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| Joint Forum  Between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector JF3/14 | |
| **DATE:** 21 October 2014 **TIME:** 10.00  **VENUE:** NICVA Headquarters, Duncairn Gardens Belfast | |
| **Chair - Michael Donnelly** | (Joint Chair) Dept for Social Development/Voluntary and Community Unit (VCU) |
| **Present - Public Sector Group (PSG)** |  |
| Jack O’Connor | Dept for Social Development/Voluntary and Community Unit (Joint Forum Secretariat) (VCU) |
| Susan Hunter | Dept for Social Development/Voluntary and Community Unit (Joint Forum Secretariat) (VCU) |
| Elaine Downey | Dept for Social Development/Voluntary and Community Unit (Head - Public Sector Group) (PSG) |
| Harry Armstrong | Dept for Social Development/Voluntary and Community Unit (Secretariat - Public Sector Group) (PSG) |
| Chris Dorrian | Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) |
| Janet Johnston | Department of Justice (DoJ) |
| Sharon Smyth | Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) |
| Alasdair MacInnes | Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) |
| David Savage | Department of Education (DE) |
| Johanne Mullan | Department of the Environment DoE) |
| Jeff Johnston | Department of the Environment (DoE) |
| Gabrielle Kerr | Department for Regional Development (DRD) |
| **Alison McCullagh** | NI Local Government Association (NILGA) |
| Kathryn Semple | Public Sector Reform Division/Department of Finance and Personnel (PSRD/DFP) |
| Rachel McAfee | Public Sector Reform Division/Department of Finance and Personnel (PSRD/DFP) |
| Olive Matthews | Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) |
| Cate Taggart | Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) |
| Damian Brady | Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) |
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| **Present - Voluntary and Community Group (VCG)** |  |
| Anne O’Reilly | (Joint Chair)NI Rural Women’s Network (NIRWN) |
| Glenda Davies | Sandy Row Community Forum (SRCF) |
| Marie Cavanagh | Gingerbread (GNI) |
| Jonny Currie | East Belfast Community Development Association (EBCDA) |
| Kevin Doherty | Disability Action (DA) |
| Lisa McElherron | NI Council Voluntary Action (NICVA) (Head of Voluntary and Community Group VCG) |
| Eddie McDowell | Churches Community Work Alliance (CCWA) |
| Chris Quinn | NI Youth Forum (NIYF) |
| Anne McVicker | Women’s Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) |
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| **Observers** |  |
| Peter Osborne | Consultant |
| Donna Doran | Dept Social Development VCU |
| Sarah Wilson | Dept Social Development VCU |
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| **Guest Speakers** |  |
| Jenny Irwin | RSM McClure Watters (RSMMcCW) |
| Aongus O’Keeffe | Community Evaluation NI (CENI) |
| Nigel McKinney | Building Change Trust (BCT) |
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| **Apologies** |  |
| Keith Gordon | Dept Social Development VCU |
| Nichola Creagh | Dept of Environment |
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| **WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS** | |
| 1. The Chair welcomed Peter Osborne Consultant, as an observer to the meeting. | |
| **MINUTES / ACTION POINTS / MATTERS ARISING JF2/14** | |
| 1. The Minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of matters discussed and all Action Points were cleared. 2. Members were asked to note that Alasdair MacInnes (DHSSPS) attended this meeting. | |
| **MATTERS ARISING** | |
| **Social Investment Fund Update/Next Steps**   1. Paper 1 provided members with an overview of projects currently being funded through OFMDFM’s Social Investment Fund. 2. Following discussion it was agreed that a representative managing the fund would be invited to speak at the next Joint Forum.   **Action Point:**   1. **PSG to arrange for a speaker from OFMDFM to attend the next Joint Forum meeting to provide an Update on the Social Investment Fund.** | |
| **AGENDA ITEMS** | |
| **Reform of Local Government**   1. Johanne Mullan (DoE) provided an update on the background to the reform programme and referred members to the draft document on proposals in relation to the naming of statutory community planning partners. The draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 seeks to ensure that key organisations are part of the community planning process, facilitated by the new councils. 2. Johanne reported that DoE is seeking to set up a Community Planning working group consisting of central and local government representatives to assess what action is needed at a Departmental level to facilitate the process and develop and implement a long-term shared vision. She also reported that the Department is currently engaging with government, council and other statutory bodies to identify appropriate statutory partners. 3. Members were also advised that Community Planning Guidance was currently under draft and would be published for consultation around mid November. The Department was happy to meet with interested parties to discuss any issues. The DoE contact for Community Planning issues is [johanne.mullan@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:johanne.mullan@doeni.gov.uk) and the paper is attached –      1. Jonny Currie (EBCDA) asked whether other voluntary and community groups would be invited to be involved in the planning process. 2. Johanne responded saying that she understood that this would the case but was unclear to what degree this involvement would take. She suggested raising this query at the consultation stage. 3. Alison McCullagh (NILGA) cautioned for the need for expectations to be managed in view of the timescale for legislation to pass through the NI Assembly. In addition, she highlighted that the role of Departments needed to be defined. 4. Anne O’Reilly (NIRWN) asked whether there had been any discussion on integrated planning, budgets and outcomes and whether this would feature in the guidance. 5. Johanne advised that these issues would be open for discussion during the consultation period. | |
