that was that parents were in these sessions to become better parents, if you like. They were not there because one was from side of the Limestone Road and the other was from the other. As a consequence, they started to trust each other, saw that they had similar kinds of problems and were there together to learn how to deal with those problems.
- That broke down personal perceptions, and we found that to be a way of establishing trust.
332. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is most interesting. You are not going in saying to the people on the left-hand side of the wall that they have to work with the people on the right-hand side of the wall. You are saying, “You have an issue. Did you know that they have the very same issue?”. Why would that motivate me if I were sitting on the left-hand side of the wall with poor parenting skills? How do you convince me of the benefit?
333. **Professor Knox:** The motivation is that all parents want a better experience for their child, and that is a common issue. If you want a better education for your child, you will say, “Perhaps I could get that if I had some skills that would improve my parenting”. The issue is not one of, “I am better than you or you are better than me” or, “I want to be motivated to go to one side of the interface”. It is simply to say that we have knowledge that we have expressed through our own schools. One was Currie Primary School and the other was Holy Family Primary School. They identified in their own school environment that they could do things to help their children. The common superordinate goal was that they wanted to have a better life for their children and wanted them to be better educated.
334. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is there an element of strength in numbers?
335. **Professor Knox:** Yes, absolutely.
336. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK. How important is leadership? I get a sense that these programmes, when they succeed, sometimes succeed because there is an individual who is absolutely core as a driver of the initiative.
337. **Mrs McWilliams:** I think that the projects have had good leadership, but I think that where they succeeded was in the partnership approach that we talked about. With that approach, the projects have drawn in the schools, community organisations, the police and health

- providers. They have kind of drawn in all the resources from the community around them. OK, there is leadership, but there is also partnership-working. That, I suppose, creates ownership as well and is very effective, rather than having just one person lead it. However, it does take good leadership as well.
338. **Professor Knox:** To add to Sarah's explanation, I think that that is particularly true in schools. If you are working on a schools project and do not have strong leadership from principals there, it can fall off at the edges a bit, particularly if things start to go a bit wobbly for them when they get a bad experience. For instance, in one project, schools had come together to work together, and there was an incident between pupils. It was an isolated incident, but had the principals not been strong in the circumstances they could well have said, "Look, my life would be easier if we didn't have this kind of work". Therefore, it is absolutely crucial, particularly — I do not say this in a negative way — in a school environment, which is perhaps more hierarchical than other organisations, in that they get leadership from the top.
339. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You have programmes that can be effectively used as a template but that will work only if you have strong on-the-ground leadership prepared to look after the bad days as well as the good ones.
340. **Professor Knox:** Yes, absolutely.
341. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is there any big difference between rural and urban schools?
342. **Professor Knox:** I will use as specific examples a project that worked in east Belfast and one that worked in Newtownstewart. The geography of east Belfast is such that proximity meant that interfaces were very visible, and so on, whereas in rural areas they were almost invisible, but, nonetheless, everybody knew where they were. The other thing that we found, just by dint of working in rural areas, particularly rural schools, is that they really appreciated any extra resources, because they tended to be operating on a shoestring, particularly small primary schools with limited financial resources. Therefore, they were always very welcoming of any kind of intervention at the start. They saw that it was at least worth doing and were more than happy to participate.
343. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** More so than urban schools?
344. **Professor Knox:** I would not say more so, but our sense, certainly on that particular project, was that some urban schools might have had more access to resources than rural schools by dint of the geography and the distance between schools. At a parental level, a lot of the good models that we saw had buy-in from parents. There is a sense of community in rural areas. If it is a farming community, perhaps farmers are lending one another machinery and that kind of thing. If I can say this without being disparaging to urban areas, there is a civility in rural communities that you do not witness as much in urban communities.
345. **Mr Lyttle:** Thanks for your presentation. I found the written briefing that was provided very helpful, but I also have the benefit of having met some of the projects involved in the Contested Spaces programme, particularly the project around active, respectful communities that was led by Community Relations in Schools (CRIS). It took six schools from Ardoyne and the Shankill and brought them together for early years family work, parenting work and community relations education. I think that it has now become known as the Buddy scheme. That is obviously a Community Relations in Schools term that has been inserted into the Together: Building a United Community strategy. I was sceptical about that when I first saw it in T:BUC, but, having met CRIS and the people involved in the project, I have experienced at first hand the benefits that it has brought to the areas.
346. Surprisingly, it is not just the young people from starkly different

- backgrounds getting to interact but grown men from the Shankill and Ardoyne, who openly confess that they have had interaction as a result of the programme that they would never normally have had. Indeed, it is important to remember that it takes great courage for them to have that interaction. In some of those communities, interacting with people from the “wrong side” is extremely risky and takes quite a lot of courage. The benefits of the projects are clear and should be developed.
347. My big concern and query is around the fact that phase 1 of Contested Spaces finished around April 2014. I think that phase 2 runs until March 2015, so it is almost finished. T:BUC was published in May 2013, yet many of the excellent pilot programmes do not appear to have been taken forward by T:BUC at the rate that we would like to see. For example, my understanding, having met with Department of Education officials, is that the Buddy scheme is still at the business case stage, yet, as you said in your presentation, those are well-developed projects that are showing positive evaluation and results. Have you seen any more evidence than I have of OFMDFM and other Departments working proactively and rapidly to ensure that we do not lose the ground that has been gained by the successful delivery of some of the projects?
348. **Professor Knox:** We gave a presentation this morning to the good relations programme board. Therefore, civil servants, officials and special advisers are interested in the work.
349. It is probably something to do with the system of moving from the project to the implementation of Together: Building a United Community, where there was some sort of chasm developing. It is not that the learning is not there or that T:BUC is not aware of it, but the pace at which it seems to be unfolding is not aligned with some of the emerging learning.
350. Phase 1 of the programme finished last March and the second phase will finish
- in March 2015. That will be the end of the programme. That is why we are keen to push the principles, rather than ask for more money for the projects.
351. You talked about the Buddy scheme, and that is one of the commitments in Together: Building a United Community. CRIS has developed that as a concept. It is very proud of its work in that area, as it should be as, because it has been very successful.
352. There learning is there, but it is where that will go in Together: Building a United Community. As outsiders, it seems to us to be getting kicked around among the Department, the boards and the new authority, and no one is quite sure where it will end up. In the meantime, our fear is that, the greater the distance from the programmes, the learning, the experience and the trust that has been developed will start to dissipate. Some of the relationships will still exist, but those often need to be oiled with resources to help with further interventions. I am not saying that all the projects that are paid for out of the public purse should continue indefinitely, with more and more funding. That is why we have tried to stress the transferability of principles rather than projects.
353. **Mr Lyttle:** You have made a really important point. People take risks, show courage and get involved in the projects, and the time period in which they slip or are not sustained really damages people's confidence when it comes to continuing to be involved in that type of project.
354. I see that you stated in your presentation that the director of the good relations division in OFMDFM, Fergus Devitt — I do not think that he is still in that role — said that there is:
- “real potential to scale-up some of the models”,*
355. which the Contested Spaces programme and pilot projects have developed “in difficult interface areas.” However, the speed at which that is happening is frightening slow. I hope that your good

- work is being heeded by the Department and that we will see a dramatic increase in the pace at which that is sustained and rolled out.
356. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** On the theme of things starting and then stopping again, I often think that, for those involved, it is almost like being in a game of snakes and ladders. You introduce an initiative and go up a very nice ladder to a better place, but, just as you get there and begin to enjoy it, you are hit with a big snake, because the funding or the programme is cancelled. You actually feel worse off, because you knew where you were.
357. **Professor Knox:** Can I give one very good example of that, Chair? We worked in Bessbrook in south Armagh, and one of the issues there was shared space, or, rather, the absence of it. The project there — the South Armagh Childcare Consortium (SACC) — was very successful. It spent quite a bit of time negotiating with the Churches about venues that would have traditionally have seen to have been aligned to one Church or the other. SACC spent a lot of time negotiating access to those venues, was successful in doing that and demonstrated that the trust that the Churches put in them was well founded, in the sense that subsequent programmes were very much cross-community and met needs in the area.
358. A question mark for us, having gone through that process and essentially having made those shared spaces rather than contested spaces or single-identity institutions, is, because they will not have the funding to run those activities subsequently, whether those buildings will revert to what they were. Those organisations and buildings are at the heart of communities that have had lots of conflict.
359. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Absolutely.
360. **Mr Maskey:** Sarah and Colin, thank you for your presentation. There is always a conundrum for how we measure that type of work. We all know that there are loads of excellent projects across a whole range of communities and sectors. Some of those will predate this project, while some will outlive it. Others, although one of their phases may have ended last year, are ongoing. For me, it is almost like trying to reduce the fear of crime among elderly people about burglaries. You can reduce crime against elderly people by 50%, but one highly publicised burglary will scare the life out of the population. I think therefore that, ultimately, it is about what you are actually looking for.
361. I was very encouraged by you, Colin, and Sarah when you said that there appears to be a wider range of positive outcomes as a result of some of the activity. Again, I am not sure that, if we are honest, we always know what we are really trying to measure. I favour doing a lot of work just because the work, by its nature, needs done. Yes, you can do it on a cross-community basis, bring people together and build other bridges at the same time. We all know that, for years, we probably spent a long time having coffee mornings and getting people together. As long as you did not talk about the Troubles or did not talk about your differences, it was great, but it was not.
362. **Mrs McWilliams:** I think that common issues such as education, homework support and childcare sometimes come up in conversation when people have built up that relationship. They will make friendships but perhaps be unaware that the other person is from a different community. Things will enter into conversation, but I suppose that that happens naturally, and people are quite accepting of the need to discuss things.
363. **Mr Maskey:** Is there a way of weaving things? If we do not face the realities that there are differences, we cannot deal with what the differences are or empower people to do that.
364. **Mrs McWilliams:** Yes. Different approaches have been used by each of the different projects. To go back to CRIS, it takes a very direct approach sometimes and has very

- good workshops and residentials with the children and parents, whereas other projects have to focus on common issues and address issues of community relations through that but not directly. Different approaches work well in different situations, and a head-on approach does not always have to be taken. Certainly, they recognise that those issues need to be discussed and talked about.
365. **Mr Maskey:** Finally, a key thing is around sustaining the learning or transferring that on organically. How do we do that? When you are identifying a need in an area, that may mean that the education system, the health system or the community itself needs to work out that it needs to examine its practices and take responsibility for doing that. Ultimately, a lot of that will probably require mainstreaming so that the learning is built in and the problems are addressed on an ongoing basis. For me, that should filter out a lot of the very important issues, allowing people in the community to focus on why they are different and learn how to respect that. Unless you really get to the nub of the matter somewhere along the line, we can all be dead friendly to each other yet not talk about the problems, and that means that those problems are never addressed.
366. **Professor Knox:** I will expand a little on the Community Relations in Schools model, which I think is excellent on the point that you are making, Alex. CRIS starts off by saying, “What is the common issue here for parents?”. In that particular model, it was saying, “We can do things better to educate our children together”. Once it does that, it, in a sense, has hooked the parents, and I do not mean that in a pejorative way. The parents become interested in the process of learning with their children. CRIS then invites those parents to residentials, and those parents then know each other very well. They know each other in a very natural setting very well. They have built up trust. We have sat in on those residentials, which do not pull any punches on some of the hard issues. Therefore, it is not to suggest that, somehow or other, issues are brushed under the carpet; rather, they are dealt with in an environment in which trust has already been created around an issue that is outwith the conflict, sectarianism, and so on.
367. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** How much more needs to be done on single-identity work as a precursor to groups engaging in interface and cross-community-type work?
368. **Professor Knox:** I will jump in here.
369. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I did not mean that to be a grenade.
370. **Professor Knox:** I am not a great fan of single-identity work at the stage that we have got to. That should now be passé. Clearly, there are difficulties in communities, particularly communities that suffered a lot over the whole conflict. We have reached the political circumstances where single-identity work should be very much a minor lead-in to stuff that is cross-community. We have moved beyond that, and we should have moved beyond that. We have spent enough money on that kind of single-identity work. There are models in place that accept and respect people’s right to their own identity and perhaps the nervousness about that initial meeting and so on. There are ways of tackling that, and there are some excellent facilitators and mediators in this work now, who are very skilled in this kind of work.
371. **Mrs McWilliams:** I agree.
372. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Some support?
373. **Mrs McWilliams:** Projects that might have had a small bit of single-identity work, for example, with young people in Portadown, quickly moved to joint activities. I agree with Colin that there should be a small amount, if necessary, before quickly moving on.
374. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Let me expand it to the kind of area that you were looking at, which was contested

- spaces. What about an area with a single-identity geography, which has issues because it is a single-identity village or town, but it is not homogeneous, in that there are —
375. **Professor Knox:** — factions?
376. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Yes.
377. **Professor Knox:** One project that we worked with was shared education in the Foyle area. Schools were relatively close. When trying to roll that out, as, indeed, the Department of Education will do with shared education, the geography, particularly of large urban spaces like Belfast, is such that you do not have the same opportunities for cross-community work as in other areas. That said, transport permitting — usually in urban areas that is not such a big issue — they should move as quickly as possible to pairing up or buddying up with schools. I think Sarah agrees. The quicker they get into that the better.
378. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** My point is this: in some areas, intra-community is as important for the grouping as cross-community is for many others. I accept, however, that this goes beyond what you were evaluating, which was contested space.
379. **Mr Attwood:** I appreciate that this is a how-long-is-a-piece-of-string question, and I have a sense of what your answer will be. As you indicated, the interfaces are more visible in urban areas, and the 21 or so walls that we now have in Belfast are very visible, in particular. Given that physical separation, but also the work you have been involved in, where are people in relation to doing something more concrete in respect of the interface — the structures as opposed to the emotions and other expressions of separation?
380. **Mrs McWilliams:** These projects have worked in certain areas and may have a limited geography. Certain areas, say, north Belfast, are still quite fragile at times. I go back to projects there. Even when there has been a slight step back on issues of parades or flags or disputes, the participants, particularly parents, come back in greater numbers to participate. They are almost saying, “We want to do this work, and we want to engage.” Each community will be different, but there is still the resilience and desire to move forward in the projects despite a few setbacks. More work needs to be done, but there is a good foundation.
381. **Mr Attwood:** Do people in these projects get together and ask how they can moderate these structures?
382. **Professor Knox:** A good example of that is a school working with Community Relations in Schools (CRIS), which said that it had to get a bus to go to a school and that, if it negotiated for some space across the peace walls, the project would operate better. In this particular case, they went to a supermarket and said, “If you opened this gate, which is your property, we could access other schools more easily.” They were taking those kinds of decisions themselves. It was really encouraging to hear parents saying on behalf of their children, “This might have divided us in the past, but now we see a better future for our children.” I re-emphasise that the common learning was identifying an issue that was common to both communities and that they wanted to resolve.
383. I return to your point on communities at interface areas, particularly visible interface areas. The issue of social deprivation in those communities is very obvious to us and probably to you as well. That seems not to have moved on a lot despite quite a bit of resources being targeted at those communities. Is it because these communities have been so neglected by public services? How do we move those communities on? Those peace walls will not be tackled just by pulling down the wall. Those communities are the most deprived, and they feel it. They have not seen, to use the rhetoric, the peace dividend that other parts of Northern Ireland have. If we are able to push at that together through Together: Building a United Community, taking into account the common needs of those

- communities, doing so in a way that is not artificial or contrived, that is not good-relations- type work or symbolises a desire to make everyone “protolic”, then that work would have real meaning for those communities, and you would see much more buy-in from them collectively. It is about identifying the common issues.
384. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** And how to solve them.
385. **Professor Knox:** And how to solve them.
386. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** As you say, a lot of money has been put in, but nobody could be content with the outcomes.
387. **Professor Knox:** I am not here with a magic wand. A lot of money has been put into each community. Has the money really been used so as to cut across government Departments? Needs are not parcelled out into government Departments. Has it been used in a way that sees these communities as a collective, rather than individual parts?
388. **Mr Attwood:** I have a final question. You hinted at, or maybe even gave, the answer earlier. Did you find that people involved in projects were more resilient when things around them were more volatile?
389. **Professor Knox:** Absolutely.
390. **Mrs McWilliams:** There is a determination to continue to engage in the project. There may be a few wobbles, but the vast majority of people have made a decision themselves to continue to engage and to encourage others to engage.
391. **Mr Attwood:** To be more specific, then, at the height of the flags impasse, the people were pulled in different directions —
392. **Mrs McWilliams:** There were a few issues with some projects. They pulled back temporarily but then went back and continued.
393. **Professor Knox:** They did that of their own volition. People involved in delivering their projects said, “We are sensitive to the fact that it might be difficult for you to go here or go there.” The fact, however, that they went back gave project deliverers the confidence. These people are saying, “We do not want that to be an impediment”. They were sensible about their own security. I think your point is spot on. Maybe it is the nature of people on these projects that they are willing to become participants and are slightly more resilient. As Chris said, we have witnessed, in parent sessions, people who are hardliners in their own community and have softened — maybe that is the wrong description — to the extent that they say, “This has to change for the next generation, and we are going to be part of making it happen collectively.”
394. **Mr Moutray:** Thank you for coming along today. If I picked you up right, you talked in your opening remarks about the benefits of intergenerational projects. Can I ask you to expand on that? We have the Communities Unite in Reconciling and Building Society (CURBS) project in Portadown, which is doing a great work among the youth, not only on a cross-community but a cross-cultural basis, because we are finding that as many issues are cross-cultural as cross-community. I would like to have seen that as not only a youth project but across all ages. Will you expand on that?
395. **Professor Knox:** I absolutely endorse your comment about CURBS, which is an excellent project. Clearly, you have to work within certain parameters. They see their expertise as primarily in youth work, and they have done great work around that, particularly in working with ethnic minorities as part of that youth project. One of the successes of the CURBS project has been its working across statutory organisations. They work with statutory organisations and with youth groups. They have turned — maybe “turned” is the wrong word, but they have transformed — some of those contested spaces into shared spaces, such as the YMCA, St Mary’s

- Hall and all of those places that you know very well. However, they have not, to a great extent, concentrated on that intergenerational work. I do not think they would claim that they have done a lot of that. Some other projects will have done more of it, but, in the spread of the projects, we did not have projects that specifically targeted that kind work. Is that fair to say?
396. **Mrs McWilliams:** Yes, but there were excellent outcomes. The way that they work with young people, especially in the use of media and sport, is very innovative. They make a lot of films and DVDs. We have been to a number of events, and they are really fantastic in what they are achieving.
397. **Mr Moutray:** Absolutely, and I endorse that, but the problems that we find emanating at weekends, especially in a cross-cultural area, are not coming from the teenagers and the younger people; it is the older generation. If there could be something in the future to address that —
398. **Mrs McWilliams:** Yes, and I think CURBS or the Community Intercultural Programme (CIP) are great organisations that could move forward with that.
399. **Professor Knox:** Can I just pick up on a point that you have not made there, which ties into building united communities? There is a project in Craigavon that is doing excellent work with young people in summer camps and sports programmes. You look at the headline actions and T:BUC and ask why the learning from that project is not being immediately transferred into T:BUC. Why are they starting off with yet more pilots, when they could go to Portadown? I am not saying that Portadown/Craigavon is the only example of that, but, by dint of the kind of work that we are doing, we are saying that there are some excellent examples of stuff that is going on in areas where kids are hard to reach etc. Why can we not see the immediate transfer of that into building a united community? Why are they going out as if they have never
- done it before, starting with a clean sheet and going out for pilots etc?
400. **Mr Attwood:** I know that this is an inquiry, but, given the point that has just been made, why are we not replicating in T:BUC what is working in a hard place? Why do we not just ask? Are we recreating the wheel here unnecessarily?
401. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** On that, Colin and Sarah, you have made very clear your questioning of the wisdom and the funding of the pilots. We would need to get a sense from you of the extent to which you think OFMDFM has learned the lessons from the likes of the Contested Spaces programme and is transferring them into T:BUC. Beyond pilots, are there other things that you are critical of? Is there anything that you would speak in praise of in terms of the transfer?
402. **Professor Knox:** For me, one of the big issues is around shared education. There is lots of learning from a project that looked at schools in Derry/Londonderry. It was called Foyle Contested Space. I thought that was an excellent project. It had very clear boundaries, with the river and schools on both sides of that river. Officials from OFMDFM have carried those kinds of messages back to individual Departments. The officials that we work with have been very good at doing that and have been very supportive of the work that we have done in that sense. I just think that it is a little bit harder to infiltrate the system — to move from the level of individuals into the system. Maybe the pace of government grinds very slowly in that sense. I would say that that kind of learning from schools must offer great opportunities to take the work of shared campuses, the shared education programme and the work before the Education Committee now on the Shared Education Bill. There are ready-made models there that have lots of learning, including on some of the obstacles that they had to address and tackle. Other schools will have to do likewise. Once again, why not learn from that.

403. **Mrs McWilliams:** Yes. Because some of the lead headlines and actions in T:BUC are with other Departments, we need to be able to communicate from this to the other Departments, and there are learnings from that. Yes, we did that this morning.
404. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I think that that is the challenge. If it is going to finish positively, we need to look at the culture, rather than the speed of government. We do things vertically; we have environment, education, health and housing, and we now all know that, unless you can deliver that horizontally, you will not make a big positive different to people's lives.
405. **Professor Knox:** May I just make one final point, Chair. I think that there are opportunities to do that outwith central government now. So, I would be very optimistic about community planning — if it operates as it should — in the new 11 local authorities. I would describe community planning as almost like delivering social change at a local level. There are opportunities for holding Departments to account in the new 11 councils through the local government legislation. Whether central government Departments will be amenable to that is the challenge.
406. The second and final point that I would make is that I think that there is a real opportunity here for Peace IV. I do not think that there is sufficient alignment between what PEACE IV is offering with €45 million for shared education, €50 million for children and young people, €90 million for shared spaces and €30 million for civil society. This is the bread and butter of Contested Spaces and the bread and butter of Together: Building a United Community. Why are we not dovetailing those things so that the learning does not just go from Contested Space and other good projects, but from Contested Space to Together: Building a United Community to Peace IV. There are huge opportunities there.
407. **Mr Attwood:** I got a sense from what you said, Sarah, about your meeting this morning — I do not want to put words in your mouth — that you might have found it a bit frustrating, and, in your latter comments, you asked why we were not merging Peace V, Contested Spaces and T:BUC. Would it be fair to characterise your sense of things, including this morning, as frustrating?
408. **Professor Knox:** Let me give a diplomatic answer to that. I think that there is a willingness on the part of officials whom we deal with in OFMDFM and that there is an appetite for change and a willingness to learn from these things. All of those things have been hugely positive, and, indeed, very supportive of the kind of work that we have done. Maybe they experience the same sense of frustration as we may have expressed, maybe too vividly, but there is something in the system here that creates blockages when, for outsiders like us — maybe it is easy to say these things as an outsider — that pathway seems fairly clear.
409. **Mr Attwood:** That is forthright.
410. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, mark for us, out of 10, Contested Spaces as a tool or a foundation for delivering T:BUC.
411. **Professor Knox:** OK, so I will jump in — go ahead please.
412. **Mrs McWilliams:** I would put it at the upper end. I think that it is not perfect, so I would probably say seven.
413. **Professor Knox:** Yes, and I agree, with one caveat, which is that to mark something like that requires a consistency in the nature — the homogeneity — of the projects. We were looking at four different strands within those projects, and I think that some of them were a lot better than seven and some of them were less than seven, so maybe seven is a good place to land.
414. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We have your breakdown in your submission across those four.
415. **Mr Maskey:** I think that those two are on the wrong side of the table, Chairman. *[Laughter.]*
416. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Colin and Sarah, thank you. That was most informative.

21 January 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Ms Megan Fearon
 Mrs Brenda Hale
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Professor Peter Shirlow *Queen's University
 Belfast*
 Professor Brandon Hamber *Ulster University*

417. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):**

We welcome to our meeting today Professor Hamber, who is director of the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) at Ulster University, and Professor Pete Shirlow, who is deputy director of the Institute for Conflict Transformation. The cover note in relation to this session from the Clerk is at page 136. Gentlemen — professors — you are both very welcome. Thank you for coming along. We did not get a paper from you, which is not an issue. I wonder whether you want to make some opening remarks.

418. **Professor Brandon Hamber (Ulster University):** Yes, we both will make some opening remarks.

419. Thank you very much for inviting me to address the Committee. I can only assume that you have invited me here in my capacity as a practitioner and researcher who has been working on peace building and reconciliation issues for the last two decades in a range of societies, as well as in my role as director of INCORE at Ulster University. With that in mind and given the limited time, I will restrict my five-minute opening comments to the issue of how the strategy might be seen within

the global field of peace building and reconciliation.

420. The strategy outlines a vision of a united community:

“based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation.”

421. I will not go on to read the rest of the vision; you are all familiar with it. I commend the Executive for this bold vision and the steps that they have started to take to realise that. It is also right that, as the strategy says, this is understood as a journey towards a more united and shared society. The idea of a journey is consistent with the notion of process, and most of the international literature on peace building and reconciliation talks about concepts as essentially processes, rather than as destinations in themselves.

422. The strategy recognises the damaging nature of societal division and seeks to:

“address the deep-rooted issues that have perpetuated segregation and resulted in some people living separate lives.”

423. It goes on to say that “division, intolerance, hate and separation”, unless addressed, can damage individuals and communities in various ways, including in terms of economic prospects. In other words, the strategy itself highlights social segregation and separation as socially and economically problematic.

424. The core question, therefore, in reading the strategy is whether the actions outlined align with its vision and are adequate to make the types of changes needed to transform the society. I contend that the headline actions outlined in the strategy are steps in the right direction, but they are not sufficient to address the full weight of the problems that the strategy itself outlines.

425. For example, according to the Department of Education, there are

308,095 pupils enrolled in primary and post-primary schools. One cannot calculate with complete accuracy, but for illustrative purposes, that figure suggests that 100 summer school camps, engaging 100 pupils at post-primary level, would only reach 7% of pupils. Even if we bumped that up to 1,000 pupils attending each camp, we would only touch 70% of the pupils for a once-off and, no doubt, unwieldy series of events. Equally, extrapolating broadly across the school-going population, and assuming that every child is participating in these activities at post-primary level, 10 shared campuses would reach 3% to 4% of the total number of pupils over five years. That does not mean that such actions are useless or that they cannot be scaled up or grown. On the contrary, it has been well established in international and social psychological research for decades that, under certain conditions, contact between groups can promote positive views of one another. Any increase of contact between school-age children and young people representing different traditions is to be welcomed, but, as a recent report on shared education notes, an environment that seemingly reinforces a monoculture order can limit the potential success of any programme. It added, and I quote from Joanne Hughes:

“it is hardly surprising that pupils, who meet with peers from the ‘other’ community for short periods (albeit sustained over time) and in a highly structured setting, struggle to develop friendships that can be maintained outside of the school setting”.

426. In other words, contact programmes taking place within the overall segregated context that the strategy itself talks about, despite some positive potential, could essentially be seen as a sticking plaster on a system that is largely not conducive to creating positive attitudes between groups. It is possible to argue, for example, that shared education might be able to grow incrementally, or some of the other activities themselves might also be able to grow, and that seems implicit within the strategy. However, there

is very little evidence that relatively small-scale cross-community projects taking place within a divided society will change the overall context substantially. International research suggests that contact programmes need to be complemented by substantial social change to be effective. Those who study the practice of conflict transformation globally name a peace that does not alter underlying forms of separation a “negative peace”. This is a context where political violence has decreased, but the underlying issues that fuel the conflict have not been addressed.

427. Despite the boldness of the vision stated in the strategy, I ask the Committee to seriously assess whether the actions outlined in the strategy are adequate to achieve the objectives it lays out. From a policy perspective, it is counterintuitive to set up a range of new programmes to bring children and young people into meaningful contact with one another and in collaborative ventures at great expense in terms of resources and time, when the context itself is going to potentially undermine some of those achievements.
428. Of course, we all know that there are many reasons why the context cannot be changed instantly or overnight, and we must foster contact where we can. However, to lose sight of the fact that the most logical place to foster contact is in an integrated classroom, or in neighbourhoods where communities use the same services and recreational facilities on a day-to-day basis, is missing the most obvious and long-term solution to the problem that you are grappling with. What is needed is a large-scale policy with a timetable for breaking down the separation in daily life that the report talks about. That timetabling is evident in the strategy — for example, in the recommendation to remove the so-called peace walls by 2023 — but it is lacking in relation to other barriers to integration, such as schooling or residential mixing.
429. In conclusion, I welcome the steps which the strategy outlines towards achieving greater social contact between communities. However, I contend that, in

- the absence of a bolder social process to break down separation, they may not achieve the full impact that they are intended to have. In other words, the society will remain in a negative rather than a positive peace and will remain constantly at risk of ongoing and future conflict.
430. I thank you very much for your time and for inviting me to share my views.
431. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you very much indeed. From Ulster University to Queen's.
432. **Professor Peter Shirlow (Queen's University Belfast):** I note that you and I are wearing the same shirt. That does not denote political allegiance, necessarily. *[Laughter.]*
433. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** They are similar shirts; surely not the same.
434. **Professor Shirlow:** Yours is probably bespoke tailored. *[Laughter.]* I have to say —
435. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** What a great start.
436. **Professor Shirlow:** You have to set up a barrier between people.
437. Leading on from what has been said before, I am going to talk specifically about a piece of research that we have done that echoes a lot of what Brandon has just spoken about. It is known as the Northern Ireland Project. It is a longitudinal study of relationships between political violence, sectarianism and the well-being of children living in segregated communities in Belfast. It covers 24 interface areas within the city. It is conducted in partnership between the University of Notre Dame, the Catholic University of America in Washington DC, and the University of Ulster. The results that I am going to talk about here are from funding by the National Institutes of Health in the United States. The project was led by Professor Mark Cummings at the University of Notre Dame, who is a globally renowned psychologist. These notes have been prepared with the help of Laura Taylor, who has now recently moved to QUB, which means that we can continue with a lot of the work that we have been doing.
438. The study is based on what is known as an ecological process-oriented model. I will explain what that means when we get to the results. Basically it looks at the pathways between political and sectarian violence, and also political and sectarian antisocial behaviours. So we are looking at sectarianism as in being attacked, which we consider to be violence, and antisocial behaviour, which is name-calling, graffiti, etc. So it looks at the impact of that and also of crime within those communities, and it is based on family functioning and adolescent adjustment: how families and children cope with political violence, sectarian violence, sectarian antisocial behaviour, crime and other antisocial behaviour in the community.
439. Quite clearly, this country has taken very positive steps towards peace but, as you know, in a study like this we are studying families that are living in communities that are still highly segregated. We also know that these are places in which you will have much higher levels of recorded sectarian crime and where people are much more likely to experience antisocial behaviour. Of course, new forms of sectarianism have emerged in recent years, most notably through the internet. That has become another site where young people, in particular, trade sectarian insults and attitudes towards each other.
440. So the study is basically about risk. What is the risk? How does the experience of being in that environment influence you in terms of becoming a perpetrator who engages in that type of violence or antisocial behaviour, a witness to that type of behaviour or a victim of it. What does that mean? How does that impact on your life? We are looking at all these multiple processes. They very much overlap with one another, in terms of how families live in those communities, and clearly there is interest in studying families in which the parents are mostly pre-ceasefire and the children post-ceasefire, so you have two

- different sets of lifestyles which have been influenced, and that has an impact on how families function and work together.
441. So we are looking at relationships within families and communities, relationships between communities, and interpersonal relationships within families, and at what protects people from those issues. There are actually ways in which people are very much protected within their community from those types of issues. We also look at the positive things that come out of these communities with regard to those issues. It helps us understand how sectarianism is being reproduced in communities, and it also gives us a good guide as to whether there will be a long-term stabilisation of the peace process.
442. This was based on three phases. There were focus groups, and then there was the measure of these issues. Then, over six years, we followed 700 mothers and their children in these interface communities. Some of these children are now parents. When we started off, they were 14 or 15, and they are now in their early 20s. Some of these people are now 16,17 and 18. We did not get 700 families each year — it went down to about 550 — but, over the six-year period, we have a very sizable database that tells us about the experiences of people's lives living in these 24 segregated communities throughout the period 2006-2012.
443. Four research findings came out of this very strongly, which I think are relevant to the youth strategy in T:BUC and how they should be factored in. I think that that picks up on some of the points that were made earlier about what it is that we are trying to tackle and how we are going to tackle it. The first is measuring emotional security. That is measured in two ways: first, how emotionally secure you feel that you are in your family and, secondly, how emotionally secure you feel in your community. If you live in a family in which there is a high level of support, if there is a lot of good functioning in the family, if you feel that you are part of your community and interact with it and if you feel that you have a role in your community, that basically protects you from sectarian behaviour. You will experience sectarian behaviour, but you will not be affected by mental health problems and aggression. That is very important.
444. The first thing that we are doing here is that we are not pathologising communities. We are showing that there are differences and that factors like the family influence people's attitudes and behaviours. Among families where that is not the case and where there is much more fracture in the family and you do not feel part of the community, sectarian violence and antisocial behaviour create traumas, depressions and anxiety amongst young people. One of the things that is really important to understand here is that family structure, if it is supportive, buffers you from these factors. If you do not have strong family support, you are very negatively affected by what happens around you in terms of trauma, difficulty and other such things. There is quite clearly a policy outcome here, which is to identify ways to increase emotional security in the family and the community despite experiencing ongoing conditions. Hopefully, everybody understands that. Emotional security in the family and emotional security in your community protects you from sectarian experiences. If you do not have that and it is the other way in your family and your community, it affects you very badly and you will adopt mental health problems, anxieties and stresses.
445. The second finding is on social identity. This is based on how you much you identify with the label Catholic/nationalist/republican or Protestant/unionist/loyalist. What we find here works out as both a benefit and a burden. The more that you sense that you are one of those two groups and have a really strong sense of identity within those groups, it is a protective buffer. If you feel that you are really Protestant or really Catholic, you do not really have any maladaptive influences because of sectarian violence etc. However, if you also have a strong

- identity, you are much more likely to be involved in sectarian out-group behaviour. If identity is strong, you are more likely to be involved in something like interface violence, rioting or other types of behaviour. There is a very strong issue here about the strength of identity. Identity buffers you and makes you feel part of a community, but it also makes you outplay your actions against the other community. If your identity is weaker, you are more likely not to be involved in sectarian behaviour and sectarian practices. There is a very strong finding on that.
446. There is another policy outcome for T:BUC. Social identity works in good and bad ways, so integrationists needs to take account of that. One of the questions that we really have to look at here is maybe a bigger question in T:BUC: what is the value of single-identity work? There is a very strong relationship. That also came out in the work that we did on the flag protests recently, and you see that in life and times surveys. People who have very negative attitudes tend to have much stronger senses of identity.
447. The third finding is about family cohesion, which is not the same as emotional security. How cohesive your family is and how you feel within the family also buffers children from developing aggression and lessens the amount that you will be sectarian against the other community. If your family is very cohesive, not just emotionally but in that there is work and you are attending school and you understand your family as a good, strong dynamic, that makes children less sectarian. You can see from the first and the third finding that the strengthening of family is very important in any policies that we have, and, if families support each other, this seems to decrease overall adolescent aggression and also reduces the impact that you will involve in other groups. I assume that, in layperson terms, we are talking about your parents not letting you go out in the street when there are riots. If your family are keeping you in some sort of order, that has a big impact. Poverty and all of these factors are big players in family cohesion.
448. The final research finding is quite interesting. If you do not feel part of your group, you are much more likely to engage in cross-community activity. If you have been beaten up or assaulted by people in your own community or if there is aggression towards you in your own community, that makes you much more likely to want to engage in cross-community activity. I do not know how we deal with in terms of policy, but youths who experience in-group antisocial activity are more likely to help or be positive about the out group. These are all important things to find, and we are finding that improving attitudes about the other group over time does increase helping pro-social acts or behaviours between the two communities.
449. To finish off, the root of those findings is still related to poverty, income in the home, how well the children perform at school and all of those positive factors. The higher that those positive factors are, generally, the less sectarian a young person will be, with the exception of if they have a really strong sense of identity and are functioning solely in their own community, and that is reinforcing prejudice towards the other issues.
450. Very quickly, I will go through with regard to T:BUC. I understand the overarching principles, and I agree with what Brandon has said. What is it that we are trying to change? If we are going to challenge sectarianism, what is it? What is sectarianism? What is racism? What is prejudice? I am not sure that we really have proper working definitions of what we are trying to change. What are these things? How do we account for them? If you are trying to change something or challenge something, you need to have a definitional basis on which to challenge that. I think that that is one of the things that is very important. As I have said before, in sustaining peace, maybe with the youth programme and T:BUC, if we have this evidence and you agree with it, should we not be doing more at the site of the family? Should we

- not be working at that site? So youths should not be sectioned away from their families; youth and the relationship with the family seems to be very important in how people behave and their attitudes and how they cope in their societies.
451. On shaping policy, this obviously needs joined-up government. If we go down that route of looking at family, we can show that, in families where there are mental health problems amongst the parents, some of it being trauma-related from the past, that is being reproduced. Clearly, there is a need for joined-up government where we are working with these issues. Quite clearly, we need to stimulate participation. The people who lead this, quite clearly, have to be able to get people to participate, and Brandon made that point. Finally, the whole delivery of this has to be something that has much sharper aims and objectives. It has to be something that we can evaluate, and hopefully the research that we have done will be a basis for maybe designing some of the youth activities. It might be a way that you can have a measure to look at what success actually is through the T:BUC programme.
452. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Peter, thank you very much indeed. Brandon, I will go back to the very start and talk about processes and journeys. I have a two-part question. First, how would you define the difference between this as a process and this as a journey?
453. **Professor Hamber:** I think that I was saying the opposite. I was saying that the idea of a journey could be seen as analogous to the idea of a process, rather than as something separate.
454. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So it is a journey that would have a destination, potentially.
455. **Professor Hamber:** I think that what I was arguing for is that you could set a series of destination goals, but all of those will have to be incremental in how you get to those. I do not need to tell you all that you cannot change that overnight, so you have to set a series of stages and steps for where you might go. My observation of the document is that it is not very strong in outlining that direction. The principle of it being a process that is leading somewhere is mentioned, but it is not really followed in the text, broadly speaking.
456. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** A common criticism of government here is that we are process- and input-driven and do not have enough focus on the outputs, and particularly the outcomes. You say, “Our vision is we are here, and this is where we want to be”, and then you build the bridge, the road or whatever analogy you want to put in to get to that endpoint. How well does T:BUC do in that regard?
457. **Professor Hamber:** I was trying to articulate that there is quite a strong vision articulated in terms of the type of society that the document envisages, but there is not a very clear sense of how you get from A to B. It talks about very high-level and serious problems — it routinely uses the words, “segregation”, “separation” and “violence” — but the steps that it outlines to deal with those types of macro social problems are not that well articulated.
458. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Why would that be? There are yourselves and any number of experts within your field, the voluntary and community sector, communities and families who would be more than willing to input.
459. **Professor Hamber:** Would you like me to respond again?
460. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Yes. For example, what input did you have before T:BUC was published?
461. **Professor Hamber:** At a personal level, I engaged in a range of different discussions. I did not make a submission — *[Interruption.]*
462. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Sorry, Brandon.
463. **Professor Hamber:** In terms of your question about why there is a vision but it is not quite clear how we get to that vision, I did not really have

- time to articulate this in my paper. Arguably there are different ideas of what some of those words mean. That goes back to Pete's point about what sectarianism is. What does "separation" or "segregation" mean? What does "shared" actually mean? If you look across the different political parties, there is often a different vision of what that means.
464. In theory, there is an author called Louis Kriesberg, and he talks about thin and thick reconciliation. By that, he means that for some people the notion of reconciliation essentially involves there being no violence and then saying "You walk down one side of the street, I will walk down the other. We will respect who we are, and that is fine." Then there is a thicker notion of reconciliation, which involves social, cultural and community integration. When you read through this document and its predecessors, there seems to be a battle over whether people hold a thick version of the future in terms of reconciliation or a thin version. That continually knocks on into the CSI document. You see that debate all the way through the documents.
465. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is a strong point: there is not a shared definition of some of these concepts. We have two issues, therefore: the end goal — the vision — is open to interpretation, and the route map for how we get there is not clear. How do you fix those two fundamental problems?
466. **Professor Hamber:** Do you want me to answer how we fix the problems?
467. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It is not a free lunch.
468. **Professor Hamber:** I will make a stab at it if you want.
469. **Professor Shirlow:** You have to have definitional robustness. If you are going to design anything, you have to have that. I teach students, so I need to have a curriculum: I need to have something that defines exactly what I am going to deliver to my students. The way we have skirted around with these terms has been part of the problem. There are probably very strong ideological difference over what those terms mean.
470. The way we did it in our project was to ask the families who participated what they thought the definition was. Going back to your original point, there are people who could come up with a relatively workable definition of these issues. If you do not have definitional robustness, I do not understand what you are going to change. It does not matter whether it is thick or thin; it matters in terms of what you would expect to be an evaluation. At the end of T:BUC, what would you measure as success? It is easy for us as academics: you deliver the policies and programmes, and we sit on the sidelines and judge them in hindsight. However, if I were designing a piece of research — I am sure that Brandon is the same — I would start with the outcomes that I am looking for. I would ask myself where the strategy will take me to and what the outcome will be. Sometimes, we work the other way around and saying, "Let's set something up that might take us to those outcomes". This will be a bumpy train, and you are perhaps not going to deliver the outcomes that you have set, but I am not really sure what those outcomes are, and we are certainly not sure what the definitions are. Without that foundation, everything slides.
471. One thing that we have not done in this society is to promote the idea of conflict transformation. Some communities and individuals are afraid of that type of peacemaking. The whole spirit of conflict transformation is that you do not have to change your identity. We have been very bad at selling the idea of reconciliation not being threatening. It is about how you practise your identity, and we see that in the survey work that we did. Some people practise their identity very well. They maintain a certain sense of their community identity and engage in intercommunity activity. Without being egotistical, I would say that the research that we have here is the sort of evidence that you need to know how to tackle the problem. Hopefully, what I have presented today might be novel to

- people or not something that they have thought about.
472. It is about having that connection between researchers and politicians, and you have evidence here that shows that the issues are not simply orange and green. They are influenced by family, poverty and dysfunction. Those are important stepping stones that we have to have.
473. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK, but do we have to have a homogeneous definition of those things, or is it valid to say that, because, in area a, the thin definition of reconciliation is perfectly acceptable because it works, and, in area b, the thick definition is possible and works, we should live with that?
474. **Professor Shirlow:** Neither will work unless you take away the heat. Unless you take away sectarian violence and sectarian antisocial behaviour, nothing will work. It goes back to challenging the problem. What is the problem that you are trying to challenge?
475. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** But thick and thin work.
476. **Professor Shirlow:** Thick and thin reconciliation will evolve if we change the nature of what people have to experience in their communities. It goes back to what you are trying to design. If we have significant decline in sectarian behaviour and practices, that surely will have an influence that may then take us on the journey to thick or thin. If we have people who are still being marginalised and attacked and who feel that their community is being assaulted, we will not go anywhere.
477. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** No, but I heard Brandon say — what I assume he is saying — that you can have a situation in which you have got away from sectarianism. If it is thin reconciliation, you have people walking up and down different sides of the street and not really engaging, but if it is thick reconciliation, they engage. If you can achieve either, depending on what suits a local community, is that acceptable?
478. **Professor Hamber:** What I was saying is that you might have got away from active and direct forms of violence. That does not mean, depending on your definition, that you have got away from sectarianism. If you define sectarianism, as the document does, as being a direct threat or direct forms of violence, you can say, yes, we have got away from sectarianism.
479. If you define sectarianism differently, in terms of the types of attitudes or views that you hold being damaging to or negative about another community, you might have got away from violence, but you have not got away from sectarianism. We could debate for a long time whether that is the correct definition, but it illustrates the point about it depending on how you define the problem that you are dealing with.
480. Underneath that is what your theory of change is. How do you see the change happening? The document oscillates between three theories of change, broadly speaking. One is attitudinal change, in that, if people change their mindset and the way in which they think about things, there starts to be changes in society. In other places, it is like a behavioural notion of change. Therefore, if we make communities safer, police better and prevent people from acting in ways, things will start to change. Other parts of the document seem to imply the idea of structural, contradictory change. Therefore, if we start to change poverty and people's access to resources, things will start to change.
481. What we know is that it has to be all three of those simultaneously. However, I think that at different points, and for different reasons, people will buy into different parts of that model rather than try to buy into all of it. It is not that your task is easy. Trying to move from the society that we have been in is an incredibly complex process.
482. **Professor Shirlow:** The thing about our study and other work that I have done is that some young people engage in sectarian behaviour and do not really know the history of why they do that or

why the communities are divided. They do not really have a vocabulary. It is simply about venting at other problems in their life. We saw that with the flag protest. I do not know this completely, but there was some sort of evidence that a lot of the young people involved had special needs, and other kids who were spoken to at the time were venting about other, wider problems in their life, such as poverty, break-up in the family or violence at home. Those were factors in their life that were making them behave in a certain way and choose a target. They think, "Because I live in this community, the target is over there", without actually knowing what the target is and why they are doing what they are doing. Therefore, there is a practical problem as well. You have to look at what the actions are and why they happen.

483. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I am just trying to tease this out. If, as an Assembly and an Executive, we set a vision, and that vision is open to interpretation, is it necessarily a bad thing if the various interpretations to some extent represent positive progress, possibly not the end of the journey but a good step forward? Should we not embrace that and recognise that it is not a homogeneous society and that some areas will be more open and ready to take a step than others? That takes me to the other point, which is the question of who is in charge, because it seems to me that we can set a direction of travel, publish a very detailed route map and effectively impose that, or we can recognise that there are so many different players here, such as government, you, families, communities, the voluntary and community sector, and the statutory bodies. If it were an orchestra, and once you say, "This is the tune that we are going to play", who should have the baton? Should it be passed around? Who drives this?
484. **Professor Shirlow:** Once again, it is about what you expect the outcome to be. To me, an outcome would be a significant reduction in sectarian violence and antisocial behaviour. Therefore, if we were to implement an evidential basis,
- and we set up a programme of activities that did that, that would be progress, because it comes out of what Brandon was saying and what I have been trying to say, which is that that change in relationships could affect something else. Of course, a lot of it will be going into the unknown, but we did not know what the National Health Service would be like until we set it up. We did not know what its impact would be. However, setting up the National Health Service was the right thing to do despite opposition at the time. As legislators, there are things that you can do, and if those things are designed properly, we can have a successful outcome in that sense. As I said earlier, I do not think that any of us is against people having their identity. The point is that we want people to practise their identity in ways that are not based on intimidating the other community and harming themselves. A great deal of sectarian practice also harms you.
485. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** My question is around designing it properly. How do you do that? The key question within that is this: who does it? Is it done up here by officials, or do you devolve that power and accept that there may be solutions that, at a local level, will be significantly different from area to area?
486. **Professor Shirlow:** Say, for example, that you do it through T:BUC and have actors who then engage in delivering that. The issue there is having the right people to do that. You need people who are able to drive community participation, people who are trained in understanding good citizenship and people who are trained in tackling the issues. I cannot speak for Brandon, but I think that T:BUC somehow throws up many more issues than it resolves, because, in some ways, we are still at an infancy stage in understanding what we are trying to change. We know what the blunt end of it is, but, without agreement on what the problem is, we are not necessarily sure about what we are trying to change.
487. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You are talking about people who are properly

- or relevantly trained, yet two of your four conclusions are about the importance of the family.
488. **Professor Shirlow:** Yes. We have all sorts of governmental interventions for families in distress. What we say from our research project is that joined-up government should be coping with those issues. The young lad who involves himself in a sectarian practice will be dealt with by the police or the criminal justice system, but the family may well also be being dealt with by social services. Are those joined up?
489. **Mrs Hale:** This has been very interesting today, so thank you very much. My question is for Professor Hamber. You mentioned a term that really caught my attention: a negative peace. Can you explain that and give an example? What are the long-term consequences of a negative or empty peace? That speaks to me as something that is brittle and hollow and that lacks content. Obviously, T:BUC is designed to get to the root of the communities that are experiencing division.
490. **Professor Hamber:** I did not bring a formal definition of “negative peace”, but, broadly speaking, the idea of a negative peace is that there has potentially been a decrease in direct forms of violence but a lot of the underlying causes of the conflict, whether inequality, separation or attitudinal or behavioural issues, remain in place. You might have a situation that looks peaceful on the outside, but, underneath, a lot of the structural issues remain. The most recent peace monitoring report, or the one before it, talked about the idea of community shocks, so if there is an event that takes place, such as we saw with the flag protest or whatever, and a lot of the underlying issues are not addressed, those can resurface quite quickly. There are numerous global examples of that. Some people argue, for example, that somewhere such as Cyprus could be considered to be a situation of negative peace, where no direct forms of violence are going on, but nothing is going anywhere very fast. You will hear people use that term about Northern Ireland, despite some of the progress that has been made. The essential point is about failing to address the underlying issues that are causing the conflict. The challenge, of course, is the debate about what those are. That is the bigger debate that we have been having. How do we agree what those are?
491. **Mrs Hale:** Do you feel that, if there is a negative peace, we run the risk of fomenting the situation and having other disenfranchised communities join in sectarianism? We have perhaps seen that with racism and other stuff joining underneath that, and the situation is exploited.
492. **Professor Hamber:** Yes, that is the logical conclusion.
493. **Mr Maskey:** Thank you, Pete and Professor Hamber. This has been a very interesting discussion so far. Your expertise being brought to bear and the amount of research underlines the fact that you have not really yet got the answer or asked the right questions. What are we trying to resolve? I do think that we moved into a period of negative peace. Indeed, we were dangerously in a process of negative peace. The peace process should be positive. It should be about moving forward, but it was in danger of going backwards. Although we had a peace process and an end, more or less, to the vast bulk of street conflict, we were having a battle politically, which was potentially unravelling all the progress that we had made over the past number of years.
494. Like a lot of other people around the table, as a representative I have been involved in giving out funding amounting to millions of pounds to projects across different communities for tackling disadvantage, including tackling disadvantage as a mechanism for communities to work together, and for single identity work, where people could try to build their self-confidence, if that is what they identified themselves as lacking before they could engage with others. We put on the table projects that asked the hard questions about

- what makes us different and why we are fighting over matters. I could not say, hand on heart, that all that money was wonderfully well spent, but it was a very important process to have been involved in. I am talking primarily about European Peace money a number of years ago. A lot of work and funding is continuing to this day. I am not sure that we are honest enough to ask the right questions of ourselves. You can talk in terms of communities, as Brenda did, that are divided. Sometimes, I think that people tend to talk about the problem being “all over there”. It is all somewhere else and not within me or us, dare I say that. When people use the terminology the “two tribes”, I am probably defined as being part of one tribe, but I find that offensive. As a fan of native American Indians, I hear people talk about “tribes”, and I am not against that, but it is a pejorative term and is very condescending, actually.
495. We need to do something different. I do not like it when people talk about the two tribes or when people define your politics as sectarian. I would like to think that I am not sectarian. I certainly do not want to be sectarian, but a lot of people outside my community probably say, “Well, you are one of the sectarian politicians”. We do not have agreement on that.
496. During the flag protests, not every person who went through the courts was a young person who was disadvantaged or came from a broken family. When you read the court transcripts, a lot were of an age — in their 30s, 40s or 50s — and working. Most were looking for bail because they did not want to lose their job. It does not always stack up to have just a cadre over there who are really struggling, are from a broken family or have difficulties. There are correlations, as you well know. You are academics, and I am not, and you know that there are correlations between poverty, disadvantage and other forms of breakdown. If there is a broken-down or disadvantaged community, there will be problems that will manifest themselves in some way. If you go to Birmingham, Dublin or Limerick, and if there is disadvantage, and corruption is allowed, problems will manifest themselves in one way or another. We just happen to have the political platform here. People can get involved as a result or exploit the situation and become sectarian and abusive on the streets.
497. I am quite firm in my own mind. Sometimes we look at the problem as being the fact that we have peace walls. We also have velvet curtains. We are all political party representatives. We all canvass at hundreds and thousands of doors. When I canvass, I find that people are quite honest, especially the longer that they know you, even people who would never vote for you. I find that people are quite good at being honest, which I appreciate. People are also firm in their views. That does make them wrong or sectarian, but they are firm in their views. Or perhaps they are sectarian, and that is why we need firm laws to make sure that people do not translate that into abusing people because they are different from them and act out what I would call sectarianism, which is discriminating against somebody.
498. It is difficult, Chair, because it is a multilayered problem that we are trying to deal with. For me, the Good Friday Agreement process was important, because that said for the first time that you are entitled to be different and to have a different view. What we now need to do as a society is learn to respect that.
499. Over the years, I have had people from the velvet curtain side of the community say to me, “What more do you want? You got the Good Friday Agreement”. I reply that all that I want is to see it implemented. It is about equality and about allowing us all to speak our mind without being slapped down every time that we want to say something that is not conventional.
500. T:BUC is another process that, in due course, people will write off or say that it was a good job or that a good effort was made with it. I do not think that it can be as successful as we would all like to think, because it goes back to this

- point: how do you define what we are really looking for? Would we measure a positive outcome as people saying, “I totally respect your right to say what you have said”?
501. **Ms McGahan:** Thank you for your presentation. Brandon, I want to pick up on a comment that you made about contact programmes. You referred to them as sometimes being a sticking plaster. In my constituency of Fermanagh and South Tyrone — I represent in particular the south Tyrone area — the contact programme has resulted in agreement between two communities for a shared educational campus, which I am sure you have heard tell of, for Moy Regional Primary School and St John’s Primary School. Would you acknowledge that that is a successful and significant outcome from the contact programmes?
502. **Professor Hamber:** Certainly. There are contact programmes and there are contact programmes. What we know from a theoretical perspective is that contact works between communities and individuals under certain conditions. It works best when people feel that they have an equal level of status in their contact. It works best when people feel that they have some sense of identity with the groups that are in contact with each another. It has also been found that it generally works best when people are working on larger problems. Therefore, instead of coming into the room to talk about their differences, they are engaging in something actively.
503. Finally, the research suggests that contact needs to be sustained over a long period. The idea of once-off contact or weekend engagements does not necessarily always show as positive results for contact. I do not know the full details of the programme, although I know of it. My guess is that it meets those four types of conditions, so that example may well be one of a very successful form of contact.
504. However, there are other examples of community-based programmes that do not meet those four types of conditions, and we are investing in those programmes but not getting the types of outcomes we seek. The bigger question for me is this: as a Government, what is the best way of doing them? Do we want to scale up those types of initiatives, or are we saying, “That’s a massive investment, which has been successful, using a certain type of approach”, when there are other places in which we could foster contact, such as our recreational facilities and our schools, more naturally? That, for me, is the bigger question, rather than the success or weakness of the project.
505. **Professor Shirlow:** One of the things that we found in our research was that the young people who took part in intercommunity activities came from homes that were much more secure. One of the problems was that the kids who were engaged in sectarian violence or sectarian antisocial behaviour were not participating in community activities. Therefore, what you had was contact between children from both communities who were not particularly sectarian or were from families that were more open to that type of interaction. Those whom you found outside of that were the kids from the more maladaptive situations, who were not participating in anything. That goes back to the structure of the family, where the family is saying, “You should take part in this intercommunity scheme. You should engage”.
506. It seems to me that those in that “out” group — those who do not engage — are usually picked up in things such as restorative justice schemes, when we have got to a stage at which we are dealing directly with the problem. That can be very important as well. Sorry, this all complicates what T:BUC is trying to achieve, but there is another layer there of trying to recognise who is participating in the positive interaction programmes between communities and who is not. Finding out who is not is probably very important as well.
507. T:BUC could try to engage with those types of hard-to-reach communities. We know what happens with young males especially: when they get to a certain age, they take to a bottle of cider and

- are not interested in such activities, because they are too soft, not fun, and so on. As part of that process, they go back on the street, behave in other antisocial ways and engage in sectarian activity or violence, or both. There is a very strong link between being sectarian and being involved in non-sectarian crime. The hard to reach are very important in those contacts and interactions.
508. **Ms McGahan:** Is there a difference between urban and rural areas in building a united and shared community?
509. **Professor Shirlow:** There is most certainly anecdotal evidence that, in the cities, the relationships are a bit more reproduced and a bit harder. There is a cheek-by-jowl analysis: in the rural areas, because people are not necessarily living 6 feet or 2 metres away, the context can be slightly different. From the research that I have done in the past, rural youth tend may have very strong opinions, but they do not tend to act them out in the same sort of way; namely, through antisocial behaviour or violence.
510. **Professor Hamber:** Broadly speaking, there is significantly less focus on rural communities than there is on urban communities. You might say that more people live in urban areas, but, in academia and a whole range of other fields, there seems to be a lot less focus on rural areas. Pete has done some work on that, but it is looked at less.
511. **Ms Fearon:** Thanks very much. This has been so interesting, and we have all enjoyed it.
512. I wish to focus on another disenfranchised group across all communities. Women were largely excluded from the peace process, and they still are to a large extent. You just have to look around this place for proof of that. I know that we are a post-conflict society, and I heard Brandon say earlier that it looks peaceful from the outside and that there is less violence, but, to date, we have never acknowledged the differential impact that the conflict had on women and men. We have some of the highest levels of domestic violence, and you cannot get away from the fact that that links to dependency on alcohol and to mental health issues. It would be interesting to hear your opinion on how T:BUC addresses, or does not address, that. There is a feeling out there that there is an almost tokenistic reference to women in the strategy. The gender equality strategy is mentioned once or twice, but that is it. To date, we have not acknowledged the impact that the conflict had on women. How do we resolve such issues?
513. **Professor Shirlow:** It is very clear that, in the traditional structure of our society, women are central to picking up the pieces, such as through providing emotional security and family cohesion. There is a domesticated role in that sense. Women tend to be there when the problems happen in the family, and they are there in the more supportive roles as well. One of the things that we found very strongly was that females — young females as well as mothers — were more likely to try to turn people away from sectarianism and violence. They saw that as — this reproduces what you are talking about — a very domesticated and subservient role: that they were there to pick up the pieces or to try to prevent certain aggressions and behaviours. What also comes out of the research that we did is that, if the mother is not living in higher levels of poverty, and so on, that will also influence her ability to cope with dysfunctionality or maladaptive behaviours in the family.
514. **Professor Hamber:** I echo some of those comments. You made the point yourself, and I do not think that the T:BUC strategy has a gendered focus at all. I was surprised when you said that it was mentioned. I read it again early this morning, and the mention of the gender equality strategy did not even stick in my head. To my mind, there was no mention of a gendered analysis, but I may be wrong.
515. There are two points to make. The first is that this often links to some of the definitional issues, such as how we define “sectarianism” or define

- the problem. There is a tendency in societies in conflict to define the problem in terms of what is the most visible, which is often direct forms of political violence, such as attacks in some shape or form. We know that men are generally more involved in that. If we turn our gaze towards only the behavioural component of trying to deal with problems, we tend to focus overly on young men and their behavioural problems. In doing that, we miss a whole lot of other dynamics that exist in the community, such as underlying issues of poverty that affect women differently. Their role in the conflict might look different. It is a massive gap.
516. At a more practical level that the Committee could look at, there is a lot of mention of different strategies and activities in the document that are completely gender-blind. For example, it talks routinely about sport. It would be very curious to ask people whom they think that the sport element is aimed at. I would not want to prejudge that. Perhaps it was thought of in a very gender-sensitive way, but I do not really know. However, if you fail to mention that point when making that sort of analysis, there is every chance that the types of programmes that have been advocated are going to be skewed in completely different directions.
517. **Professor Shirlow:** In the type of work that we did, the majority of young people who experienced sectarian violence or antisocial behaviour were males, but the point that we are showing in this work is that it goes back into the home. Whether you are a 16-year-old girl or boy, the environment is the same, because those issues are brought back into the home. How they are dealt with, and the crisis and anger that that creates in the home, will obviously influence how people respond.
518. **Ms Fearon:** We are going to be hearing from different women's groups. Hopefully, we will be able to influence or feed in their feelings, because T:BUC is gender-blind, as you said. There are so many issues that affect women as a result of what we have been through as a society that just get completely forgotten.
519. **Professor Hamber:** It is gender-blind in the failure to mention not only women but the relationship between femininity and masculinity in the types of violence that we see. A more sophisticated analysis could be done of the way in which violence plays itself out once you attach a gendered approach to it.
520. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Brandon, upstairs earlier this afternoon, there was a presentation by one of your colleagues, Dr Catherine O'Rourke, on the impact of the conflict and the role of women.
521. **Mr Lyttle:** Thanks for your presentation. If possible, I would be keen to get a copy of the Northern Ireland Project research. It sounds interesting. What priority do you think OFMDFM gives to addressing sectarianism and segregation?
522. **Professor Hamber:** That is a good question. Wearing my academic hat, I am always tempted to say that I do not have the evidence to say that I know exactly the hours that are given to different topics and policy approaches on different issues. I can answer this only anecdotally. I do not want to belittle the importance of job creation and other issues. However, there is a much higher level of media profile around the types of engagement that OFMDFM and others do on those issues than maybe some of the others. As I said, I feel nervous in saying that because I cannot completely evidence it, but there certainly do not seem to be as many announcements. I know that there were several announcements about T:BUC and others and about the youth strategy and so on and so forth, but, as a regular citizen sitting on the outside, one certainly sees more announcements about a range of other approaches than about issues like sectarianism, social division and segregation. Again, I am happy to be proved wrong.
523. **Professor Shirlow:** OFMDFM has played a role in the research it has commissioned. There is a series of

- pieces of research commissioned that show us exactly what the problem is. For example, there is the work that we did in Derry/Londonderry about the Protestant community and how it felt alienated, which has helped to build better relationships in that city. I am sure that you, Brandon, have done work for OFMDFM. The last phase of this family study is a qualitative exercise, and that is being partly sponsored by OFMDFM. There is a big body of work sitting there.
524. I think that one of the problems we still have in this society is how we merge evidence with political practice. If we were sitting here talking about how many tons of iron ore we created or how many litres of milk were produced last year, probably nobody in this room would disagree with us. This is very much about how we build much stronger links between politicians and academic evidence, not because we are sitting here saying that we are somehow superior and that we know these things. Certainly, there is an evidential base that may help in that way, but I think that we do not hear enough from politicians about the difficulty in putting these things into their communities.
525. When Alex talks about knocking on the doors, etc, and hearing things such as, “There’s you talking to that so-and-so who did such-and-such”, then that type of partisan, street-based anger is still very much there. It is about how we try to merge evidence with your experiences, and we do not really have that in some ways. To an extent, we work in a silo and you work in a silo regarding evidence-bases and political activities. I would be surprised if the OFMDFM research were known by all MLAs. Are they aware of the research that has been done? Maybe that is an issue. How we merge this is very important.
526. Clearly, one of the other problems is that in community and politics, as citizens — or subjects, to use the proper title for us in the UK — we are all part of the process of the transformation of this society. I am not saying that because I am sitting in front of politicians, but, sometimes, it can be too easy to blame them for many of the problems we have in our society. I think that a lot of this has to be about the spirit of wanting society to move forward. Whether you want to stay in the UK or want a united Ireland, what is your responsibility in the transformation of this society? Maybe this is a Utopia, but how we effect this much more strongly in society is very important. Despite the fact that we have a negative peace, and whatever else, I think that this is a much better society. Any of us who have children are certainly living in a much better society than we once did. Maybe the Assembly does not celebrate that enough. Some of the shocks that we have been through in the last few years would have been much worse 20 or 30 years ago.
527. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Peter, when you are commissioned to do research, do you know whether it will be published? If it is to be published, do you follow through to make sure that it is published?
528. **Professor Shirlow:** You would not get research funding unless you said that you were going to publish, so you have to publish as part of the conditions of the research.
529. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, they would never commission private research from you.
530. **Professor Shirlow:** OFMDFM?
531. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Yes.
532. **Professor Shirlow:** Not that I have experienced.
533. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, it is all published.
534. **Professor Shirlow:** There is a lot of material there that has been very important material.
535. **Professor Hamber:** T:BUC references a number of those documents, the life and times survey and others.
536. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Does either university ever survey elected representatives to see to what extent

- these reports are read, studied and acknowledged?
537. **Professor Shirlow:** Probably not, but I think that there is an increasing number of studies that are engaging with political actors about how they feel about peace, change and the Assembly. I think that that has taken place.
538. **Mr Lyttle:** I have one other line of questioning. Dealing with past atrocities and transitional justice are important aspects of building a united community, and I know that you have both worked on those areas. What is your assessment of some of the proposals from the Stormont House Agreement in that context? I think in particular of the online archive that you have worked on.
539. **Professor Shirlow:** Clearly, the landscape is a mess when you consider that we have the whole landscape of victims, including the HET, public inquiries that put the state in the dock — to use that terminology for short hand — the decommissioning of weapons, which makes it difficult to collect forensic evidence and royal prerogatives of mercy. I could go on and on and on.
540. Quite clearly, the response to the victims issue is highly fractured. Obviously, it is constructed around contention. I do not know enough about it, and I do not know what the collection of information is meant to achieve, because I do not think that you could ever have a timeline of the Troubles or the conflict that everybody would agree to. It is too theoretical and ideological to produce that.
541. I still think that, in politicising the conflict in our society, the one thing we missed out on was care for the people who were harmed. I think that the harm caused in this society is colour-blind if we talk about orange and green or others in society. That is the thing that we have missed. We should have been building a society around coping and caring. Much of this is reflected by the fact that many of these families, who are producing kids who behave in this way, are very traumatised by the past.
542. We should have based our whole process on trauma recovery and harm intervention. That can come in many forms, including psychological help, stress relief and even just recognition. We should have become more focused on servicing the needs of victims and people who were harmed in the conflict as opposed to the fractured landscape that we have, which seems to be that one political section gets this and the other political section gets that. That really takes us nowhere.
543. I have observed this: when politicians have been on the television arguing about the past, people have rung me up, or I have had people who I have been doing research with, saying, “I sat last night and cried because, when they are sitting shouting at each other, it just brings it all back to me”. What the person needs is not that. It is about how we take the political and ideological aspects out of the issue. I think that this is the only way that you can progress this society. You can still have your ideological differences about what the conflict was about and about whether there was collusion or whatever the issue is that you want to discuss, but this has to be a human-centred process, which is about giving people the capacity to cope in a changing society that then does not transmit itself. As shown in our study, in the case of people who lost loved ones, that is being transmitted to their children.
544. **Professor Hamber:** From my perspective, not only is there a challenging landscape with respect to dealing with past strategies more widely, which Pete outlined, but there are disparities between the documents now. Obviously, the documents come out at different moments in time. How, for example, does the suggestion about the education programmes advocated in T:BUC interface with the oral history work and other narrative work that the Stormont House Agreement talks about? There is work that needs to be done to knit some of these issues together.
545. You specifically asked me about what we have done in relation to the oral history work. At INCORE at the Ulster University,

we have developed a resource called Accounts of the Conflict, where we have been working with a range of different community groups that have been collecting stories of the conflict. There are well over 30 groups that have been doing that, and we have been recreating an online collection of collections of stories. The infrastructure for this type of an archive has been created at interfaces with the CAIN archive that we run, which is the largest digital repository of information about the conflict anywhere in the world. We feel that, on that specific recommendation, we have done a lot of the groundwork, and we would welcome interfacing with the appropriate body in relation to how the Stormont House Agreement will be timetabled and moved forward.

546. I think that the challenge with that specific recommendation is the same one that we have alluded to the whole way through here, which is that people have certain perspectives. It is unlikely that we will be able to change those and find a common perspective in the short term. So, what can we do so that people can get a better sense of one another's experiences and narratives in a safe and accessible way? If done right, something like the oral history archive and the work we have done at least starts to move down that road. At least you have somewhere where you can start to see a whole range of different experiences which, hopefully, could contribute to the more human view that Pete was advocating.
547. **Mr D McIlveen:** Thank you for your presentation, gentlemen. Obviously, it has been pretty much 20 years since the ceasefires, so, if anybody who — put it this way — is at or below the higher and further education age alleges themselves to be a victim of the Troubles, they are an inherited victim, rather than having suffered direct experience. It is implied, from some of your presentation, that there has been a degree of passing victimhood on to the next generation, which is obviously something that will be quite damaging for us in the future and something we need to deal with.
548. In that context, how has your research developed in looking at us as being exclusive, in our problems? Bear in mind that, if we broaden this out, even to our next-door neighbours or the rest of the United Kingdom, then there are huge antisocial behaviour problems in housing estates and working-class areas in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. I suppose that our society has not moved on to the extent that it is an issue of black and white, Muslim and Christian or "They are getting everything that we are not, because of their religion". For us, it is more the case that we have remained in our traditional tribes, if I can put it that way. How exclusive are we, as regards 21st-century antisocial behaviour in working-class areas? What is it about our situation that is different to what appears to be happening throughout the rest of the United Kingdom?
549. **Professor Shirlow:** We are still, pretty much, a low-crime society compared with others. That is an issue. Of course, all such crime is reported crime, so we can see only the tip of the iceberg. We know that for every crime that is reported, six or seven similar crimes go unreported. We certainly do not have the same drug-related violence, from what I can gather. With the exception of some wards, we do not have the same volume of violence or reported crime that you would have in some other, similarly deprived communities. So, that is important.
550. One of the things that is really important to understand is that the work that was done in places like Lebanon and maybe South Africa etc shows that a lot of the trauma and the maladaptive behaviours come significantly after conflict ends. You see that with war veterans. When you are involved in a conflict, you have very strong coping strategies, so you have a strong bond with your community. That is what we are up against: the Second World War attitude that we are all in it together. There is very strong community solidarity, to an extent. You

- also have a reason for that identity, because you are protecting yourself: “I do not want to be harmed, or I do not want to be a victim of that”. Quite clearly, when a conflict ends, those bonds tend to break down, especially over time. The way in which violence brings a community together begins to fracture.
551. The same thing takes place when you take away a factory, as we saw in places such as Dublin or Manchester. With de-industrialisation, community purpose leaves, and there is a growth in drugs, crime and all those things. However, there is very strong evidence that this is happening in other post-conflict societies. When you think that the conflict is over, it actually comes back. That is a part of the ageing process. People of our generation have been through the Troubles. As you get older, you reflect more on your life: “Did I achieve things?”. This is when these issues, these episodes in, say, 1972, 1973 or 1974, these things that you and I may have experienced — I am sorry, I do not know what age you are, so I will say things that I may have experienced — come back as you start to reflect on your life, and they can cause traumas because of other things in your life. As you get older, you are maybe more stressed. That is important.
552. Mike Tomlinson’s work at Queens was really important. He made a very strong argument regarding suicide in society. Obviously, suicide is a very unfortunate feature of our society. He made the comparison with the suicide rates of our neighbours — the Republic, Wales, Scotland, and England. Their rates have gone down because of better treatment and, to go back to masculinity, because men now talk about things that at one time they would not have talked about etc. Obviously, there is better recording as well. Those suicide rates have gone down, but Mike Tomlinson has shown that our rates have increased, especially among the section of our society who were young adults during the conflict. There are very strong lag effects that will come back at a certain point. It is like the question: “What is the impact of the French Revolution? It is too early to say”. What is the impact of the conflict? It is too early to say, because we do not know where the journey is taking us or what the future will be.
553. Certainly, we are different in that we have sectarian crime and not just sectarian crime but sectarian antisocial behaviour, which is very prevalent and is a conditioning factor that does not present in many other societies. Racism in Britain would not necessarily be articulated at Westminster, whereas here people look straight at the Assembly and say, “That is what they are telling us to do” or “They agree with us”. This is not necessarily the fault of politicians, but it is how people read the connection between themselves and political leadership and is another slight difference.
554. **Professor Hamber:** I will add a few points. This one is slightly wider than the violence issue. There is some evidence to show that issues can skip a generation in societies that have been through large-scale forms of political conflict. In Latin American countries, such as Argentina and Chile, it is often the grandchildren who are dealing with a lot of the unfinished business of the past. Sometimes their parents might not have got the full story or were maybe too tired as a result of the conflict, and so it is the grandchildren rather than the children who take on the issues. We do not know whether that will happen here, but it is possible.
555. Pete was moving towards issues that are more directly related to mental health. I want to make the same point in relation to crime. This is a relatively low-crime society, but the statistics for suicide and mental health are higher than those for the rest of the UK. I do not have them in front of me, but I have written a paper on the subject that is focused on young people and draws on the work of Mike Tomlinson and others that I am happy to share. The statistics are definitely elevated.

556. Allusion was made to domestic violence. There is certainly anecdotal evidence that domestic violence has increased post conflict, but it is quite hard to research it fully, although I have tried to do so through a number of research projects. There is generally some evidence to show that domestic violence has gone up. Whether that is due to a change in reporting or is a mutation into domestic violence after the conflict, something that Pete alluded to, is difficult to establish academically. There is certainly a lot of research and literature that makes that assertion. We do not know it for a fact here, but, if you were commissioning work, I would say, “Look in the direction of violence in the home”.
557. Pete also alluded to young people and sectarian antisocial behaviour or whatever word we would like to use. Pete has talked about this better than me. I imagine — again, I cannot state it unequivocally without the statistics in front of me — that fear of movement, fear of the other community, must be significantly higher here than in other areas, which is not to say that they do not exist in other parts of the United Kingdom.
558. The final issue for us to interrogate — and maybe this is pie in the sky or a bit too large-scale — is the degree to which in segregated communities, where there is less investment and where people are looking inward, their economic opportunities are impacted upon. Again, although I do not think I can verify this scientifically with the papers I have in front of me, there may well be evidence about the economic opportunities for people who are growing up with the legacy of the conflict and their potential to reach out across boundaries and into multicultural societies globally. There is the potential that young people are still being significantly disadvantaged, which is a legacy of the interface of conflict and poverty, conflict and poverty being a lethal mix.
559. **Mr D McIlveen:** Obviously, T:BUC is committed to dealing with the underlying issues, including poverty and that side of things. I have a quick final question, which is not based on any scientific evidence either. Setting mental health to the side, as a serious illness that has to be dealt with, is there a risk that by giving so much attention to a strategy dealing with antisocial behaviour, domestic violence and those types of behaviours, you almost provide a licence for bad behaviour?
560. **Professor Shirlow:** It is the other way round: it is about how you cope and deal with that issue. You would be looking to engage with kids who have been involved in antisocial behaviour. There is an interesting point here, because we sometimes slip into the view that, in these communities, everyone is the same. In these communities, there are also people who are open, tolerant and who wish to build bridges. There are also people who were involved in charities or who have had children with serious illnesses and have had to go and meet groups in west and east Belfast. We ought to remember that there is a lot of really good, positive activity going on in the communities that suffered the greatest loss of life in the Troubles.
561. I remember one time we were doing outreach work with kids who were throwing stones at the emergency services, and, of course, they were being taken here, there and everywhere. Somebody came round to me and said: “It is not fair that they get to go on all the trips, and we get to go nowhere because we are well-behaved.” Of course, the kid who is well behaved probably comes from a much more structured home. I do not think that anybody would misbehave and become involved in something like that. These things are already too embedded in their lives.
562. **Professor Hamber:** As far as criminology is concerned, I also do not think that that is the case; but there is a risk that by overly focusing on certain issues, and legislating for them in different ways, you would see an increase in types of behaviours because of the way you define them. If you define low levels of interaction between young people as antisocial behaviour, then it looks like

- the focus has increased that form of behaviour, but it is the legislation that has redefined things.
563. **Professor Shirlow:** This reminds me of something that happened in north Belfast. A community activist worked for years to get his next-door neighbour involved in community activity. The next-door neighbour was a plumber, who came home every night and did things with his kids. For years and years he was told: “You should take an interest in your community; you should engage with your community; you should show leadership in your community”. “No, I do not want to do that.” Then, one night, the community activist was out, only to find that his kids were rioting while the plumber’s kids were sitting in the house doing their homework. It goes back to the fact that there are really complex issues in these communities.
564. **Professor Hamber:** The point was made earlier that we need to be careful in our analysis of something like T:BUC. We can be completely in favour of something like the United Youth scheme, but the document is phrased in such a way as to suggest that the scheme is aimed at the 46,000 people who are unemployed. There are a lot of paragraphs before and after about sectarianism and other types of behaviour. There may well be higher levels of certain behaviours in that group, but we do not know that for a fact, and so there is a risk that by targeting different communities we end up stigmatising them, rather than stepping back and taking a wider definition of sectarianism as being something that is embedded right through our society and not necessarily just in specific communities. We have to be quite careful with our phraseology and policy and how the public perceive some of those types of interventions.
565. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Let us finish on that point, because we have to assume that T:BUC will be around for some years to come, not least the strategy to remove walls in ten years. If you could make one suggestion to improve either the vision of the strategy or the route map for achieving it, what would it be?
566. **Professor Shirlow:** We are academics, so this is quite difficult for us.
567. **Professor Hamber:** You go first, Pete.
568. **Professor Shirlow:** I would suggest an evidential base that creates the foundation for T:BUC and therefore guides its aims, objectives and outcomes.
569. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You said that there was a lot of research already.
570. **Professor Shirlow:** That could be incorporated more into —
571. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It needs refined.
572. **Professor Shirlow:** I know that the youth support group is still deliberating on what to do. I would like to see some of the research that has been done. I would like to see that being discussed, at least, and then, hopefully, providing a foundation for the aims, objectives and evaluation.
573. **Professor Hamber:** What I would suggest is at the political level, and I know that this is not easy. Could we agree a set of high-level outcomes that we would like — for example, “We would like to have the peace walls down by 2023”? We should have high-level outcomes, such as that we would like to move towards an integrated education system and x% mixed housing and set dates for those. Then, we should look at the steps needed to get to those points and gear resources towards some of those high-level issues of segregation and separation that the document talks about.
574. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Brandon and Pete, thank you both very much indeed. That was most useful.

