



27 June 2018
Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim

Present

Judith Thompson (JT)
John Beggs (JB)
Tina McCann (TMC)
Patricia Stewart (PS)
Alana Fisher (AF)

Jan Crawford
Donal Dunn
Paul Gallagher

Mary Moreland
Niall O Murchu
Mina Jadeja

Kathryn Johnston
Alan Brecknell
Emmett McConomy

Apologies

Paul Crawford
Paul McCormac
Lesley Veronica
Jeremy Adams

Hazel Deeney
Don Mackay
Sam Wilson
Minty Thompson

Robert McClenaghan
Carmel Rooney

Outline of Meeting

JT welcomed Forum members and noted apologies.

An update was provided on the May residential weekend attended by Forum members in the Killyhevlin hotel and a synopsis of matters arising.

These matters included the proposal that the work of the Better Future Working Group and the Pension and Need Working Group were brought back into Forum plenary sessions and that membership of Forum working groups should only consist of current Forum members.

As the Commission have been asked by the Northern Ireland Office to update the 2014 advice to ministers on a Pension for the Severely Injured, JT proposed that the Pension and Need Working Group continue to convene in its present form solely to complete this timebound update piece.

Whilst members' advice was that in principle Forum working groups should be comprised only of current members, due to the knowledge, expertise and lived experience of the severely injured in the Pension and Need Working Group, the Forum agreed that this could continue on a "task and finish" basis. A point for consideration was made about any future Forum replenishment exercise allowing for greater representation of the severely injured.

JT also recapped the pastoral support activities carried out at the residential and advised that Dr Michelle Kavanagh would be invited to attend the July Forum meeting to move on to the next stage of support.

Action Point: AF to invite Dr Kavanagh to July Forum meeting.

The Forum then went on to discuss the Legacy consultation. There was a consensus that the launch of this was poor and that it had left a lot of organisations playing catch-up. There was also discussion around planned VSS and Peace IV funded group events. JT and TMC then outlined the Commission's engagement plan for the weeks through the consultation period which included leaflet and poster drops to neighbourhood renewal partnerships, GP surgeries and libraries; focus group sessions for individuals to attend; sectoral engagement with VSS and Peace IV funded groups and engagement with the media.

Engagement with the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme

Julie Harrison from the Tackling Paramilitarism's #endingtheharm Programme met with the Forum and gave an outline of the programme. She explained that this was not a social investment fund but rather financial resource to carry out very specific activities.

She advised that the programme had spent significant time determining what "success" looked like and they had identified four key areas of focus:

- Building confidence amongst society in the justice system to help break the cycle of what many would deem "alternative justice"
- Long-term prevention of recruitment to paramilitary organisations through creating a culture of lawfulness
- Building capacity to support transition into a lawful society
- Strategies to tackle criminality using tactics such as "follow the money"

A discussion with the Forum followed where they had outlined concerns at the effectiveness of paramilitary organisations in scamming systems and concealing money. Julie advised that the programme was incredibly careful in issuing funding for activities and ensuring relationships were well established with funded recipients.

The Forum also discussed how the lack of a Northern Ireland Assembly could prove a contributing factor in a rise in paramilitary activity and discussed geographical areas of focus.

The Forum thanked Julie for her attendance and iterated their wish to support and assist in the programme, specifically in relation to ensuring a better future for children and young people. Key areas agreed were:

- Helping young people who grew up post-conflict to appreciate the harm it caused;
- Support for the Children and Young People in terms of mental health and trauma.

Engagement with the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC)

John McBurney and Tim O'Connor from the Independent Reporting Commission met with the Forum to outline the role of the IRC in monitoring the progress on tackling paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland. They advised the IRC itself was born out of the Fresh Start Agreement (2015) and advised that Tim's focus was on the societal impact of paramilitarism whereas John's was on the criminal justice aspect.

They stated the importance of support from individual victims and survivors and the Victims and Survivors Forum. They noted that 20 years on from the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, Northern Ireland still has paramilitary groups carrying out attacks, engaging in criminal behaviour and issuing threats and intimidating others within their communities of operation and spoke of the importance of a societal change to this end.

Engagement with Dr Luke Moffett and Dr Adriana Rudling, Queen's University Belfast

JB opened this session giving a background to the pension for the severely injured as a form of reparation for harm done to many individuals, and acknowledgement that for many severely injured people, they were unable to gain a work place pension due to inability to work.

Luke Moffett then delivered a presentation to the Forum on the concept of reparations, proposed an infrastructure that could apply in Northern Ireland and also gave an international perspective from other post-conflict countries.

He advised that reparations are a different form of acknowledgement of harm as it is entirely victim-centred and not dependent on any prosecution or identity of a perpetrator. He outlined that the Victims and Survivors Service is there to support victims but is not a body for reparations in its traditional form as it is subject to criteria and is discretionary.

He noted that although Northern Ireland needs to keep moving forward as a society, it is imperative that we do not leave anyone behind. He emphasised the need to ensure that those who have been tortured and injured are also given acknowledgement and are remembered as well as those who were killed.

The Forum members raised questions in terms of expected numbers who would be eligible for reparation and the channels of access to this. Adriana went on to explain that the nature of reparations is to identify select groups of individuals who have been most adversely affected by conflict but is not in any way designed to discriminate against others, the example was given of the severely injured whose needs were imminent and very present in their day-to-day lives.

The Forum thanked the representatives from QUB for meeting with them.

Meeting closed.

Agreed Actions

1. Action Point: AF to invite Dr Kavanagh to July Forum meeting.