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| **Procurement – discussion on the way forward**   1. Members were referred to the paper outlining the issues identified at the previous Joint Forum in relation to procurement between funders and the voluntary and community sector. 2. Discussion centred on the range and breadth of the issues relating to ‘procurement’ and how best to address them. Anne O’Reilly (NIRWN) was keen to mainstream these issues into the work of the Joint Forum and to have a dedicated group set up to look into the issues concerning Sector organisations. 3. Lisa McElherron (NICVA) outlined research and consultancy recently commissioned by NICVA on - ‘Innovation in procurement and entrepreneurial societies’; and ‘A cross-section review to identify any barriers to the commissioning process’. This review was undertaken to look at a cross-section of procurement exercises to establish what and where barriers exist and to develop a solution-focused outcome. 4. Following further discussion it was agreed that a cross Government/Sector group would be set up to look at these issues in more detail. It was further agreed that representatives from Central Procurement Division (CPD) would be invited to participate in the group to provide expertise on the legislative framework for government procurement exercises. 5. Alasdair McInnes (DHSSPS) was happy to represent his Department on this group. Lisa endorsed the need for CPD input to advise how legislation could and should be interpreted. 6. Rachel McAfee (PSRD/DFP) referred to the alternative models of delivery being investigated by PSRD and expressed an interest in the NICVA research. Her Unit is interested in piloting different models she was keen to engage with NICVA to see how Government could respond to the issues. 7. Cate Taggart (SOLACE) highlighted the changing role for councils and the need for local government to have a greater understanding of procurement and grant funding arrangements. 8. Kathryn Semple (PSRD/DFP) explained about the Innovation Labs being used by PSRD to look at specific issues, one such being procurement and advised that there would be opportunities for members to be involved. She agreed to raise this matter with PSRD. 9. In summary, Michael Donnelly (VCU) highlighted the need for clarity on the parameters for the working group and the need for a better of understanding of the procurement process. It was agreed that core membership of a working group to take forward issues would consist of NICVA, DFP, NILGA, DHSSPS and CPD. Other Forum members would also be invited to join. Terms of Reference were to be developed by DSD Secretariat for consideration by Joint Forum members. 10. **Members were asked to forward details of any innovative initiatives, past or present that may be useful for the group to consider.**   **Action Points:**   1. **DSD Secretariat to draft Terms of Reference** 2. **Joint Forum Chairs to provide members for a working group** | |
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| **Policy Discussion**   1. Elaine Downey (PSG) introduced ‘Policy Discussion’ as a new standing item on the agenda. She explained that its purpose is to bring forward matters identified by either PSG or VCG that warrants further discussion and follows on from the work of the Commitment Action Team (CAT) which had been looking at how there can be increased engagement between the sector and government to help meet the needs of both in the development of government policy. 2. The out workings of this team had secured approval for upcoming policies that are new or up for review to be made available to the Joint Forum and this was now being mainstreamed into the work of the Joint Forum. The process would involve policies provided by Departments to be sifted by the Heads of PSG and VCG for relevance to members before a number were selected for further discussion at Joint Forum. Elaine explained that this agenda item would also allow for other policy matters to be introduced.   Social Clauses   1. To open this agenda item, Elaine introduced Jenny Irwin from RSM McClure Watters to deliver a presentation on ‘Social Clauses in NI’. This presentation covered research commissioned by NICVA on the difficulties experienced in implementing social clauses; commentary on the monitoring systems and procedures regarding the implementation of social clauses; and the development of real examples to influence government on the use of social clauses. The research document is attached. The floor was then opened for questions. 2. Referring to the Social Value Strategy for NI proposed in the research paper, Michael Donnelly (VCU) commented on the positive elements of this matter being taken beyond the construction industry. 3. Members acknowledged that while social clauses were a ‘Programme for Government’ requirement and that the principles needed to be anchored in government policy, they highlighted that officials needed to be guided and trained in the process for appropriately incorporating social clauses into contracts. Reference was made to CPD guidance on the business case process published in November 2013. 