4 February 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Alderman Tom Ekin	<i>Belfast City Council</i>
Ms Angela Askin	<i>Derry City Council</i>
Ms Sue Divin	

575. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We welcome Alderman Tom Ekin of Belfast City Council; Sue Divin, good relations officer of Derry City Council; and Angela Askin of Derry City Council. Tom, are you making the opening remarks?
576. **Alderman Tom Ekin (Belfast City Council):** Yes, Chairman, I will make a couple of remarks. I was told to keep it very short, which I will do. I am delighted that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) has been invited to make a presentation and answer your questions. It reflects the importance of NILGA now with the change of local government. If you want to get clarity of purpose, you speak to NILGA in future. It has taken some time to get here, but I think that all of the councils are buying into it. Thank you very much for inviting us. We have issued you with various responses, therefore there is no point in me reciting them. I assume that you have read them all.
577. We, in local government, realise that we are taking on a lot more responsibilities. We know that it will be a difficult time and that there is a lot of work to be done. It means that not only do the new councils have to work, they have to work in tandem with the other Departments. This is a thing that we have talked about in the past, but it has not really delivered particularly well. That is all that I am saying at this time, except “Can we get the spelling right next time?”. I am “Alderman”.
578. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** The name plate says “Alderman”. Point taken. Sorry about your sign. Is everyone else’s OK? Sue and Angela, is there anything that you want to add by way of opening remarks?
579. **Ms Sue Divin (Derry City Council):** On behalf of Derry City Council community relations team, we are delighted to be here. We are happy to take whatever questions you have. We have a few key points, which we have put in our written submission. We can reiterate those if you want, but, really, we are here to give members the chance to ask us questions about the programme.
580. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I suppose that the first thing we need to establish is what your impression has been since Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) was announced, the degree to which you feel that you were consulted and that your expertise has inputted into the proposal, and how it is planned to implement it.
581. **Alderman Ekin:** I will give my version, and Derry city can then make its comments. This is just another of the five generic statements that have come through over the last 10 years. They are wonderful statements of intent, but nothing seems to back them up.
582. The most recent one was the Stormont House Agreement, where words were written. I accept that they are written, but we found in Belfast that something more substantial needs to be put to it. There needs to be unique leadership, by which I mean single leadership. When I asked the junior Minister, “Who do I speak to about T:BUC in Belfast?”, I was given the names of three people to speak to, but I wanted one name; the

- name of the most responsible person. Belfast has found that it has been general. There are no specific targets or goals. There is nobody in charge; it is left to the council to find its own way. The other Departments are not necessarily playing a coherent part. That is where Belfast is, broadly. I will leave it to Sue or Angela.
583. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Just for clarity, Tom, are the three people you were told to speak to all departmental officials in OFMDFM?
584. **Alderman Ekin:** The person I spoke to was the Minister, and there were officials in the DOJ, OFMDFM, and somewhere else, I think. When I was given three names, that answered my question. The problem is that we do not have somebody who we can go to and say, "Right, let's coordinate this thing. Let's do it in a businesslike manner". It is a very difficult job to do, but it has to be done.
585. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK, but were the three officials from three separate Departments, as far as you recall?
586. **Alderman Ekin:** I could not say. I was given three names, and two Departments were mentioned.
587. **Ms Divin:** Initially, I think we had some consultative input into T:BUC, but it was probably fairly limited; it was just through the district councils' good relations programme. Overall, we welcome T:BUC. We needed an updated strategic document in place from Stormont, and we are delighted to have finally got that. We are delighted to see that the district councils' good relations programme continues to be included and highlighted in that as a vehicle. A lot of good work has come out of that, but things could be improved in it.
588. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Such as?
589. **Ms Divin:** The key one is the timing of letters of offer. They usually arrive around August or September in a given financial year. The lateness of this prohibits us in strategically planning to deliver the stuff that we need to deliver on the ground. This has been raised for about 10 years by district council good relations officers, but it is getting worse rather than better.
590. **Ms Angela Askin (Derry City Council):** We are going into a new dispensation with councils. In the past, some local authorities were willing to work at risk to mitigate this and still get the work done. Given the funding climate that we are all experiencing, that is going to be impacted on now, especially over the summer months, where a lot of our work is so necessary in dealing with key issues. It is going to be impacted on even more so if the letters are not out in a timely manner.
591. **Ms Divin:** There is a further impact in not issuing letters of offer at the start of April. Whether there is a big budget or a small one, if the letter is received on 1 April, we can prioritise strategically and deliver our work according to local needs over the year. If it does not come in, then you find that, in local councils, some good relations officers are put on notice on an annual basis. You then have a reasonably high turnover of staff; you have a drain on the expertise of good relations staff working for local councils. It is a vicious circle; it is not improving if people cannot stay in the post, stay committed and build their skills. If we cannot work strategically on things like interfaces, flags, parades and marching, which are the types of issues that come up generally, before we receive a letter of offer from Stormont, it is very difficult for us to function effectively or as effectively as we could.
592. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, timeliness is an issue.
593. One of the themes that is emerging for me is that T:BUC should not try to reinvent the wheel. There is an awful lot of good practice out there already. To what extent do you believe that your members in NILGA have the expertise and capacity to deliver T:BUC?
594. **Alderman Ekin:** In Belfast, we have built up very considerable expertise over the years. The frustration that we

- have, and Sue alluded to it, is that this is a long-term project. You have to get the people on the ground to buy into this change to their thinking. Once you have done that, you have to be able to deliver something that satisfies their expectations. We are not achieving that. We have a lot of people in Belfast City Council who meet the people not quite daily but very close to daily. That must apply to all councils, because they are on the ground. They can understand what is going on, but they also know that it will probably be a two- to three-year programme to get people to change their attitudes and open a door. Once you have opened the door, how do you keep it open longer? You cannot do it in a hand-to-mouth exercise as we have been doing. Well, you can do it, but it is very unsatisfactory. Long-term financial planning is one of the keys to it.
595. **Ms Divin:** In response to the question on whether we have the capacity, I will say that it is important that Committee members are aware that there is quite a wide variation in how the various local councils apply their good relations practices on the ground. It depends on a number of things. One is whether you have staff in post who have been there for a while or, even if they are new, who have brought relevant experience. There is no doubt that good relations is built on building relations with local communities and understanding the context on the ground. So, that is a big issue.
596. The other factor that influences it, in my professional opinion, is how the managers in each district council react to good relations: whether proactive, creative, innovative good relations work is encouraged, as it is in our council; and whether it is supported by all political parties, which it is in our local council. If it is, the officers in the posts know that they can go ahead, take risks and work innovatively with local communities and use their initiative. We have the capacity in our council, but there is an extreme variation across district councils.
597. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Tom, we have already heard your point that this type of longitudinal approach is very important. We heard of communities being brought together and then, when there is a kind of a seismic shock because of an event — the example used was the flags protest — the two communities immediately sprung back into their own bolt-holes, but, because the work had built up sufficient momentum, people decided, “Actually, we are not going to let this external event put us off. We are going to get back together”. So, you need that time to be able to get over events, dear boy.
598. The other thing I am interested in is this: does best practice suggest that you will not bring people together by saying to them, “You are different, so you need to come together and work”? Is best practice actually saying to them, “You have a lot in common”? One of the examples we were given was this, “You all want to be better parents, so let us get together and talk about how we can be better parents”, and you do not even mention the fact that they have a difference.
599. **Alderman Ekin:** I certainly agree with that. It is like a lot of big change. You have to sell to your audience the benefits of being different. It applies to anything. If you are going to create a discomfort for folks, you have to say to them, “You could do this. You could do that. Do you realise, for example, that your job opportunities, are diminished by your being beside a peace wall?” The Ulster University is doing a study on that and hopes to produce a report shortly to spell it out. However, we know from years gone by that it costs £1.5 billion or £1 billion it does not matter which figure it is as both are valid to keep us separated. Part of that is the peace walls, duplicating services and so on. You could be saying to people, “You can have 10% of that, £100 million, to spend on other things to help you to get jobs and training.” It is a long-term thing. They have laughed at me saying this for years, but I will keep saying it because it is true. You have to keep selling to people the virtues of why a change

- should happen and get them to say, “We want the change.” It is doable.
600. The other evening, Belfast City Council passed a resolution, which might come across your desk at some stage, to ask OFMDFM what has been the result so far of the programme of breaking down the peace walls. We are three years or something into the programme of removing peace walls by 2023. Where have we got to on that? Nobody really knows. Belfast City Council has proposed a motion, which will go back to one of the committees, and will be writing a letter to OFMDFM to ask, “How much progress have we made?” The corollary will be, “What more do we have to do to make it happen faster?”
601. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Tom is saying that we do not know how far we have come in that programme. That makes me wonder: what is the relationship like between good relations officers at council level and the Department? You have talked about the letters of offer, but, more generally, what is the communication flow like?
602. **Ms Askin:** It is reasonably good. We get good support from the OFMDFM officials who are in charge of the programme. It probably could be better in getting good relations officers together to share best practice on a more regular basis. There used to be a two-day conference, then it went down to one day, and now it is a half day. So, that could probably be better. However, I would say that the support from the officials is reasonable.
603. **Ms Divin:** We know them by name. We can lift the phone and ring them or email them, and they will reply.
604. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is the sharing of best practice an area that is ripe for improvement?
605. **Ms Askin:** I think so. There are some really good local projects going on. If it works in one area, that is not to say that it will work in every area. However, it is certainly worth having a look at it and seeing if it could be replicated.
606. On your original point about bringing people together because they are different, I would say that it would probably be best practice to bring them together for a reason rather than just for being different. An example that we use all the time in training is Tesco. It brings everyone together all the time to do their shopping, but they are not actually interacting. They are turning up at the one place all the time and passing one another like ships in the night. Rather than just bringing them together, we bring them together to try to get them to talk, interact and communicate more.
607. **Ms Divin:** You need to do both work on finding common goals and other commonalities and work that looks at differences and explores those constructively. The key difference that we have found in Derry/Londonderry is that people generally realise that difference is not a threat and can be a positive thing for our city and district. The most commonly cited example of that is the Londonderry bands forum and the All-Ireland Fleadh.
608. **Alderman Ekin:** I listened to the ladies talking earlier. One of the problems with some of these meetings is that staff turnover is such that, as new community relations officers (CROs) and new Civil Service folks come in, you are starting off from scratch every time. That is wasting time to a considerable extent. You have to start building on the existing knowledge and make sure that you keep the teams together.
609. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I feel compelled to say that other supermarkets are available. *[Laughter.]*
610. **Mr Moutray:** You are very welcome. The Chair touched on a point about sharing experiences. The constituency that I represent encompasses Craigavon and Banbridge, and the issues in the two councils are very different. Surely there should be a more organised and regular sharing of experiences. Sue, I think that it was you who said that what is fed out at the bottom depends on how proactive the council’s senior management are.

611. **Ms Divin:** It can; yes.
612. **Mr Moutray:** Surely sharing your experiences is beneficial and should be encouraged.
613. **Ms Divin:** In the annual report to OFMDFM, each council is required to list examples of its best practice throughout the year. However, to my knowledge, that has never been shared across councils. There is useful information sitting there. Genuinely, when CROs need to, they tend to lift the phone to one another and find ideas of best practice. However, there are not formal structures for sharing that. It is not just within the district council's good relations programme. Our council runs considerable programmes with primary and post-primary schools. The education board rarely says, "Let us look at what you are doing." Although we work at a local level with teachers and people from the education board, we are never asked to input into the educational stuff in T:BUC. There is almost an assumption that councils just give out grants. The whole breadth of what we do is not tackled or looked at.
614. **Mr Moutray:** But it would be beneficial.
615. **Ms Divin:** I think that it would; yes.
616. **Ms McGahan:** No community relations funding was used in the distribution of grants at Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council. What do you believe to be the pros and cons of that?
617. **Ms Divin:** Of giving out good relations grant aid?
618. **Ms McGahan:** Yes.
619. **Ms Divin:** We have tried a number of systems over the years, but grant aid is a key part of what we do, not so much in terms of workload but financially. Derry City Council usually gives out around £150,000 in grants. It is a very competitive programme. We can fund only about 50% of the applications, and this year we will have to cut that programme quite significantly in the current context. So, many good projects are being turned away, but we have an open and transparent application system — a public advertisement, and a scoring panel — and we think that that it is important.
620. **Ms McGahan:** I notice that, in my constituency, no community relations funding was used in the distribution of grants. The figure is sitting at zero, so it has obviously gone somewhere else. I am trying to work out the pros and cons of that.
621. **Ms Divin:** In terms of programme versus grant aid?
622. **Ms McGahan:** OK, yes.
623. **Ms Divin:** We have a bit of a balance. There is certainly merit in putting money out to groups on the ground that identify local needs that meet good relations conditions. However, we say that it is also important that the officers also have programme budgets. We put money into mainstreaming good relations through Derry City Council services: therefore, we look at good relations through our leisure centres, sports, heritage, museums and all of that. We also do a lot of training programmes. If we see something that we think many people in the community would benefit from, such as a load of people needing mediation or media training, or whatever it is, we will run courses. Our schools programmes are all part of what we do directly.
624. **Ms Askin:** The pros for grant aid include that it is like mainstreaming good relations through community associations. They have the contacts in and relationships throughout their community, and they can probably attract a wider audience than, perhaps, could we. So, it is also definitely positive in getting the good relations' message out wider than we possibly could.
625. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** What impact does time-limited funding have on your ability to deliver effectively? What I mean is that you may apply for and get grants for 12 or 18 months, three years would probably be the longest that you would get them, but the issues will be around for a lot longer.

626. **Ms Divin:** At the minute, one year is the longest that we get funding under this programme; it is on an annual cycle. We would very much welcome it being on a two- or three-year cycle. That would make a massive difference in the strategic impact on the ground.
627. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** From my work in the public sector, on the victims' side of things, it seems to me that you would make a case, and, if successful, you would get funding. You would maybe then employ somebody to deliver a service. If you were playing snakes and ladders, you would take the people you were serving up a nice ladder to a better place. However, as the funding runs out and there is uncertainty about whether it will be renewed, your key worker might see a job in the statutory sector and leave, and the programme would collapse.
628. The people would then hit the big snake and be worse off, because they now know that there was a better place but that the funding was not available to keep them there. Could funding be open-ended? Once you have proved the need, could government say, "Your funding is going to be open-ended. Obviously, we are going to monitor it and we want to see impacts, but rather than have you reapply and reapply, we will monitor it, and, if we reach a point where we think that this need has been met, we will give you notice that funding will stop."?
629. **Alderman Ekin:** I can see what you are getting at.
630. I think it is doable under the following circumstances: if a lump sum of money were made available to a council for community relations over three years, and that council was able to say, within that period and for each year therein, "These are the programmes that we are going to fund". It would then be given the responsibility to use the funds properly, reporting against targets and making sure that there is the continuity that you referred to. A point that is hard to carry out is that the council must also have the responsibility to make sure that it cuts a programme, once started. So, it is doable, but I do not know how government finance would accept a three-year commitment of £1 million a year to this council, that council or whatever.
631. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We commit to a National Health Service because we know that we will need acute hospitals, GPs, nurses and all the rest. Sectarianism is not going to be cured in 12 months.
632. **Alderman Ekin:** We know that. We treat it as much less than 12 months, as you have heard from Sue and Angela. You are given two months to do something. That is the slowness of the process.
633. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Yes, and the letter of offer becomes even more of an issue because it becomes an annual process.
634. **Ms Askin:** It also makes it difficult to do strategic or progressive work. If you are starting at a low base with groups, you would like to move it forward and progress it year-on-year. If you are only getting your letter of offer on an annual basis, it is very difficult to keep that progression going and keep those relationships live.
635. **Ms Divin:** District councils tend to get the flak when other good relations-related funding cycles close and start. For example, when one round of Peace funding closes and there is a six- or nine-month gap until the next one, everybody looks at the council to fulfil all that. We are hitting the same thing at the minute with the IFI peace walls programme. So, yes.
636. **Mr Lyttle:** Thanks for your presentation. You are very welcome. Is it possible to give a brief example of one best practice piece of community relations work?
637. **Ms Divin:** One? Is there any particular type of work that you are interested in hearing about?
638. **Mr Lyttle:** Maybe something in relation to interfaces, for example.
639. **Alderman Ekin:** There are a lot of exercises going on in Belfast. I am not

- saying that it is good practice but it is standard practice.
640. You have to engage with people. As soon as you see a glimmer of people saying, “We want to be different”, you have to help them and support them in that. That is happening at Alexandra Park, for example. OK, it is the only park in the world with a peace wall across it, but they have opened a door in it and you have to give them the courage to do that. You put the funding in place. It is done. There is a lot of mischief-making outside, with people saying that there is rioting there every night and that it is criminal to have opened it up. That is mischief. That is wrong. We have tried to stop that. That is coming from some councillors, and it appals me that they say those things.
641. The good practice there has been to listen to what the people are saying, take the idea and ask, “What can we do to help you to get there?” When they get there, you know that there will be a problem and the good practice then is to help them at the time of the problem and ask, “What can we do as the next step?” Maybe you have to take a step back. That is not a problem as long as you know that you are taking a step back for the right reasons, which is what they had to do. The city council worked very closely with those folks over time without putting undue pressure on them but still saying, “Your goal is to make Alexandra Park a normal place”. The other good thing is that you get people who are prepared to come forward and say, “That gate was open. Do you know what it does? It allows me to get to Tesco without having to get a bus or a taxi. I can walk”.
642. **Mr Lyttle:** And other supermarkets.
643. **Alderman Ekin:** There are other supermarkets; I realise that. Tesco needs help.
644. **Ms Divin:** From a Derry/Londonderry perspective, I would say that you cannot tackle an interface by just looking at the wall. That is the first key thing. There are a number of things that we do in relation to that, most critically the interface monitoring forum in Derry/Londonderry, which, on a monthly or bimonthly basis, as needed, brings together statutory agencies, the PSNI, the Youth Justice Agency and the council along with key community workers from all sides of our three interfaces and we sit round a table and talk about the issues. That work has progressed over the years to the point that, at the last Maiden City Festival celebrations, we found ourselves talking about where the Portaloos would be in the city and about the police reporting on a carnival atmosphere. If you wind things back five or six years, it would have been a very different meeting.
645. Building relationships and sustaining the structures and the relationships is important in the long term. Equally, the IFI peace walls programme has made a massive impact in Derry/Londonderry because it paid for part-time workers to be based on each side of our interfaces. Having those workers on the ground was critical. Equally, we have a programme on bonfires and alternatives to bonfires so that communities that have, do not have or are doing away with bonfires can equally benefit. That brings a lot of our interface communities together on incentive-based training programmes and helps us build relationships with them so that they know us if they need to lift the phone. We also give diversionary money. A sum of £500 can make a massive difference to a community group or a youth group that works on either side of an interface in trying to keep young people involved in something positive rather than getting sidetracked into something negative.
646. **Ms Askin:** With shared spaces, and what are considered to be shared spaces, we do very practical things like getting a group of people on a bus and taking them into areas where they would not normally go, opening up areas to them and making them see that they are grand.
647. In the UK City of Culture year, we had a couple of new shared spaces — at the time, they were not considered to be shared spaces — like the Ebrington

- site and Guildhall Square, which were part of the public realm scheme. The programming, such as the Radio 1 Big Weekend, allowed people to go to Ebrington for a reason, and it is now considered to be a totally shared space. It is about pushing the boundaries of what is seen as a shared space and trying to make them more accessible to everybody.
648. **Mr Lyttle:** You are leading me on to a question that I am reluctant to ask, but, if I am not wrong, the T:BUC strategy sets the aim of all public space being shared space. What is OFMDFM doing to work with you to ensure that that aim is achieved?
649. **Ms Divin:** It is providing money under the district council good relations programme so that we can work with local communities.
650. **Mr Lyttle:** How is it monitoring or evaluating the outcomes of that investment to ensure that it is achieving the aims that it has set out in the strategy?
651. **Ms Divin:** I can comment on how we have to report on that. Every action plan is outcomes-based so you have to look at the target that you are aiming for and then work backwards from that as to what you will do and what OFMDFM does with the information that we send up. We submit quarterly progress reports to OFMDFM. I do not know whether those are collated, but it checks on an individual basis that a council is doing something constructive.
652. **Mr Lyttle:** What does OFMDFM do to bring district council good relations officers together to share practice or to consult on ideas?
653. **Ms Askin:** It brings us together annually for a conference.
654. **Mr Lyttle:** Is that a half-day conference?
655. **Ms Askin:** Yes. When the T:BUC consultation came out, for example, it brought us together, and our views were fed in. If there is any critical legislation that is pertinent to good relations, it brings us together.
656. **Ms Divin:** Before the RPA, OFMDFM advised that we should work in regional groupings. Derry City Council was part of the northern forum of good relations officers, along with Coleraine, Ballymoney, Moyle and Limavady. We shared good practice informally in our slightly wider areas. That does not really exist now because of the RPA, but it existed previously.
657. **Mr Lyttle:** What is the typical budget that OFMDFM gives to a council for good relations work?
658. **Ms Divin:** There is not a typical budget, unless you ask OFMDFM what the average is. Until now, it was based on the quality of your work, and you submitted a competitive bid, which was scored. If you scored very highly, you tended to get 100% of your funding. If you did not score highly, you did not get everything that you asked for. Our understanding is that that has changed, and we are concerned about that. It is no longer competitive to the same extent. When you apply this time round under the new council structures, it is either a pass or a fail, and, if you pass, the money is not based on quality but on per capita spend. Derry City Council has some concerns that, as it is a more deprived area of Northern Ireland, that disadvantages us, and we would expect quite a significant budget hit.
659. **Mr Lyttle:** What was your budget for last year?
660. **Ms Divin:** It was half a million pounds.
661. **Mr Lyttle:** With the letters of offer, am I right in saying that August/September was an early date of receipt for some of the last financial years?
662. **Ms Divin:** It is probably around average.
663. **Mr Lyttle:** Are there instances when it has been almost halfway through a year before people receive letters of offer?
664. **Ms Divin:** Yes.
665. **Mr Lyttle:** Is it an annual budget?
666. **Ms Divin:** Yes.

667. **Mr Lyttle:** How can anybody operate in those circumstances?
668. **Ms Divin:** We would be delighted if you could help us to answer that question.
669. **Mr Lyttle:** That is obviously a serious problem.
670. What involvement did OFMDFM have with the district councils in setting the good relations indicators? Have you had any update on the outcome of the review?
671. **Ms Divin:** We were asked to send one or two representatives to meetings in Stormont to discuss those indicators. We had input about it not being so Belfast-centric, bearing in mind rural areas and so on. So we had input, which we welcomed. Three or four good relations officers from different parts of Northern Ireland were involved in that process.
672. **Ms Askin:** The indicators were communicated to us once they were finalised.
673. **Mr Lyttle:** Do you think that they are in line with the types of outcomes that we are seeking to achieve, or is there work to be done?
674. **Ms Divin:** I think that they are very high level for us to be able to measure at a local level without employing researchers. We tend to do our own consultation and write our own action plans and strategies because that works for people on the ground. That also means that we do not spend money on consultants. It would be very difficult for councils to measure those indicators, because it requires university level analysis.
675. **Mr Lyttle:** The issue with the letters of offer is astounding, in that, when councils are given an annual budget, they know only halfway through the year what they will receive to do that work.
676. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You have made it clear that, when a Peace programme wraps up, groups understandably put pressure on you. What about when a Peace programme is open? Is there attention at that point? How do you make an assessment when there is this cocktail, as it were, with money coming from the Department, the CRC, Peace money and philanthropy money? How does it work for you?
677. **Ms Askin:** With Peace money, we would have ensured that there was complementarity with what we were delivering versus what Peace III was delivering. Locally, it worked very well for us. We were invited to sit on their partnerships and attend their meetings. We were asked for expertise on projects that they were establishing.
678. We are aware of areas where it did not work so well, and there were issues between both funds. For us, however, it worked pretty well. We tried to ensure that there was always complementarity and good relations. When it is operating well, it is brilliant, and loads of money is flying about, but, when the money starts to dry up, they want a house somewhere for the good work that was initiated under Peace. That is when they tend to look to the statutory sector.
679. **Ms Divin:** I will add to that, linking in with Bronwyn McGahan's question about the value of putting money into grant aid versus programmes. When Peace or another funding programme opens up a lot of money to the community and voluntary sector, very often the expertise of councils' good relations teams is called in to sit on steering groups for those projects. That adds to our workload but also shows the value of a district council good relations programme that employs staff.
680. **Alderman Ekin:** There is always a problem in matching the sources of funds. The IFI does one thing, the SEUPB does something else, and Belfast City Council had a certain amount of money to do things. One of the problems is that the availability of this funding is never coterminous and does not start at the same time.
681. We have had the odd problem when we have said, "If I have money, it is there, and it has to do a certain thing". That is to help people and communities to develop, but to develop to what? You need physical cash to come in later

- on to do whatever physical work has to be done, and that is not necessarily available. You are asked whether you want to take IFI money to do that, not knowing where the next step will be. It is important that we know the next step.
682. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So you spend a lot of time chasing money.
683. **Alderman Ekin:** Yes.
684. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You spend a lot of time accounting for the use of money, and you probably spend a lot of time shaping your strategies to tick the boxes.
685. **Ms Divin:** In fairness, we also spend a lot of time doing practical and policy work, and our jobs are just quite busy.
686. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Fair enough.
687. **Mr Spratt:** Thank you for the presentation. Good to see you, Tom. Community planning will now be a big issue for councils. Community engagement is obviously a vital part of community planning. I notice that Belfast has done an online survey of residents, and Mid Ulster has conducted a series of town hall-style meetings in different towns. Is that being run out across the Province for some of the issues that you are dealing with? Is Derry City Council doing anything about that?
688. **Ms Askin:** Different approaches are being taken to community planning across the Province, but, in Derry City and Strabane District Council, the town hall information sessions were rolled out last week and continue this week across the district. There will be 12 such sessions, and the chief executive is leading on them, with input from consultants. Staff are also very much involved. There is a three-pronged approach: letting the public know about the new dispensation and what will happen; what community planning means for communities; and how they can impact the new community planning, how it will be shaped and developed and what it will look like at a local level.
689. **Ms Divin:** There is a household survey, backed up by NISRA, of 1,400 households in the area and of section 75 groups.
690. **Mr Spratt:** That will play into your work as well.
691. **Ms Divin:** Some of it will but not all of it directly.
692. **Ms Askin:** Enumerators are being employed locally to do the surveys through Ilex.
693. **Ms Divin:** That will also be done through community groups on the ground. There will be trained enumerators.
694. **Mr Spratt:** We have heard about budget issues and all the rest of it, and the problem of having only a yearly budget happens right across the board. Departments and so on get only a yearly budget, and that is obviously something to do with Treasury rules. Local government, from a rating point of view, also gets its budget only on a yearly basis. Tom, you said that NILGA has been doing a good job, and I agree with you. Over the years, NILGA has done a very good job in making presentations. It did a good job in the run-up to the legislation for the new councils in lobbying across the board. Perhaps it could be stronger, and could be made stronger in the future, on some budget issues and the day-to-day workings of what we were talking about. Do you see a major role for NILGA in lobbying at Stormont? It attended regularly in the run-up to the legislation for local government reform.
695. **Alderman Ekin:** Thank you. It is gratifying that somebody other than NILGA is saying that we are doing a reasonable job. Remember that NILGA has been going through a transformation for the last few years, and the major issue now is how we are going to get a coherent view from 26 councils — down to 11 — to get them to work and how we are going to ensure that government delivers what it said it was going to deliver to the councils. Let us take the transfer of functions being rates-neutral. That did not happen, but we fought very hard to try to get

all the councils to agree what we were trying to take on board and to be willing to take on the new responsibilities. Some of them did not want to take on those responsibilities. In a couple of months' time, it will have happened, and I entirely agree that the councils are now buying into NILGA more. They will be using NILGA as a conduit, which is why I was quite pleased that the Committee invited us here today. This is another step in putting responsibility on NILGA to come up with coherent views that are persuasive and that all the councils in the Province can buy into so that there is one view so that you do not have to go and listen to 26 or 11 different people. You are listening to one spokesperson. I certainly see NILGA expanding its role and influence.

696. **Mr Attwood:** From what you have said so far, quite a number of recommendations could go forward to any final report. I have only one question. You talked about uncertainty of funding and delays in getting confirmed offers of funding. Can you scope out for us as best you can what you think that the profile will be of budgetary pressures, with the rundown of Peace, with whatever happens with the IFI interface project moneys that you referred to and with budgetary pressures in government and so on? Can you anticipate now what the squeeze could be year on year over the next number of years — let us say in the life of the current council term? Is that too speculative? If our report is to be rigorous, we have to advise government on the financial profile, including what the needs might be and what might fall to government in this situation, bearing in mind that the Institute for Fiscal Studies today published a report indicating that further Budget pressures will be very significant, including for devolved administrations post 2015-16. Are you able to do that? I am not quite asking you to speculate but to give your best assessment of what your pressures will be.

697. **Alderman Ekin:** I will answer speculatively from a higher level,

because I am not on the ground, as these ladies are. If you were starting this as a project, you would spell out your end result: where are you trying to get to? Nobody has spelled out just what we are trying to achieve. Indeed, we talk about a shared future, but it often ends up with people creating things that make it a divided future. You have to get people to say coherently, "Right, we are going to share the future, and that means getting rid of peace walls and working with people on the ground". This is how we need to bring people forward so that they are comfortable with their neighbour. There are also wonderful savings sitting there: it costs £1 billion a year to keep us separate. How do we find, say, £5 million a year? Is there some way that the Minister of Finance can say, "We can get £5 million a year, and, come hell or high water, we will set it aside for the next five years, and that is what will be spent over the Province". You could then go to the 11 councils and say, "Look, you have a certain issue". I am sure that somebody has already done the research on the major pressure points.

698. You were talking about areas of deprivation. I heard the other day that ISIS comes from deprivation. Now I do not want there to be an ISIS in Northern Ireland. You have to address the issues in those deprived areas and bring in social and economic investment and a whole heap of other things. Somebody has to start thinking their way through that and ask how much money we need. If, however, you are given only a few million quid, you then ask how you will spend it. The pressure will be felt by people at the coalface — Angela and Sue. If you were to cut their budget by 50% or 20%, they will have to juggle that and carry on doing what they are doing. Maybe you could expand on that.

699. **Ms Divin:** I will start, and you can add anything. We have already had these conversations. We lost 18% of our budget at the start of September last year. So our key message to you — we have articulated it before — is this: tell us what our budget is on 1 April,

- because then, whatever the budget is, we are able to plan strategically to work within it. Our style of working may change. Communities come to councils asking to work in partnership in order to get grant aid. Soon, we may be saying to them: "We have no money. However, let me come out and work with your community group at this interface or in that housing estate or in that sports club". We will work with them in kind and help them to fill in forms to get funding from Comic Relief, Children in Need or wherever we can get it. Indeed, we are already doing some of that. If we have less money ourselves, our resource, as people who understand good relations effectively on the ground, becomes even more important. That is the key issue.
700. We already work on a shoestring budget. The scale of funding for things like Peace III puts ours into perspective. We work on a shoestring delivering projects. Cutting that further effectively means cutting our direct delivery under our action plan. Either you cut all our grant aid or you cut all our other programmes, such as training and schools programmes, community festivals, black and minority ethnic work and our interface diversionary fund. That could all go, or you halve both and try for some kind of balance. That is how significant the funding cuts are. This coming financial year, we do not know whether we will have any money to spend after we have given out grant aid. We do not know whether we will have any programmes money at all for our officers to work from. That is the worst-case scenario, but it is not impossible. We are already looking at those kinds of things.
701. **Ms Askin:** We have heard that Peace IV may be in the pipeline, and that might relieve the pressure, although there will be a significant gap. The IFI is done: it is gone. The only other thing is philanthropic funding. As Sue stated, it is scary.
702. **Ms Divin:** Another key impact of those funders going out of existence is that the people who are employed in the community and voluntary sector end up not having those jobs. I cannot stress how important those jobs are to our sector. Derry City Council's good relations team could not do half the work it does if we did not have people working on the ground in communities. You can rely too heavily on volunteers who are trying to juggle family and work while doing all this. It is impossible for them to do it. Our city and district have moved forward, but that is partly because we have a very progressive community and voluntary sector that is willing to engage with these issues and work with us. If they go, we are handcuffed in what we can do.
703. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Sue, you mentioned NISRA, and my final question is about NISRA's evaluation of the district council good relations programme. I think that it was completed in 2012, but the recommendations have not been implemented.
704. **Ms Divin:** That is my understanding.
705. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Do you know when the recommendations will be implemented?
706. **Ms Divin:** No, I do not, but I am familiar with some of the key points, such as the timeliness of the letters of offer and things like that, which were raised then. We would love to see many of those recommendations being looked at.
707. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That has been most useful. Thank you very much indeed. Still feeling bad about the supermarkets. Clearly, from what you say, Sue, a Lidl goes a long way, but we are not yet at the point at which we can ask, "Asda programme worked?". Sue, Angela and Aldi-man Tom, thank you very much indeed. We look forward to Spar-ing with you in the future. *[Laughter.]*
708. **Mr Spratt:** We will be back after this short break.
709. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** The weather is next.
710. **Mr Lyttle:** He misses it.
711. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I have just had an image of Frank Mitchell. I am not well.

4 February 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Mrs Brenda Hale
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Ms Jackie Patton	<i>Mid and East Antrim Council</i>
Ms Karen Smyth	<i>Northern Ireland Local Government Association</i>
Ms Mary Kerr	

712. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** With us are Karen Smyth, the head of policy at the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), Jackie Patton, a council officer for Mid and East Antrim, one of the new super-councils, and Mary Kerr, the housing policy and research manager for the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations. You are very welcome. Karen, you are in the middle, so are you opening?

713. **Ms Karen Smyth (Northern Ireland Local Government Association):** Yes. Thank you very much for the invitation to attend and for your interest in community planning. This is obviously very new for Northern Ireland, and councils are making the necessary practical arrangements to do all they can to ensure that community planning is successful. I have provided you with some background information in your briefing and want to take a brief opportunity to expand on some points.

714. Although the primary legislation is in place for community planning, we are still waiting on some subordinate legislation and statutory guidance to enable councils and their community planning partners to move forward

with more certainty. A consultation about statutory partners closed on 12 December, and we are in the process of responding to a consultation on statutory guidance, which closes on 9 March. In November, councils and a number of relevant organisations were given a brief opportunity to comment on the draft guidance as part of a pre-consultation exercise. One of the issues arising from that pre-consultation was a weakness in the documents in the areas of equality and good relations, which was addressed prior to publication of the finalised consultation. We know that DOE officials were in contact with the Committee on the Administration of Justice, the Community Relations Council, the Equality Commission and OFMDFM to explore that issue and assist in developing the guidance in that regard. It might be useful for the Committee to examine the consultation as it stands to assess whether you wish to make any suggestions as to content. I know that other Assembly Committees are keeping a close eye on the progress of community planning to ensure that they are aware of the opportunities it presents and have requested sight of that draft guidance document.

715. I also suggest that the Committee encourages the Department to liaise with the DOE local government division to establish whether it should send an attendee to the DOE community planning working group, which meets regularly. I know that DOE is looking at strengthening links with Departments that are not transferring functions within local government reform, and I respectfully suggest that, given OFMDFM's remit for equality and good relations, it should engage with the work at that level.

