



Thursday 11th December 2014 @ 10.30am, Hilton Hotel Templepatrick

MINUTES

In Attendance

Alex Bunting

Mitch Bresland

Liz Clark

Roberta Holmes

Violet Craig

Fiona Kelly

Stephen Gault

Peter Heathwood

Jennifer McNern

Ann Travers

Irene Kerrigan

Apologies

Alan Brecknell

Jude Whyte

Jeff Smith

John Loughran

Eibhlin Glenholmes

David Scott

Present

John Beggs (Chair)

Adrian McNamee

Tina McCann

1. Minutes from Forum meeting: 13th November

The minutes from the meeting on the 13th November were reviewed for accuracy and amendments and no changes were recorded. The minutes were proposed by Jennifer and seconded by Roberta.

2. Matters Arising

John gave an update on the action points from the last meeting and advised that he has met with the Interim Chair of the VSS on the issue of welfare and they are scheduled to

meet with DSD officials to agree protocols to ensure engagement is as unobtrusive as possible for victims and survivors.

3. Engagement with Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable

John advised that the meeting with the Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable was scheduled for the 29th January. He suggested to Forum members that they could discuss the issues then agree 3-4 spokespersons to speak on an issue each.

Alan had sent apologies but wished to raise some issues for the attention of the Chief Constable and after discussion it was agreed that the following members would speak to the issues discussed and meet for a pre-brief on the 12th January; Alan, Ann, Stephen and Fiona.

AP1: TMC to issue invite and briefing note to Alan, Ann, Fiona and Stephen for the 12th January.

In the course of the discussion, some of the issues raised fell under the remit of the Ombudsman rather than the Chief Constable. For example, the Ombudsman has informed those who are pending OPONI investigations that there will be a considerable delay to delivering on their commitments. Many victims and survivors feel that this delay is intolerable and some people may not even be alive when their case comes to be investigated. It was agreed that the Commission would request to meet with Michael Maguire to contextualise these issues.

AP2: TMC to write to OPONI to ask them to meet with relevant Forum members and JB

4. Request for meeting: HMIC Criminal Justice Inspectorate

Adrian advised that he had been contacted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary who has requested to meet the Forum as part up their follow up inspection report on the HET. Tina will forward this information as and when the Commission receive it

AP3: TMC to forward information on HMIC meeting when received

5. Update on appointment of Commissioner

John gave an update on the recruitment of the Commissioner and advised that the department had informed him that they would be re-advertising the post in the New Year with the same criteria but with possibly an enhanced salary to incentivise international applicants.

Members expressed their deep frustration and disappointment at this news and a discussion followed as to how to maintain the credibility, influence and momentum of the Forum in the continued absence of a Commissioner.

Members expressed frustration at the persistent absence of some members of the Forum and the impact this has on the representativeness of the Forum. John advised that this had been discussed at length at the Steering Committee.

6. Update from steering Committee- Work Programme

Members of the Steering Committee briefed on the meeting held on the 4th December and the discussion held on the work programme of the Forum. It was decided that the Forum needed to continue despite the absence of a Commissioner as some aspects of the Forum's work programme were at a critical stage including the development of the future funding through the VSS and the Better Futures research.

It was agreed between the Commission and the Steering Committee that John would meet all Forum members in the New Year on an individual basis to review and reaffirm the commitment of members. After these conversations, the Forum would revisit the work programme for 2015-16.

AP4: TMC to schedule meetings between all members of the Forum and John for early 2015.

AP5: Schedule a discussion on work programme priorities for Forum in February 2015

Forum Residential

Tina advised that the Forum residential was agreed by the Steering Committee for February 19th – 20th, venue to be confirmed. Steering Committee members had discussed and agreed an outline agenda for the residential meeting which would include inviting external stakeholders and academics to address key areas of work under development.

It was also agreed that Forum members would look at different operational models of working in the absence of a Commissioner. Steering Committee members had asked if the Commission could appoint new Forum members to replenish membership in the absence of a Commissioner.

John advised that the Commission could not as this was a statutory duty of the Commissioner but that he would scope ways to address and mitigate against the issues posed in the absence of a Commissioner.

7. Update: VSS

John told the members that the VSS had now advised him that they had developed programmes for the bereaved with the additional funds allocated to them from the department. A discussion was held on these programmes including what will the bereaved receive, the conditions of the awards and communication with victims and survivors about the awards.

Adrian reminded the Forum members that they had asked the VSS to make these awards as flexible as possible for the recipients and the VSS have attempted to do this. Members agreed but added there was some information that appeared to be outstanding, for example who exactly is entitled to the awards- individuals, families etc

AP6: Commission for Victims and Survivors to scope from VSS who will be eligible to claim amongst the bereaved and advise Forum members in due course.

John also advised that the department had completed the competition to appoint new Board members and appointments would be made shortly. Forum members added that it was critical that the relationship that has developed between the Forum, Commission and the VSS Board should continue and the Commission should look at how best to optimise this when the full complement of VSS Board is in place, up to and including co-opting Forum members in an advisory capacity as and when required.

AP7: John to discuss Victims and Survivors Forum and VSS Board relationship with Oliver Wilkinson and department.

8. CFNI Event 10th December

Tina informed all the members that 5 members of the Forum had attended the CFNI Prison to Peace seminar on the 10th December in Healing Through Remembering premises.

Those who attended had expressed their disappointment that members of the consortium from the Republican community had not attended and this diminished the experience somewhat. They also added that they had reciprocated the invite to engage with the Programme, which is due to end in March, and felt that they were convinced that it could be a valuable engagement if the commitment they had demonstrated was matched by all parties.

Forum members also reviewed the value of the Urban Rural Trip they had undertaken on 19th November.

9. AOB

Tina informed the members that she had issued an invitation to tender for the Independent Post Project Evaluation of the Forum for the period March 2012- March 2014. This should commence in early 2015 and the successful tenderer would want to engage with the Forum members in order to effectively evaluate the Forum as stipulated in the business case.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 29th January in the Radisson Blu, Belfast Gasworks @ 10.30am.