4. Following further discussion on examples of social clauses in a range of situations across Departments it was agreed that PSG would consider the issue of social clauses and the position of Departments in relation to them. Glenda Davies (SRCF) recommended that social needs assessments should involve the community prior to the award of contracts to ensure a direct benefit to the local community. 5. Cate Taggart (SOLACE) added that social clauses needed to be realistic, accessible, and of benefit to local people.   **Action Point**   1. **PSG to consider the issue of social clauses and the position with Departments**   **Consultations**   1. Members were advised that the Policy Update would bring current or proposed consultations to the Joint Forum. The following are those PSG is currently aware of:- 2. DoE – “The draft Local Government (Community Planning Partner) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015”. 3. DCAL – “Arts Strategy” – currently under draft and due to be published in 2015. 4. DSD – “Advising, Supporting, Empowering.   A strategy for the delivery of generalist advice services in Northern Ireland 2015-2020”. Published 22 September 14, closing date 14 December 14. | |
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| **Presentations:**  **“Public Sector Reform - Improving Public Services”**  Rachel McAfee and Kathryn Semple (PSRD/DFP)   1. Rachel McAfee and Kathryn Semple from DFP’s Public Sector Reform Division delivered a presentation outlining the role of the new Unit set up in DFP by the Minister, Simon Hamilton. 2. The Unit’s approach is to embed new ways of working by providing advice and support to Departments in developing and commissioning new models of delivery based on proven research methods, including ‘Innovation Labs’ (where specific topics or ideas are researched in detail) and by engaging with Departments to identify suitable pilot projects. 3. Rachel and Kathryn stressed the importance of a collaborative approach, which included working with the Voluntary and Community Sector, to improving public services to achieve results. 4. A copy of each presentation is attached.     **“Inspiring Impact NI”**  Aongus O’Keeffe (CENI) and Nigel McKinney (BCT)   1. Nigel McKinney, Administrator for the Building Change Trust (BCT), provided a brief background of the development of BCT. The Trust was formed from a Big Lottery grant of £10 million over 10 years to help develop and shape the future of Northern Ireland’s community and voluntary sector through the development, delivery of, and learning from a range of programmes including commissioned work, awards programmes and other interventions. 2. Nigel explained that the Inspiring Impact NI programme is one such intervention that emerged from a growing demand from organisations seeking IT solutions to measuring outcomes. BCT considered potential measurement/outcomes tools available or under development elsewhere and through this established links with the Inspiring Impact programme in GB. 3. Nigel went on to explain that the confluence of interests with the Commitment Action Team on ‘Outcomes’ coupled with the demand from the Sector made the Inspiring Impact Programme an ideal starting point to develop a NI programme. BCT secured £188k from DSD and £800k from other sources to develop the NI programme. 4. Aongus O’Keeffe, the Inspiring Impact NI Programme Manager (CENI) commissioned to develop the programme, presented an overview of the Inspiring Impact NI Programme. The presentation outlined the need for impact measurement, the benefits to funders and organisations, and linked it to the Concordat commitments on reducing bureaucracy in grant funding and developing an outcome-focused approach to funding. 5. Bringing members up to date he advised that following initial scoping work with Public Sector Engagement Group (PSEG), PriceWaterhouseCoopers had been appointed to lead a team to identify 5 demonstration projects to test the programme. 6. Nigel added that the programme has the opportunity to go further in NI because of the resource investment and the relationship with Government. 7. Glenda Davies (SRCF) advised that her organisation was one of the demonstration pilots and that she had found the experience useful in determining how outcomes should be developed. 8. Cate Taggart (SOLACE) highlighted the need to raise awareness of the ‘Theory of Change’ concept and the need to have activities in-built to the process with the transformational programmes. Cate stated that while the programmes would not be in place until 2017, she proposed that arrangements should be made now for impact processes to be included in their development. 9. It was agreed that the suggestion to share information on the developing outcomes on the Joint Forum webpage would be considered by the Communications CAT. 10. Details of the presentation and related documents are available through the following links:     Measuring Up! online self-assessment resource: <http://inspiringimpact.org/measuringup/>  Impact Hub: <http://inspiringimpact.org/listings/>  Link to Inspiring Impact Exchange NI event: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/inspiring-impact-ni-exchange-event-sowing-seeds-of-change-registration-13410494149>    **Action Point:**   1. **PSG to forward details of information to be shared to the Communications CAT** | |