716. New councils have recently appointed community planning officers, such as Jackie, who are working closely with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in a phase of building

- an evidence base for decisions that will need to be taken after 1 April 2015.
717. I have also requested that Mary Kerr from the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership joins us today, as that partnership, which also includes councillor members, has been very active in assisting in the evidence building exercise, and has produced a document focusing on community profiles for the new local government districts, particularly in relation to migrants. That community profiles document, which I think you have a summary of, is designed to support councils and their partners to engage with, plan for and deliver to communities that are becoming much more diverse, and, hopefully, to assist us all to maximise the potential within our communities. I have a copy of the full document for the Chair, should you wish to have a look at it. We are happy to take any questions.
718. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you very much. That was most useful. In your briefing paper you referred to the political partnership panel, which was set up and met in December, and, actually, was due to meet for the second time yesterday.
719. **Ms Smyth:** It did, yes.
720. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, how did that go?
721. **Ms Smyth:** It went very well, by all reports. There were five of the Executive Ministers there, including Minister Hamilton, and there was obviously a huge desire on behalf of councillor members to have a discussion about finance, to begin discussions on community planning and to develop a work programme for that partnership panel.
722. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Do you know which other four Ministers attended?
723. **Ms Smyth:** Off the top of my head, Minister Durkan chaired the meeting, we had Minister Wells, Minister Storey and there was one other — I am trying to remember who it was — but none of the OFMDFM Ministers attended. Obviously, Minister Hamilton was the other one.
724. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Do you think it has the potential to be a very useful cross-cutting tool?
725. **Ms Smyth:** We have a lot of hope for it and indications are good at the moment. Obviously, it needs to show results quickly. We need some quick wins from it. We have already managed to have a good outcome in relation to a problem that the sector had with the code of conduct, in the fact that it was too onerous on members and was actually anti-democratic in some ways, limiting their ability to speak about things. It is early days, and we anticipate that it will become substantive over time, particularly in the run-up to the next Programme for Government. We would like to see complementarity between what local government is doing and what central government is doing.
726. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** If you read the Smith Commission post the Scottish independence vote, or, indeed, the Command Paper on further devolution for the English regions that has come out of Westminster, you can see a consistent direction of travel that power should be devolved away from Westminster, out of Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, down to council and community level. Do you agree that perhaps the best thing for Stormont to do is set the vision, which might be a shared future, but then to devolve the actual mechanisms for delivering it to councils? Because how you might deliver it in Larne may be different from how you are going to do it in Dungiven or in east Belfast. Indeed, how you do it on the lower Newtownards Road may be different from how you want to do it on the Upper Newtownards Road.
727. **Ms Smyth:** I certainly agree with that direction of travel. Community engagement, as already highlighted, is a fundamentally important part of the new community planning process. We are working with voluntary and community sector partners, to build their capacity, as well as the capacity of our elected

- members and staff in councils, to get things working as they should and normalise the situation here. Delivering that shared future is an important part of what we are trying to do.
728. I want to bring Jackie in. She was a good relations officer in Ballymena for a long time and has transferred to community planning. This is very much her area of work.
729. **Ms Jackie Patton (Mid and East Antrim Council):** Indeed. Chairman, thank you and the Committee for the invitation. I worked for Ballymena Borough Council since 1991 as a good relations officer — so quite a while. I have now taken the opportunity to work for Mid and East Antrim District Council on community planning, on a secondment basis.
730. My experience would suggest that all of the work is about civic leadership. It is about making sure that we have key people at the head of all the organisations. In Mid and East Antrim District Council, we are fortunate in that we have an excellent chief executive, Anne Donaghy, who is very much behind good relations and community planning, as are our senior management team and our councillors.
731. I have worked very closely with Sue and Angela over the years and, as has been said, it is about relationship building and making sure that we have those relationships. A lot of the discussion today has been about grants. In Ballymena council, our grant aid was something like £10,000 per year or £300 per group. It was a competitive process, and it was only for £300, yet a great amount of work was done. Again, it was about the staff getting involved in the committees at a grass-roots level.
732. In the Ballymena borough we have Harryville, Broughshane and a vibrant ethnic minority population, who we worked with in the early 2000s to create an inter-ethnic forum that has gone from strength to strength. David, I am sure that you will agree with that. You come to an awful lot of our events, and we are very fortunate in that.
733. So, the work is time-bound, and it is about grasping the opportunities that you have through the Peace funding. A lot of it is about people working together and creating a great capacity in their area. The area that I represent has been very fortunate to have that.
734. **Ms Smyth:** To build on that and to come back to your point, the ability of local government to work locally is incredibly important, and Tom was very clear on the importance of that sort of bottom-up approach. Although we need the strategy to be set at a central level, it also needs to be fed by what happens at ground level. So, that reciprocal relationship is incredibly important and can be worked out through the community planning process and hopefully and eventually through the partnership panel.
735. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Mary, I want to bring you in. Your role is in housing policy and research. What sort of patterns are emerging?
736. **Ms Mary Kerr (Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership):** It is. Sorry — to clarify, I am with the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership. When you introduced me as having responsibility of housing, I was just getting installed and misheard.
737. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Sorry, the error is on our side. I withdraw that question. Will you repeat your function?
738. **Ms Kerr:** I am with the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership. I am the policy officer there. We are one of the 11 partnerships across the UK that are funded by the Home Office.
739. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK. How well do you think that your area is understood at a local government level?
740. **Ms Kerr:** It is becoming better understood. To date, we have been working very much at a regional level. We are relatively recently established partnership and have been in place for about three years. This issue is coming more to the fore in local government, particularly with regard to the new functions of community planning, and

- is bringing governance closer to the people. There is also a recognition that “the people” are a much more diverse representation than previously was the case.
741. That is really why we developed the profiles. We were working at a regional level, and we realised that there was a need to work more at a local government level. Initial conversations, principally with good relations officers, showed that they did not have the data and did not know what their demographics were. That is why we developed the profiles for each of the new 11 councils to show them exactly who was living within their government boundaries, what kind of diversity they have, what languages are spoken and what pressures and possible pressures will be put on different services etc. So it will inform them, not just with the engagement aspect of community planning but also in terms of the content, so that they are serving the full diversity of their population.
742. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Karen, do you think that there is a common understanding of what the term “community planning” means amongst councillors?
743. **Ms Smyth:** No. I do not think that there is a particularly strong understanding across a number of sectors about what community planning means. I think that there is a different understanding among different Departments about what it means. That is why the guidance is so important. We have a legislative definition, but how it is worked out in practice is going to take some time. We have at least a year, hopefully two, to get the first iteration of community plans up and running. During that time, that understanding of what community planning means in a local area will need to develop. I say that deliberately because, what community planning looks like in mid and east Antrim might be different to what it looks like in Belfast. There is some flexibility in the guidance as to the outworkings of it: whether there is an area-based approach, one based on strategic themes, or a combination of the two. That is what it is supposed to be. It is supposed to be local, but it has to be within the strategic setting of the Programme for Government, the local government response and complementarity to the Programme for Government.
744. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** I just wanted to ask about the political partnership panel. What is the make-up of it? My understanding is that it has local government reps from each of the 11 councils, NILGA reps and Executive Ministers. What sort of representation is there from local councils on the panel?
745. **Ms Smyth:** I do not have the exact political make-up of that with me. I can furnish the Committee staff with that later this afternoon. Certainly, there is a good cross-section of political parties across the panel. We have one representative, obviously, from each of the 11 councils, and there are up to five representatives from NILGA. The key function, apart from the strategic consensus-building that NILGA does, is to ensure that a political balance is provided. We know the importance of ensuring that smaller parties and quieter voices are represented at that table. So, the balance issue is an important one, and that is why we are on the panel in the first place.
746. **Mr Lyttle:** That is helpful. I just wonder how MLAs or Assembly Committees stay up-to-date with the work of the panel, given that it seems to be the one area of representation that is not covered on it. It seems like a useful framework to try to lead on issues.
747. **Ms Smyth:** I am sorry to cut across you. As you have already stated, it is very early days for the panel. It is working out what it is and what it is going to do. Also, the new councils will become operational on 1 April. Most of them will have an AGM in March, and their representation on the panel will probably change after that. That may have the effect of markedly changing the political representation on it, because people may have cottoned on to how important

- it is going to be, and that may impact on which parties prioritise membership as a position of responsibility.
748. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** This could be my final question. If you were doing a SWOT analysis of community planning and its ability to deliver the T:BUC policy, what would be the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats?
749. **Ms Smyth:** The strengths would be bringing key players together and being able to work on themes or specific areas. We have weaknesses, in that we are not particularly happy at the moment with how the Departments are tied in to the process. Because the Departments are setting the policy and strategy — and I refer to all Departments — we are trying to ensure that their feet are under the table, specifically those Departments that have service-delivery arms. We are still trying to tease that out, and, certainly, the Minister is working quite hard to ensure that the statutory partners legislation is written in such a way that Departments are fully tied in. Jackie could perhaps come in on the opportunities that she sees at local level. We are a bit worried that people are going to perceive it as some sort of panacea or magic wand that will solve everybody's problems. Specifically, we possibly have an issue in managing the expectations of the community and voluntary sector. It is an opportunity to completely change how local government, Northern Ireland and the community operate. If it works, it should be quite successful.
750. **Ms Patton:** Notwithstanding those weaknesses, we have a specific community planning directorate and a specific director in the structure that Anne Donaghy is purporting in Mid and East Antrim council. Good relations is going to sit under that department. That is very welcome. As Sue said earlier, it is the case in certain councils that good relations was not to the fore as perhaps it should have been. I was a good-relations officer for many years, and I very much welcome that.
751. In Mid and East Antrim council, we are at the start of the process of engaging with our statutory partners and the community engagement aspect. We are currently working to the foundation programme's themes. As you will be aware, one of those is safety and good relations. I would be very surprised if safety and good relations was not one of the key themes. I certainly think that it augurs well in terms of opportunities. It is good to get it out there and to have the community consultation. The themes that we will be looking at will be very specific to safety and good relations.
752. Another aspect of the operational point of view is the example of the policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs). When I worked in Ballymena council, I worked closely with the officers there in terms of community safety and the district policing partnerships (DPPs), but I did not necessarily have a seat at the table. I welcome that opportunity; it will, hopefully, be more joined up.
753. It is very early days. I have been in post only since October. This is obviously new for all the councils. It is about taking time at this point in terms of trying to set up the structures as best we can, but we realise that we will make mistakes. We need to try to learn from those as we move forward. I certainly very much welcome the opportunity in terms of good relations. Again, it is good that it is well referenced in the statutory guidance. That is certainly to be welcomed. One area that perhaps could be enhanced is race relations. Perhaps Mary wants to speak a little bit about that in terms of the statutory guidance.
754. **Ms Kerr:** The racial equality strategy is forthcoming. We welcome that; we look forward to seeing the final document. How can community planning help to deliver T:BUC? T:BUC is a very strong strategy in terms of its vision. When it is broken down into the implementation side and the project, it becomes less of an inclusive document and more of an exclusive document. It goes back to the two-community model, whereas, when it sets out its vision, it is a very inclusive model. I perceive that as a

possible weakness when we are looking at promoting good race relations and looking at community planning as a vehicle for that. The emphasis in T:BUC is still on looking at one particular fault line in the community at the expense of another, lesser fault line that is growing. If that is not addressed now, greater need will have built up 10 years down the line. It is very important to coordinate those documents and to spell out how the racial equality strategy is going to coordinate with T:BUC and how they are both going to be supportive of and supported by community planning.

755. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is the racial equality strategy missed out on the ground?
756. **Ms Kerr:** Yes. It is very ad hoc; people are firefighting a lot. The organisations working on the ground are very client-facing. We work in a very strategic area, but we talk to a lot to organisations that have much more of an operational role. They really feel that there is a lack of strategic direction. They are very much looking forward to the racial equality strategy. The gap where the racial equality strategy has not been has been filled by community groups really working to their capacity and beyond. There is a lot of coordination among the community and voluntary sector because those gaps have been there, and they had to be filled. With the absence of the strategy, it fell back to that sector to do a lot more because there was no overarching framework for it to work within.
757. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, is there a danger, Mary, that the strategy could become obsolete because people have had to make decisions about how to live their lives, and the T:BUC strategy, for example, might shape relationships, before the strategy comes out?
758. **Ms Kerr:** We hope that the strategy will be informed by the consultation responses and that it is not merely going to take up where the previous strategy left off. We hope that it will acknowledge how groups and organisations have moved forward and how relationships have developed. We understand that the final strategy will be available by the end of this financial year. We hope that it will acknowledge the work that is done in T:BUC. T:BUC acknowledges that there is a racial equality strategy and that the two will be working together, but it does not spell out how that is going to happen. The good-relations indicators are very much focused on the two-community model. Without seeing the racial equality strategy, how that is going to be measured and how these indicators are going to be brought together, it is very difficult to say how the two strategies will work together. However, as there is an acknowledgement in both that there is a need, we need that to be spelt out a little bit more.
759. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** 18 March is a key date for the Committee, because that is when we are due to have a briefing on the strategy. One would like to think that that indicates the policy is about to go to the printers.
760. **Ms Smyth:** Chair, may I come back on a more general point? It goes back to something that Alderman Ekin said earlier about having a conversation and looking closely at what we want to achieve and what we want the outcomes of all of this to be. I have seen the Programme for Government for Scotland, 'Scotland Performs'. They can get their entire Programme for Government on two sides of A4 because they have very tight outcomes, which everybody is working towards. Councils and the Scottish Government are working towards them. I think that that is the way we want to go. Community planning, T:BUC and all the strategies should be working together and feeding into a document like that so that everybody — the whole region — is clear about what we want to achieve.
761. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** The Scottish Government's Programme for Government is two pages?
762. **Ms Smyth:** The summary of it is on two sides of A4.

763. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I like the style.
764. **Mr Spratt:** What has NILGA done to try to lobby and put the point that has just been made, to OFMDFM? Lobbying should be part of your job.
765. **Ms Smyth:** Of course.
766. **Mr Spratt:** It is easy to say what you have said.
767. **Ms Smyth:** It is.
768. **Mr Spratt:** Tell me what you have done or what you intend to do.
769. **Ms Smyth:** Our chief executive has met the Ministers from OFMDFM. We do lobby. We have developed a programme for local government. It has been put round all of the relevant Departments. It is designed to be complementary to, and inform, the forthcoming Programme for Government. It also takes on board something the Chair said earlier about potential further devolution and taking on further functions once political confidence has been built in the transfer of the functions that will be taken on. We are at a very difficult time in relation to NILGA and local government. At the moment, NILGA is in the process of reconstituting, so we are in a slightly weakened position. That is why there is not an elected member with me at today's session. We are in the process of consulting with the 11 councils on their engagement over the next period, funding mechanisms, membership, new constitutions, and so forth. That has not come to a resolution, as yet. So, we are continuing to negotiate on some thorny issues with some of them. We have strong support from all of them, as far as I can see, to continue, particularly on the lobbying role and the consensus-building role. I should say that we are working more on financial issues. At the moment, the way in which we are constituted means that we represent the 26 councils, and we need to develop the constitution and membership to represent the 11. We are in between two stools at the moment. Very shortly, we will begin a much more concerted effort to lobby along those lines — local government finance and strategic policy — and we have support from the 11 councils to do that. We are doing what we can to support them in advance of their eventual sign up.
770. **Mr Spratt:** You have just made a statement to the Committee to say that the chief executive lobbied OFMDFM Ministers. Was that the First Minister and the deputy First Minister, or was it the junior Ministers? When did that lobbying take place, and what was the lobby about?
771. **Ms Smyth:** I would need to go back to the office to get the details of the visits. As far as I understand, there have been a number of visits. I know that we have had contact with officials about various aspects of OFMDFM's work, and that would be more on the economic policy side and the Programme for Government side. I know that the chief executive led on some of those visits, but there may have been visits with members as well. I do not have the detail of that at the moment, but I can certainly furnish the Committee with that.
772. **Mr Spratt:** In evidence a short time ago, you specifically said — it will be on the record in Hansard — that the chief executive met OFMDFM Ministers.
773. **Ms Smyth:** As far as I am aware.
774. **Mr Spratt:** So you are not sure? You made a statement, and you are not sure now.
775. **Ms Smyth:** I am not 100% sure, but I am fairly sure that he has met at least one of the junior Ministers.
776. **Mr Spratt:** So you are retracting the first statement that you made.
777. **Ms Smyth:** If that has caused confusion, yes.
778. **Mr Spratt:** It is not causing confusion, but we need to get it clear. You cannot make a statement and say that you have had meetings. I want to know what those meetings were about and on what issues the chief executive lobbied. Perhaps, Chair, we can get a letter back from NILGA — from the chief executive

— to tell us exactly when those meetings took place, if they took place, and what the lobbies were about so that we are clear.

779. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I think that that is agreed. Karen, are you content with that?

780. **Ms Smyth:** Yes.

781. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Jackie, Mary and Karen, thank you very much. Mary, I apologise again for the confusion.

782. **Ms Kerr:** It was nice to have another hat.

783. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Clearly, we shall give some thought as to how we keep abreast of the political partnership panel, which may be the key in this area. Thank you very much indeed.

11 February 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mrs Brenda Hale
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mr Peter Mullin *Landscape Institute*
 Dr Stephen McCabe *Northern Ireland
 Environment Link*

784. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We are joined today by Dr Stephen McCabe, who is policy and projects officer with Northern Ireland Environment Link, and Pete Mullin, who is the policy representative for the Landscape Institute. Gentlemen, you are very welcome. Would you like to make some opening remarks?

785. **Dr Stephen McCabe (Northern Ireland Environment Link):** Thank you, Chair, for your welcome this afternoon and to the Committee for the invitation to give evidence to the inquiry.

786. For those of you who do not know, Northern Ireland Environment Link is the forum and networking body for non-statutory organisations concerned with the environment in Northern Ireland. Its members represent a significant constituency in Northern Ireland and manage a large land area that delivers a variety of benefits to society. Members are involved in environmental issues at all levels from the local community, which is obviously relevant to this inquiry, to the global environment. Environment Link brings together a wide range of knowledge and expertise that can be used to develop policy and practice.

787. With regard to the implementation of Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC), a really simple but important

point that I would like to make today is that there is a significant body of research that demonstrates that the environment is a key factor in building community cohesion. While no individual or single discipline has all the answers to complex social issues, part of the solution to community division will be found in addressing environmental enhancement. Well-designed and well-maintained shared green space in urban areas has been shown to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, contributing to the establishment of stable societies. As people feel more comfortable and feel more pride in the place where they live, their confidence in their identity increases and they feel less threatened. Furthermore, better integration of things like land and transport planning naturally leads to better functioning places and spaces, which can lead to greater social inclusion.

788. Green infrastructure is something that we would like to get across to you today. Essentially, it means using green and blue space — vegetation and the water environment — *[Interruption.]*

789. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Stephen, I am so sorry.

790. **Dr McCabe:** Don't worry.

791. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I suspect that we may be away for some time.

792. **Mr Spratt:** I propose that we adjourn the meeting, Chair.

793. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Would you be willing to come back on another occasion?

794. **Dr McCabe:** We would be.

795. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I am really sorry.

796. **Dr McCabe:** That is how it goes some times. We understand.

797. **Mr Pete Mullin (Landscape Institute):** I will change the wording of this —
798. **Mr Lyttle:** Chair, I know that we are in a rush, but, for what it is worth, I think it would be a really valuable contribution, so it would be good to reschedule.
799. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We would definitely like to reschedule.
800. We have a proposal from Mr Spratt, and I do not think we need to put it to a vote. We need to adjourn, but hopefully we will get back together.

Committee adjourned (Division in the House).

18 February 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Mrs Brenda Hale
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr Stephen Moutray

Witnesses:

Mr Johnston Price	<i>Forthspring Inter Community Group</i>
Ms Roisin McGlone	<i>Interaction Belfast</i>
Mr Terry Donaghy	<i>Suffolk Community Forum</i>
Ms Caroline Murphy	<i>Forum</i>

801. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We are very grateful to Interaction Belfast for hosting us today. The witnesses joining us are Roisin McGlone of Interaction Belfast; Johnston Price from Forthspring Inter Community Group, whom we have met before; and Caroline Murphy and Terry Donaghy from the Suffolk Community Forum. All four are very welcome. Forthspring Inter Community Group and Interaction Belfast have provided written evidence through our call for evidence. The Suffolk pocket plots initiative was brought to our attention by the Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) in its written submission. Caroline, I understand that you have been unwell since Christmas, so I want to say a particular thank you for considering it important enough to make yourself available today. I appreciate that.
802. **Ms Caroline Murphy (Suffolk Community Forum):** Thank you.
803. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** No doubt you have enough to fill the afternoon, but we will try to restrict you, collectively, to 10 minutes, if that is OK, so that we get the best interaction possible.

804. **Mr Johnston Price (Forthspring Inter Community Group):** I will start off and keep it very brief before handing over to Caroline and then Roisin.
805. Thanks, first, for your invitation and the opportunity to come along. We can talk more specifically during questions about the interface, but I will reiterate the general points made about Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) in Forthspring's submission to the Committee. We believe that T:BUC fundamentally lacks ambition. It lacks a vision of what a shared society would look like, which makes it quite an impoverished document. It lacks a commitment to tackling sectarianism, and the absence of a definition of good relations is a barrier to helping to promote a more positive society and a clear sense of where we want to go as a community.
806. The document reads like a compromise, albeit that it has desirable measures within it. Overall, it feels very much like the lowest common denominator. It is not a policy that gives us vision or encouragement at interfaces or anywhere else in our society. We raised a specific point about the funding that has been derived from OFMDFM, and we carefully used the word "appalling". There has been a series of delays, an absence of transparency and there is no appeal process. There is a widely held belief that it is, at best, a political carve-up and, at worst, a sectarian carve-up. In the absence of transparency, people will talk, as it were.
807. There is an opportunity, post the Stormont House Agreement, to address the legacy of the conflict in T:BUC. That was, as many people pointed out, a glaring omission from the original policy. There is a huge amount of work to be done in interfaces on safety, regeneration and relationships, and more vision would create more opportunity there.

808. **Ms Murphy:** I will not talk about the strategy per se. Rather, I will talk about how we interpret it on the ground and what we are doing, which I believe is what NIEL referred to. In putting into practice building united communities, we, as an interface community, have some land within the Suffolk boundaries that we are trying to develop into shared space. We worked for a long time with Lenadon on the shared space building on the Stewartstown Road, but we are now working with the communities off the Blacks Road, Willowvale and the surrounding area, and Brooke to develop a little interface buffer zone of 0.8 of an acre into shared family-size allotments. In order to do that, we are supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I have been working towards this since late 2009, which indicates that it is a very slow process. We are coming to the nitty-gritty now of consultations with colleagues and friends, not only in Suffolk but on the other side of the interface. There has never been any interaction between the two, so there are trust issues there: who will trust whom?
809. As I said, we are working with the Housing Executive. We have been talking to Matt Garrett and some of the other community representatives from the Brooke area to put this into practice. Money should not be a driver, but we have applied to Space and Place because we cannot do anything unless we have sufficient funds to do it. We are now through to the final stage of Space and Place, looking at asking for £350,000 towards making it a reality. Beside the buffer zone, there is a large piece of contested ground on which we plan, and hope, to develop a fishing and leisure park that will be shared space. You have the drawings for that. They are very rough topographical drawings. The allotments will be the first phase; the fishing and leisure park will be the second phase. Basically, it is bringing down to the ground the aspiration of building united communities. To make this viable and sustainable, we want to make it economically viable and develop it into a social enterprise. Key to all that would be developing a horticultural training centre on the contested land alongside the fishing and leisure park, developing stuff from that and an interface market.
810. I am quite happy to answer any questions on that, but I do not want to labour the subject. The handout that we gave you shows the main bullet points. As I say, we are not talking about the strategy, which, to people on the ground, is way up in the air somewhere; we are talking about how it is on the ground.
811. **Ms Roisin McGlone (Interaction Belfast):** I will try to marry the two things that we have just been talking about. We need to contextualise T:BUC and what it is really about. For us, T:BUC really should be a contribution towards a reconciliation process — it is as simple as that.
812. We have provided you with an extensive written submission. If you want to know about the organisation, some of the things that we have done and the theories and policies behind what we have done, you will find all that in the submission. I did not want to play on that, emphasise it or talk about this organisation. Really, I wanted to talk about what reconciliation is. Very briefly, it is both a goal and a process. In your case, politics is to deal with the issues that divided our past, whereas we see our grass-roots reconciliation process as a process to redesign the relationships of the imperfect reality that we have. That has some very painful challenges. The problem with T:BUC is that it reflects the politicians' temptation to concentrate on the political process element of issues: looking at schools, young people, walls and interfaces. I think that, sometimes — to give you your fair due — as politicians, you are concerned about examining the past because you think that there is a danger of damaging the political and social stability. The reality of reconciliation is that it applies to all of us, and we need to come to terms with the past in order to guarantee that we do not go back to it.
813. Moving on slightly from T:BUC, although I will come back to it, I think that the Stormont House Agreement certainly

- has given us more meat on the bones of what could be done with regard to a reconciliation process. Your job as politicians is to reach agreements and negotiate about issues of conflict. You find the compromise, you bargain and you pragmatically cooperate within the bound of your self-interest and party interests. That is a vital part of our transformation from conflict, but our job is to address the broken relationships between the communities that you represent as well as the issues that broke us.
814. The sad reality is that we do not have a lot of money, and we know that there is not a lot of money. However, T:BUC misses out completely on two things that do not cost a lot: the ordinary people who are prepared to pay a personal rather than a financial price to achieve progress; and the home-grown mechanisms developed from learned and lived experiences on interfaces. I have been working on interfaces in north and west Belfast since about 1966. We have developed mobile phone networks, forms of peaceful protest, peace projects and protocols. The international community realises the importance of reconciliation as an ingredient in conflict prevention, human security and peace building. People from all over the world come to this organisation, and probably to the other two organisations as well — Japan, eastern Europe and America — to look at our practice. Yet our practice is not being implemented in T:BUC or in some of the issues around it.
815. I will not go on for much longer. The work on interfaces should not be focused on the walls — they are the least important part. What appears to have happened through T:BUC is that the architecture has become important. There are three stages of reconciliation at interfaces. First, replace fear by non-violent coexistence, and I think that most of us have done that over the last number of years. Secondly, where fear no longer rules, we should be building confidence and trust, and I think that we have begun to do that among activists but not necessarily among residents on the ground. The final stage, which we have not yet reached, is the move towards empathy.
816. My appeal to you is this: recognise the expertise in the field; allow this to happen through joined-up government codes of practice and protocols, and involve civic society in developing and evolving that process of reconciliation. However, most important of all is this: will somebody please be our champion?
817. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you all very much. You have given us some very fundamental challenges in terms of the document and practice on the ground.
818. I will start with your very last point, Roisin. You said that, collectively, you get global interest in what you do on the ground but that it is not matched, if I heard you correctly, by the level of interest from across town — Parliament Buildings.
819. **Ms R McGlone:** I do not think that we have the mechanisms yet. I go back to the point that I made about politicians. You have your role to play and we have our role to play in reconciliation. In civic society, I do not think that we have yet found the mechanisms to be able to do that. I think that there may be an opportunity, through T:BUC, as part of a reconciliation process, to do that, but we do not yet have the mechanism to bring out the best. Some of our work is recorded in books written in Australia, Jerusalem and America. Another one, Vicky Cosstick's book on interfaces, is coming out quite soon. On the back of the work that we do, many academics are publishing PhDs and books about the peace process, but I do not think that Stormont has found a mechanism yet whereby civic society can be engaged.
820. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is a fair point, and flowing from the Stormont House Agreement is the question of how we re-engage civic society. After 1998, there was the Civic Forum.
821. **Ms R McGlone:** I was a member of that forum, Mike, so I know about that.

822. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I was not in this role at the time, but my impression of today's critique of it is that it did not work. Is that reasonable as a headline?
823. **Ms R McGlone:** I will be absolutely blunt: there was not a lot of political support for it. First, people were interested in other things. Secondly, the Civil Service did not know how to deal with it. The forum was made up of a diverse range of people from the Orange Order to residents' groups to community relations groups to Church groups, and the Civil Service did not know how to handle us. A direct rule Civil Service did not have the skills to deal with civic society. No offence — you do not expect them to. Thirdly, maybe it was not facilitated as well as it could have been. We were probably at fault as well, because we did not know what we were doing either.
824. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I do not want to stray too far from the role of Chair, but I sense that there is a commitment from the five parties to try to find a way to do it that is affective. That is ongoing. I was struck by your comment that what we are talking about is a goal and a process. Caroline, you made the point that it is slow. What factors slow it down?
825. **Ms Murphy:** There is a lack of trust between communities; uncertainty about the position of the volunteers who make up the community forums and how they can be sustained; and a high level of burnout — Terry is very committed, but he could tell you about the amount of unpaid work that he does. Those are all very real factors. There is also a lack of commitment among many of the agencies that we work with in the statutory sector. We have been very lucky with the Housing Executive, which has been absolutely superb in its support, but we do not know, given all the cuts and so forth, what resources we will have in the forum itself. Then, we are trying to work on the ground to get trust, not only of the other community but of the community in Suffolk. We want to say to them, "You'll not be betrayed. This land might be within your boundary and might be considered your territory, but your neighbours are important, too, and this will be so much better if it is shared". All those factors make it a slow and laborious process. It has been speeding up just recently, but you need to watch your step.
826. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** If trust is a fundamental value, presumably one of the great threats to it is beyond your control, namely external events that just happen.
827. **Ms Murphy:** They do, but we have been very lucky in the sense that somebody up there is pushing it along anyway. We have had the flags protest and a lot of negativity about that, and we have seen the way in which disadvantaged Protestant communities are alienated and disaffected, but, somehow or other, we have managed to keep this ball in the air. We are blooming determined that we will continue with it.
828. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Johnston, you began by very starkly criticising the document for a lack of vision. This is your opportunity to put your thoughts on the record.
829. **Mr Price:** The first thing to be said is that it is called Together: Building a United Community, so we have to accept that we have very different constitutional aspirations in this place, live with that and do so in such a way that we can respect and get on with each other.
830. You asked about impediments to progress. There is a lack of trust, but there are historical reasons for that, and they need to be addressed. There is also cynicism, and it is important that political leaders do not send out contradictory messages all the time. On the one hand, we get positive media and press releases about urban villages; on the other hand, we get very bitter squabbling about the past or whatever.
831. If our vision is of a place where we respect and trust each other, there are other things that we can do. People keeping their word would help. There was a commitment in the Good Friday

- Agreement to an anti-poverty strategy. A lot of the time, we look at the relationship between communities in terms of Protestant and Catholic, but, in fact, a lot of people suffer chronic social and economic disadvantage, and that can be underpinned by people feeling very alienated and disengaged. If you wanted to send out positive messages, you would do what you said that you would do and keep your word.
832. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** What is your vision? Do you have one?
833. **Mr Price:** Yes. It is maybe what Belfast was like briefly in and around 1995, when people were prepared to engage with each other and there was optimism. My vision is of a place where a Protestant can choose to live where he wants and Catholics can live where they want; where we do not have to talk about buffers and segregation; and where I can aspire to be whatever I want to be in terms of my identity and can respect someone else's identity. It is not really that complicated — it is a place where people are decent to each other.
834. One of the projects that I have been working on recently is the 5 Decades project, which deals with very contentious issues because it is about people's experience of living through the conflict. I am not wearing rose-tinted spectacles, but I was shocked — I do not think that that is too strong a word — by the extent of the generosity and understanding that people displayed for other people's experience, which is at odds with much of the political rhetoric on the subject.
835. I think that we need to create space where people can engage with each other, share the difficult experiences that they have had and treat each other with respect. Belfast is my city; it is a place that I love.
836. Forthspring has a very large youth project, and I have seen a noticeable change in the attitudes of young people. That is an important message to get across. I have been working in and around here for six years and have definitely seen change in that period. Young people are more into sharing and getting on with each other; they have less time for bitterness and old animosities. So, when thinking about impediments, we should not ignore the fact that there has been change in this place. There are many ways in which it is a more decent, a fairer and a more equal place.
837. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You have given us something very positive there. You also say that, to a certain extent, 1995 was a high point for you. How would you characterise the journey from 1995 to 2015?
838. **Mr Price:** It has been a journey from hope and optimism to cynicism, which is a sad reflection of where we are today.
839. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Not for young people, though.
840. **Mr Price:** Young people have found their own way, and you make a fair point. We talk to young people from this part of the city, and, 20 years ago, they would never have been in the city centre. They have more space now. I am not saying that it is ideal by any means. There are enormous inequalities in our city. Every day, when I come to work, I come into an area where less than 30% of the kids get five or more GCSEs. At night, I travel home to an area where, in many locations, 90% or more of kids will get five or more GCSEs. It is not surprising that we have tensions, division and alienation in our city, but we can have a much better city and a much better society.
841. **Ms Murphy:** May I come in on the back of something that Johnston said? I mentioned the alienation of disadvantaged Protestant communities. You have the strategy and all that it purports to support and wants to take forward, but, on the ground, as Johnston said, qualification levels are extremely low, particularly amongst Protestants. Suffolk is an enclave, and those on the other side of the interface are slightly better off, so there is that kind of inequality there. If we are developing

- something, we have to be aware of, and try to cater for, the reality on the ground. There are low qualifications, significant health deficits and low job expectations — low expectations in general. That is the bread-and-butter issue that walks hand in hand with all this.
842. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Let us look at that again because educational underachievement is not new, and it is not confined to Protestant working-class boys. It has been around for decades, not years. Health issues have been around for decades, not years. It seems to me that, as a Government, we put an awful lot of effort into measuring: for example, we have the Noble indices, super output areas and league tables. We spend tens of millions, and, on some occasions, even over £100 million on specific communities, yet they remain in the same place in the league table. Whatever we are doing, it is not working.
843. **Ms R McGlone:** It is not working.
844. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Does this document contribute to a fix?
845. **Ms R McGlone:** I do not know. The consensus of people on the ground is that they are very cynical about the T:BUC document. I cannot not say that. I am in the community relations sector, and people have been scrabbling around for a long time. It is not all about T:BUC. One of our problems is that funders have different needs, and we have to meet those needs. There is not even a joined-up approach there, and there is not a joined-up approach in government either. To me, T:BUC looks like a fragmented document, in that there is a bit about young people, a bit about schools and a bit about interfaces, which is all about taking down walls. I cannot help being cynical when we look back at Bloomberg, somebody from outside this country saying that we need to take down the walls. No, we do not. We need to get people to build relationships so that they want the walls to come down. We have that the wrong way round.
846. You are right, Mike, that a lot of things have not changed, and yet, like Johnston, I am amazed by the resilience of young people and their ability not to take some of the routes that we have taken. Although the communities that we work with are still a bit frightened and they are frightened when they hear about a wall coming down or whatever, they are much more generous than our politicians sometimes. I know that you are politicians and it sounds as if I am saying that you are something separate, but you just have to listen to the radio sometimes and you do not want to come to work in the morning. You say to yourself, “Is that the way we are going?”. I am being serious about that: we need examples and models of good practice, and we need champions. We need people who are talking about a reconciliation process. We need to start using that language and those processes, and we need to start unpicking that. There are loads of international examples; we are not the first country that has had conflict or which is post-conflict. I am sorry, but sometimes it can be very frustrating when you are working such a long time in the field and you see —
847. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Absolutely. I will take that criticism on the chin because it is, sometimes, challenging to demonstrate the spirit of generosity that I think is important for somebody like me to show. It is too easy to be negative; I am guilty of that on occasions, so I certainly take that point.
848. Caroline, you said that money should not be a driver, but, presumably —
849. **Ms Murphy:** You cannot do anything without it either.
850. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So it is.
851. **Ms Murphy:** It is about finding a balance. I am quite passionate about what we are doing, but I am also very frustrated at times because of the distrust between communities — “They are not going to do this because they etc etc”. They live cheek by jowl, but they do not know each other and they

- are not willing to come out. I talked about deficits, but you can translate that into lack of confidence and apathy — “No matter what we do, nothing is going to change”. I want to grab them and tell them that it is going to change but that they need to work at it. You are looking at a strategy on the one hand; yes, we can pick through it and see where we can use it, but we cannot do it on our own. We are not driven by money, but we cannot do it without money or support.
852. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You said that sometimes you want to grab people and tell them that they have to work at it. Are people willing to work at it?
853. **Ms Murphy:** Yes; not universally so, but yes, of course they are. You will get the naysayers —
854. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Of course.
855. **Ms Murphy:** — People are willing to work at it, but they need the drivers.
856. **Ms R McGlone:** We started the mobile network between 1996 and 1998 when Drumcree was at its worst, and we started it in north Belfast. Twenty or 30 people from both communities gave up 24 hours, seven days a week, and not one penny changed hands. That has since developed across the whole of the North. It has to be something worthwhile. Why would you want to bring somebody out of their house? As you were saying, Caroline, there has to be a benefit. Why would you take on dealing with difficult relationships if you could just stay in your own area and not worry too much about them'uns on the other side of the fence? You would not have to have any difficult meetings and go to places and people that you were frightened of. Why would you? Why would anybody? It has to be done.
857. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I have two more points before I open it up to members. I want to go back to Johnston's opening remarks. We talked about the lack of vision that he identified in the document. Then you said that there was a failure to make a commitment to tackle sectarianism.
- Does that mean, Johnston, that you simply want to see the words “we will commit to tackling sectarianism” in the document or do you want to see a vision or route map for how that will be achieved?
858. **Mr Price:** We need a legal definition of good relations for a start so that it can be promoted in a way that supports and underpins equality but which gives us a sense of the society that we want, where we can acknowledge that it is wrong to be discriminatory or bigoted. We need to send out a positive message on that.
859. I want to make a brief comment about money. When T:BUC came out, all the consultation on the Peace IV moneys showed clearly that the line being taken on Peace IV was informed by the limitations of T:BUC. More progress has been made in the Stormont House Agreement, and it would be useful if some consideration were given to having a wider notion of how the Peace IV moneys were spent, certainly in relation to dealing with the past and the legacy of the conflict.
860. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You have covered sectarianism and good relations, and I think that I am right in saying that work is being done on a definition of good relations.
861. **The Committee Clerk:** It was supposed to be in the context of —
862. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** The new commission, yes.
863. **Ms McGahan:** Thank you. I apologise for missing your presentation. I have just come from the Employment and Learning Committee, where we were dealing with a when of community groups that might lose their funding under the European social fund (ESF), and quite a number of them are from Belfast.
864. I want to zoom in on poverty and disadvantage. I represent Fermanagh and South Tyrone. I am from a rural area, and I look at Belfast and see universities sitting on top of each other — a when of community groups

delivering skills and qualifications and an FE college — and, for the life of me, I cannot understand why we have so much poverty and disadvantage, because it is generally accepted that skills and qualifications are key to taking you out of poverty and disadvantage. There is probably another problem with intergenerational poverty, and there is a strategy to deliver social change. I would like to hear your views on that.

865. **Mr Price:** This is probably more a personal than an organisational view. The answer is fairly straightforward: we reproduce inequality in this society through education, and we do it through a segregated and divisive education system. It is perfectly grand if you get a grammar-school education and then the universities with all the investment put into them are waiting for you. OK, there might be some difficulties with loans, but your access to the labour market improves dramatically. The FE college is there as well. However, there is a whole raft of young people in this city and in our society across the board who are not being given those opportunities, and that is how you deliver your resources and use them. Whilst we continue to ignore the fact — I have to point the finger particularly at politicians who are elected in working-class areas and who are content to support an education system that does that disservice to the young people in their areas — it is a crime; it is a sin; it is a disgrace to our society. We will remain an unequal society whilst that remains the case.
866. **Ms McGahan:** I know that the Minister of Education has the view that every school should be a good school; no child should be left behind. What is the issue?
867. **Ms R McGlone:** Education is not just about school. In some senses, we see a terrible lack of confidence in communities; there is a lack of aspiration and a lack of confidence. That is linked in with parenting — I mean that in the broadest sense possible; I do not mean parenting skills. As far as I can see, certainly from the nationalist and unionist communities that I work with, there is a leftover of

trauma that disables people from having aspirations and having thought for the future. I very rarely speak to working-class people on either side of this interface who talk about university. I am from a working-class background, and I went to university as did my children, but we are losing those kids as well. That is the other thing, Bronwyn: we are losing kids who are going to university. From working in this area, I see that people have a lack of confidence in their ability to bring their kids up, to encourage their kids, and to have aspirations for them. I do not know what schools can do about that.

868. **Mr Price:** The point here is very clear. It does not really matter how you set about explaining it; it does not matter even how you analyse it. All you have to do is look at the outcomes. You look at the outcomes, and if that is the outcome, it is not a satisfactory outcome. You can blame whomever you want — the communities, the parents or whatever else — but it is not a fair outcome. It is a costly outcome for our society, because you are perfectly right about the role that skills and qualifications play in promoting a positive economy, but we are ensuring — whether every school is a good school, whether every child pursues the same curriculum — that the outcome is not the same. The life choices and opportunities for so many young people are so much better than for others. It is happening in very geographic and very concentrated areas. If we want to change that, we would put resources into those areas and into the schools to start levelling out the outcomes. It would have quite a political impact in some ways, but if this is the society that we want now, we have it; if we want a different one, we have to invest in all our children.
869. **Ms Murphy:** It is very important to realise that when you look at the areas and see the schools and the universities you think that everybody has those opportunities, but, as Johnston says, they do not. I am from an inner east Belfast family whose tradition was that the boys went into trades and the girls went to a good office job. This particular

- girl wanted to go to university but could not go until a later stage. I was very lucky, because I had parents who were interested and who looked beyond where they lived in an inner-city area. Yes, they would have been among what used to be called the labour aristocracy in that my father had a trade. However, that is not the situation on the ground; that is not what is happening in the schools that our children go to.
870. My background is in teaching literacy and essential skills. A wide-ranging survey was done in the early 90s that revealed that 24% of people in Northern Ireland had a reading age of 11. That is one in four. How are children going through school not able to read and write properly? That needs to be addressed, as it has been a bone of contention for years. There has been talk about it; we are good at talking, but we are not good at really looking at stuff. We have league tables for schools. We say that a school is a good school because A, B C and D pass A, B C and D, but what about the children who are slower? What about those mixed abilities? What about doing something about how we direct teaching, how we stream those children and how we stop looking at success? Look at training; we have children and young people being constantly recycled on training, and for what?
871. **Ms McGahan:** The universities have the Widening Access strategy, which is used to tackle those areas of poverty and disadvantage. Is that not working?
872. **Ms R McGlone:** No; not in this area.
873. **Ms McGahan:** OK. Have you had conversations with people in the universities to say that you need a game changer because the strategy is not working?
874. **Ms R McGlone:** We work on interfaces, Bronwyn, and that is what we concentrate on. It is not something that I have been a part of.
875. **Mr Price:** Forthspring works with young people and provides opportunities to get them back into training so that they can get some initial qualifications. However, the dice are loaded against them. The universities have those commitments. but people have to get to a certain point on the education ladder before they can access the universities.
876. **Ms McGahan:** But there are strategies for that, even at FE level. I sit on the DEL Committee so I am across that, but maybe I will do a follow-up with you on that to drill down and see what the problems are from a DEL perspective.
877. **Mr Price:** That would be grand, yes.
878. **Ms R McGlone:** Absolutely.
879. **Mr Price:** This is not unconnected to T:BUC, because if you want a society with better relationships and equality you need to give people the opportunities to play their part in that society.
880. **Ms R McGlone:** And to contribute.
881. **Ms Murphy:** I have been talking about practice on the ground. If I say to you, for example, that we would like a horticultural training centre, it would not be stand-alone. The Colin neighbourhood partnership has a little training area, and we have the Colin Glen Trust; we can work together to develop rounded qualifications. The green economy is a growth area; can we respond to that? Can we respond to the lack of training in areas? We can take from a wide catchment, but there needs to be a purpose.
882. Government are willing to give grants to employers, but the outcomes are not there. The money is going to employers for training and, maybe, the trainees are taken on for so many months, but then they are dropped off at the other end. Education also needs to have progression routes. You are looking at a strategy at the top, but you need to look at a practical strategy on the ground that responds to a variety of actions and economic realities. There is a mismatch with what is actually happening. There are aspirations with these strategies, but they are not translating down on the ground.

883. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Caroline, there is the question of the role of the Government at Stormont. At the moment, it seems to me that we try to set a strategy that, as you correctly identify, sits up there well divorced from day-to-day life on the ground. Is it up to us not just to say, “Here is the strategy, but here is, figuratively speaking, the 400-page manual for delivering it, and unless you tick every box you do not get your funding.”? Should we not be saying, “You take the power, we have set the vision, you know how to deliver it on the ground here”? How you deliver it on the ground here might be different from how you deliver it in Dungiven or on the Newtownards Road. In fact, the way you deliver it on the Lower Newtownards Road is probably significantly different from how you might deliver it on the Upper Newtownards Road. Would it be mature of us as a government to say, “You know the vision; you deliver it as you see fit on the ground”?
884. **Ms Murphy:** I think so, but by the same token you need to have mechanisms in place whereby there is good monitoring and evaluation of what is going on. A lot of money has been wasted on pilots and three-year funding cycles. In the first year of funding, you are setting all your ducks in a row, if you like; in the second year, you are coming into your stride; but by the end of the third year you are off the other end and there is something else, some new flavour of the month, to move onto. There needs to be continuity and good monitoring and evaluation and, yes, there needs to be recognition that the community organisations are working like hell on the ground. We are all working in interface areas — working like hell and getting nowhere.
885. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK. Let me park funding, because we have had issues raised by other groups. I want to come back, Johnston and Roisin, to this idea that we are high accountability and low trust. If we were to rebalance to higher trust and essential accountability in evaluating and monitoring, what impact would that make?
886. **Ms R McGlone:** It would make a big impact. We are in the business of building relationships, except between one another. When anything happens at an interface area, on the Newtownards Road or wherever, the police and the community workers are called out. However, when there is nothing happening, when we are building the peace and making sure that things are happening properly, suddenly everybody disappears, there is no money available, and we are scrabbling around for pennies.
887. I would love to ask you about all the evaluations that you do and all the targets that you set; where does it all go? What have we learned from it? Is there a central bank somewhere that all that knowledge goes into that we have missed? Unless there is trust between politicians and community workers, all you will do is keep sucking us dry. There will be burnout, as Caroline mentioned earlier. Some of us may be already beyond burnout. Young people are not volunteering to do the type of work that we are doing. They will get involved in projects or come to a couple of meetings, but that is it. They look on us as eejits, the people who did the heavy-duty lifting. There are a couple of funders who are very good examples. The Irish Government’s funding package to us over the years has been a lifeline, and they are very open and very trusting, but they get the results. We seem to be always meeting criteria, Mike, but we are never quite sure what the end result is.
888. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It is kind of obsessive.
889. **Ms R McGlone:** Yes, it is obsessive.
890. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Fifty shades of measurement. [Laughter.]
891. **Ms R McGlone:** Just call it a different thing. There is a new one out at the moment.
892. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Johnston, do you have anything to add about accountability and trust?
893. **Mr Price:** It may be stating the obvious, but the role of politicians is to give

leadership and to create good policy. It might sound a bit optimistic or naive, even, but rather than the politics of deals and compromise, what about setting some objectives for where we want to be as a society and get there? When government get it very badly wrong, it has practical consequences. Bronwyn talked about widening access and increasing participation. Yet DEL virtually destroyed the adult and community education sector under very poor leadership. That has enormous impact on any possible remedial action against the disadvantage that people suffer in the education system in the first place. It is not just about improving the relationship; it is also about getting it right. The consequences of getting it wrong are all too real for people.

894. **Mr Maskey:** I sometimes find conversations a bit frustrating, because I am not sure that we are even at the point of having the real conversation. In the last evidence session, we heard from academics, who are very good people for the most part. They talk about taking down the peace walls; outcomes are taking down so many peace walls. There are, however, a lot of velvet curtains, as I would refer to them, that may as well be breeze-block walls. It just happens to be a higher class of segregation. Nobody is tackling professional bigotry.

895. Some of you will know about my own direct experience. Interestingly, Johnston, you were talking about the '94-'95 period, when the European Parliament funding boards started up. They were very good and challenged a lot of people, bringing together sectors that would not work together before. Alex, you were on that committee in Belfast. To me that was a breakthrough from where we had been when people would not go into the same room or people were excluded from the same rooms. That brought politicians, community groups, trade unions, business people and statutory bodies together, with the theme being how to tackle disadvantage, underpinned and overlaid with community relations and

tackling division. Millions of pounds were spent. I was very pleased with the money that was disbursed for the most part into a lot of projects. A lot was really spent on building capacity in communities. A lot of the single-identity work and the projects could have been building something, but it was really about bringing people together. All that in my opinion was very good. Obviously, a lot of it was not as successful as you might have liked, but still it was going on at the time. It was all very embryonic.

896. Here we are so many years later, still talking about the same treadmill aimed at tackling some of the disadvantage; but we are still not dovetailing it into community relations. We need to get to is the point where we are saying: "If I am not ambitious enough, someone tell me what I need to be." I make no apologies for thinking that some of the T:BUC aspirations to bring thousands of young people together and place them in different communities are never going to happen in the numbers that I would like. I cannot see it happening, because I do not think there is enough buy-in in some of the communities. There might be an issue to do with money and capacity to bring groups of people in. I would look at that. I would be saying this: "Well, OK, if an area wants to bring people in and give them a meaningful shared experience and all the rest of it, in the way that T:BUC outlines, let us see if we can build the infrastructure". Organisations like yourselves would, in my opinion, be at the coalface. I do not see that happening. If OFMDFM went tomorrow morning and picked 20 areas, people would probably run out of the friggig area if they were asked to take 20 or 50 young people from September. They would be challenged to get them placed. I am being honest about that.

897. There are brilliant organisations on the ground, your own included, and a lot of brilliant work going on, including by Lenadoon and Suffolk. I live just up the street from Suffolk on Suffolk Road. There is an awful lot of good work going on, but then a lot of people beyond the people who are doing the good work

- are just getting on with their life. A lot of people I know are, thankfully, doing OK. How do we get to people who are maybe dead on but are still living a half-segregated life, if you know what I mean? I agree with you. My kids, all my nephews and nieces, are going into places now where they would not have gone before. That is good. That is maybe more organic; that is what we can build on. Some of the older people are set in their ways and will not rush out to meet one another. Take it, Suffolk.
898. **Ms R McGlone:** And neither they should, Alex.
899. **Mr Maskey:** Maybe in some cases we are trying to flog a dead horse. Maybe we need to have a different conversation.
900. **Mr Price:** One of the ways you can definitely connect with people is through their children and their grandchildren. People may say, "I have lived life the way I have", but, when you ask them about their hopes and aspirations, you see that they have a lot of ambition for their children and grandchildren.
901. This is a bugbear of mine. Often children, particularly from the middle-class areas you were alluding to, Alex, meet other children from around the world. They go on study tours, they take part in house-building programmes through Habitat for Humanity or whatever and yet they do not meet people from different backgrounds in their own city. We certainly have plenty of young people on the Springfield Road who are more than willing to take part in programmes to help them form a positive relationship with people from a different background. Organisations that work with young people, particularly the Churches, need to focus a bit more on how we connect as a society. The selling point to people who are prepared to lead their comfortable lives behind whatever sort of curtains they have is this: what sort of place do you want to live in? What sort of society do you want? Do you want the lowest common denominator and to ignore your neighbour, or do you want somewhere where you can reach out and be generous? People here who live behind their curtains can also get very critical when there is a negative impact on the economy or they cannot drive their car into work or whatever.
902. There is a downside to all this, but we are prepared to spend a large sum out of the public purse on things like corporation tax, when in fact, this whole area of sharing and overcoming segregation and division would arguably have a much better impact on how people view this as a location down the road. At the minute, all we are doing, from looking at T:BUC, is trying to steer Peace IV into funding the narrow areas that have been identified in T:BUC. We are not really taking on the challenge of shared space as a society.
903. **Mr Maskey:** I will just follow up on the last point. For me, the question of how to define good community relations is the nub of it. The peace process is predicated on basically saying that we have different constitutional aspirations; I think you coined it yourself. That is there, and we are not going to change that until it is changed. People, however, have clearly held views, and I suspect that most people, when you scratch the surface, still have those views, which is fair enough. They are quite entitled to them. That is the difference between the old days of community relations, when we all let on that we did not have a problem, we are all the same, let us all have a nice cup of tea and we will be dead on, and nowadays, when we are supposed to be respecting differences, embracing them and working with them. I respect you, and you respect me and let us get on with it. If people in community relations let on that we do not have any big differences, we will never get an answer. That is being honest. That is not to be negative. I think that most people do respect most other people. In saying that, political representatives still have to talk to people on the doorstep, and people who live in these areas want their representatives to represent their

- interests. There is a dichotomy in some of this.
904. I agree with you on long-term funding. I would like to focus on longer-term funding for the delivery of services and on getting the MOUs and service delivery agreements to deliver, whether that is in good relations, tackling disadvantage and so on. An awful lot of good people waste a lot of their very important time chasing funding packages, when they would be better off delivering what they are supposed to be delivering. I am one with you on that.
905. I would be interested to continue exploring this notion of good relations and how we define them, because I do not think we are at the nub of it yet.
906. **Mr Attwood:** I thank you for your forthright approach and the evident sense of exasperation that you convey. I do not think we should deny — that is not what you did — where we have come from in the last 20-odd years. You identified where new generations are compared with where our generation was. There have been multiple and good changes, but I think you capture very well that we are struggling around T:BUC and a lot of our society. We have to recognise that we are struggling and that it is a very big struggle. The scale of what is still needed to be addressed, and how to have the vision, ambition and wherewithal to address it are not being acknowledged or appreciated.
907. My view is that we are into a long period — a deep phase — of managing our conflict without transforming it. I think that informs our politics and our community, and it creates a sense of detachment and alienation and a lack of confidence in politics, but that is where we are. That needs a huge paradigm shift in the thinking of parties, politicians and leaders at all levels and in how government goes about its business. Otherwise, we will remain in a very long phase of managing and not transforming our conflict. Managing our conflict is better than what we had before, but it is not what our ambition should be. I worry, as that phase is so long, about how it is going to present itself in the lives of our people. Societies either go forward or back; they do not stay the same.
908. My own view — you know this Roisin because we had this conversation at the event up in Stormont recently — is that, until and unless people like you are in government designing and implementing the right policies, we will struggle further, because I do not think that, in the round, our Government have the capacity to know how to define and put into operation the right programmes that have the right ambition and vision that Johnston spoke about, or to deal with the issues of delays, the absence of transparency and appeal process that you also talked about. I do not think that our system has the capacity, and that was my experience as a Minister. There are very good people, and some are very good at what they do in terms of the radical edge of government but, in the round, it is managing and not really changing. My view is that, until human rights organisations, business organisations, community and voluntary organisations or the NGO sector are in the life of government through a huge secondment strategy, the Government will continue to struggle, even if they had the right policies.
909. You are also right to nail the issue of relationships; it all comes down to that. Interface is about relationships; parade disputes are about relationships and whether they are respectful or not. That is at the core of the politics at the interfaces, the parades and everything else. By the way, I think that the narrative that the three people presented today has to be at the core of the overview of T:BUC when the time comes to write a report.
910. Trying to get back to the particulars of the inquiry, I ask you to comment on three things, and I think that they are immediate in terms of T:BUC, despite all its limitations. I was on the Executive when T:BUC was presented as more than it is, and a number of us at Executive level tried to make these points: do not exaggerate what this is; do not be extravagant about it; say

what it is as a step in the right direction and let us build on that. Whether we can build on that comes down to the three questions that I would like you to answer. First, Johnston, you made the comment about steering T:BUC into Peace IV to fund narrow areas. Can you say more about that, because I think that there is great concern that that is what is happening? Secondly, there are the three issues that were named — delays, absence of transparency and appeal process — so that, when we come to deal with the granular of T:BUC as well as the overall issue and ambition of T:BUC, we can deal with both sides of that coin. So, the three issues for Peace IV are delays, absence of transparency and the appeal process.

911. **Mr Price:** The SEUPB must have heard a wide range of views from across the board about what should go in to Peace IV, yet it looks so similar to T:BUC. Clearly, therefore, it was designed for Peace IV to be the pot of money that would cause T:BUC, when something as central as a shared future should not be a central government concern for funding and should not be the last piece of European money to do that. I do not know what stage the Peace IV process is at now, but it must be very well on. A simple thing is that, lots of projects that were funded around dealing with the past under Peace III, in my judgement, could not be funded under Peace IV simply because of the way that the programme was being structured because of the way that it was being informed by T:BUC. So, I do not know whether the opportunity remains to take some positives out of the Stormont House Agreement and have a higher set of ambitions for Peace IV.

912. The experience of OFMDFM distributing money is all a bit of a mystery, to be honest. You tend to take the best possible judgement that it is so convoluted and difficult that the conclusion is that it is not about poor administration and that there are obviously more complex problems in the system.

913. The very first moneys that OFMDFM brought to bear in relation to interfaces

was the peace walls programme. There was something systematically wrong with that because it was put together on the assumption that one side would come together with another side, and, somehow, that was always the dynamic round an interface, without any recognition that there are also existing organisations that are developing shared space. So, the thinking behind that was very crude, but things started to get worse when OFMDFM started to give out some of their resources. In a rush to get some moneys to underpin T:BUC, the first round of money was for three months, yet the three-month period was virtually up before any decisions were made on that. When you were less than happy with the decision, and you felt as if you were putting something in, were working on a key interface and your work was being recognised by other people, there was no appeals process or opportunity. The problem with that is not just the frustration that it leaves for unsuccessful applicants — we have all been unsuccessful applicants; we are well used to that — but it gives rise to talk about what is going on. How is money being allocated? Why is it being allocated? What sort of deals are being done? It is very unusual to have a funding programme these days without an appeals process built in.

914. **Ms R McGlone:** It has been particularly difficult. Johnston and I share a frustration because you cannot count the unburned buses and you cannot count the riots that did not happen at the Whiterock parade. Whereas, we look at other areas where there is trouble and, there is the thought that, if the money is not coming to us, it must be going to them. Because there is no transparency, we are sitting scribbling around for fivers here or tenners there or running mobile networks, and we see other areas getting money, and we think, “Where is the transparency?” Where is the investment in what does work? We are investing in people who are volunteers. All the networks that we work on are mainly volunteers. Both our organisations are operating on skeleton staff. We are a major interface,

we have had major successes, we have done major work over the years, yet there is absolutely no recognition. Then, when we applied to OFMDFM, we heard absolutely nothing for nine months and then we did not hear anything for a year, and it is coming up to this time when we will go through the same process again. That is our experience each time. It opens up the question of whether there is another agenda. Maybe you can tell us. We do not know but we wonder, because of the lack of transparency, whether there is another agenda or something else at work.

915. **Mr Price:** I want to make it very clear that I have no objection to any of the grants that were made to the organisations.
916. **Ms R McGlone:** I do not know any of them.
917. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We had said —
918. **Mr Price:** My concern is around the process and the lack of confidence that it gives rise to. I also think that we get quite a lot of recognition for the work that we do in Forthspring and, on occasions, we manage to access resources, but it is always a struggle and continues to be one.
919. **Ms R McGlone:** We have been sporadically, and we are still here 24 years later; actually, it is coming up to 25 years. What frightens me slightly about Peace IV is that the most innovative work that we did was with the Peace money. When we got the Peace money, we started the mobile phone networks, did the peaceful protest on parades and did trust-building processes with people from north and west Belfast, and they have kept those relationships going. What worries me is that it was never linked with government, and my concern is that, if it is now starting to be linked in with government and we get caught up in a government agenda, it will be risk-averse, there will not be any innovation, there will not be any aspirational stuff in it and there will not be room for people to come up with ideas. It is an old saying but it is like turning on a sixpence, because, if an organisation comes to us tomorrow and says, “There is a problem down the road”, we can immediately start working on it. It does not cost anything. You just go out there, meet people, bring people together and see what you can do because you have the infrastructure and the networks there and you have people who you can tap into all the time. If this starts to be linked to government objectives and we do not think that the government objectives are right, what will happen then?
920. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We tend to hear two things about the funding structure. The first is that, because of the way that it is done at the moment, money tends to come in very late in a financial year. You have maybe been promised money but you could wait three, six or nine months before you get it, and that obviously has its problems. The other point is about the three-year cycle and the question of why it is only three years. If you have proven the need, which you have done, to get the money —
921. **Ms R McGlone:** Mike, three years is very, very unusual. We work on year-to-year funding.
922. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I listened to Caroline talking about three years. I know that some people get 12 months or 18 months. The health service will be funded for the rest of our lives. We know that. Sectarianism will not be tackled through a three-year cycle. If you have proved that you have a scheme that will meet a need, why is the funding not effectively open-ended with the checks and balances in the monitoring and evaluation? Rather than say that it is for three years, we could say that it is open-ended but that, when we think you have met the need, we will come to you and give you three, six or nine months’ notice so that you can inform your staff and can prepare for the inevitable outcome of success. I do not get it.
923. **Mr Lyttle:** Apologies for my delayed arrival today. The Forthspring submission states:

“There should be co-ordination of reconciliation efforts on a regional basis ... facilitated by a regional body that is independent from government. The regional body should be tasked with the management and efficient delivery of long-term funding as well as developmental support for organisations and individuals within communities.”

924. Do you see an action in T:BUC that will deliver that recommendation and/or can you propose how it should be achieved?

925. **Mr Price:** It is not evident in T:BUC, no. We do not know what will happen with the negotiations and discussions around the equality and good relations commission, but there is an assumption that that body will not have a lot of those functions and will not have the funding to do it. In the absence of politicians coming up with something whereby it can be transparent and is not all about deals, the best measure at the minute is to have some independent body. There was criticism of the Community Relations Council in the past, but I think that it has performed its function well in the last number of years. It was a good funder to work with through Peace III. It was supportive. It has also reassured people that it has a much more inclusive notion of good relations and community relations. I certainly was one of the critics of what I am very reluctant to refer to as the “community relations industry” or whatever. I think that things have moved on from that. I probably would not look past the Community Relations Council for something that could carry out that function and do it well.

926. **Mr Lyttle:** Yet it looks like T:BUC proposes to remove some of those functions from the Community Relations Council, if OFMDFM ever agrees on legislation to bring forward in relation to an equality and good relations commission. That is helpful.

927. One would like to think that, notwithstanding a complete lack of detail on the proposals, the like of the urban village or the United Youth programme may go towards beginning to address some of the issues that

you raised around social and economic infrastructure and interfaces being vital. As organisations on one of the biggest interfaces in Northern Ireland, what has OMDFM’s biggest interaction been with you in relation to the delivery of those types of programmes in your area?

928. **Mr Price:** The answer is not a lot at the moment. The value of those types of developments is that, even locally, things have clearly improved with the arrival of the E3 centre at Belfast Metropolitan College. There is the proposed innovation centre from Belfast City Council, but, beyond that, there is nothing really.

929. **Ms R McGlone:** Same here. I suppose that I have been to one or two meetings, one recently at Stormont. You were at it, Alex, and I met Alex and Megan there. Prior to that, there has been absolutely no involvement at all, and there has not been any funding and we have not been approached in any way about any of the work that we do.

930. **Ms Murphy:** No, we have not. It is a monolith up there. We have not had much interaction.

931. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Do you feel cherished for your expertise?

932. **Ms R McGlone:** Certainly not.

933. **Mr Lyttle:** I find that pretty surprising. I do not know where to go from there. We obviously have a lot of work to do to try to mobilise the type of expertise that we have on some of those issues in key areas. We continue to do the best that we can to get greater detail in relation to the key proposals that make up the T:BUC strategy. I share your frustration and concern about the lack of detail and lack of interaction around some of those issues.

934. **Ms R McGlone:** Chris, we have an opportunity here to sell from the rooftops some of the work that we have done here. Our organisation has been approached to speak at conferences all over the world on different things that we have developed. NI, or the North plc has a real opportunity here. There

- are some really innovative and brilliant things that have happened here that could be sold abroad, and we are not capitalising on it.
935. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I think that we are about done, folks. Given that we are gathering evidence for a report, it might be useful for you to tell us what you would like to read as a headline in that report. Maybe Caroline will go first.
936. **Ms Murphy:** I would like to see that OFMDFM and the politicians are, for once, in tune with what is actually happening on the ground. Big words, big phrases and big strategies are great, but I would like to see a meeting of minds and actions so that aspirations are translated on the ground. The only way that that can be done is by starting to talk to us on the ground.
937. **Mr Price:** The headline that I would like to see is a rewriting of T:BUC, adding an anti-poverty strategy to underpin it.
938. **Mr Terry Donaghy (Suffolk Community Forum):** It is worse than we think.
939. **Ms R McGlone:** In some senses, I would love to read language that says something to people on the ground.
940. **Mr Maskey:** Go for it, Terry. Go ahead. You have been the quiet man here.
941. **Mr Donaghy:** It is worse than we think.
942. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That was a slightly down but maybe realistic, way to finish.
943. **Ms Murphy:** You are saying that, and I had that feeling of, “Oh gosh; this sounds very much like woe is us and what is going on?”. We need to take away the fact that a lot of stuff needs to be done and a lot of talking needs to be done. A lot of attention needs to be paid to what is happening on the ground and to what good stuff is happening on the ground. What also needs to be taken away is that, yes, we are optimistic. We are knocked for six many times, but we will go on. We would just like somebody to listen and give us a hand to move on more smoothly.
944. **Mr Donaghy:** There is a lot of good work being done out there through communities. I have lived in Suffolk for 40 years and, when I grew up in the 1980s, it was bad. I am well in with Suffolk Football Club now, but about 10 years ago, our community was getting smaller and smaller, and we started opening it up to Catholics. There was resistance to it at the start, but now our team is 56% Catholic, and we field two teams.
945. **Ms R McGlone:** Are you winning any more? [Laughter.]
946. **Mr Donaghy:** Yes, we are actually eight points clear at the top of the league. We are looking to go into intermediate football next year. There is work there, but nobody knows that our team is 56% Catholic.
947. **Mr Price:** They do now. [Laughter.]
948. **Mr Maskey:** That is not the headline, by the way. Hansard, take note — do not take note.
949. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You are also top of the table.
950. **Mr Donaghy:** Yes, eight points clear.
951. **Mr Price:** That is a pretty good metaphor for sharing.
952. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Absolutely. Young people are getting on with it and are open for it, and that is great. Terry, Caroline, Johnston and Roisin, thank you very much indeed.
953. **Ms Murphy:** Thank you for the opportunity.
954. **Mr Price:** It was a long 20 minutes. [Laughter.]
955. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Yes, a political 20 minutes, Johnston.

18 February 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Mrs Brenda Hale
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan

Witnesses:

Mr Gerard Deane	<i>Holywell Trust</i>
Mr Michael Doherty	<i>Peace and Reconciliation Group</i>
Ms Maureen Hetherington	<i>The Junction</i>

956. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I welcome Mr Michael Doherty from the Peace and Reconciliation Group, Gerard Deane from the Holywell Trust and Maureen Hetherington from The Junction. I am sorry to have kept you waiting. We had a very good session with your colleagues, and hopefully we will have the same with you. I ask you to limit your opening remarks to 10 minutes to allow for an exchange. Who is up first?
957. **Mr Gerard Deane (Holywell Trust):** I will give a brief collective introduction, after which we can have a conversation.
958. Thank you for the opportunity to attend today. I welcome the publication of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy and the efforts of this inquiry, as do my colleagues Maureen and Michael. To inform our submission, we had an engagement process in the north-west. That prompted some lively and challenging discussion, which we have framed in our submission.
959. Crucially, throughout the process, we made the effort to place the discussion in a positive light. That was not always an easy task, but our submission is a synopsis of the lengthy discussions that took place. All participants have

received a copy of that and are happy with its content.

960. We are of the opinion that the T:BUC strategy could be strengthened in a number of areas, but we are fully aware that it is the strategy that is in place to help positively to shape our society for the future, and we are committed to working with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and other partners to strive towards a society that is, as stated in the document, a united community based on equality of opportunity, desirability of good relations and reconciliation.
961. Each of our organisations — The Junction, the Holywell Trust and the Peace and Reconciliation Group — is a member of the DiverseCity Community Partnership, which is a collective of 11 community organisations based in Derry or Londonderry, each of which is committed to modelling the society that we wish to live in. Our diverse groups share and own a state-of-the-art building in the city centre, and we hope that that is a model for others on how people can work together for mutual benefit and for the creation of a truly diverse city and a place where difference is welcomed and celebrated rather than feared and rejected. We would be delighted to host one of your external Committee meetings at some stage.
962. In all the work of the partnership, we try to work in partnership with a range of organisations, formally and informally. That approach should be replicated to address some of our biggest challenges: namely, the creation of a healthy economy, having a safe place to live, learn and work, challenging the divisive issues of sectarianism and its visible manifestations and addressing the legacy of the conflict. Between us, we have relationships with a wide range of partners, from community partners throughout these islands and beyond to

educational institutions such as INCORE at Ulster University, Queen's University, Trinity College Dublin, and thought leaders such as the Young Foundation and the Irish School of Ecumenics. Our work is supported through a range of funders, including OFMDFM through our core funding received from the Community Relations Council (CRC), and others such as the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs.

963. As stated in our submission, and without going into the detail because I know that you have it in front of you, we have concerns about the strategy, particularly in the areas of resource; the development of the strategy and the lack of engagement on the development of such; the time frame for delivery, in that the document contains only three actions with defined timelines; some of the strategic connections; definitions of some of the terms; and concerns about reconciliation and the delivery detail needed, such as leadership and the political will to address the difficult issues. We also have a concern about the proposed merging of the CRC and the Equality Commission; the challenge with interfaces and the need to address not only the psychological but the physical interfaces; and the detail that is needed on implementation.
964. Rather than focusing on those concerns, we want to focus more on leadership and the need for leadership, and the need for good relations champions in government and in the political sphere. There is a need to detail the financial commitment made towards the strategy in the longer term, and I know that efforts have been made since the publication of the strategy. As for the ambition in the document, we recommend a longer-term view to achieve real change on challenging issues. We would love to see integrated education whereby the education of our children with those from a different background is the norm rather than the exception. We would also like the Civic Forum to be revisited as a way to refresh and formulate approaches to deal with difficult issues.

965. We are also aware, however, that the inquiry wants to examine models of good practice for good relations, to challenge sectarianism and to deal with the past. Please feel free to ask questions about a range of initiatives that we are involved in, including our diversity community partnership; the towards understanding and healing initiative, which is a project that engages people from all backgrounds and uses storytelling as a vehicle to address trauma and other legacies of the conflict; the city of sanctuary initiative, which is working towards recognising our city as a safe space for all; the garden of reflection project, which is creating a physical shared space with an associated programme, which is a partnership between our group, our Civic Trust and Derry City Council; the ethical and shared remembering project, which is a groundbreaking project that encourages us to remember ethically as we mark a range of centenaries; the interface monitoring forum, which operates in the city; the human library project and initiative, which encourages people to challenge their own prejudices by hearing from a range of human books; a city safari project, which encourages people to visit places in our city that they would not normally choose to visit; working in partnership with INCORE on the accounts of conflict project; the trauma memorialisation, which examines ways to engage positively on trauma in society; and other projects like the let's talk programme, cities in transition, our range of training and the resources that we produce. I will take a breath now.

966. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Good man. Thank you very much. Were you able to listen to the previous session?

967. **Mr Deane:** No.

968. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It will be reported by Hansard, so I do not want you to read the transcript and think, "Why did he not say that?". I think that Roisin, Johnston, Caroline and Terry are much more critical of T:BUC in a fundamental sense than you are. Maybe you are being more polite.

969. **Mr Deane:** We are much more civil. I do not think that it serves us well to come in here and be hypercritical. We have to realise that it is there, and the question is how we will work within its parameters. That is probably the way that we have to move forward.
970. **Mr Michael Doherty (Peace and Reconciliation Group):** This is an inquiry, and we are here to help it rather than to ridicule what is going on. It would be pointless for us to do that. As organisations working at the coalface, we are looking to the future, and we really have not been consulted about what is going on on the ground. Maybe people do not understand some of the work that we have been involved in, because they do not know about it. That is why we welcome the opportunity to have that discussion. If we can possibly help, we are open for you to ask us any questions that you would like to ask
971. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** There is already a common theme with the Belfast experience: a lack of engagement by the Department in bringing forward T:BUC. I will ask the question that I asked previously: do you feel cherished by the Department?
972. **Mr Doherty:** Cherished? [Laughter.]
973. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Can you answer rather than react visually, because that does not translate into Hansard?
974. **Ms Maureen Hetherington (The Junction):** It has been disappointing. Between us, we have over 100 years' experience of working in the field.
975. **Mr Doherty:** I have been at it since 1987.
976. **Ms Hetherington:** It would have been nice to have been able to share our experience and to have had a constructive conversation in which we could have outlined what is happening at grass-roots level. It is taken for granted. The community sector is sometimes seen as being less than others, yet expertise has been built up in that sector. I am talking about people who make a decision to work in the sector and the constant fight that we carry on our shoulders every day. There has to be recognition of the expertise in the sector and the choices that people have made to work in it. Dr Johnston McMaster and Dr Cathy Higgins are working with us, alongside people on our committee. There are educators, professors, doctors and people with MAs, but, most importantly, people who have been working for a lifetime at the grass roots, interface and coalface.
977. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** If you had been presented with the T:BUC document before it was signed off and published, and the Department had said, "Maureen, have a look at that and give me your thoughts", what practical adjustments or amendments would you have come forward with?
978. **Ms Hetherington:** The documentation has so much of the usual language, but it is not followed through with strong actions on the ground. It proposes to set up an all-party group for dealing with the past, when that is one of the crucial areas that needs to be unpacked. Education is a huge area that needs to be looked at in great depth. There are so many areas in which we probably would have chosen different headlines and straplines. If I am honest with you, I find it hard to fit our work into any of the overarching aims. I would have to start to dovetail and work around them because of the work that we do, yet we are working across Northern Ireland in the border counties. I have concerns about many other organisations that are in exactly the same situation. It is difficult to fit in with work that I see as being already done by the statutory bodies. I worry that there is an opt-out of where work will be allocated and that the community sector will be left behind.
979. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Do you think that your work would qualify in achieving the objective of Together: Building a United Community.
980. **Ms Hetherington:** I do not want to be arrogant, but I know that our work happens on the ground. We deal with

trauma, and we have been working with very sensitive groups. We have been working with subaltern groups — those groups that do not have a voice. We have been doing a lot of work on trauma, helping for healing and working towards healing. The ethical and shared remembering project, for example, is also doing amazing work on how we look at how we remember. That gives people a language and a new way of looking at things and dealing with the past in a very constructive way. We have rolled out training to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Northern Ireland Office and the Community Relations Council. A lot of statutory bodies are taking on the training. So we know that, at policy level, Peace III clusters have undertaken them as guiding principles. That is only a fraction of the work that we are doing. We know that it is working at different levels. We also work, all the time, with loyalists, republicans, victims of state violence and victims of paramilitary violence at all sorts of levels to bring them together.

981. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I ask the same question to you, Michael. What would you have said?
982. **Mr Doherty:** I will tell you what my first reaction was when I read the strategy. I read the section on summer camps. I was involved in summer camps in 1965, so there was absolutely nothing new for me on what a summer camp was going to be about. This is what struck me: there is a boys' club mindset going on here. My question was, "What are they going to do in these summer camps?" What is it all about? Is it about taking young people away in the summertime because of an issue with parades? What thinking went into the proposal on summer camps? We are working at the interface, taking people to residential centres and other places during the parades season. When I looked at the whole development of the shared education space, I wondered why we were avoiding integrated education and talking instead about shared education spaces.
983. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Why do you think we are doing that?
984. **Mr Doherty:** It is difficult to have integrated education; we are not focused on trying to change it because of resistance to it on the ground.
985. The lack of understanding of definitions also struck me. It was all great flowery language as far as I was concerned, but do we really understand what sectarianism is and how we are going to deal with it? We talk about the expertise on the ground and the lack of consultation. I brought a document for you, Chair: it is my fourth document on peace building, with my experience of working in the field. The lack of consultation is an issue. The document states that experts in the field — I do not want to be arrogant about it — were possibly ignored. I had to ask myself what it was that we were doing that we were not asked. What did we miss out on? It is partly to do with the fact that, when issues are going down in a city like mine, a lot of people look at our city as a model of good practice in many ways. However, just because we have a model of good practice does not necessarily mean that it will work elsewhere. I am the first to acknowledge that, particularly with parades.
986. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I will come back to that because it is a very important point, Michael. Gerard, I will ask you the same question slightly rephrased. There is still scope, and, if the Department is persuaded, it will, presumably, readjust. What should it be looking to change?
987. **Mr Deane:** Vision is the key thing. Generally, there is a good vision in the document. The roll-out and the practicalities of some of the suggestions fall short. There is a realisation that it is a politically agreed strategy, which was probably the best that could be done at the time. There is a real opportunity for risk-taking and leadership from community leaders and political leaders to say how they would like to do things a wee bit differently and to indicate the risks that they will take. Let us do things that go beyond the next step. Some of the headline actions here read as though some Departments will do some of this stuff anyway, so they will rebadge it as good relations. Let us be

- a wee bit different and have a document that is purely about leading this society forward and changing how we think about ourselves. That is what I would have welcomed and could really have bought into.
988. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is interesting. We will only know that this has worked if it makes a difference on the ground. My question is this: what should we be doing up at Stormont? Should we be setting a vision, such as a shared future, and no more, and be saying to you that you should deliver it? Michael, you said that the way in which things are done in Derry might be different from the way they are done here. I made the point that the way in which you do it on the lower Newtownards Road would be different from way in which you do it on the Upper Newtownards Road. Is that the way to do it, or should we be doing what I think we are doing at the minute, which is to present the vision with a 400-page manual on how to deliver it, and woe betide you if you do not tick the boxes?
989. **Mr Doherty:** Let me think about tackling your question. If people are really serious about a shared society, I would say to the people involved in rolling this out that they should look at some of the serious issues that affect us, such as sectarianism, and how that could be understood by people. That means that you need to revisit the education system and where we are at.
990. We need to talk about looking at our politicians as our leaders and about how sectarianism is covert and overt. That needs to be brought out clearly, because it affects what is happening with parades and flags and the people who protested. Most of all, we need to look at how we will deal with the past and the definitions that still cause confusion, such as who is a victim. We need to go back to the drawing board on all that stuff and begin to look seriously at whether the people on the hill who will roll this out to us really know what they are asking us to do. At this point, I think that they really do not know what is happening on the ground and what it is like, because they have not looked seriously at the whole issue of sectarianism. I am hooked on that in a sense, because I feel that this has been the blocker for all of us. It has been what I call an avoidance syndrome. We have all cleverly learned the skill of avoiding dealing with the actual issue that divides us.
991. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Let me emphasise that I ask the following question as Chair of the Committee, not wearing a party political hat. If we took one of those issues, such as who is really a victim, what do you think would happen?
992. **Mr Doherty:** I reckon that you would more than likely be divided on it.
993. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** What would the impact be on the community?
994. **Mr Doherty:** It is having that impact as it is now. It is keeping us more and more divided. People need to look seriously at how their view is affecting what is happening on the ground. We need a more collaborative approach. I think that Gerard got it right when he talked about risk-taking. Some people are more likely to be left behind. It will be the sorry legacy of the conflict that some people will never be satisfied, but risk-taking needs to be involved.
995. **Mr Deane:** I agree with Michael, but this Committee needs to hold a broad vision, and it has to lead by example. You should make broad commitments about where you would like us to be as a society and say that we are heading towards it and that, within 10 years, we will start to look at it as a process. It is like saying that all peace walls will come down within 10 years. That is a challenge. Let us look at it as a process and say that, over 10 years, we will start the process of doing that, or that we will look at victimhood, survivors or however we want to define it. You should pick broad themes and look at them without being descriptive. Say that we are going to channel resources to do that work in communities, in Departments and in statutory bodies — wherever it is

- appropriate to do it — and we will try to support it through the strategy. You should look at all the major issues. It is about making broad commitments.
996. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Gerard, you mentioned resources and financial commitments. Are the three of you clear in your own minds about the level of financial commitment and the amount of resource that is available?
997. **Mr Deane:** We are now, because Linsey Farrell called down to see us last week, so we have a broad figure in our heads, but, before that, we were not really clear.
998. **Mr Lyttle:** You can enlighten us then.
999. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You may regret saying that, Gerard, when the Deputy Chair gets going in a minute.
1000. **Mr Deane:** I think that a figure of £10 million being allocated to the strategy within the financial year was mentioned. We think that that is a good start.
1001. **Mr Lyttle:** Did they tell you what it is for?
1002. **Mr Deane:** No, it was not detailed. It was a broad figure.
1003. **Mr Lyttle:** They would not tell me either.
1004. **Mr Deane:** Our concern is that, for example, you pick one shared education campus, and that is your £10 million gone and another £10 million along with it.
1005. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Absolutely.
1006. **Mr Doherty:** One disappointing thing that sticks with us all is the roll-out of the tenders last year for some work from OFMDFM. People in the Peace and Reconciliation Group were left hanging, waiting on hearing word back that we had been awarded the tender, which we did not get. It looks like it was intended that we would never get it, because, as far as we understand it, there was no money in the pot. People were waiting for other money to come in, which did not happen. I could be totally wrong about that, but people like me were left with a bad taste in our mouths over the head of it, because we were depending on winning a few of those tenders, or at least winning the tender that we submitted.
1007. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I accept that that is how you were left feeling. Whether that is based on fact, of course, Michael, is not something that we have the data to back up.
1008. **Mr Doherty:** I understand that.
1009. **Ms Hetherington:** We put in an application, and, three months later, we have still not had word on whether or not we were successful. I just have a real fear. I know that money is really tight and has to be spent efficiently and effectively. I totally acknowledge that. I will probably be retired at some stage soon anyway, so it will not be a priority for me, but I have a great fear about the expertise in the field that will be lost and decimation in the community sector. I have a fear that so much expertise that has been developed down through the years will be lost as people try to find other means of survival, especially in that field.
1010. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It does strike me that, in your position, you would prefer to be told no early on so that you can plan and react to it rather than be left hanging.
1011. **Mr Doherty:** It would have been better for us, and it certainly would have been better for me.
1012. I will say something else so that you get a sense of where we are at on the ground. Our understanding of the peace process is that the people were willing the politicians to get the agreements and get it all worked out, but it was people like us who were left on the ground trying to work through those agreements, and we were left out on the street, working to try to get all this stuff sorted out. With the flags protest last year, for example, a large number of people were involved with us in trying to settle all that stuff on the street. A lot of issues were going on, and there was expertise on the street. If it had not have been for the peace work

