

From: PAUL SWEENEY
14 December 1998

To: Dr Monica McWilliams
Ms Jane Morrice
Councillor Eileen Bell
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Councillor Fred Cobain
Councillor Carmel Hanna
Councillor Mary Nelis
Mr David Ferguson
Dr Graham Gudgin
Mr Colm Larkin
Mr Hugh Logue

Paula: / 38 12
Pl. put me down for this
and return these papers
for the trip to Dublin on Wed.
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CIVIC FORUM STUDY GROUP: TUESDAY, 22 DECEMBER 1998

1. The next meeting of the Civic Forum Study Group will be held in Room 152 on Tuesday, 22 December 1998 at 9.30 am.
2. If you are unable to attend I should be grateful if you would contact me immediately. It was agreed to proceed with the meeting if any one political party is unable to be represented, but to cancel the meeting if any two political parties are unable to be represented.
3. The agenda for the meeting is attached.

Paul

Paul Sweeney
☎ 21015

CONSULTATIVE CIVIC FORUM STUDY GROUP

Tuesday, 22 December 1998
Room 152, Parliament Buildings
9.30am

AGENDA

1. a. Apologies.
2. b. Note of last meeting (action point)
2. Issues to be addressed: A representative from each of the six Parties will make a 5-minute presentation addressing the "Issues to be Addressed" paper issued on 2 December 1998 (another copy attached).
3. Reflections on the examples of other civic fora issued in advance of the 10 December meeting.
4. Arguments for and against a recommendation to the First and Deputy First Ministers that they initiate consultation throughout the community in relation to the establishment of the Civic Forum.
5. Possible meeting with those organisations who made submissions to the First and Deputy First Ministers.
6. Drafting the report for the First and Deputy First Ministers.
7. Any other business.
8. Date of next meeting.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

In advance of the 30 November meeting of the Sub-Group, the Support Team issued a set of papers which included a paper entitled "Civic Forum: Views Expressed to Date and Issues to be Addressed". It was agreed that this paper should be reviewed at the 10 December meeting of the Sub-Group and that a series of prompt questions would be prepared by the Support Team to facilitate discussion – see below.

1. The relationship between the Forum and the Assembly

It is accepted that there will have to be a very close working relationship between the Forum and the Assembly

- Are members content to use terms such as "complementary to" and "assisting the work of the Assembly" in describing the role and functions of the Forum?
- How can the interface between the Assembly and the Forum be managed to the mutual benefit of both organisations? For example, should a standing committee be established in the Assembly specifically for the purpose of managing the relationship between the Forum and the Assembly?

2. Representation

- What organisations represent the business, trade union and voluntary sectors?
- What (if any) other sectors should be represented? (See list in section 3.2 of the Annex B paper issued in advance of the 30 November meeting.)
- Should quotas be set in relation to the percentage of say women (51% of the NI population), youth (40%), people with disabilities (17.4%) etc who should serve on the Civic Forum?

- Should elected representatives be included or expressly excluded from the Civic Forum?

3. Selection

The guidelines for selection (when agreed) will need to be very comprehensive, setting out the number of representatives from each sector, what bodies within each sector shall have representative rights, the criteria for selection and the date by which selections must be made. The guidelines made by the First and Deputy First Ministers must be carefully drawn to ensure that they do not discriminate against any person or class of person on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion, in breach of the selection obligations under Section 24(1) of the Northern Ireland Act.

The Agreement and Act are silent on the matter of who is to select the representatives of the various sectors. It is not outside the scope of those provisions for the First and Deputy First Ministers to incorporate in the guidelines a requirement that they shall select the representatives, whether from nominations or from those persons whom they think should be representatives. However, this would likely prove to be a contentious option, judging from the expressed preference of the sectoral bodies to have nomination rights.

- On balance does it seem reasonable to agree the sectoral bodies and then invite those representative bodies to make their own nominations?
- Is there merit in establishing a selection body (made up of sectoral bodies) whose job it would be to select the full membership of the Forum on the basis of merit from the list of nominees from the sectoral bodies?
- Would an appointment system based on an open recruitment process be preferable?

Number of Forum Members

- On balance does the broad consensus around a body of 50-60 people seem about right?
- What are the merits of a much larger “standing conference” approach?
- Is there merit in providing for powers to co-opt non members of the Forum, based on expertise that they might bring to a given subject matter?