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| **Commitment Action Teams Updates**  **Bureaucracy**   1. Elaine Downey (PSG) provided a brief background to the objectives from Phase 2 of the Addressing Bureaucracy recommendations to develop a Code of Practice. 2. Elaine advised that the Code of Practice was due to be circulated to Departments for consultation, followed by a ‘Dear Accounting Officer’ letter when any comments from the consultation had been addressed. It is envisaged that the Code of Practice will launch in mid March 2015. 3. She added that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) was fully supportive of the proposals and will monitor its implementation, and that all relevant information would be published.   **Influence and Examine the Impact of Government Policy**   1. Lead manager for this action team, Lisa McElherron (NICVA), advised that the work of this team had concluded their work and that policy issues would now be mainstreamed as an agenda item for the Joint Forum. The working arrangement is for Elaine and Lisa to meet to discuss topical policy issues, and policies under development or up for revision. 2. Lisa advised that she would prepare a formal closure to the team’s work.   **Action Point:**   1. **Lisa to prepare a closure report for the Influence and Examine the Impact of Government Policy CAT.**   **Concordat Compliance Monitoring**   1. Glenda Davies (SRCF)) who leads this action team provided a brief background to the pilot of the original Compliance Tool, explaining why the questionnaire (Tool) had been re-drafted and the rationale for the team’s proposal to conduct a further pilot of the re-drafted document. 2. Test subjects for the original questionnaire had highlighted design and layout difficulties which caused difficulties in eliciting relevant information relating to Concordat compliance. The redrafted questionnaire retained the ‘areas of compliance’ from the Concordat Agreement but the document was reformatted to present them as statements against which respondents could indicate how they considered these areas of compliance were met. 3. The re-testing of the questionnaire against the pilot subject – the development and implementation of DSD’s Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP) – indicated that the new layout of the questionnaire was more user-friendly but that as a pilot to test the questionnaire, the RISP did not offer a sufficient range of potential issues that may arise in the wider course of Concordat compliance monitoring. 4. Glenda went on to explain that there were also understandable concerns regarding openness on the part of some of the respondents and that not all issues and concerns may have been highlighted. She explained that the general lack of awareness meant that completion of the questionnaire relied heavily on those with a working knowledge of the Concordat and the work of the Joint Forum to explain the purpose of compliance monitoring and that the intention was to have a questionnaire that was self-explanatory. She went on to relay the team’s recommendation for a further pilot of the questionnaire against a more ‘substantial’ policy. 5. Following further discussion it was agreed that the Secretariat would reflect on the experience of testing the RISP and speak to the Chairs to identify the characteristics needed for a compliance tool. 6. The team is to deliver a presentation to the next Joint Forum on the issues considered.   **Action Points:**   1. **VCU Secretariat to speak to Joint Chairs to identify the characteristics needed for a Compliance Tool** 2. **Compliance CAT to prepare presentation for next Joint Forum**   **Communications**   1. David Savage (DE) advised members that the Joint Forum web page was scheduled to go-live within the next week and proposed to announce it with the issue of the Joint Communiqué to members and to the mailing list set up with contacts in Non Departmental Public Bodies and Arms Length Bodies. It was also proposed to issue the Joint Communiqué to all Northern Ireland Civil Service staff via the IT network. 2. David explained that the webpage was still a work-in-progress and invited comments and suggestions from members.   **Action Point:**   1. **All members to forward any comments/suggestions on the Joint Forum webpage to the Communications CAT.** | |
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| **Any Other Business**   1. There were no further items of business for discussion. | |
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| **Date of Next Meeting**   1. It was agreed that the next meeting would be scheduled around end of January/beginning February 2015 at a location outside Belfast, with consideration to be given to inviting Minister Storey to meet the Joint Forum. | |
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| **Action Points:**   1. PSG to arrange for a speaker from OFMdFM to attend the next Joint Forum meeting to provide an update on the Social Investment Fund. 2. DSD Secretariat to draft Terms of Reference. 3. Joint Forum Chairs to provide members for a working group. 4. PSG to consider the issue of social clauses and the position with Departments. 5. PSG to forward details of information to be shared to the Communications CAT. 6. Lisa to prepare a closure report for the Influence and Examine the Impact of Government Policy CAT. 7. VCU Secretariat to speak to Joint Chairs to identify the characteristics needed for a Compliance Tool. 8. Compliance CAT to prepare presentation for next Joint Forum. 9. All members to forward any comments/suggestions on the Joint Forum webpage to the Communications CAT. | |