- that was going on, I do not know where we would be.
1013. **Mr Lyttle:** Thanks for your presentation. Our friends in Derry/Londonderry/ Legenderry are showing great examples of really good work, and there seems to be a really good atmosphere in the north-west for a whole heap of key issues at the moment. I am grateful to you for your evidence today. I participated in a towards understanding and healing storytelling project and found it extremely worthwhile in challenging people to deal with difference and become comfortable with the different stories that people have to tell in Northern Ireland.
1014. You were polite and positive about the strategy, but your critique has been fairly robust. I welcome that because I share quite a few of the concerns. Your submission is also useful on lack of resources and lack of actions. Indeed, it states that there are three actions with detailed timelines, one of which was to review the good relations indicators by 2013. That is the way to test whether it is doing what it says it is aiming to do, and we have missed that deadline by quite a way. You also mention the disconnect between the strategy and community relations in practice. We need to find a way to address that. I do not think that the Committee changed that behaviour in a great way by turning down the evidence of one of our foremost community relations practitioners in Northern Ireland. All of us have to overcome that challenge together.
1015. I want to ask you a question about one comment. You say that the Community Relations Council is a valued and vital organisation in the promotion and delivery of good relations throughout Northern Ireland and that the sector supports the organisation and wants it to be sustained. Can you say a wee bit more about that?
1016. **Mr Doherty:** They are the only people who have been supportive of us on the ground. The organisation is a connect for us. It has brought us all together on strategic planning days, at times of concern and at conferences.
- We have gone through a series of thematic meetings with people from the Community Relations Council, and they are aware of the type of work that we are all involved in. They have been supportive of us since 1990 when other people were not.
1017. **Ms Hetherington:** Strategically, it has been crucial in bringing all the diverse voices together, including victims and survivors, which is no mean feat. It has had an input strategically and on the ground in giving support, and I have found that it has the expertise and has been willing to share. It has not just been about the core funding to help us to survive, but that has been an important part. There has also been advice and support, networking and wide connections. As Michael said, you can become very insulated when you are working in your own wee part of the world. The CRC allowed us to make the network much bigger and to exchange information and make our learning and sharing much wider. That has happened through so many different ways and approaches. It is a core body that knows what is happening at the grass roots. At the moment, it is looking at the decade of commemorations and has pulled together all the diverse groups, organisations and statutory bodies that are doing anything on commemorations. That input is invaluable on so many levels.
1018. **Mr Deane:** I declare an interest as a recently appointed member of the Community Relations Council. I think that it is an important organisation, and it is vital that there is an organisation that has a Northern Ireland-wide remit that holds the vision for the work that goes into community relations and holds the challenge as well. Michael and Maureen have captured most of the stuff.
1019. **Mr Lyttle:** I was not aware of your membership.
1020. **Mr Deane:** It has only been since December.
1021. **Mr Lyttle:** I was not intending to set that up in any way. Obviously, T: BUC proposes to take the funding function

- and put it into a funders group, as far as I can ascertain from the level of detail available. It proposes to put the independent scrutiny role into an equality and good relations commission if and when legislation comes forward to deliver that. Where do you think that this leaves the Community Relations Council with the role you believe it should be playing in the delivery of community relations in Northern Ireland?
1022. **Mr Doherty:** Can I be so bold as to say that the people who thought of changing the Community Relations Council to bring it into the Equality Commission obviously did not know about the work that was going on in the Community Relations Council.
1023. **Mr Lyttle:** It was not me, just to make it clear.
1024. **Mr Doherty:** No, I am making a general point.
1025. **Mr Lyttle:** I would like to make that clear because I do not agree with it.
1026. **Mr Doherty:** The fact that people had a lack of understanding of the role of the Community Relations Council gives me cause for concern. Why would you want to change something that has been working? I believe that, had it not been for the Community Relations Council supporting us on the ground, we would not have been as far on as we are with the peace process. The point I want to make is that this conflict has been transformed to be less violent, but it is not a post-conflict situation and is not over yet. I would like to see the Community Relations Council staying as it is and not being changed and subsumed into the Equality Commission. Let the Equality Commission be a stand-alone commission.
1027. **Ms Hetherington:** I think that the board representation of the CRC is diverse and is a microcosm of what is reflected in the wider community. I think that it is a stand-alone body and that it gives support at the grass roots, but it is also strategic, so it works from the top down as well as from the bottom up. I think it would be a shame to lose the expertise,
- and, more importantly, the trust built up over years where people who have been working in the field and need that support can get it from somebody who can help and support with regard to policy at local level as well as at top level.
1028. **Mr Deane:** It is really strange that a strategy recommends what an independent charity should be doing and says that the Community Relations Council will be merged with the Equality Commission. I think that this was a step beyond, because this is an independent organisation. I realise that, in the future, the organisation might need to change, but it is independent and it should decide what it should do in the future. That is just my opinion.
1029. **Mr Lyttle:** I have a closing question: have you had any indication that the gross mistakes in relation to the administration of the good relations fund in the last few financial years will not be repeated in the forthcoming financial year?
1030. **Mr Deane:** We did meet Linsey Farrell. As I mentioned last week, she called down and gave us a general update on the plans for delivery. She reassured us that lessons have been learned, it is fair to say.
1031. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I am not questioning your views on the CRC, but, Gerard, the point is that, in fairness, if it was created by government, then government has to have the right to uncreate it or merge it.
1032. **Mr Doherty:** Yes, of course.
1033. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You have very strong views, quite rightly, on whether this was a good idea or not, and that is perfectly acceptable.
1034. **Ms Hetherington:** Unfortunately, down through the years, too many people have had a say on what is peace-building and what is not. People who may not be fully informed are making decisions, and I think you need to have a body that does have a long experience and knows what is happening at the grass roots to be

- able to make the best informed choices on where the funding goes.
1035. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Going back to my point, is it our function to set a broad direction of travel and vision that can then take a shape that is different in different parts of the country? You give meaning to that vision, and we should not get too hung up about saying that we are very prescriptive in how we see this happening but need to be a bit more relaxed and mature about saying that it will be different here than it is there, but that it is all good. How is it in Derry at the moment? What is the interface situation like?
1036. **Mr Doherty:** The interface situation, at the minute, is fantastic. At our last interface meeting, there were no reports of any incidents whatsoever, and that has been the same since last August.
1037. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Why is that, Michael? Do you know?
1038. **Mr Doherty:** I think it is because we have built up relationships over the past lot of years. I am just thinking back to the Beyond Hate conference in 1992, when relationships started to be built up in the city. That has made it easier.
1039. The interface forum meets every six weeks. It will meet next week. It meets before a parade. While the parade is on, there is a mobile phone network in operation. We then meet after the parade — the loyal orders, the respective interface groupings and the PSNI. It happens on a regular basis.
1040. I have a black spot with republicans in the city who are not on board with the peace process and seem to be hell-bent on destabilising it. We still have expulsions happening. We still have punishment beatings happening. You heard in our local media yesterday about the bomb that was planted deliberately to attract PSNI officers and, in my view, kill them. This is still happening up our way. Apart from that, our city is wonderful. In many ways, we have sorted out the interfaces and all the parading issues among ourselves because of those relationships in the past that have not been built up in many other parts of the North.
1041. **Ms Hetherington:** I do not think that you can underestimate the community and voluntary sector. We have such a vibrant community sector with a number of women's groups, self-help groups and mental health groups. There are so many people who feed in. When we were running this, we had to submit at very short notice, Gerard. We called two meetings, and there was a huge response and people who could not come along gave apologies. You have that vibrant voice of the community sector. That is civic society in action and it helps to support the work we do. It helps us to lead from the grass roots. It also helps at council level that we have a vibrant community sector that is always on the go.
1042. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We heard evidence from academics who said that, if you want to build a united community, the thing to not do is say to two people, "Will you both come to an event because you are different?". They say that the thing to do is to create an issue, such as good parenting, and say, "If you want to be a better parent, come to this meeting". Is that the way to do it? Is that the way that you do it?
1043. **Mr Doherty:** I am more proactive than that. I do not hide behind any other way of bringing people together. If you are going to come in to talk about sectarianism, that is what you are going to talk about. I am more direct and clearer in that, if I am involved in it, this is what I want to do. I am not for bringing people in to do flower arranging just for the sake of them meeting across the table. We can all do that. We can all create community choirs. Are we going to talk about the hard issues? I would rather that we talk about the hard issues. The other stuff will happen anyhow.
1044. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** And it works for you.
1045. **Mr Doherty:** No, I cannot say that it works for me. It works some of the

- time. I try to make sure that we are really tackling the hard issues that other people are avoiding. I am not against flower arranging, community choirs or whatever, because all those things are natural. However, I want to have people in the room having the difficult conversation about what is really dividing us.
1046. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** In fairness, the evidence we were getting was about good parenting, perhaps to tackle educational underachievement, so it is a very important issue, Michael.
1047. **Mr Doherty:** I am not disputing that.
1048. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** The interesting thing that I am hearing from you is basically that one size does not fit all.
1049. **Mr Doherty:** Yes. What I am asking is this: what about the radicalisation of young people today who are maybe being attracted into some of the paramilitary groups that have not gone away? That is a hard issue for me.
1050. **Mr Deane:** It is also about normalising society, so that bringing people together to do normal things is OK. That builds relationships and trust, and, over time, we get to address the issues.
1051. **Mr Doherty:** Where we are complementing each other is that we are all working at different levels, doing different things, at different times and with different people.
1052. **Ms Hetherington:** A lot of it is about respect. I do not want to avoid the hard issues. I am in the field of peace building. I do not want to stay in a comfort zone. We challenge, but it is about respect. It is about building up mutual trust and a code of ethics. I am glad to say, Chris, that it was in Towards Understand and Healing, because our training covered ethics at length, and that has to go across society. It is how you go about tackling the hard issues. For organisations that have built up trust and mutual respect over a long time, that is a really important part of peace-
- building, as well as being who we are and being allowed to be who we are.
1053. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I will ask one more question, on the more oblique approach, where you pick an issue, such as good parenting, as a way to bring people together. The event, such as the bringing down of the Union flag at City Hall, was used as an example of something that forces communities apart. After a short period, however, the people attending decided, "Well, I am not going to let that put me off, because I am becoming a better parent". They come back, and there is a certain resilience. Would that also be the case with the head-on approach, or is there more danger and risk?
1054. **Mr Doherty:** It depends on the motivation. If you want to bring people together to be good parents, that is great; do that. If, by accident, other conversations take place, that is also great. What I am saying is this: there are times when you have to look at what is happening on the ground. Here is the challenge: would you speak to your enemy? Would you go into the same room? Would you speak to somebody who made you a victim? These are all hard issues. Let us talk about sectarianism. Let us talk about who is a victim. These are the hard issues that, on many occasions, we tend to avoid. When we avoid them, they just rumble on. For my part, I believe that we have another century of work ahead of us before, possibly, the end is in sight.
1055. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Another 100 years?
1056. **Mr Doherty:** Yes. We talked about a shared vision. What have we not got? We have not got a shared vision. For many in the republican camp, the vision is of a united Ireland. For many in the unionist camp, it is to remain with Great Britain. It is not a shared vision. What we are trying to do is share this space, but, while we are still a big threat to each other, that will be hard. We have not sorted out flags, parades, and — I will finish by saying — the past. We are allowing them to rumble on.

1057. **Mr Maskey:** Thanks for your candour and the wealth of experience you all bring to the table. That is very important, and it is one of the things I have been picking up on in the sessions so far.
1058. A lot of people are frustrated that the expertise on the ground has not been drawn on through T:BUC, not so much in its genesis, but in its shaping. This has to be corrected because, obviously, the work going on is invaluable. There are a lot of other people doing similar things as well, and we have to find a way of bridging the gap that quite clearly is there. I share that with you, so, hopefully, you can take that forward.
1059. I tend to go along with your way of thinking: if there is a problem, let us identify it and try to deal with it. Sometimes you have to find ways of doing that, because everybody is not at the same point, or some people may want to come at it a bit more subtly. I am interested in how the commission on flags and identity, which was agreed at Stormont at Christmas, is going to work out, because we could have 20 meetings that are just going to be shouting matches; it is going to happen. Obviously, you would expect such a commission to shape how that evolves. I am trying to reflect ahead, because, while it may not mean an awful lot to me, it might present an opportunity for a lot of people to have their say in a rational and mature way. I am not so sure what the outcome will be, because some people will still want to have their flag respected and others will want their identity manifested in a respectful manner.
1060. I see this as an opportunity in our peace process, probably the first in a long while, if not the first ever, for such a question to be put to people through some formal structure. The question of what to do about flags is always put to us as politicians. I represent people who have a view about flags, and they do not all hold the same view. Every elected representative here represents people with very firmly held views and who will hold us to account for defending their views. I am quite prepared to challenge the people I represent about those hard discussions, and I do so, on an ongoing basis. I am therefore looking forward to this, because I am interested.
1061. I do not expect you to comment on whether such a commission is a good idea, but how might you prepare for it or prepare the people you are working with to engage with it? For me, it is a platform for the hard questions to be put. People would be expected to give their views, if you know what I mean. I see this as being one of the first opportunities to send the challenge back to wider civic society and get their views on it. It is all very well saying that people are arguing over flags. People argue over flags because they mean so much. One of the things I have learned in politics over the last lot of years is that, unfortunately, symbolism sometimes means a lot more than substance. It frustrates the life out of me, I must say. But, I understand it, and I have to deal with it. Do you have any views on that? For me, that is part of the bigger picture we are dealing with, because T:BUC cannot just stand on its own. It has to link and relate to other parts of our environment. I wonder whether you have any views on how this might unfold or what your advice to people might be on how to engage.
1062. **Mr Doherty:** First, there needs to be a recognition that, when somebody feels that something has been taken away from them, they will resist more. Unionists are in the position where they feel that their flag has been eroded, so they are going to resist and look for support for their position. That was what happened in the 2012-13 period. It is about recognising that this is important to a lot of people. But, also, those from a unionist perspective need to understand that others have an issue with a flag that is not theirs, as far as they are concerned. When you start from the position of trying to remove a threat from one another, it is grand.
1063. Getting people to look at simple solutions could be a starting point. I could sort out the parades' issue tomorrow by giving two solutions and then letting one of the groups select who

- will go first. The first solution is to allow parades to go into areas where they are not wanted. The second solution is for them not to parade in those areas. It is so simple and could be over tomorrow. But who is prepared to do it? Those are the hard discussions that facilitators and mediators need to be prepared to get people around the table to have a look at — the common-sense solutions that accommodate us all.
1064. Rather than trying to get agreements, we look for accommodations. One of the factors in this has been that people are trying to shove their decisions down one another's throats. It is just not working at the present time. There has to be some encouragement to look at accommodation and compromise.
1065. At the moment, it is not working. We have to look at why it is not working, Alex. It is not working because people have got themselves into fixed positions and are not prepared to move. How do you weaken those positions? This is me looking at what is called the best alternative to a negotiated agreement. Why does the Orange Order not come to the table to negotiate an agreement? It is because their better alternative is to let somebody else like the Parades Commission make a decision for them and then blame the Parades Commission. It is the same with the residents' group whenever the decision goes against them. Do not blame the Orange Order; blame the Parades Commission for the decision that went against you. We have to let people know that they are allowing others to make decisions on their behalf for their community. It is about encouraging people to have those internal dialogues, but they are feeling threatened.
1066. **Ms Hetherington:** I might add that knowledge is power. Community education equips people with a language, an understanding of where they have come from, and a deeper understanding of where they are and how they got there. They have to really understand all those things and unpack them.
1067. We have not done enough on memorialisation or memory work. History is more about psychology than facts. Facts are very limited, and there is an interpretation of history. When you start to get people to have a different dialogue from what they have been brought up on, and to find out their diatribe or what they have been digesting, that is a really important area.
1068. We have had very diverse groups coming in and starting to discuss this. When people start to unpack it and begin to understand where we have come from, and the deep legacy of the roots of violence, it frees them up to be more open to other possibilities. This comes back to the fact that if you do not feel that you are being heard or, possibly, that you cannot articulate what you are trying to say, it reduces things to a shouting match simply because you are limited in your own language.
1069. I am not trying to be insulting or to belittle, but there is a huge knowledge deficit out there, and, I am not saying that we are geniuses. A lot of the work that three of us do in different ways is basic grass-roots education. For example, we worked with a young parades group in the Waterside. They had been out marching and protesting, and we took them right back to the ice age to understand Ireland and all the different people who had come to the country. We took them right back to basics, because the education system has not been the best way for them to receive their education. It is about how we see ourselves and what we have been brought up on. It is about unlearning some of that stuff and those deep religious roots of sectarianism — the unpacking of all of that — and trying to see things differently and open ourselves up to other possibilities. It has worked.
1070. **Mr Deane:** If we get the rationale and ethics of it right to start with — the, “here is why we are doing it, here is what we are going to accept, and here is why we are asking you” — then it is back to some of the approaches towards understanding, healing and

- ethical and shared remembering. If those are right at the start, and if people know what they are engaging in, and buy into the process, then it is less likely to be disruptive.
1071. **Ms Hetherington:** It is about the greater or common good. If you have basic principles, you keep going back to them.
1072. **Mr Attwood:** Thank you very much for coming. First, your comments about the CRC are timely. My party began to go down a wrong road in relation to the proposed equality and good relations commission. We corrected that some time ago and decided that the appropriate model is not to take away from the CRC and give to something else, especially to the Equality Commission, which has been struggling for a long time and continues to struggle. However, separate from that, the CRC is showing good authority, and we should now work to protect it. I hope that the proposed legislation does not come forward as a consequence of all that. As practitioners and people on the ground, your common message in that regard is useful and timely.
1073. Michael, we were all struck by your comments in respect of another century. I probably have different words that convey a similar sentiment, which is that we are in a phase where we are managing the conflict but not transforming it. Whilst we are much better than we were, for all the obvious reasons, in our politics and governance, and, probably, in many but not all parts of our community, we are just managing the conflict. It seems to me that it will take a long time.
1074. We do not seem to have the ability or ambition for the paradigm shift we require. We manage things, such as the Stormont House talks, and move some things forward, if all that evolves into what it is meant to be as opposed to what the limited words say it is at the moment; but I worry that we are in this phase.
1075. If this is your assessment in Derry, which is seen to be a city of leadership,
- then there are other places where it is more difficult. That came across in the submission from the previous group. Urban inner-city Belfast has an intensity and critical character that makes it not in as good a place as Derry, even though there are still issues in Derry.
1076. Separately, you talk about your observations on an ethical process for dealing with the past. I am worried that we have a structural process for dealing with the past that is not ethical, and that will be found wanting when it comes to ethics. Eames/Bradley was a comprehensive and ethical approach. I wonder if we now have a structural approach as opposed to getting behind all of that in the way that we should. It is seen, most acutely, in the Stormont House Agreement's attempt to suppress the patterns and policies of the past in relation to the activities of terror groups and state agencies. There is a clear attempt to suppress all of that in a very unhealthy way. That is not ethical, in my view.
1077. I will bring you back to the inquiry and ask the questions that I asked the organisations in the previous session. You touched on this, but I want you to elaborate. What is your experience of delays, the absence of transparency, the failure to have an appeals process around T:BUC and the assertion that an attempt is being made to steer T:BUC into Peace III in order to fund narrow areas? Those were the words used by one of the previous group.
1078. **Mr Lyttle:** Peace IV.
1079. **Mr Attwood:** Sorry, Peace IV. Do you have any observations on this? Do you have a sense of Peace IV being steered towards T:BUC and, if so, is that narrow?
1080. The second point is on the delays and the absence of transparency in the appeal process around the management of T:BUC to date. You referred to some of that when you mentioned making bids and not hearing anything for a year and three months, and making bids and then realising that it was all notional and that nothing was ever going to be funded anyway.

1081. **Mr Deane:** On the structural approach of the central good relations fund, it was a generally frustrating process that people really believed in at the start. They put a lot of effort into making quality applications, or so they thought, that were not supported, and people found that to be frustrating more than anything. It was not that the funding was not hitting the ground; it was the fact that we did not hear and could never get an answer. That was the frustrating thing. We accept that resources are limited, but, as was said earlier, a clean “no” is at times a lot handier than being held on and held on and held on.
1082. I think that this strategy needs to sit separately from Peace IV. Yes, it needs to reference it, but it should not look like it. It should not look like central government objectives are being met through European money. European money should be used for other things. For example, it should be used for some of the projects that are funded, and that we are involved in, such as Towards Understanding and Healing and the Garden of Reflection project. Those types of things are innovative and ground-breaking and should continue to be done through the Peace IV programme.
1083. I have a concern that this will be resourced through Peace IV. We feel that there should be a real commitment through government to say, “We value this strategy and, as such, we will commit the following resources to it in addition to Peace IV stuff”.
1084. **Mr Doherty:** I concur with what Gerard said about Peace IV. The amount of money put into community relations from central government could be pennies compared with what is needed. If it had not been for European money — and I go back to the peace process — I do not think that the peace process would be as far on as it is. Central government needs to look seriously at the amount of money given to community relations work and at the European money as being add-on money.
1085. **Ms Hetherington:** I acknowledge that there is a huge struggle between the politicians and that it is very hard to come to an accommodation on decisions given the different constituencies. I understand the difficulties that that presents. It is even hard to get a document that is totally agreed on across the board.
1086. As Gerard and Michael said, this document can be about real partnership working between the politicians and the community sector. It could be the document that envisions how we might work together. We are all in this together. Peace is too important to be left to politicians alone, and it is too important to be just left at the grass roots. There has to be a coming together and a common ground. A document like this should be a stand-alone document, but it is a partnership. It is about saying, “We all need one another. We are all in this together. What are we going to do about the common good?”. The vision here is very good and there are ways in which we could work.
1087. It has to stand separately from Peace IV. That can be the add-on, but here is a visionary document in which politicians are acknowledging the work at the grass roots, and the grass roots is acknowledging the difficulties in the way that politics works. This is the way we can pull it together. Sometimes, politicians cannot make the difficult decisions about who is a victim. Maybe we can help in that struggle. Maybe we are the ones who can carry the torch for that. With memorialisation and commemoration, maybe we are the ones that civic society has to strengthen, that need to get our act together, and that need to start to lead and support at the top.
1088. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That has been most useful, Maureen, Michael and Gerard. Thank you very much. I hope that you feel that it was worthwhile making the trip.
1089. **Ms Hetherington:** It was. I think that we feel that we have been heard.
1090. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Good.

11 March 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Ms Bronwyn McGahan
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Stephen Moutray

Witnesses:

Mr Gerry Burns	<i>Armoyn Community Association</i>
Ms Lyn Moffett	<i>Ballymoney Community Resource Centre</i>
Ms Rose Smyth	<i>Causeway Rural and Urban Network</i>
Mr Colin Craig	<i>Corrymeela Community</i>
Mr Sandy Wilson	<i>North Antrim Community Network</i>
Ms Charmain Jones	<i>Rural Community Network</i>

1091. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** As we are doing this in a joined-up sense, from my left to right, we have Gerry Burns from Armoyn Community Association; Colin Craig representing the Corrymeela Community; Charmain Jones from the Rural Community Network (RCN); Lyn Moffett, who is our host, from the Ballymoney Community Resource Centre — thank you very much; Sandy Wilson from the North Antrim Community Network; and Rose Smyth from Causeway Rural and Urban Network. Only the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is not with us today. I am looking at you, Lyn, as our host, to make the opening remarks.

1092. **Ms Lyn Moffett (Ballymoney Community Resource Centre):** I will, unless Charmain wants to.

1093. **Ms Charmain Jones (Rural Community Network):** First, on behalf of the Rural Community Network, I thank Karen for contacting RCN and asking us to be the conduit today to bring rural communities here. We were asked, as

an organisation, to have the meeting in an area of best practice. This was the first area that came to mind, with the linkages that I have with Ballymoney Community Resource Centre. I will just say thank you for hosting us today.

1094. **Ms Moffett:** We are very grateful for this opportunity as well. As you know, we made a submission to the inquiry. When we were invited to come along today to bring examples of best practice, the first people whom we thought of were the other community networks in the area because we all cover areas that are both rural and urban. Our work extends into all those areas. The work that we do, particularly on building community relations and addressing community tension, happens in all those areas. It is not just an urban issue.

1095. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** If people are content, we will start with that point. If a first-time visitor to Northern Ireland wants to know about these things in the urban situation, in Belfast or Derry/Londonderry, it is very easy. I would almost certainly put them in the car, drive them to a peace wall and say, “Well, there are you are.” In a rural area, I am not so sure that I would know where to go.

1096. **Ms Moffett:** It might be obvious enough in the summertime when we have our cultural expression in full view with regard to how areas are flagged and the territorial markings that we see in certain areas. Very often, apart from that, you would not necessarily be aware of it if you were not local to the area. It is the people who live in an area who know which streets they might like to avoid, which areas they would like to go through to the community centre or even which shops they shop in. It would be something that might be unique to each area.

1097. **Ms Jones:** We commissioned a research report in 2009 called ‘Beyond Belfast’.

From that, the Rural Community Network has peace-building and good relations at the core; that is a main ethos of our organisation. The work that I do regionally across Northern Ireland is in what you would classify as a contested area, but, with regard to rural issues, it would be more subtle. The divisions might be not be as visible. There is a different way of working. I worked in the urban setting for about 10 years in Portadown and Armagh. I had to learn very quickly that, in an urban context, a spade might be called a spade; whereas in rural areas, there is a “say nothing” attitude. It is more subtle. I suppose that there may be less incentive in a rural area to come together because, at least, in an interface area — I live in an interface area in Portadown — when the wall is there, it gives you a focus to build relations of some sort, and there is an incentive to do that. When you live in a rural area, perhaps quite a dispersed rural area, there might be less of an incentive to come together. As Lyn says, we work across the whole of Northern Ireland. Rural communities are very self-sustaining; they have their own shops, post offices, garages and schools. There is sometimes less of an incentive to mix. Our organisation is about trying to do that.

1098. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I wanted to ask you about that unspoken element. If you are in an urban setting and there is a physical manifestation, that is one thing. If you are in a rural situation, is it largely unspoken, and, as you said, Charmain, you have to learn it.
1099. **Ms Jones:** It is not a one-size-fits-all situation. In some communities, we tried an exercise two years ago to map out rural contested issues. Week by week and day by day, we found something that a local village or town could change. A flag could go up in the area, and it automatically becomes contested; the flag comes down, and that goes away again. There could be a parade that normally does not happen. Then, it goes away again. Good-relations issues in rural areas are constantly shifting. You have to learn. You have to be very close

to the ground to try to feel what the local issues are. It is not as in your face sometimes; it is subtle.

1100. **Ms Moffett:** Nevertheless, we could definitely point to occasions when what is happening on the wider political scene comes right down to our local areas. We see that playing out in local estates and villages.
1101. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Can you give an example?
1102. **Ms Moffett:** Well, the obvious one is the flag at Belfast City Hall and how that affected our work locally; it made a huge difference to people’s willingness to engage with cross-community work. Where they had been willing before, there was almost a cessation of that willingness to work across communities.
1103. **Ms Jones:** After the flag protests, I would have had some people, particularly in quite small rural areas, using the sort of World War I phrase of “going back into the trenches”; the retraction from any type of cross-community work. I find that what happens in a larger city definitely radiates down to a very local level.
1104. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It is interesting that you chose that example because a previous witness was talking about working in an urban setting. He was trying to bring people from either side of a peace wall together, not because they were different, but because they all wanted to be better parents. That was the reason for their coming together. The flag came down at the city hall and there was a hiatus when people went back to their trenches, but because of the value of the scheme, they said, “Well, I am not going to let that derail me” and they came back in.
1105. **Mr Colin Craig (Corrymeela Community):** There is added complexity with the rural environment because, in my work, there is often a memory, in a sense, of cooperation because of the farming connections, which people talk about at one level. Then, there is a geographical separation whereby it

is not as up close and personal as it often is in the urban environment. When people reach across and meet up and you get into programmes where you find connections, the relationships are there. However, it is also much harder for them to sustain that relationship because, often, if you are working with older people and rural transport issues, they do not just walk across; there are miles of separation. Going out at night to meet people regularly can be an issue. There are subtleties to the rural environment that are very different from those in the urban environment.

1106. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** How would you characterise how farming cooperation has changed in recent years?
1107. **Mr C Craig:** I cannot actually talk specifically about that, but, often, there are memories of sharing equipment and moving across things. They speak of that. Then, it is your time of year, and you go and do what you need to do. Perhaps, many in the rural community did not directly experience as much of the violence as some urban areas experienced. They did experience violence, but it was more of an absorbed fear through witnessing the external story, and they pulled back from each other at times. They also have a love for the land, which is a deep bridge for them. They connect on other points, which is interesting.
1108. **Mr Gerry Burns (Armoy Community Association):** I do not think that the people in Armoy understand the word “subtle”: we are one sort or the other. We have been there. Anybody I knew was of my side; anybody I did not know was of the other side. We talked among ourselves and did not know each other. We have a long history of division in the place where I am from. The road through it splits one community from the other. In 1911, it was the only ward in the whole of Ireland that was 50:50. It is now 55:45.
1109. I was reared on a small farm of 14 acres. The Protestant farmers chose to rent land to my father. He and I appreciated that, but, in many other aspects, we were a very divided community. On the street that I live on in Armoy, in 30 years of the Troubles, I maybe walked up it twice. We have a place transformed today, but it has been a difficult struggle. I am delighted to be here as part of Building a United Community because we are from a diverse community. We have three Orange lodges, a Masonic lodge, three churches, three church halls, the Gaelic club and the rugby club. At one time, Corrymeela and Rathcoole had places within a few miles of the road that goes down through Armoy. There was division and sectarianism, but the place has been changed and transformed.
1110. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I will come back to you, Gerry, on how you achieved that.
1111. **Mr Sandy Wilson (North Antrim Community Network):** If I was asked what we do at the North Antrim Community Network, I would say that we build people. That is your starting point. Building with bricks is sometimes important when needs are identified, but building people is the most important thing. Alongside building people, you have to build respect.
1112. I will go back to what Colin said about ownership. There are great opportunities in this time of austerity in service provision and community planning to get a renewed sense of ownership. Whether people own a house or a car, it is theirs, and they care for it and look after it. There are great opportunities in communities when the focus is on areas rather than groups. There is a fundamental difference.
1113. Some people, politicians and parties would say that there are too many groups. All those groups are trying to do wonderful things, but they need to work together. We encourage them to develop forums. In some places, they are working not only in their own communities but in other communities. It is vital to build relationships in your own community to have the confidence to work outside your community.

1114. When we talk about rural areas, we are talking about villages that might be only three miles apart. In times of austerity, people in government think that they are funding this community group or that community group and so on. However, we are already working together on the ground, teaching groups about collaborative working. There is less funding, so it is more important to work together to become more competitive in a difficult funding environment. When you are building people and respect, you build confidence, and, when you build confidence, you might then be able to make progress in good relations.
1115. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** The expression “building people” is troubling me a little, Sandy: what do you mean?
1116. **Mr Sandy Wilson:** When building people, you have to build their knowledge and capacity. I think that we have gone beyond building capacity nowadays. We have to build tenacity. By tenacity, I mean that people have to be resilient and have to work together, and the most important people with whom they should be working in their local area are their democratically elected councillors. I know of some wonderful examples of those relationships building, and, in the challenges that we have — I say challenges rather than problems — if we work together, we can begin to make further progress on all the issues in all our communities. The key is to focus on areas rather than groups and ensure that groups work together, whether as an umbrella organisation or otherwise. If they work together as an umbrella organisation, that makes it much more receptive and accessible to work with government agencies. Bear in mind that, as we keep telling groups in our communities, at this point, all 26 councils have about 4% of the Budget in Northern Ireland. We tell them not to keep knocking on the doors of councils because there is roughly 96% of the Budget in the Departments, although it is very competitive, and there are restrictions and all the rest of it. If they do not always knock the doors of councils but work together, they will have a stronger voice and can go further afield. Respect your councillors and your council officials and work with them to encourage that collaborative working.
1117. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** We are three weeks away from the big change when we will have the 11 new so-called super-councils. Rose, you are Causeway —
1118. **Ms Rose Smyth (Causeway Rural and Urban Network):** I am from the Causeway Rural and Urban Network.
1119. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You have the Causeway Coast and Glens coming in.
1120. **Ms Smyth:** Yes. My project is very much focused on the borough of Coleraine. I work closely with probably the most marginalised communities in our borough. Over the past couple of years, I have delivered projects to people in bands, bonfire builders and unattached nationalist youth. I go back to what Charmain said in that the end result, which is the resilience that Sandy is working towards, is just not there in the groups that I work with. I was in Garvagh for two years on a project that looked at reducing the number of flags and exchanging them for banners. In the middle of that, the flag issue at the City Hall came up. I worked for a long time with guys from two sets of bands, and I was struck by the fact that they were from all over the rural hinterland around the Garvagh/Aghadowey area. They were in several different bands and were often in bands that did not come from where they lived but had been their grandfather’s band and stuff like that. There were so many areas that, in their heads, were no-go areas. They were completely paralysed by family traditions and issues such as who owned which house, who owned what farm, whose shop it was, where they would go and where they would meet. That was in contrast to other work that we were doing in the same village with more resilient young people in the more mainstream youth club and who did a wider range of activities. Work still needs to be done, but we need to find

- the best practice and really good work that can work for such young people to increase their resilience to come together.
1121. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** How do you do that? How do you approach a young person who says, “I do not go down that road because my father and grandfather did not, and it is not my/our road”?
1122. **Ms Jones:** We have done a few bits of work with YouthAction Northern Ireland, and those difficult conversations have formed part of the programme. YouthAction does some really good youth engagement in rural areas. On a couple of occasions, I have worked with different groups of young people and have had similar conversations about their feelings that a shop, a street or a field in their area was a no-go area. There were even cases of fighting or feeling threatened because of uniforms when walking down a village street on opposite sides.
1123. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** A school uniform?
1124. **Ms Jones:** Yes. We had a conversation with a group of young people last week about groups meeting when going up or down a hill and how they brush past each other on the way past. There is eye contact but nothing physical. We talked about that kind of stuff to find out how young people feel.
1125. You asked me how we engage them. You ask them and talk to them. Many a young person will say to me, “I have never had the chance to speak about this. Nobody else has asked my opinion”. If you create that safe space and allow them to discuss the issue and to vent their concerns, maybe they will not go home and tell their parents that, but, in a youth group setting in a safe area, they will discuss it. It is about trying to talk to them and engage on their level. We have talked about loads of issues across rural Northern Ireland. We have talked about shared education, flags and emblems and parading. I have had conversations with young people in rural areas about every issue that you could think of, and they are just glad of the opportunity to express themselves. Young people sometimes get a bad press. I was a youth worker for four years, and I am an advocate for young people. I think that young people have their place in society, and their voices should be heard. I am always encouraging young people to explore their own community and where they can and cannot go.
1126. **Ms Smyth:** There is a lack of resilience. You said that it was about listening. That mindset had to come from somewhere. Sometimes, it can be seen to be linked to the cultural issue, but it will go beyond that: it will go to low self-esteem, their view of the world, educational attainment and life experience. However, the fact is that there is still a pool of young people who are living in a very closed in and paralysed mindset. Charmain mentioned what it is about: getting really good youth work in, listening and seeing how that can start to be built on to widen their world, because it is in widening the world that you will start to —
1127. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You and Sandy are very clear about the need for resilience. That leads me to wonder whether single identity work needs to be emphasised to build up resilience and capacity before you try for cross-community work, or should you go straight for the ultimate goal.
1128. **Ms Moffett:** We had a long conversation about that while we were waiting to come in.
1129. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is there an answer?
1130. **Ms Jones:** We all had different answers.
1131. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Six different answers.
1132. **Mr Burns:** We had no choice, because it was a divided community. We were a single group with mixed identity. With regard to the funding programme for peace and reconciliation, we could not get money to work with ourselves. We

- saw groups going on all sorts of trips and doing wonderful things, but, when we applied to get money for our group in Armoy, that was really difficult for cross-community work. That is what our community is; we are a mixed community, a community abandoned and a community with no political representation for decades. I was 18 years old on 5 October 1968. Twenty-six years later, on 5 October 1994, I was invited by a Church of Ireland minister from Drumcree to go to a meeting to set up a community group that was started because we had a summer scheme. Those were difficult days.
1133. When I was five and going to school, council houses were being built. Today, 61 years later, the people living in those houses are still waiting for the Housing Executive to extend their kitchens. That is the sense of abandonment right across the board in an interface rural area. We have worked so hard to put in infrastructure. You may ask me what the secret was at the end of it. The secret was a community regeneration and improvement special programme (CRISP), funding from the IFI and DSD, with real people round the table with an agenda who were able to deliver.
1134. You may ask what effect the grand political scheme had. In October 2000, Tony Blair came to support David Trimble at a meeting — at the Waterfront Hall, I think. The night before that, our community office was burned to the ground. That was when we were planning the opening of Tilly Molloy's. We got three phone calls of sympathy because, two weeks previously, the Catholic primary school was petrol bombed, and I was on the board of governors for that school. We opened a facility, and the consensus was that it would never work. Not only might it not be supported but it would be destroyed. I am very grateful to the people in the CRISP scheme, the funders and the people round the table at that time who supported us. The funding environment and the support environment from 1994 to 2004 was a lot better than it is today.
1135. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you, Gerry.
1136. **Ms Moffett:** One of the examples that Gerry brings to the table shows how good practice is not necessarily rewarded. We are probably all involved in both single identity and cross-community programmes. We would probably describe many of those as being good practice, but we really feel that we have to start moving very distinctly towards cross-community work. We are finding that, if estates become entrenched, the single identity work “concretises” — I am sure that that is not a real word — the attitudes that already exist. Rather than building confidence to come out and espouse other groups, it is entrenching ideas and ideals.
1137. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is maybe a key element that you are taking us to, Lyn. I think that it is right that OFMDFM and Stormont, as the devolved government, say, “We have a vision, and, in this case, the vision is of a shared future, and we are calling it T:BUC — Together: Building a United Community”. However, we have to consider how that is brought into being. It is maybe not for us to say, “Here’s a 400-page manual with 600 tick boxes; get on with it”. It is maybe to say, “How are you going to do it?” I say that because the way that Gerry does it in Armoy might be different from the way that Sandy does it. Somebody might say, “Actually, where we are, the people whom I represent need single identity for a few months to build up resilience capacity”. Other people might say, “No, I know how to do it with my people”, and that will be very different. Do you feel that you have that sense of control over the way in which you deliver?
1138. **Ms Moffett:** It is entirely right that one size does not fit all. “Criticism” is a strong word, but one of the criticisms that we might make of the strategy is that there is not enough involvement at civic and community level for us to inform some of the ideas as to how T:BUC might be rolled out. I do not know what other people might say.

