

E. R.

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RBS/286/87

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

I have been trying to think through how the new arrangements might work. Attached are the first rough drafts of papers to the Community Relations Steering Committee seeking agreement to the Central Community Relations Unit's work programme.

I would be grateful for your reactions in general. I propose to discuss the drafts in detail with a few key people in NIO, DFP and DENI.

The most difficult areas are probably:-

1. getting the Unit's place in the "NI System" clearly understood and accepted; and
2. securing recognition of the "audit" role; the draft suggests - only partly tongue in cheek - that the first two audits might cover segregated education and the Irish language; the Unit must be able to pose the awkward questions in such contentious areas if it is to be of any value.

RBS

R B SPENCE

2 September 1987

/JH

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS STEERING COMMITTEE (CRSC)

Introduction

This note forms the agenda for the first meeting of the Community Relations Steering Committee (CRSC) which is scheduled for []. A list of the members is appended.

Role of the Committee

The main role of the Committee is to steer the work of the Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) and in particular to agree the CCRU's programme of work.

Access to Advice

The CCRU will have access through DFP's Policy Planning and Research Unit (PPRU) to academic advice and will be advised by Professor John Darby (Head of the Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster). It is intended that Professor Darby will normally attend meetings of CRSC.

CCRU's Work Programme

Attached is a paper from CCRU which describes the Unit's role and outlines how it proposes to approach its ⁵task. The CRSC is invited to discuss the programme of work set out in paragraph 6.

Programme of Meetings

CRSC will wish to decide how frequently it needs to meet. ~~Regular~~ ^Mmeetings at a quarterly interval would seem to be appropriate, with additional meetings convened as necessary to discuss specific papers.

R B SPENCE

Central Secretariat

September 1987

/JH

CENTRAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS UNIT

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME

Introduction

1. This paper describes the role of the Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) and outlines how it proposes to approach its task. The paper has been prepared as a basis for discussion with the Community Relations Steering Committee (CRSC).

The role of the Unit

2. The Unit has been established within Central Secretariat to advise the Secretary of State on community relations policy. It is envisaged that the Unit's main roles will be:-

Challenge - examining all major policy submissions to PCC and Ministers from the point of view of their possible impact on community relations;

Audit - reviewing at appropriate intervals the impact on community relations of major policies and programmes;

Innovative - developing new ideas about improving community relations and about how best to support those on the ground who are working to improve community relations.

3. The creation of the Unit does not detract from the duty of NIO and NI Departments, in carrying out all their responsibilities, to give a high priority of the objective of improving community relations. Nor does it remove or detract from the powers to provide financial and other assistance conferred on DENI by the Community Relations (Amendment)(NI) Order 1975. Any policies formulated through the new arrangements and approved by the Secretary of State will be sponsored or carried out by the Department or Departments directly concerned.
4. In practical terms, it is envisaged that -
 - 4.1 in day-to-day matters, the Unit will work closely with DENI and NIO's Political Affairs Branch;
 - 4.2 NIO and Departments will consult the Unit in the preparation of all major policy submissions which could have a significant impact on community relations;
 - 4.3 in exceptional cases where the Unit wishes to express a view on a policy submission which has already been made, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield will put the Unit's views forward through Dr Mawhinney;
 - 4.4 the Unit's programme of work will be agreed with CRSC;
 - 4.5 reports being prepared by the Unit will be discussed interdepartmentally through CRSU; there will be full prior consultation with the Department or Departments directly concerned; where resource issues arise, there

will be prior consultation with DFP; the Unit's reports will normally be made available to all Permanent Secretaries and, through Dr Mawhinney, to all Ministers.

5. The Unit will have access through DFP's Policy, Planning and Research Unit (PPRU) to academic advice and will be advised by Professor John Darby (Head of the Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster).

Proposed Programme of Work

6. The following proposals are tabled as a basis for discussion with CRSC on the Unit's programme of work:-

6.1 Explaining the new arrangements

It will be essential to explain the new arrangements for handling community relations issues to all parts of the public sector (including NI Departments, Area Boards, District Councils, RUC and other interested public bodies) and to the voluntary sector. This can be done partly through circulars and letters, but it also requires use of the media through articles and interviews, probably involving the Minister.

6.2 Establishing the challenge role

It will also be essential to establish within the NI system the Unit's challenge role in respect of all major submissions to PCC and Ministers and to require Departments to address the community relations issue in policy papers. This can be done initially by a minute from HOCS to NI Permanent Secretaries and by a minute from SOS to Ministers.

6.3 Review the data base

It is proposed to review with PPRU and Professor Darby the data which is already available about community relations issues in NI and to examine what further information might be collected on a regular basis and what additional research work might be commissioned.

6.4 Policy Paper

The Unit will draft a key paper which would analyse the community relations problem in NI and discuss the broad approach which Government might adopt. (The paper would draw heavily on the Secretary of State's speech on 8 September). This paper might eventually be published.

6.5 Policy Seminar

The Unit proposes to organise a two-day seminar for a carefully selected group of 25-30 key people which would discuss the draft policy paper and help in refining it. There might be a small number of guest speakers. This seminar would not be given any publicity.

6.6 Funding of voluntary bodies

The Unit will mount a study of the existing arrangements for providing financial assistance to the bodies which work to improve community relations and encourage community development and of the case for creating a central resource capacity to assist these bodies. This study follows up ideas in the Frazer/Fitzduff paper.

6.7 Audit Reviews

The Unit proposes to initiate a short programme of audit reviews in

policy areas from the point of view of their impact on community relations. These reviews would be carried out in close co-operation with the Departments involved and the CRSC would be involved throughout the reviews. It is envisaged that the reviews would concentrate on a factual analysis of the area under review and a discussion of the policy options which were available. It would be for Ministers to decide whether these audit reports should be published as a basis for wider public debate. [Two possible areas for audit reviews are segregated education and the Irish language.]

Conclusion

7. The CRSC is invited to discuss the CCRU's proposed programme of work.

Central Community Relations Unit

Stormont Castle

Belfast

September 1987

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