Tenure of Office

- What is the optional term of office (2, 3 or 4 years)?
- Is the principle of rotation of membership accepted?
- Should daily allowances to cover loss of earnings be paid?

Chairperson

- Is there merit in appointing a full-time Chairperson (recruited by public advertisement) or should the Chair be appointed by the members of the Forum?
- Should there be one/two Vice-Chairpersons?
- Should the Chairs be paid a salary/allowances?

Secretariat

- What is the appropriate staffing levels (see suggested staffing complement in section 8.3 of the 30 November Annex B paper)?
- Should the post of Director/Head of Secretariat be publicly advertised?

- Where should the Secretariat be housed?
- *Where should the Forum meet?*

Work Programme

- Is there merit in the Forum focussing its energies on a small number of strategic themes (eg long-term unemployment, social exclusion etc)?
- Should the Forum be encouraged to be innovative and forward looking, rather than retrospective?

**MEMORANDUM OF KEY POINTS DISCUSSED AT THE CIVIC FORUM
STUDY GROUP ON THURSDAY, 10 DECEMBER 1998**

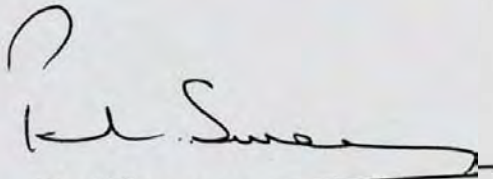
Present: Ms Jane Morrice
Councillor Mary Nelis
Councillor Carmel Hanna
Councillor Eileen Bell
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Dr Graham Gudgin
Mr Paul Sweeney

Apologies: Mr David Ferguson

1. Clarification was sought as to the status of 'special advisers' attending the study group. After discussion it was agreed that 'special adviser' status at this stage was only applicable to the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers.
2. It was agreed that if a representative of a Party was unable to attend a study group meeting a deputy could attend providing the person was an Assembly member.
3. Some of the members present took the opportunity to express their frustration at being ill-informed about the current state of negotiations with regard to the Departmental structures and North/South co-operation. Members (excluding Councillor Hanna) asked that Paul Sweeney would write to the First and Deputy First Ministers to convey their frustration.
4. Concern was expressed about using New Agenda to carry out work on behalf of the study group.
5. The above items expended 45 minutes of the meeting and given that two members were scheduled to leave at 3.30 pm the remainder of the meeting covered some of the questions laid out in Annex B of the 2 December 1998 working papers.
6. On the issue of the relationship between the Forum and the Assembly the emphasis on "complementary role" was agreed. One member expressed reservations about the idea of establishing an Assembly Committee to manage the interface between the Assembly and the Forum – this was considered to be contradictory – it would be preferable for the Forum to manage it's relationship in a direct way with the Assembly.

7. On membership, it was agreed that bodies such as the CBI, Institute of Directors, Chamber of Commerce, NICVA, NIC/ICTU etc were representative of civil society, but not wholly representative, hence the need for additional sub-sections of the population being identified for inclusion.
8. On the issue of membership Councillor Nelis outlined Sinn Féin's idea of panels being elected in each of the 18 constituencies. Ms Morrice outlined the NIWC's idea of 6 thematic panels with 8 members on each. It was agreed that both individuals would elaborate on these models at the next meeting and perhaps exchange papers in advance.
9. Dr Gudgin suggested that the Civic Forum should have a core membership plus an open membership of up to several hundred people who would meet twice per annum.
10. On the matter of elected representatives serving on the Civic Forum, Sinn Féin, Alliance, NI Women's Coalition and Progressive Unionist Party were strongly against this.
11. It was agreed that at the next meeting each representative would take 5 minutes (strictly) each to address the questions outlined in Annex B of the 2 December 1998 working papers.
12. On the issue of advising the First and Deputy First to undertake community consultation, it was agreed to include this as a separate item on the agenda of the next meeting.
13. **Date of Next Meeting**

9.30 am, Tuesday 22 December 1998 (provided that a minimum of 5 Parties can be represented, if not the next meeting will be held at 9.30 am on Tuesday, 5 January 1999.


Paul Sweeney
21015