1139. **Mr C Craig:** Let me put a little bit of history into this. I was on the Community Relations Council (CRC) board when we were transitioning from Peace I to Peace II. We are about to go to Peace IV. Peace II was explicitly meant to be cross-community in orientation, because Peace I had put a huge investment into time and creating an environment in which you could have your space and your time. There was a huge outcry at that moment. People were saying that they were not ready. So a lot of Peace II went into single identity work. Peace III was heavily colonised by single identity work. The danger for those in leadership is that you are creating a ghetto that people stay inside. It is a funding ghetto. Why should people move? Unless you set up the stretch goals that allow us to motivate and guide, it will not happen, because they are comfortable. We all get comfortable in our own world. Unless we stretch, we will go round and round in circles. I think that part of the weakness of T:BUC is that, whatever the negotiation behind it, it went for the lowest hanging fruit. I was doing summer schemes with young people in the 1970s, for instance.
1140. Contact is critical, but we know, through education for mutual understanding (EMU) and all the research, that contact on its own is not enough. We need more: a higher level of aspiration in the funding and innovation. Innovation has to be funded and not be the same old, same old attitude. You mentioned outcomes. Part of the risk is that we have to give some freedom to explore and to get it wrong. To do this work, there are no guarantees; there is no 400-page manual. You will do something with the best of intentions, and we, as the practitioners, need to put our hands up and say, “We thought this, but it was wrong”.
1141. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Lyn raises the important issue of pre-T:BUC consultation. I am going to go across the table, starting with Rose. Rose, I will phrase it in two parts. First, do you feel that you had something to offer to the design of the T:BUC policy? Secondly, did you have an input before it was published.
1142. **Ms Smyth:** Yes and no. We had no consultation whatsoever.
1143. **Mr Sandy Wilson:** I had no involvement, but my manager was involved.
1144. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Your manager was involved in the design of the —
1145. **Mr Sandy Wilson:** With the rural support networks.
1146. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Lyn?
1147. **Ms Moffett:** Yes and no, as per Rose. We certainly feel that we could make an input with other groups like ours, but we did not get the opportunity.
1148. **Ms Jones:** We were consulted, which was great. We are funded by the Community Relations Council, which, I have to say, being a lone worker in rural development, has been a critical friend. As Colin said, there are many days on which you make mistakes. No manual comes with the job, so the CRC allowed us to have the door opened for our engagement. I looked at the level of our engagement with officials during the design of T:BUC and the co-design stage, and we have had an excellent relationship with OFMDFM officials. We had Donna Blaney and Linsey Farrell, who engaged with us in a number of meetings. We had Gavin King, who now sits as part of our Beyond Belfast steering group. We constantly feed into what is happening. Our Beyond Belfast group has a wide range of stakeholders across rural Northern Ireland, whom we meet every couple of months. That flow of information is still happening.
1149. We were heavily involved in the United Youth programme. We had pre-design meetings, and a lady from DEL came to us with a blank piece of paper and said, “Tell me about rural issues. What do I need to know?”. We had a lengthy meeting with her, and we were also involved with a fringe event. We had a large conference last year for rural dwellers, and there was a fringe

- event, so there was a consultation at that as well. We have been consulted on the United Youth summer camp; 30 people came to that feedback meeting a few weeks ago. The really good, positive outworking is that they asked us whether the money should be redesigned to go to hotspots or whether it should be a regional programme. The strong feeling was that rural issues should not be left out of the equation. Just because there is no interface violence and people are not rioting on the street does not mean that rural communities should be forgotten about. Gerry's prime example of that good work still needs to be supported. We also had our own conference, at which 60 people attended. We had OFMDFM officials, and the room was set up so that rural fed into all the strategic priorities. There is a conference paper. We have been very fortunate that there has been a very good, positive relationship with us.
1150. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is encouraging
1151. **Mr C Craig:** Our answer is no and no, in the sense that —
1152. **Ms Jones:** I am the odd one out here.
1153. **Mr C Craig:** We were able to provide some commentary, but what we were looking at was already a fait accompli of design. It was not our experience that we had any influence on design.
1154. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Gerry?
1155. **Mr Burns:** No, but I would have been very happy with T:BUC if it could have delivered something, because we have had nothing delivered for years. We go it alone. Our work is completely different from all that community relations and peace and reconciliation stuff. Our champions and heroes are the people who run the playgroup, Sure Start, the community pharmacy and the tea rooms. There are 17 jobs in our mixed building. Of all the community buildings that I mentioned, ours is the only one that is open every day, right at the interface. From the day that Tony Blair came to help David Trimble, we have gone from there to a place of success, where relationships are flourishing because of everyday contact by ordinary people doing extraordinary jobs in a normal way. We know what normal is, because we have lived there all our lives.
1156. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you very much. I want to bring members in.
1157. **Mr Moutray:** I welcome the opportunity to engage with you today. On the back of what you said, Gerry, do you ever feel that rural communities are left behind when it comes to resources and funding, given that there is not the same manifestation of disorder or community strife?
1158. **Mr Burns:** We have paid a terrible price for being peaceful. I have written letters of complaint to Department of Education officials, never thinking that I would get this opportunity. I am the first person in the history of Armoy to sit at a table at this sort of gathering. This is brilliant because it is real politics. This is the sort of question on which we need to be heard. We have three policemen in Armoy at an Orange parade. There are sometimes 200 in Rasharkin. Resources go in there. We ran a country and western concert; somebody came to play. We had to do 15 pages of a health and safety statement. We paid Roads Service £200 or something for insurance for an evening. I rang the Parades Commission and asked whether all the band parades paid £200. They do not; it is covered by some other Act. Stephen, we pay a terrible price for being peaceful.
1159. **Mr Moutray:** That is what I wanted to tease out. I am all too aware of rural communities across the Province where this is happening; where there has not been the manifestation of disorder on the streets, but yet there is an underlying problem with resources —
1160. **Ms Jones:** Rural communities will say to us, "You're the first group or first people who've ever asked us what we think about the conflict, how it affected us and how it's still affecting us". I am sure that it is the same up round

this way as well. Even in my work over the last six months, a large number of people are coming forward with trauma-related problems who have never tapped into any resources. They are maybe in an area that you think had not been affected at all. They are starting to slowly drip feed into our programmes, and we then have to redirect them to further support. If there is one message that I can get out today, it is equality and fairness for all. We would like to see rural getting its fair share as well. Thirty per cent of the population live in Derry/Londonderry and Belfast. The other 70% live outside of that. Sometimes, that is forgotten about. The whole of Ireland was affected by this. I am an advocate for ensuring that resources are given to rural areas. We find that groups get funded a lot less for that type of work because there are no overt issues.

1161. **Mr Sandy Wilson:** I keep coming back to what I said earlier about focusing on areas rather than groups. There is a great opportunity for that sense of ownership. We are talking about community relations and issues related to that. As the Chair said, different places are different. Obviously, the credibility of people in certain areas is important as well. I am a volunteer as well as being here today in a paid capacity. We must not forget that the volunteers will make the difference for people who live in those areas. They are the people who have that credibility.
1162. Thankfully, as I see it, in times of austerity, there are vast opportunities in my council area of Ballymena and other council areas. The new councils will want to help people who want to help themselves. That is very important. Through that sense of ownership, it is very important to look at community relations. As part of that process, there are other issues that are more important to some people in those communities than community relations. I am not saying that it should be ignored, but there is lower educational attainment, the whole environment of the area and so on. There are other issues that need to be looked at alongside

community relations that, equally, can build relationships with people. Those are the most important things for them. That is why you need to focus on areas, get the people working together and a sense of ownership. Relationships build when you start to look at the needs, identify them and tackle all the needs in the area. They are the things that are most important to individuals. When you get trust and respect, you can begin to do other things. It is not a short-term solution, but it is important for government in these times of austerity and so on that people are supported to help themselves and that the communities are showing that they are fitting in with policies in government. There are opportunities coming along that way as well.

1163. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is the point that I was trying to make earlier, Sandy. A witness from Ulster University who had been working up in Belfast said that you bring people together because there are issues that concern them. For example, they want to be better parents in terms of being able to encourage their children who are educationally underachieving. That was the bond that brought them together rather than saying, "We want you to come into a room 'cause you're different".
1164. **Mr Sandy Wilson:** There are other issues. We talked about young people. I have experience of working with young people. One of the reasons why parents are now encouraging their young people to come along is because of the difficulty in the educational system of getting to university and so on. It is good for them to have done a Duke of Edinburgh's Award or to have done work in the community sector environment or something like that. We have also researched elderly people, who still feel undervalued and ignored to some extent. We talk to the young people and they say that they are totally ignored, but when you bring them together, as we have done, and those young people can sit down with grandparents or elderly people and contact people around the

- world using FaceTime, they begin to share each other's skills. The older people share their skills and teach the younger ones how to cook and to do so healthily —
1165. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Or how to read.
1166. **Mr Sandy Wilson:** — on a budget and so on. It is a matter of getting the relationships built, not always on the community relations side, although that should not be ignored. To me, that is all good community relations work, particularly when you are working in local areas. It works in local areas because it is the same as the Localism Act 2011 that was passed by the United Kingdom Government and it is why there has been a change in attitudes in Scotland and England and so on. Localism works. It is the same for the leading voluntary organisation in Ireland, which is the GAA. There is local passion for playing for the jersey and the club, the townland and the parish, whatever it might be. That happens in all our communities across barriers and so on. It is about the place where people live, the sense of place and the identity. That identity needs to be progressed to ownership. The opportunities are there through community planning and all sorts of things in government in times of austerity at the moment. There are great opportunities there, but they must be grasped. I go back to saying that local people need to make the changes. There also has to be visibility, because visibility creates credibility. One of the difficulties in communities is that there is sometimes a perception that there is not much credibility. However, there is greater credibility when you are working together as an area, across urban and rural divides that even some Departments have not bridged yet in government. When that is happening, you can begin to go places.
1167. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Thank you.
1168. **Ms McGahan:** Thank you for your presentations. I come from a rural area, and I can very much identify with what you are saying regarding the farming community. I come from a farming family, and we all share equipment, whether it is balers or whatever. We socialise at marts, maybe more so than going there to buy cattle, and that all helps to break down barriers and build relationships, but it is not done in a contrived way; it is done in a very natural way. It is those social settings that help to build confidence. When you build confidence, then comes trust. I see cycling clubs taking off in rural areas; they are very cross-community, but they do not get a penny of funding. That is something that needs to be looked at as well.
1169. **My daughter uses Translink buses. Up our way, we have two Translink buses coming from rural areas:** there is one for the Protestant kids and one for the Catholic kids. I think that is incredible; indirectly, those barriers between our young people are being sustained. Maybe we need to have those conversations with Translink to see how we get our kids to mix even at that level. Even if my daughter missed the bus for whatever reason, she would not get onto the other bus, which is completely daft, but that mentality is there and that is where we are. I have also seen that, when you scratch the surface, the sectarianism is there. I saw that recently in Moygashel, where someone was sitting at a polling booth —
1170. **Ms Jones:** *[Inaudible.]*
1171. **Ms McGahan:** — yes, and we had to get reinforcements in to remove them.
1172. **Ms Jones:** That school is not going to be used in the running of the election now.
1173. **Ms McGahan:** That is unfortunate for the people who live in that area, but we are where we are. In Fivemiletown, which is a predominantly Protestant/unionist area, there is a Catholic primary school at the edge of the town. Following from the stuff coming from Belfast, a Union Jack was put up outside the school, but through the local contacts on the ground, also involving the PSNI, there was a negotiation not to remove the flag but to move it away from the school,

which was to everybody's satisfaction. That was all down to the local contacts. I suppose, in terms of funding, this seems very much Belfast-based to me. I do not see a big focus on rural areas. Someone mentioned that the war did not really impact on rural areas, but that is not the case where I am from. It had an impact. Read the Anne Cadwallader book; it is all there. There are people who would not even make use of the VSS; they do not go to groups; they just sit there. They do not talk about it. It is buried deep, but it is running down from generation to generation. I know a family who had three members and an unborn baby murdered with a bomb that exploded in a house. They do not engage with anybody or anything, but they are there, very isolated.

1174. What recommendations would you like to see coming out of the inquiry?

1175. **Ms Jones:** I would like to see a couple of things, maybe hundreds of things. You talk about the likes of funding and resourcing, and I can give you an example of that as well. I was approached by a couple of rural women, two years ago, who wanted to start a women's project in County Armagh area. They felt that there was nothing really there for women, from a rural perspective. So I started that project or initiative, and it has been running for two years now. The amount of money that the project had assigned to it was only £250. That is £250 for a cross-community, intergenerational project covering Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. We are still going, two years later, because we use the skills of the local rural women. We try to get free venues and speakers, and we tap into other organisations. That is how we have managed; and we are still going. Thankfully, Craigavon Borough Council's good relations team has come on board now and has seen the merit of two years of hard work with those women across a wide rural district. That is what we are talking about with funding. If I were to place that group in a very urban setting or Belfast, I would probably have thousands of pounds thrown at me.

1176. **Ms McGahan:** Do you think that the policies coming from government discriminate against people living in rural areas?

1177. **Ms Jones:** From our perspective, though the strategy itself was rural proofed, the seven headline actions coming out of it are not seen as having been rural proofed. That is why, with the summer camps, we advocate that you make sure that it is a regional programme, not just urban-centric, and it is in hotspots. Our director is a part of the Housing Executive shared neighbourhood scheme, and she advocates very strongly that, when it comes to shared housing, it should also operate in a rural context. She came back from a meeting to say that Cookstown and Newry city were the west of the Bann, but nothing other than those locations, so she is advocating that as well. We would like to see all the headline actions rural proofed, to make sure that we get a slice of that pie and that the west of the Bann is not forgotten about. It is a large geographical area and not everything is concentrated in the east. Does that answer your question?

1178. **Ms Moffett:** Bronwyn, I was very struck by what you said about the family who do not leave their house or engage in wider society following the bomb. I feel that that is another area that might deserve more resourcing and should be more heavily included in the strategy: the legacy of the past and dealing with the past. Certainly, we have been involved recently with the WAVE Trauma Centre, working on the subject of intimidation. That is an area that we have been doing a lot of work in recently. Our recent conference was called the 'Hidden Menace', because that is exactly what we feel it is. It happens in rural areas. Charmain actually presented at the conference on the rural areas.

1179. Resourcing in this sector is such a big issue. I know that this might be close to your heart from your former positions. If the building of community relations is resourced in a proper manner, savings will be made everywhere else. If we can start to build relationships and address

division, you can start to reduce the policing budget. You can also start to reduce the health budget, because incidence of mental health problems will start to decline. A report came out just recently — last week or the week before — claiming that 40% of people presenting with mental health issues are doing so as a result of Troubles-related experiences. There are so many different areas in which savings could be made, if this area was well-resourced. There are people in this room who have probably heard me make that statement before, but we believe that, if this is properly resourced, it will make a difference across the board.

1180. **Mr Burns:** Bronwyn mentioned something about discrimination against rural areas, but there has been particular discrimination in interface areas like ours. It is a mixed area, and we have been abandoned. There have been no Housing Executive houses built for 35 years. In the catchment area, we used to have 246 houses, but lots of those were sold off, and then we wonder why our Catholic school and our Protestant school are short of numbers. Within the area, there has been an 18.7% increase. It is OK if you have money or access to a mortgage. Social need, in terms of housing, is discriminating against mixed areas like Armoy. The standard of housing repair in the village is abominable. It has been abandoned. There has been no voice in putting forward that case. I do not know what you think about it, but what message is it sending to the people who live there? What message is it sending to a mixed community? In a survey in 2009, 49% of the people thought that there was a need for more housing. The area plan says that there was no case presented for social housing. Land was de-zoned in the area, which is mixed 50:50 and has been mixed for 100 years. The area is peaceful, and it had CRISP investment. Since that, what has been happening?
1181. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Gerry, surely the Housing Executive should have conducted a latent stress test.
1182. **Mr Burns:** Yes, and let me explain this to you. They promote it as demand. Who wants to live in Armoy? It is put in as demand. Then they do an assessment of need. If anyone in Armoy was in need of housing, they would go to the Housing Executive and would be treated very fairly. However, what they do is promote it as demand, then they do an assessment on it, and there is no one in housing stress. The people are being treated terribly unfairly in terms of equality and not having access to a mortgage or money. They are being discriminated against. I have had this argument as recently as last week.
1183. **Mr Sandy Wilson:** I just want to mention one thing. The opportunity of taking forward and developing good relations lies within the new councils as we move into them on 1 April. The fact is that communities, for far too long, have been working on their own, to a certain extent, at building relationships. It must be the communities — when I talk about communities, I am talking about an area, rather than a group — that work with the democratically elected councillors. In most areas, there is quite a breadth and depth of political parties involved. It is very important, in developing good relations from now on, that leadership is shown by community leaders, working alongside political leaders of all perspectives.
1184. **Ms Smyth:** Although I do a lot of single identity work, and you touched on it earlier, it needs to be mapped and measured. It is acceptable, in certain cases, to start with some single identity work, especially with young people who have been very insular and inward-looking. In some of the areas I have worked in, there are multiple funders. There is a lot going on. Part of the reason we were not part of the consultation is that we are not funded through CRC and are maybe not that connected. We have found ways to work effectively, but it is not mapped or measured. You should look at where resources are going and at some kind of outputs — for example, although we do single identity work, we tie all

- the work to achievable qualifications. I have worked for the past couple of years with bonfire builders and young guys in bands. We developed an OCN based on public event management, where we could go in and talk about risk assessments, customer service, disability awareness and managing crowd control, and we could bring in environmental health officers to go to the bonfires. We were instrumental in that. Much of the work that we did in that area was around health and well-being outcomes. We talked about everything to do with the well-being of the community, and we made really good strides. They were all run out on OCN level 1 and level 2, so there were concrete figures. We achieved 431 OCN qualifications in three months last year.
1185. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Just for the record, can you spell out for us what OCN is?
1186. **Ms Smyth:** The qualifications are Open College Network-accredited. I brought the workbook along to show the Committee. We have a level-1 qualification developed for low-literacy communities. We tie it to child protection training, basic first aid and basic food hygiene. When we work with young people and talk about building resilience, we go out there and base it all on their own culture. We have cultural education, history of bonfires and history of parading. What I am saying is that that is where you build your resilience but that it is also mappable. If you give funding in and you can see something concrete coming along, there is a big lead-in point to this, but it is still able to be mapped.
1187. That also leads on when you are talking about moving to cross-community work. At some point, if it all seems to be about single identity, there is a conversation to be had there about maybe my project is done, maybe mine is stale and maybe someone else can come in. There has to be an impetus around moving on. My point is looking at this as being about how to measure and how to map and also seeing what other resources are going into communities.
- There are certain communities that get an awful lot of resource, and I think about what the gentleman at the other end said about Armoy, which seems to be getting very little. There has to be a balance. If you are putting thousands and thousands of pounds in and nothing seems to be happening there, you need to look at it. I say that as someone who delivers single identity work.
1188. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It is an absolutely fair point.
1189. **Mr D McIlveen:** Thank you for all of your inputs today. Whilst I congratulate all of you on the work that you do, I want to turn my attention particularly towards Gerry. Armoy, potentially, should be more divided than it actually is if we look at other villages in this area. I am very curious, Gerry, to tease out what you identify as that kind of crossroads moment where a conscious decision was made — it must have been taken at some stage — to say that Armoy will not be another Rasharkin or another Bellaghy or another Dunloy. When was it decided that, as two separate communities, rather than tearing ourselves asunder over sectarian division, we will try to make a go of this, try to accommodate each other and try to build a village and an area that we can be absolutely proud of?
1190. As an elected representative in this area, I dread July because, although 90% of north Antrim is a peaceful, wonderful place in July, 10%, for various reasons, implodes on itself. It is high-pressure and high-stress, and you are just waiting for the worst to happen. At what stage did the people in Armoy, particularly in the nationalist community, say that they have a choice to make here? One choice was to go in the same direction as perhaps some of the neighbouring villages have gone and decide to protest, at certain times of the year, against certain things that they do not necessarily agree with. For the greater good, they decided to try to find an accommodation there. That is what, I think, sets Armoy apart not only from other villages in this area. I think that we could look at every county in the whole

- of Northern Ireland and find that, in many ways, Armoy is a trailblazer in that regard. It had the potential for things to explode quite unpleasantly. What happened? How did you do it?
1191. **Mr Burns:** I will explain why I got involved. I am a Catholic and have been involved in the GAA all my life. I still am. Last year, I was chairman of the juvenile club. I have always mentored eight- to 16-year-olds, where we want to get them stuck in. In 1994, I was asked to go along by the Church of Ireland minister. Because he had asked me, I felt some sort of obligation to go along.
1192. In 1995, we had a community meeting chaired by Niall Fitzduff, the then director of the Rural Community Network, in a Protestant school. We did not know how to handle it because there was a Sinn Féin councillor and a DUP councillor who might have come, and, at that time, they were walking in and out of councils. We thought, if they sit at the same table, this will all be a disaster. Both those people came in, one a loyalist and the other a republican, and, before they left, they said to my wife, who is from Donegal and was the secretary, “You should buy the derelict building in Armoy”. That was in 1995, and it is an inspiration to me today. It is also an inspiration when I see people sitting around the table here and asking sensible questions.
1193. It worked because we got in what was needed; for example, the playgroup. I talked to the playgroup leader yesterday, and she said, “We came in here to space. In the school, we had to put everything away every day. We were annoying people.” That worked. Sure Start came in, and I hope that T:BUC can retain the Sure Start presence in the office in Armoy. We battled for years for a community pharmacy, and it was delivered. We ran summer schemes and all that sort of thing.
1194. How did we get buy-in from the nationalist community? I did not take them with me. I think that, at times, they thought that I had abandoned them. That is why we need government to support this sort of thing. However, they then started to see the benefit of the playgroup and the benefit of Sure Start. Sure Start has helped mothers who were rearing children on their own. The men around Armoy were not interested. There are things that I had to do that I would not like to be recorded in Hansard. They were very tough and very hard, and risks were taken where you could never have said, “These are the outcomes”. We did not know whether that community building would be supported or destroyed and by whom, but it has been a resounding success.
1195. The Mayor of Ballymoney, Bill Kennedy, runs a business and is most supportive. People now look forward to the parades on the Twelfth in Armoy, because they bring business and life and are of no threat. Sure Start, the playgroup, the community pharmacy and all those things are of no threat. I am still who I am, and they are who they are. We are more confident. There has been a transformation, particularly in recent times. I have read part of the inquiry report, and Roisin McGlone said that the last stage was empathy. We now get a crossover at funerals. There is a project with Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity. We are doing that sort of thing.
1196. It is cross-community. It is normal. I do not think that we have ever really done community relations. We have done things that are needed. We need houses. We need a footpath. I have written to the Minister about a footpath. The Armoy women attending Sure Start had to go to Ballycastle to walk because the roads and footpaths were not safe and there were so few footpaths. There is so little shared space.
1197. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is very passionate, Gerry. If we crack empathy, we have won.
1198. **Mr Attwood:** Thank you very much for everything that you have said. As I said at one of the previous sessions, in terms of the overall shape and character of our society, we are very clearly and powerfully in a much better place than

we were in the days of conflict. You have given a lot of powerful evidence to that effect, be it in Armoy, Corrymeela or across all your groups, including what you just said about the management of bonfires. It has had a very powerful impact on lives in the communities that you represent, and that can be replicated across the North. I hope that this is wrong, but it is my view that we are now into a very prolonged period where what we are doing is managing our conflict in a non-violent way —

1199. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Alex, I am very sorry to interrupt, but Stephen has to go. If everybody is content, I am now going to formally close the meeting — with only three people we are not quorate — but continue in an informal setting. I adjourn the meeting until next Wednesday at 2.00 pm in Room 30 at Parliament Buildings.

18 March 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Alex Attwood
 Ms Megan Fearon
 Mrs Brenda Hale
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Mr David McIlveen
 Mr Stephen Moutray
 Mr Jimmy Spratt

Witnesses:

Mr Peter Mullin	<i>Landscape Institute</i>
Dr Stephen McCabe	<i>Northern Ireland Environment Link</i>

1200. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** I am delighted that we are able to welcome back to the Committee Dr Stephen McCabe, policy and projects officer with Northern Ireland Environment Link, and Mr Pete Mullin, policy representative from the Landscape Institute. Thank you very much for making yourselves available today for our meeting. I invite you to make some short opening remarks before I open the meeting up for questions from the Committee.

1201. **Dr Stephen McCabe (Northern Ireland Environment Link):** Thank you, Deputy Chairperson, for your welcome and for inviting us back again to provide some evidence to your inquiry. I will go over the ground that I covered last time.

1202. The Northern Ireland Environment Link is the networking and forum body for non-statutory organisations concerned with the environment in Northern Ireland. Members represent a significant constituency in Northern Ireland and manage a large land area, delivering a variety of benefits to society. Members are involved in environmental issues of all types and at all levels from the local community to the global environment. Environment Link brings together a range of knowledge, experience and expertise

that can be used to develop policy and practice in environmental issues.

1203. With regard to the implementation of the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) strategy, the simple but key point that we want to get across to you today is that there is a significant existing body of research that demonstrates that the environment is a key factor in building community cohesion. While there is no individual person or single organisation or discipline that has all the answers to complex social issues and problems, part of the solution to overcoming divided communities will be found in addressing environmental improvement. Well-designed and well-maintained shared green space in urban areas has been shown to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, contributing to the establishment of more stable societies. As people feel more comfortable and perhaps have more pride in where they live, their confidence increases and they feel less threatened. Furthermore, better integration of land and transport planning naturally leads to better functioning places, and better functioning places means greater social inclusion.

1204. One term that we want to raise today is that of green infrastructure. Green infrastructure essentially means using green and blue space — vegetation and water — to address social, environmental and economic issues. We suggest that shared natural space, green infrastructure and recognition of the services that flow to society from the environment, which are really true public goods, should be embedded in all public policy. There are great opportunities to do that through the regional development strategy, through the strategic planning policy statement for Northern Ireland, and through the implementation of the very good ideas that exist in the urban stewardship and design guide, 'Living Places'.

1205. Research shows that shared space is more likely to be used if it is natural in character. Our natural and historic heritage has a potentially massive role to play in delivering T:BUC. Shared spaces are not just urban. We encourage communities to explore our shared spaces outside urban areas. We have beautiful shared spaces and shared built heritage in Northern Ireland, such as the Belfast hills, Mourne Mountains, our great beaches and the rich heritage of the Causeway coastline, to name a few examples. Those are all part of our shared heritage and should be promoted as shared space. The heritage perspective has a large role to play in overcoming division and giving a fresh perspective to the present.
1206. Finally from me, Environment Link has been involved over the past few years in the administration of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) challenge fund. It is just one example, and I gave out books the last time that we were here covering challenge fund projects. It is just one example of how environmental projects can deliver much more than just environmental outcomes. They can deliver community benefits, including increased cohesion, and address cross-community issues, as can be seen in the early stages of the Suffolk interface pocket plots project. Another example of environmental management delivering shared space for communities is Ulster Wildlife's Bog Meadows reserve in west Belfast, which sees in excess of 40,000 visitors a year from across communities. There is potential for much more multiple-benefit work like that in Northern Ireland. I will pass over to Pete now.
1207. **Mr Pete Mullin (Landscape Institute):**
Thank you. Good afternoon. I am a chartered landscape architect and policy consultant for the Landscape Institute in Northern Ireland. First, thanks to the Committee for having us back again. I will try to keep this quite short. Stephen has already covered most of the key points that I would like to cover today, so I will simply concur and support the points that he has made.
1208. In short, there is a growing body of evidence supporting what we all instinctively know, which is that quality environments have a direct and positive impact on people's quality of life. That does not simply mean that provision of well-finished accommodation, for example, will tick all the boxes. As you know, it is much more complex and multilayered. There is no single-fix solution to it.
1209. Over the past four or five years, the Landscape Institute centrally has been very active in developing and advocating some of the core principles of our profession. That has resulted in a number of position papers, and I have issued a couple of those to the Committee. They include climate change, green infrastructure, housing, water and, most recently, public health and well-being. A number of threads run through all those papers, which focus on the fact that good design of the environment delivers multifunctional, tangible and, sometimes, intangible benefit.
1210. You are probably familiar with the Barton and Grant settlement health map. I refer you to our position paper, 'Public Health and Landscape', when you get the opportunity to look at it. There is a simple colourful diagram, which places people at the centre of our settlement, and concentric rings that run out include the built environment and the natural environment. All those things influence people's well-being and health, and studies have shown that that is increasingly demonstrable.
1211. Accommodating change is at the heart of our interest as professions. It is what we do, and it is what we expect. We expect change to take place in our environment, and it is something that we work with. We sometimes call it "material"; it includes working with time as a fourth dimension. That sounds very mysterious, but it is simply about understanding the process of a constantly changing environment. That does not mean that change should just be allowed to have free rein and be left to the open forces. We need to be able to identify what is worth protecting and

managing and what could be better and to work with that. We need to manage expectations and to manage and guide change going forward. That is the foundation of our planning system. Planning is the result of allowing market forces to direct results.

1212. We believe that T:BUC offers great opportunities and has great potential to support the delivery of better place-making and stewardship, which will, in turn, lead to more sustainable communities. As you will be aware, our organisation held a lunchtime conference, last month, here in the Long Gallery, kindly supported by the Committee. It was very successful, and the feedback has been very positive to date. For those who could not make it, we recorded the speakers and will put their speeches up on our website. In short, we had three speakers. Sylvia Gordon, chief executive of Groundwork NI, described how her organisation is working at interface areas with communities to deliver shared space and improve community relations in north Belfast and other parts of Belfast. We had Dr Milena Komarova, an academic from the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at Queen's University, who described some useful and insightful research approaches. One of the key messages that struck me is that all parts of our cities and urban spaces are exposed to conflict and there is contested interest of all kinds in those spaces. In Northern Ireland, we also have the layer of an ethno-nationally divided city to deal with. We have this other elephant in the room, for want of a better description, that we must start to imbed into our policies for and approaches to the delivery of shared spaces. We also had, as a speaker, Neil Porter from Gustafson Porter. They have done a lot of work in Beirut, where they have had to deal with master planning a city that has been exposed to complex conflict and sectarian divide.
1213. The simple message that came out of that conference was captured very well by one journalist, who said that,

“Building relationships matter in urban planning”. I will finish with the observation that in this context it is simple to focus on the relationship between local communities. That is key, but there is a myriad of other relationships that need to be built as well. We need to improve the structures and resources around funding and procurement, departmental silos and any blockages that can result in dampening aspirations for our public spaces. We have made some ground on that. DOE produced the ‘Living Places — An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland’ document, which some of you will be familiar with. There are some very good key messages coming out of that document, which now needs to take on a new life and start to be built into policy, but, incidentally, it does not mention T:BUC or the issues that T:BUC is trying to address. It is important that that is somehow built into policy going forward.

1214. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** Thanks very much, gentlemen. You have put forward very persuasive points about the importance of the natural and built environment in shaping the united society that we want to see in Northern Ireland. You have prompted my first question with your reference to the fact that DOE's ‘Living Places’ document does not explicitly mention the Building a United Community strategy. How well are the extremely important points that you raise reflected in the current Building a United Community strategy?
1215. **Mr Mullin:** ‘Living Places’ does mention a number of key points. There is a section called “Bringing it Together”, which, I think, gets close to what the theme of the inquiry is about. It has a number of key points. One is looking at the challenges. I will flash a picture up from that section of one of the peace walls, which is clearly one of the challenges, but it does not go into any great detail on how we deal with those challenges.
1216. From a practical point of view — I have seen it in my professional practice — there are a great deal of positive

- approaches. When dealing with projects through DSD, communities or DOE, professionals and the communities are very keen to deliver and create quality shared space, but there are blockages to that. 'Living Places' is a very nice starting point. It is a good guidance document that sets the high level that we ought to be achieving, but it does not get into the technical side of things. That is where it falls down at this point in time. I think that there needs to be 'Living Places 2' with some kind of technical support to that. How do we deliver? If that is the aspiration, we now need to think about how we deliver that.
1217. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** Building a United Community is similar in a way, because it makes the statement that all public space should be shared space, but I am not too sure how much detail it goes into as to how that is going to be delivered. I certainly do not recall any great reference to the level of detail that you have managed to outline in a short presentation today. Hopefully those will be important points for us to work into the issues that we will document further to the inquiry.
1218. I will ask one other question before I bring in the members. You made some reference to projects such as the Connswater Community Greenway, for example, in my constituency of East Belfast. Are there learning points that could be drawn from that type of project for other projects in other areas of Northern Ireland?
1219. **Dr McCabe:** It is very difficult to take something as good as the Connswater Community Greenway and just drop it in other places, but there are definitely lessons that we can learn there on the multiple benefits of having a space like that, not only for shared communities but in terms of transport, active travel and flood alleviation. It ticks so many boxes across different policy areas. Also, the way that it is funded, with input from lots of different Departments and bodies, is a good example for us going forward.
1220. **Mr Mullin:** It is a good example. Probably the criticism, if there is a criticism, is that it responds to a natural system. It responds to the Connswater, which is where it comes from. It comes from the Castlereagh hills down to the foreshore. That is happenstance. That is where it is, so it does not pass through an interface area, for example. It is very much an east Belfast-based project. I think that there is some leverage towards the Short Strand, but not really anything physically connected.
1221. It would be interesting, as a learning exercise, to try to apply the same principles of a green corridor, or what we call a piece of green infrastructure, through a series of more difficult and challenging interface areas. Alexandra Park is one that was discussed during our conference last month. It is also attached to a small watercourse, which is called the Mile Water and runs from the Belfast hills right down through several difficult interfaces to the foreshore. There is much disconnect physically and psychologically, so it would be interesting if some kind of project could be applied on that basis to see what the real results might be.
1222. **Mr D McIlveen:** Thanks very much. I suppose that my question is following on the same theme. The Department and the First Minister and deputy First Minister in particular have been very enthusiastic about the concept of urban villages. A few urban villages have already been announced and tied in with the strategy, yet I noticed that there was no specific mention of that concept in the submissions that we have received from you. I am curious to know whether that was just an oversight or whether you have a particular opinion on urban villages. It would be interesting for us to hear what that might be.
1223. **Mr Mullin:** To be honest, at the time of writing our submission, I was not tuned in to the urban village initiative. Having said that, I am still not entirely tuned in to the urban village initiative. I know that there is a high-level brief attached to that, but I am not personally familiar with the detail of what encapsulates an

- urban village. Is it bound by lines? Is it focused on a single point that radiates out? What defines an urban village? I have been making enquires to DSD about urban villages, actually in just the last couple of days. I would be very keen to understand where the gaps may be in what the initiative is trying to achieve. In principle, yes, urban villages have the potential to do what we want them to do, which is to reposition areas, but we would then need to see that that is not inward looking. It needs to be an outward-looking approach.
1224. **Mr D McIlveen:** Thank you very much for that. I am sure that the Department will not be found wanting in trying to clarify that for you.
1225. Last week, we had a regional meeting in my constituency, North Antrim. We had a fairly long, drawn-out conversation around that kind of point about whether putting people together crosses the line of social engineering. I wonder whether, from your point of view, looking at it from the environmental side, you see a sort of no-go line, which, if it were crossed over, would actually almost be counterproductive. Last week, I used the example of Unity Flats in Belfast, which is probably one of the biggest contradictions in terms that you will ever find. It was obviously built with the best of intentions, but it did not achieve what it was supposed to achieve. Where there are examples of bad practice in this regard, where, from your point of view, is the line not to cross?
1226. **Mr Mullin:** A lot of good study has been done that shows that involving grass-roots communities and, again as you will be aware, children's groups and education is always a very positive way to make a change. I think that this comes back to the idea of what I mentioned earlier about time. There is no quick-fix solution to any of this. It will have to be something that we will grind out over a long period. Unless you put the seed in place and bring, for example, willing communities together, there will always continue to be blockages. I think that it would probably be to all our benefit if we were to identify ways in which to bring those communities together. We can lead the horse to water, but we cannot make it drink. We have to identify opportunities where we can get cross-community involvement, whether that be through a lot of good work that is done by Belfast Healthy Cities to create allotments and places for children to get involved in the environment, and working in that nature.
1227. **Dr McCabe:** I agree with Pete that the physical environment and creating good spaces and places is sort of where we are coming from. I appreciate that there are other layers of complexity on top of that — absolutely. I would also endorse what Pete said about environmental education. That is a key area of potential for crossing communities and getting schoolkids doing things together in the environment.
1228. **Mr Mullin:** There is an initiative in the rest of the UK called Learning through Landscapes. It is in England, Scotland and Wales. We do not have it here. It is very positive. It starts in schools. They do a lot of outdoor work with kids and learning from their environment. We do have some good work going on, but maybe we need to be more structured and organised about that.
1229. **Dr McCabe:** I will just add one more thing to that. We have now reached 100% participation in the eco-schools programme in Northern Ireland. There is a great existing network there that we can tap into on these issues.
1230. **Mr D McIlveen:** Finally, just to you, Stephen — I think that this will be a fairly short answer — you mentioned the issues of shared open space. I am particularly blessed to represent North Antrim, where we obviously have a lot of open space, which is certainly very much viewed upon as being open to everybody. There are no signs or emblems; nothing. You go there and it is just purely open. The natural beauty is there. However, in recent months, some of the open space around Belfast — at one site in particular, which I would say is probably known to you — has been used for the promotion of messages, which, at times,

- have been quite sectarian in nature. Presumably, you would discourage that type of abuse of the landscape.
1231. **Dr McCabe:** One of the great things about the environment is that it is for everyone equally. That is my position on it.
1232. **Mr Mullin:** I think that that applies to all space, whether it be a large open space or even a small urban space. There needs to be a movement towards, if you like, less branding of space and a repositioning of those areas.
1233. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** I have a couple of other members to bring in. Where do murals fit in to the consideration of these issues?
1234. **Mr Mullin:** That is clearly at the heart of a lot of the problems. A thorny debate on that is currently ongoing. Generally, as designers, when we are brought in — I was talking to Stephen about this outside — we get very good at negotiating with people and talking about repositioning a new space. Where an opportunity arises for a piece of streetscape or urban design, you very much design with humans in mind, as opposed to any particular political attitude. You design it to create a nice space and a nice environment. I would be very surprised if there were any professional designers who did not take that approach to it. The difficulty is what happens afterwards. I have personal experience of working on a number of schemes where we did the handover and, the next thing, flags went up when the communities moved in. That is unhelpful because it very much sets out the use for that. If you like, the division becomes very prevalent there. There has to be a sea change in how we steward things going forward. We were in the habit of investing money in the creation of a space and then maybe putting aside a small budget for maintenance of it, but ownership finishes at that point. I think that that is where the idea of stewardship, which is in the title of the document, ‘Living Places — An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland’, comes in; that it has to be ongoing and repeated. You cannot just walk away from it and leave it.
1235. **Mrs Hale:** Thank you for your presentation. You mentioned that the Landscape Institute is marking its fiftieth year as a profession, so congratulations. In that time, there has been a demise in your public sector membership. Why do you think that is? Have you made any representations to the shadow councils to inform them of your work? I speak specifically about Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. I would like to put on record at this time the impressive renovation of Castle Gardens in Lisburn. As Stephen said earlier, it does indeed raise the historical and heritage environment of the city. I think that everybody has bought into that again. With regard to stewardship, there have not been any flags: the whole city has taken ownership of the gardens. The new councils, such as Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, are coming in next month. Have you made representations to them about the work that you do?
1236. **Mr Mullin:** Professionally, as the Landscape Institute, we have very much liked to hide under a bushel. We have not been very good at promoting the work that we do. As you say, it is 50 years this year. That actually coincides with the fiftieth-year celebration of Craigavon as a new town, when the first professionals came to Northern Ireland to help to deliver that project and the institute was set up. It was an all-island institute, and we were the only landscape architects in the whole of Ireland. We tend not to promote our work in the way that we maybe ought to, and, in the last couple of years, we have been trying to change that. Since I was taken on for the secretariat of the institute in the last year, part of the work that I have been doing involves being its policy consultant. That is now a small paying role that is about putting a wee bit more concerted effort into the promotion and advocacy of what we do. We have a plan to approach the 11 new councils to try to build up our presence within them. It is about

- capacity building. You are quite right. I did a statistic recently, and I found that, in Scotland, something like 50% of the local authorities have a landscape architect and 90% have access to one to help to inform brief and with development plans and policy.
1237. In Northern Ireland, it is 7% currently. That will probably change when we turn to 11 councils, as opposed to 26, but, at the moment, Belfast is the only local authority that has a landscape architect working in it. Actually, I think that Derry has one as well, but the rest of the country has not felt the need for landscape professionals. I think that the simple reason is that there is a perception that only Belfast and Derry have parks, therefore, it is only they that need landscape professionals. The reality of modern life and the modern environment is that there is pressure from wind turbines, infrastructure and economic regeneration. All councils will feel the effect of that. So, you need to have people who are professionally equipped to help you inform policy going forward. We are doing work on it, but we could do better.
1238. **Mrs Hale:** Thank you. I hope to get some input on the transformation of the Lagan canal, which runs through Lisburn. I look forward to seeing your fingerprints over that work.
1239. **Dr McCabe:** Absolutely. On behalf of the wider sector, we have been engaging, or will be engaging, with councillors on their new planning powers. We are producing a planning handbook, if you like, with Sustainable Northern Ireland, which tries to raise awareness of environmental and heritage assets in each council area. We will be distributing that through the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).
1240. **Mr Maskey:** If I get these questions right, I am going to swap seats with you. These are very difficult issues, and, for the Committee's inquiry, we are trying to work out who can help and what additional matters people can bring to the table. That is your last question. Do you want to discuss with us how your profession and the Landscape Institute can help to bring communities together? You have addressed a number of the issues, and Brenda mentioned the capacity of local government and the deficit, as you see it, of your profession being involved in the planning stages. I understand structurally how we can increase the number of your members in the various institutions, if it is thought necessary. I understand clearly the need to have a landscape strategy that would underpin strategic planning and design issues, and I also understand the need to get something into the curriculum and into education. I can picture all that and say, "Well, there is a gap. Let us see whether we can fill it". However, when you then talk about interfaces, the Bog Meadows, Custom House Square or a range of the other initiatives that have been identified, all of which are very good and very successful in their own way, how do we add value to that?
1241. In most interface areas that you will know — you addressed some of them — it would not matter whether you were putting palm trees in, because people need the interface under the current circumstances that they feel they have to live within. The last thing that a lot of those communities want is to take that wall down. That is a sad reflection of the life that we live. If you went into a lot of people's houses and looked out at a wall, you would find that, unfortunately, they would rather have that, because they feel safer in their home. That is a shocking indictment on all of us. In the context of your presentation, we are trying to work out how we bring what you have to offer, which is your higher vision on the use of space. How do you introduce that into a conversation with people who are fearful of where they live and do not want to have anything done to the wall? Do you know what I mean? You cannot ignore the other. You have already identified a lot of initiatives through which parks have been built and initiatives have been taken. That is all very good, but how do we reach the place where we really need to make a difference to people's quality of life by bringing them together? As I said, it

would not matter what you do with some of those walls, people want them there. We are trying to set ourselves a target for removing them, but when you talk to the people who live there, you find that they would rather have them than what they feel would be the insecurity of having them taken away.

