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Via email: committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

PROGRESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

Dear Daniel,

I refer to our Memorandum of Reply in which we agreed to the above update by 31st January 2025. Please accept my apologies for the delay.

Departmental officials are continuing their work on the development of the Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy. The Department is currently engaging with officials from all departments to discuss the development of the Strategy and the Minister has stated that he is encouraged by reports of the progress to date.

The inaugural meeting of the full Cross-departmental Working Group (CDWG) took place on Monday 18 November 2024. The Director of Central Policy Directorate and officials from Poverty Policy branch had engaged prior to this meeting with the departmental nominees to highlight the importance of this work and set out what participation in the working group would involve.

Discussion at the first CDWG meeting focused on a range of issues and attendees were provided with an overview of the work that had been undertaken to date and discussed the terms of reference for the group, available statistical evidence, resource for delivery and consideration of what governance mechanisms will be associated with the Strategy.



Following up on previous correspondence requesting input, Minister Lyons wrote to his Executive colleagues in December 2024 requesting confirmation that Executive Ministers were content with the overall structure and approach for the Strategy and were in agreement on a broad three pillar approach. Minister Lyons also formally requested Departments' strategic level inputs including policies, strategies and actions which will contribute to delivery of these pillars, along with an indication on which actions are currently fully funded and being delivered and which actions will require additional funding from the Executive. The majority of the Departmental inputs were received over the first weeks in January and officials are incorporating these into a revised draft prior to sharing with Minister and the Executive.

The CDWG met for the second time on 13 January 2025. Discussions focussed on the departmental returns to date, alongside broader considerations on the delivery of key actions which will help mitigate impacts, reduce the risk of falling into poverty and support those impacted to exit poverty. In addition, the Poverty Policy Team has engaged with Teams across the Department for Communities, seeking input on areas such as Housing, Benefits, Advice and other supports to ensure that the Department's contribution is as comprehensive and effective as possible. Input has been received from these Teams and, again, this is being incorporated into the revised draft Strategy.

While the scale of the work and associated timescale remains challenging, a draft Strategy is planned to be brought before the Executive in March 2025 for consideration. Following Executive agreement of this paper the Strategy will be subject to public consultation prior to its final publication. Officials will provide further updates to the Communities Committee as the work progresses and an in-person session with the Committee has been provisionally agreed for 27 March 2025.

I trust you find this helpful.



Yours sincerely,

Colum Boyle
Permanent Secretary