1242. What other conversations might you have those communities? You addressed the point that you have been involved in initiatives and that you went and negotiated with the community and got the murals down, but then, when you did that bit of work, you found that they went back up again. That is really only managing a situation. I am not saying that you are wrong to do that, because, ultimately, we all do it at times. I am just trying to work out what else your profession can bring other than good, high-quality landscape design and a high-level vision, which are all very important. How do we marry that with the need to get people to feel more comfortable with where they live, if you know what I mean? It is a tough question; I know that. I do not expect you to have you the answer, but I would expect you to take it away and think about it.

1243. **Mr Mullin:** There clearly is no easy solution to it. We have members who are involved at a number of levels, and the conference that we had last month was quite interesting. It had, if you like, three tiers. I was involved in setting the thing up and deliberately chose three speakers. There was an academic to give an overview of cities in conflict, and we also had a master planner, who dealt with looking for connectivity and solutions through planning and urban design on a bigger scale. Sylvia from Groundwork was also there to deal with the on-the-ground aspects. It is one of those situations where it is not one issue or another; all those things have to come together. Unfortunately, this issue will be a case of small gains. I do not think that we are going to be able to make a wall disappear overnight; it is going to take time to look for ways to create breaks and apertures — almost a road through the peace wall, as opposed

to removing it. We may have to look at ways that we can start to take it down a bit, narrow it a bit or shorten it so that we can gradually get people confident enough to think that it is OK. There will be a process, I think. It is not going to be a quick win; it will be a slow process. That is just my own thought.

1244. When the walls eventually come down, we will have to think about what is beyond them and what it is that we are revealing. There are examples in the city of areas that have had antisocial sectarian behaviour, if you want to call it that, or antisocial behaviour — both are very similar when you see them expressed — where communities have now been rebuilt. I am thinking, for example, of the back of Clonard — I mentioned this before — where there is new social housing that is very much on the back of the interface wall. With the benefit of Google Earth nowadays, you can jump from one side of the street to the other, and when you look at it, you realise that it is just more housing. It is about trying to educate people and children about what is over the wall. They have the current perception that there is something big and scary beyond that large wall that they should not have contact with. The reality is that it is just another street.

1245. So, I think that there is a whole slow process of trying to bring people backwards and forwards from that point.

1246. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** One of the young people at a recent event of ours asked whether walls could be see-through, which I never heard anybody ask before. I am not sure that it is as immediately dismissible as you might think. As the professional landscape architecture experts, you could have a think about that.

1247. **Mr Mullin:** Increase the sales of Perspex.

1248. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** There could be a gradual revelation that the other side has similarities, rather than differences.

1249. **Mr Mullin:** I will mention one small project that we are working on at the moment. I have secured a piece of the Berlin Wall for Northern Ireland, after contacting the senate in Berlin about it. During the process of pulling this response together and the conference, Berlin was celebrating 25 years since the wall came down. There was a map — I think it was in ‘The Guardian’ — showing pieces of the wall everywhere from Christchurch in New Zealand through to Canada. There was none in Ireland, so I thought, “Hold on a minute; there is an opportunity here to take something”. Obviously, the reasoning behind the walls is politically very different, but the idea of division is the same. What can we possibly do with that? There might be a number of little spin-out projects that we can use that piece of wall to identify and that can shine a light on the problem. All those little things can help.
1250. **Mr Attwood:** First, I agree with your point that there has to be opportunities for better understanding that unity when we appreciate the scale of our built, natural, archaeological and Christian heritage, which is in the common ownership of all our people. There must be some learning about and narrative on all that to open our minds beyond the more orthodox approach. I think that you indicated that earlier. Part of T:BUC should be not just about managing visible expressions of division but must have a narrative about our shared heritage and the wonder of it, celebrating it and drawing conclusions from it. T: BUC, which we think is quite a moderate start anyway, lacks that sense of grounding. Its idea of a united community already unites us, but we do not seem to acknowledge it in the way that we should.
1251. Alex Maskey is right to ask how your institute and experience can inform building a united community at the hard end. It is only when you are on the ground working with communities that people begin to see other ways that a wall might look. The point is still valid, because at the far end of all that, unless
- there is confidence on both sides, it does not go anywhere. That is rightly so, because when people have their worst fears, you cannot just say that it will be all right on the night. That is just not credible. My first question, therefore, is whether you are you involved in any of that work on the walls with OFMDFM to look at the options and at how they can be made to look or feel different? They probably have to feel different before they look different, or before they are different and can all be taken down.
1252. **Mr Mullin:** I am not involved in those projects. I know that some of our members are involved through DSD streetscape improvements in various parts of north and east Belfast. We have private practitioners involved in lots of these procured initiatives and master plan initiatives. As Brenda mentioned, we could benefit from more members being involved in brief setting within the city council. They can then deliver some of those strategies through the new development plans and local policies that will come forward. Yes, we have people involved once it has been recognised that a project is needed. It would be more helpful, however, if we had people involved in helping to set up those projects and to identify the potential.
1253. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** Thank you very much indeed, gentlemen. I have found this very useful, and we will factor all this into our issues paper. I might also propose to the Committee that we write to the Department of the Environment to ask how the urban design guide, ‘Living Places’, will link with Together: Building a United Community and for some more information on how organisations would engage with the design process for urban villages. Are there any other last issues of that nature that you would like to raise?
1254. **Dr McCabe:** I will chime in a little on the heritage aspect. I know that NIEA will very shortly release its historic environment strategy. I think that there is a lot of scope there for T:BUC and that those strategies should speak to one another.

1255. **Mr Maskey:** Is there any other information? You referred to other case studies and so on that you might have, but I do not see them in this pack. Can you maybe make it available to us at some point?
1256. **Mr Mullin:** There was a series of papers, and we can recirculate them to anybody who did not receive them the last time. We need to find a mechanism to almost mark the success of T:BUC going forward. There are a number of sustainability markers out there. I am trying to say this without creating another tier of bureaucracy, because the last thing that anybody needs is another box to tick. There are a number of mechanisms such as the Building Research establishment environment Assessment Method (BReeAM), which is to do with creating sustainable design. BReeAM is applied to a lot of public-sector projects, including schools, hospitals and social housing. CeeQUAL is another one. It is more connected to civil work, streetscape work and town centre work. I wonder whether there is a mechanism whereby, as part of the tender procurement process, we have to deliver the results for economic benefit. If you are designing a town centre improvement scheme, you have to involve economists to determine what the net benefit is for every pound spent; for example, a £3 return for the investment of each pound. I wonder whether there is something in that mechanism that marks our success in bringing communities together. They could be things that we have done in a master plan process that are maybe more outward looking, looking at connections and at opportunities to avoid division physically. A good designer will do that as part of their process; they just need to set it out. That will give us a tangible way to mark the success of that programme.
1257. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Lyttle):** Thanks very much indeed, gentlemen. We have a lot to go on there. Thank you for your contribution today. We hope to produce a report of the inquiry towards the end of this session, so we will be able to re-engage with you then.

13 May 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Mike Nesbitt (Chairperson)
 Mr Chris Lyttle (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Megan Fearon
 Mr Alex Maskey
 Mr David McIlveen

Witnesses:

Miss Donna Blaney *Office of the First
 Minister and deputy*
 Mrs Linsey Farrell *Minister and deputy*
 Mr Michael McGinley *First Minister*
 Mr Peter Robinson

1258. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I

welcome Peter Robinson, Michael McGinley, Donna Blaney and Linsey Farrell.

1259. **Mrs Linsey Farrell (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):**

Thank you, Chair. I will make a few brief opening remarks, if that is OK.

1260. Chair, thank you for your introduction and for the invitation to appear here today to update the Committee on the progress of the implementation of Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) and respond to the common themes that emerged from the inquiry into the strategy's implementation.

1261. Together: Building a United Community was published on 23 May 2013, following the announcement of seven strategic headline actions by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 9 May. We had the opportunity to brief the Committee in February and October 2014 on the implementation of the strategy, and we welcome this further opportunity to comment on the responses received to the inquiry.

1262. As you are aware, the range of commitments and actions contained in the T:BUC strategy extends well beyond the seven headline actions. In total, there are in the region of 42 actions and commitments, which, compositely,

will contribute to achieving our vision of a shared, united and reconciled community. I acknowledge the view raised in inquiry responses that the headline actions, in and of themselves, will not address all the issues that divide our community. However, it is a long-term strategy, and it is one that will evolve over time.

1263. I would like to commence by focusing on the responses received to the inquiry. While it is impossible to cover every issue raised, I will focus on a number of the key issues that have been highlighted throughout. We welcome the wide range of interest from organisations that have responded to the inquiry. I believe that this is testimony to the real passion across our community for building a united, shared and reconciled society. From an analysis of the responses received, there are a number of common themes that have been identified, and I will cover each in turn.

1264. In respect of the level of engagement or involvement with the sector, there was a lengthy public consultation on the Executive's draft cohesion, sharing and integration (CSI) strategy and further stakeholder engagement as part of the detailed design of the many actions being delivered. The establishment of the thematic subgroups has also provided vital opportunities for engagement with the sector, and we look forward to developing that engagement as the subgroups take their work forward.

1265. In respect of communications, we are working to develop a stakeholder newsletter to show the continuing progress in the implementation of the strategy and other good relations activities. We are also working closely with the Community Relations Council (CRC) to enhance our opportunities to engage with stakeholders in a more structured way. Over the coming months, we hope to hold a number of events

- that will also provide a platform to communicate the work that has been taken forward under the strategy and highlight other successes that have been achieved as a result of good work across our community.
1266. A number of the comments received focused on funding issues, and we acknowledge that it has not always been possible to provide groups with early notification of funding. For 2015-16, steps have been taken to ensure that funding is released earlier in the new financial year. This has been made possible by the Executive's commitment to allocate £10 million of funding towards the delivery of the strategy. This will facilitate the allocation of funding earlier in the year and funding programmes commencing promptly. Letters of offer were issued to six of the councils in April, and we plan to be in a position to agree the remaining five before the end of May. Officials are working with those five councils to ensure that their planned programmes of work meet the Department's requirements.
1267. Assessment of applications to the north Belfast programme was also completed in April, and letters of offer were issued to the 12 contract holders in the week commencing 4 May, dependent on their ability to revise their applications as appropriate to ensure they are sufficiently outcome-focused and that all programmes align with the aims of the T:BUC strategy.
1268. In total, we received 175 applications to the central good relations fund, which closed on 20 April. The assessment panel met initially on Monday 11 May, and officials are in the process of contacting groups that have been successful. The summer camp multi-agency panel will meet to review the applications to deliver 100 summer schools and camps during 2015 on 20 May, and we are on target to announce the successful projects in the week commencing 1 June.
1269. Several issues have also been raised through the inquiry regarding the sharing of best practice. We are fully aware of the importance of sharing best practice, and it is something that we are continually seeking to do. The good relations officer conference is a good example of sharing that provides a space for sharing experiences of successful project delivery. We are also actively discussing with our officers other ways of sharing best practice through a new shared learning initiative within the structures of the new councils.
1270. The north Belfast strategic good relations programme bi-monthly forum has progressed to being a monthly forum due to demand from the groups and progression of the forum remit in response to learning and feedback from 2014-15 programme. That forum is a key driver in facilitating the use of techniques, such as outcomes-based accountability and mapping, which can be built on in-year and incrementally through each iteration of the strategic good relations programme in north Belfast. That learning is vital to informing the work of other areas, as ideas from those areas are used to add value to the work of the north Belfast programme.
1271. Through other fora led by the Department, such as the good relations programme board, learning and best practice is shared across all Departments. These fora facilitate the sharing of learning and knowledge to help inform plans, projects and programmes within other Departments. The Department also engages closely with the Community Relations Council and other stakeholders to share information. That engagement enables the Department to give feedback directly to practitioners and other stakeholders and facilitates open and frank discussion on a range of issues.
1272. With enhanced community planning powers, the new councils have the potential to have greater involvement in many areas, such as community relations. The Department has been working with councils to facilitate that and share alignment between the good relations action plans and the key priorities within Together: Building a

- United Community. Further engagement with councils is planned.
1273. A further focus of the responses to the inquiry was on outcomes, and I can report that the performance monitoring framework for all programmes and projects related to T:BUC will utilise an outcomes-based approach. This approach has involved the developmental of departmental guidance on outcomes-based methodology to monitor and evaluate actions and activities flowing from projects.
1274. Respondees have expressed concerns about an absence of definitions in the strategy. However, it is our view that actions are outlined in the strategy to address these issues. For example, whilst there is a definition of sectarianism in the strategy, a commitment is given to reach an appropriate consensus on a definition for inclusion in the legislation for the equality and good relations commission. Good relations are currently defined by reference to the groups named in section 75(2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There is no additional definition in the strategy; however, a commitment is given to reviewing and revising the good relations indicators that will measure the desired impacts of activities for each of the four priority areas in the strategy.
1275. The revised indicators have now been agreed by Ministers following extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. In the context of the implementation of the strategy, the revised indicators and associated outcomes will be used to monitor progress at a population level and will provide the strategic performance measurement framework to underpin the measurement of impacts across the strategy's headline actions, associated programmes and funding streams, including the district council good relations actions.
1276. Equality screening has also been raised as an issue in the inquiry. Through the good relations programme board, assurances have been sought from all Departments that they are fulfilling their statutory obligations as they deliver their headline actions on a regular basis. Officials in OFMDFM have carried out an equality impact screening of the T:BUC summer camps pilot programme for 2015-16. At this stage, no negative impacts have been identified, and as such the policy will be screened out. However, given that this is a pilot programme, it was decided that this decision will be kept under review in the event that any additional impact should be identified as the programme rolls out.
1277. I would now like to provide a brief update on the headline actions contained in the strategy, if time allows.
1278. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You have certainly gone over five minutes. My first question is this: why was the paper submitted at 9.08 am today?
1279. **Mrs Farrell:** The papers were under consideration by the Department.
1280. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** When were they written?
1281. **Mrs Farrell:** The date on which they were written or submitted to the private office is immaterial to the date on which they issue. Both are parts of the wider process in the Department to allow engagement and ongoing discussion between Ministers and officials.
1282. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I read the following line about summer camps: *"the closing date for applications to be submitted to the Education Authority is 8 May 2015."*
1283. That use of tense tells me that it was written well before 8 May. Linsey, you know that papers are supplied to the implementation group of the Stormont House Agreement every Monday, days in advance, regularly and promptly and without any issues. Yet this Committee is entirely disrespected on a weekly basis by the same people.
1284. **Mrs Farrell:** I cannot comment on that, other than to say that they were under consideration by the Department.

1285. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Together: Building a United Community is a strategy that celebrates its second birthday this month. How much have you spent?
1286. **Mrs Farrell:** On good relations in general or on T:BUC headline actions?
1287. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** How much have you spent on T:BUC over the last 24 months?
1288. **Mrs Farrell:** Over the 24 months, particularly during 2014-15, we delivered in the region of £9 million to support good relations activity across a number of programmes. I believe that those are cited in the briefing document the Committee received about the range of funding programmes.
1289. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** How much of that would not have been spent were it not for T:BUC?
1290. **Mrs Farrell:** The T:BUC allocation in this year's budget was only agreed in the context of the Stormont House Agreement and the Budget settlement, and of the £10 million allocation, just over £8 million has been allocated across the headline actions to a number of Departments.
1291. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Are you saying that the £9 million that you have just said has been spent would have been spent anyway, with or without T:BUC?
1292. **Mrs Farrell:** Not necessarily. I believe that there was a real commitment given in Together: Building a United Community by the Executive to ensure that resources were available, particularly at a time when they were depleting in other areas. Together: Building a United Community has continued to be a priority and one that has attracted funding. It has not suffered in the same way as other areas. There is real priority given to it, and those funding schemes are testimony to that.
1293. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** How much of the £9 million would have been spent anyway, and how much is attributable directly to T:BUC being in existence?
1294. **Mrs Farrell:** Donna may know the detail of spend before that, but it certainly would not have been to that level.
1295. **Miss Donna Blaney (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** No, it would not. I do not have the exact figures for the difference between what would have been spent and what was spent, but, through in-year bids for T:BUC, we have achieved additional funding for the district councils good relations programme, the central good relations programme, the north Belfast strategic good relations programme and the summer interventions programme.
1296. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** In round terms, what would that add up to?
1297. **Miss Blaney:** It is going towards at least £3 million. That is just off the top of my head.
1298. **Mrs Farrell:** We can certainly check the exact figures and write back to the Committee, if that would be useful.
1299. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Two years: £3 million.
1300. **Mrs Farrell:** And now £10 million; in fact, £13 million.
1301. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** This is a programme that was launched with the then junior Minister saying that it was a half-a-billion-pound initiative. Three million pounds has been spent in two years. Wow.
1302. **Mrs Farrell:** I think that the figure of half a billion pounds took in the expenditure across a range of funding programmes, including what is put in by the Executive. Peace III was a significant player in promoting good relations and reconciliation. A proportion of that is provided by the Northern Ireland Administration, and OFMDFM is the accountable Department for that. If you take in the expenditure under Peace III and that from other external funders, such as the International Fund for Ireland and The Atlantic Philanthropies, with which we jointly funded the

- contested spaces programme, it represents a significant expenditure on good relations over the period. Since the beginning of this financial year, we now have £10 million that is specifically ring-fenced to support the delivery and implementation of T:BUC across all Departments.
1303. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** In what way is Northern Ireland better off because of T:BUC?
1304. **Mrs Farrell:** It is better off because we now have a strategic framework for good relations. Previously, we were working with a direct rule document, 'A Shared Future'; the Executive now have their own good relationships strategy and framework for action.
1305. Although issues have been raised around implementation, some of which are included in the inquiry, the community has embraced the fact that there is now a framework for action with which to align their work. What we heard previously was that there was a bit of a vacuum and that they had nothing to pin their work to. T:BUC sets out a clear vision of the type of society that we all want to live in. It sets out four key strategic priorities that we want to focus on over the lifetime of the strategy, a number of quite challenging headline actions and somewhere in the region of 42 other actions and commitments that are to be taken forward by Departments. There is no doubt that it is a longer term strategy.
1306. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** You say that there are challenging headline actions, and you have included, for example, summer camps. Those have been happening for decades. What is challenging about running a summer camp?
1307. **Mrs Farrell:** Summer interventions have been happening for decades. Summer schools and camps represent a new approach to how we engage with young people.
1308. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** That is not what we heard when we took evidence.
1309. **Mrs Farrell:** From our view in the Department — and Donna will want to come in on the detail — the detailed design has been with stakeholders, and their involvement in putting together the design has shown the importance of it not just being about working with children and young people for three to four days in the summer to divert them from periods of tension. It is about engagement before and after and Donna can detail that.
1310. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** I am very happy for Donna to come in, but perhaps you would include something else, Donna. When we had our stakeholder event, I was sitting beside a woman who works in youth services, and her speciality is summer camps. When T:BUC was announced in May 2013 she was very excited. She sat by her phone thinking that you guys would be phoning her in a day or two because she had all the expertise in the world and you would want to tap into it. She waited 18 months for that phone call. I would like you to take that on board as you are responding to what Linsey said.
1311. **Miss Blaney:** Over that interim period, we recognised that summer camps have been going on for a number of reasons and to deliver a number of outcomes. In the context of Together: Building a United Community, summer camps are different.
1312. At the beginning, the aspiration was to create the opportunity for young people who attended the camps to build and maintain sustainable relationships that they maybe would not have had the opportunity to have in their day-to-day lives. We carried out an extensive engagement process with stakeholders and, hopefully, the person you referred to has had the opportunity to speak to us. Over 200 stakeholders have engaged in the co-design process, including people who have direct experience of delivering summer camps, youth workers and young people. We had almost 300 attendees at workshops in preparation for the applications to the summer camps.

1313. As a result of that process, we have been able to design a programme that will deliver specific and very defined outcomes for those camps. They are things along the lines that, as a result of the camps, attendees will have positive attitudinal change towards people from a different background, sustained contact and friendships will be developed between young people from different backgrounds, young people will be more positive about shared activities, there will be better recognition about the role that young people play in peace building and they will have a better understanding of and respect for cultural differences. That is the focus of the scheme.
1314. We have other summer camps that are called planned interventions, but they are much more generic and are about facilitating people at times of specific community tension and maybe taking them out of their areas. That is quite a different programme. Our stakeholders and particularly the young people have welcomed that. They want something different. They just do not want to go away on a certain night and spend some time together and then go back to their communities and never see those people again.
1315. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** So, those are summer camps, the likes of which Northern Ireland has never seen before.
1316. **Miss Blaney:** Hopefully. At the minute, we have 154 applications to deliver them and those will be assessed in the next couple of weeks.
1317. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Will they all be new camps, or will some have happened before but simply be reshaped to meet your objectives?
1318. **Miss Blaney:** We will assess them to make sure that we have people delivering them who have experience of working with young people or delivering camps. If people do not have experience in delivering camps, we want to make sure that they are working with those who have the experience to deliver camps that will have those outcomes.
1319. One of the unique aspects is pre- and post-engagement. It is not that they take a group of young people away for three or five days. They will also build relationships during pre- and post-engagement processes. Young people will use social media in whatever way they want to keep in contact, and we plan to have a shared learning forum in the late autumn or early winter, and some sort of celebration event, at which we can bring back the young people who participated to tell us what worked well and what did not. Remember: this is a pilot that will inform how we go forward in the future.
1320. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** There was a pilot last year as well.
1321. **Miss Blaney:** We delivered some pilots, but those were done before and during the engagement process and they have also informed this process. We wanted to make sure that the process was shaped to be different and actually delivered for the young people who participate.
1322. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK. I am a young person, you prep me, I go to a camp in the first week of August and I know what to expect. I come through the camp. What happens after that?
1323. **Miss Blaney:** After the camp, there will be post-engagement.
1324. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** When will that be? If I went to the camp on the first week of August when would you —
1325. **Miss Blaney:** It will be up to the project deliverers. The people who are making the applications to deliver the camps have to include pre- and post-engagement phases.
1326. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Is it just one engagement? Is it one meeting?
1327. **Miss Blaney:** It could be a one-day event. Within the programme design, there is a set number of hours for face-to-face contact between the programme deliverers and the young people. It is not that they just take them to a

- museum and put them back on the bus at the end of the day. In addition —
1328. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Specifically what happens? I have been to the camp, how long do I wait before the organisers get back in touch and how often do they get in touch? How many post-camp events will there be?
1329. **Miss Blaney:** At the moment, for this year, there will be one post-camp event that is being organised by the camp deliverer.
1330. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Just one.
1331. **Miss Blaney:** That will be followed up by another event in the late autumn or early winter that we will organise. That will be a mixture of a celebration event and a shared learning forum. There may actually be two events?
1332. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** And that is it.
1333. **Miss Blaney:** It is, for the pilot for 2015. Importantly, we will take the learning from this to inform what we need to do differently if the participants and deliverers tell us that it is not as effective. It is also about how we build in the online or continuous monitoring to see whether it is effective. You cannot really tell, the following week, whether people have sustainable relationships. We will need to build in that monitoring.
1334. **Mrs Farrell:** Those are exactly the things that we will want to test at the pilot stage. When we look at assessing the applications, we will look for innovative ideas and different delivery models to allow us to test how the post-camp event will work in practice. Furthermore, we are looking at how we can signpost and cross-refer to the various headline actions of T:BUC. It may be useful to signpost a young person involved in a summer camp to United Youth or to the cross-community sports programme. We are looking at that in the context of the outcomes framework as well.
1335. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** My reading of the evidence that we have taken so far is that, if engagement is not continual — continual rather than continuous — it is potentially a waste.
1336. **Mr Lyttle:** Thanks for your update. I start by wishing you well as you get further into the detail of the actual work on delivering the strategy. I have worked closely with some of you before, and I know that you are genuinely committed to doing the work. I do not envy your challenge of building a united community in a political context where parties seem content to represent what they believe to be their community, but you are committed nonetheless. Have community relations improved in the two years since the publication of T:BUC?
1337. **Mrs Farrell:** Thanks for your comments, Chris. The good relations indicators showed where improvements had been made, albeit other indicators showed some ways in which relationships were not improving. That is why a key commitment was given to look at the indicators and review them in the light of Together: Building a United Community. I often heard the indicators referred to as “bad relations indicators”, as opposed to something more positive, so that is what we have tried to do through the engagement process and the consultation on them. We have tried to develop indicators that can align T:BUC to the outcomes that we are trying to achieve in order to get to what the key differences are that we need to make right across our society — young people, shared spaces, a safe community and cultural expression — that will have a tangible impact. It is the word “impact” that we are looking for in building good relations. Now that the key differences have been agreed, they can form the basis of the outcomes framework that we produce. We can then really be serious about measuring the impact that T:BUC has. In the absence of those agreed indicators aligned with T:BUC, there was perhaps a bit of a skewed picture.
1338. **Mr Lyttle:** How far off are you from agreeing the new good relations indicators? Will you be able to present those to the Committee in the near future?

1339. **Mrs Farrell:** We will check that out. There will hopefully be a launch, and we will obviously engage with the Committee in advance of that happening.
1340. **Mr Lyttle:** It has been quite a while since they were put under review.
1341. **Mrs Farrell:** They were out to consultation. They went through a couple of consultation periods and work with an advisory group. Peter, is there anything that you want to add?
1342. **Mr Peter Robinson (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** I just want to add that we have been looking at the departmental funding schemes and the funding schemes that the CRC delivers to ensure that the good relations indicators are incorporated into the application processes that are going out this year. Therefore, when applying for funding, groups have to show what contribution the interventions that they are taking forward are having on the impact of the good relations indicators.
1343. **Mr Lyttle:** We were discussing the Children's Services Co-operation Bill earlier. There are proposals to produce annual reports on performance against the outcomes. Is there any possibility of having annual reporting on performance against good relations outcomes or indicators?
1344. **Mrs Farrell:** Absolutely. It was discussed. We were at a good relations programme board meeting this morning with the Departments involved in delivery. The plan is that they will get guidance on the outcomes-based approach. We have already been working with Departments to develop a number of shared outcomes across all the headline actions. Departments will submit report cards against each of those outcomes, and the programme board will monitor the progress against all of those and then produce a report on the basis of the information received.
1345. **Mr Robinson:** I will just add that, over the next year, we will be working with the funded groups to help them produce similar report cards on the impact on their outcomes.
1346. **Mr Lyttle:** In the absence of that type of report, it would be quite difficult to make an assessment as to what impact the headline actions are, or are not, having.
1347. **Mrs Farrell:** The issue with the headline actions is that a lot were significant projects. There is a lot of work to go through on governance and business cases. We are now entering the stage of true implementation and will be able to measure the real impact of the headline actions as resources flow and the communities start to see the real benefits.
1348. **Mr Lyttle:** You mentioned the contested spaces programme that was co-funded with Atlantic Philanthropies. That seemed to have some really good, positive impacts. One scheme attached to the programme was the nursery-school buddy scheme.
1349. One action in T:BUC is the roll-out of nursery-school and primary-school cross-community buddy schemes. It is my understanding that that action rests with the Department of Education. Do you have any update on the status of the business case being progressed to roll it out?
1350. **Mrs Farrell:** The latest update from DE is that it is still going through the process. We can certainly seek a further update. Community Relations in Schools (CRIS), which has been delivering a buddy scheme, has been successful in receiving core funding from the Community Relations Council. Again, that was money flowing from the Department to support that work. I think that the amount has increased, in recognition of the work that CRIS has been doing on the buddy scheme.
1351. **Mr Lyttle:** Another key item of T:BUC is to deliver and enhance the good relations impact assessment for all policies across government. I think that that linked in with the paragraph in the Stormont House Agreement that there should be an independent audit of departmental spending to identify

- how division in society impacts on the delivery of public services. Is there any update on the progress of that?
1352. **Mrs Farrell:** It was intended that that would be one of the issues taken forward in the context of the proposed equality and good relations commission. While the legislation is under consideration, we are working with the Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council to identify the areas that they can work on within their existing remits and vires. We plan to engage with them further over the next period, and that is one of the specific actions mentioned in T:BUC that we will be looking at.
1353. **Mr Lyttle:** Given that a previous OFMDFM audit costed division at upwards of £1 billion, are there any moves afoot to implement that Stormont House Agreement to conduct an independent audit of all departmental spending?
1354. **Mrs Farrell:** The First Minister and the deputy First Minister have written to Executive colleagues to remind them of that Stormont House commitment and of the structures that are in place already through Delivering Social Change (DSC) and Together: Building a United Community. The head of the Civil Service will follow up shortly with permanent secretaries on that as well to assess how we can look at the cost of division across all the areas while bearing in mind the existing structures in place with DSC and T:BUC.
1355. T:BUC also committed to commissioning research into identifying shared services and the extent of shared service delivery. Again, that is something we will be exploring further.
1356. **Mr Lyttle:** I hope that you get the ministerial support that you need to expedite delivery of those really important issues.
1357. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Linsey, you talked about moving to the implementation phase. One objective that you have to implement is the creation of 10 shared education campuses. Each campus will obviously be a multimillion-pound initiative. How much implementation do you think that you will do this financial year, given that I have just seen that your paper, which we got at 9.08 am today, advises that the budget for the 10 new shared education campuses this year is £200,000?
1358. **Mrs Farrell:** That is £200,000 of resource budget that was bid for from the Department of Education. It secured that bid from the T:BUC allocation to progress business cases. This is the point that I was making about a number of the headline actions: there are a lot of processes to go through, particularly where there is capital build involved. The shared education campuses would be one of those areas. However, DE has advised that the first three successful applications for shared campuses are going through the process now. In fact, one wants to go even further with its application and become more ambitious, and DE is working with that campus. The second call for applications has closed, and DE is considering those applications. Good progress will have been made on business case approvals for the initial three applications and on gearing up for spend to be able to happen on the capital side.
1359. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK. We may have only 10 minutes left before we become inquorate, so I will split the time in two, if that is OK. Alex and David both want in, and Alex is first on the list. You have five minutes.
1360. **Mr Maskey:** Thank you, Chair.
1361. **Mr D McIlveen:** I need only two minutes.
1362. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** Don't tell him, Pike.
1363. **Mr Maskey:** There are a couple of questions that I want addressed. A bit like the Deputy Chair, I do not envy your task, because I am not exactly sure what everybody wants out of the process. Some people expect a light switch to be turned on and we will all be the same in our wee Norn Iron and everything will be wonderful. That will not happen, because we are not all

- the same. We are different, and there is nothing wrong with that. The trick is managing to deal with, embrace and respect that difference.
1364. One of the things that concerned me a wee bit came in some of the evidence sessions with people for whom I have immense respect and who have worked a lifetime at the coalface and at interfaces. Sometimes I felt like handing some of them an elephant. A lot of the focus was on asking, "What do you mean by 'sectarianism'? You haven't told us what you mean by that". I might have a definition, and somebody else might have a different definition. Those are people who are genuinely trying to grapple with what they can do. I am very appreciative of the work that has been done on summer camps and very keen to see how they work out. I have no doubt that there will be difficulties, because how do you measure some of the outcomes?
1365. The Chair was pressing you on how many engagements you have to have regarding a camp: one before, one during the camp and one afterwards. However, you are talking about organisations that are working around the clock all year round and are funded to work on those issues. Surely there could not possibly be a one-day prep meeting, the camp itself and another day for assessment. There has to be a continuum of work. The people who are doing the camps are going to be people who are doing such work anyway.
1366. I am certain that there will be people trying to get camps organised this year that are to be as much around diversionary work, and that may be a bit challenging. I have been at residentials with young people, and some of them involve taking people away in the summer, giving them diversions and challenging them on some of their ideas. Some of the sessions were quite good. How do you measure the outcomes from that, because to do so is quite difficult? Good luck with all of that.
1367. The design is critical. When we held the round-table and other discussions,
- including our evidence sessions, people were saying in general terms, "OFMDFM officials are very good. They're out there a lot and are attending all the meetings". However, there were some issues raised around co-design. Has co-design been properly taken on board between the Department and organisations that have been doing great work for a long time?
1368. I am interested in what kinds of clear outcomes you have in mind when you engage with stakeholders, because it is a two-way process. You cannot bring all the answers. You are bringing resources and government commitments. We want people to co-design, but we also want them to tell us what they mean. I have asked people, "What do you mean by that?" I know people who are working very well in interface areas, but they are never going to move to the other side of the interface, so let us get real on some of this. Do they always challenge each other? No, they do not. Sometimes they do not challenge themselves. It is difficult, and there is a lot of work to be done. I do not underestimate the difficulties involved.
1369. To make sure that this becomes organic in the longer term, what kinds of challenges are we putting into the process from your end, where you deal with stakeholders, who, as I say, are, for the most part, excellent and doing great work? I am just glad to see that there is a commitment through T:BUC to giving added support, but there has to be a two-way process as well as additional resource.
1370. **Mrs Farrell:** To me, there is a subtle difference between consultation with stakeholders and co-design. That is perhaps something that has taken all of us a bit of time to understand and get out heads around. Consultation has traditionally meant us going out to stakeholders with our ideas and asking them what they think of them. The approach that we have used through co-design has involved going out with more of a blank page and saying, "Here is what we are trying to do. Here's the outcome that we

- are trying to get to, which is linked to T:BUC. Now, tell us from your experience how that can best be designed and delivered". That is the approach that we have taken with summer schools and camps, because you are right when you say that it is a two-way thing. We have to tell stakeholders what we are trying to do in government through the Executive, but we need to listen to their experiences and informed opinions from the real world. Then, together we design something that is workable with our processes and governance but that will also meet the needs of the community.
1371. That is something that we have found with the United Youth programme, which we have worked on with the Department for Employment and Learning, and, more recently, the summer schools/camps programme. You are right: there has to be a challenge back into the community, and that is something that we are trying to build into our subgroup structures. It is no longer the case that there are just statutory agencies sitting around the table. There are community representatives involved, and it is about getting across that there is an onus and responsibility on them to bring the information to us. Collectively, we need to identify what we need to do, and each of us then has to take responsibility for the bits that we can take responsibility for.
1372. Donna, I am not sure whether there is anything to add on summer schools in particular.
1373. **Miss Blaney:** A phased approach was taken. We had the more generic stakeholder engagement-cum-co-design to decide what it should look like. We then had in a specific design team, which had the representatives from statutory organisations and the youth sector. We then had in young people from the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, NEETs and representatives from Bryson and district councils — all the key players. They came up with the current design, which has to be a pilot. At the end of the year, we will take back what we have learnt and ask why things did or did not work. That is the opportunity to introduce the challenge factor.
1374. The fact that we have outcomes is a challenge to the applicants. Therefore, people have been applying for interventions and for camps, but, when they look at our scheme, they will see that it is quite different, is more challenging and intentionally does not deliver the same things. Some people may not like that, but perhaps the scheme is not what they are interested in delivering. We will find that out as we go through the year.
1375. **Mr Robinson:** That is what we are telling you about all the funded groups. At the very start of the application process, we made it clear what the T:BUC priorities and the associated indicators and outcomes are. We said, "This is what we want to achieve. You tell us the best intervention that you can make that will contribute to the advancement of those outcomes and impacts". We like to see the innovative approaches that they come up with, as long as there is a clear link between what they are doing and the T:BUC outcomes and impacts.
1376. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** It is two minutes, David.
1377. **Mr D McIlveen:** No problem, Chair. I will try to keep to that, because I have to go at 4.00 pm as well.
1378. My question is almost a supplementary to what Alex asked. It is on the same theme. I would not be splitting hairs about whether there is one further engagement with Departments or are two. This should be supported by Departments, not led by them, because there are plenty of people who are already doing this work very well, and I suspect that they will be the people who put in the application forms to run the summer camps. We all know that kids are probably the hardest group to reach, so there needs to be a bit of experience and expertise involved to do that.
1379. Bear in mind that, in every single part of our community, most likely on a Friday night, there are dozens upon dozens of community-led or church-led gatherings that involve Protestant, Catholic, Traveller or Polish children. They have

- the whole mix there. What can T:BUC do to support those groups, because they are the ones that ultimately will do the continuous work that builds on the strategy? Has any thought been given to having a curriculum for children and youth groups? If all the community-led groups throughout Northern Ireland were putting the same message across, with the support of the Department, with their arms being lifted up by the Department to give them the capacity to do that — it would have to be voluntary, but I do not think that any of them would have any great objections — why would we not tap into what is already there and support it?
1380. Alex is absolutely right that everybody is different, but the message is the same: this is about tolerance and respect. My little girl has tried a few different things on a Friday night, and the message, broadly speaking, is the same but is being taught in a different way. That is a little confusing. If there were a little bit more structure to the whole thing, the Department could find itself a role by giving groups the capacity to get the final outcome that we want?
1381. **Mrs Farrell:** That is a useful point, because one of the things that we grapple with is that structure and standardisation to allow groups the flexibility to do things in the way in which they feel at ease doing them, with some consistency of message. That is something that the children and young people's subgroup could look at when it is up and running.
1382. In recognition of the work that goes on across the community delivered by community workers, community organisations and church- and faith-based groups, those are the groups that we want to see applying for the summer schools and camps. We want to assist and support those groups. This is not about good relations just being the business of Departments but about getting the message out that it is everybody's business. Those are the groups that have the relationships, and, at the end of the day, it is those relationships with young people that are so important. Those groups will be able to reach out to those young people in a way that we, as officials, will never be able to. Therefore, it is really important that we see applications coming from those organisations, and that is something that we have tried to build into the design, specifically for summer schools and camps. Other Departments are doing the same around, for example, cross-community sports and United Youth. They have been tapping into the expertise that is already out there in the community.
1383. **The Chairperson (Mr Nesbitt):** OK, folks. I am afraid that time has beaten us, but thank you very much indeed, Michael, Peter, Donna and Linsey.



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