



**Report of Community Consultation Workshops
on the Review of Public Administration Proposals
for Community Planning**

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I. Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2002 the Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly initiated a review of public administration in the region. In March 2005 a consultation document on the Review of Public Administration (RPA) was published. It contains proposals for health and education structures and options for new local councils with additional powers and responsibilities. One of the proposals is that new councils would be responsible for preparing a community plan in consultation with other service providers and the community they represent.
- 1.2 This is the report of four consultation workshops organised and facilitated by Community Technical Aid (CTA) during May 2005 with the support of funding from the RPA Team towards the costs. The workshops were designed to enable community and voluntary groups to learn about and express their views on community planning within the context of the wider proposals for reform. The report draws together the main issues raised and views expressed across the four workshops. In the main these were about the community planning proposals. However, given the wider context, views were also expressed on the options for local government and the responsibilities new councils might have in the future. These views are also included in this report.
- 1.3 The workshops provided participants with three opportunities to express their views: during a question and answer session; in small discussion groups; and in evaluation forms. This report draws on the views expressed through all three opportunities and includes direct quotations from participants' evaluation forms.
- 1.4 The report has been prepared and edited by Community Technical Aid and will be sent to all workshop participants who requested a copy. The report is also available on the RPA website (www.rpani.gov.uk) and on www.communitytechnicalaid.org.

2. Summary of Key Issues

The key issues arising from the four consultation workshops across the region were:

- There was a general welcome for the Review and its aim of simplifying what in the experiences of community and voluntary groups is a complex and cluttered system of public administration.
- Some participants expressed concern that simplification of structures could reduce both accessibility to services and community involvement - to the detriment of service provision and good decision making.
- Most participants gave a positive reception for Community Planning on a legislative basis if this is robust enough to provide meaningful community engagement and effective partnership working across all agencies and sectors.
- Community Planning was seen by some as an opportunity to move beyond consultation to participation but only if it is effectively framed to ensure that agencies co-operate in both preparing and implementing the Plan. There were expressions of scepticism about the commitment of agencies to better co-ordination and meaningful community participation. Thus many participants emphasised the need to establish a firm and agreed framework from the outset - as the statutory guidelines on Community Planning in Scotland seek to do and as the Council and partners have achieved in Edinburgh through a Compact between the Council and the community and voluntary sector. Such a framework should also address issues of inclusion, diversity and equality.
- In Scotland the councils and their communities are developing local and thematic community plans as sub-sets of council-wide community plans.

These were seen by many participants as an important means of ensuring that policy and decision making takes account of local needs and does not become remote from communities. For many participants local plans such as these would provide some assurance that a smaller number of councils would not result in less community involvement.

- Community Planning was also viewed by a few participants as a means of better linking land use planning with social and economic needs and ensuring new developments are fully co-ordinated with infrastructure and service provision.
- There was a clear recognition by many participants that the implications for the public and community and voluntary sectors are major and that both they and government need to co-operate in appropriate processes of preparation for change and do so soon. In the short term this should include raising more awareness of the proposals, promoting the consultation process and encouraging considered and informed responses.
- The point was made in a variety of ways that government and the community and voluntary sector should continue to learn from Scotland and establish a similar Task Force to advise on legislation, prepare statutory guidelines and promote good practice in Community Planning.
- Many participants across all the workshops made the point that preparation for Community Planning will require training and resourcing for both the community and voluntary sector and other partners and that Government needs to budget plan for this in the next stage of the process. Some emphasised the desirability of the sector pro-actively engaging in both developing Community Planning and the wider process of reform.

3. Format of the Consultation Workshops

3.1 The schedule of workshops was:

- Dungannon - Wednesday, 18 May 2005 from 9.30 am to 12 noon in the Business Centre, Coalisland Road.
- Belfast - Wednesday, 18 May 2005 from 2.00 pm to 4.30 pm in NICVA Resource Centre, Duncairn Gardens.
- Derry/Londonderry - Thursday, 19 May 2005 from 9.30 am to 12 noon in the Junction, Bishop Street.
- Portstewart - Thursday, 19 May 2005 from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm in the Flowerfield Arts Centre, 185 Coleraine Road.

3.2 The programme for each workshop was:

- Introduction and Background - Colm Bradley, Community Technical Aid.
- Proposals for Local Government and Community Planning - Dr Debbie Donnelly, RPA Team.
- Experiences of Community Planning in Scotland - Sallie Anderson, Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (Dungannon and Belfast) and Alison Cameron, Fife Community and Voluntary Service (Derry/Londonderry and Portstewart).
- Questions and Answers.
- Workshop Discussions.

Each workshop lasted approximately two and a half hours and included one hour for small group discussions facilitated by CTA. The programme for each workshop included input from a representative of the community and voluntary sector in Scotland because in 2003 local councils there were given a legislative responsibility for Community Planning similar to that proposed by the RPA.



Dr Debbie Donnelly addressing the Portstewart workshop

- 3.3 Participants were provided with a briefing paper by the RPA Team on Community Planning and a background paper on Community Planning prepared by CTA. These are presented as appendices together with the presentation slides used by Dr Debbie Donnelly to present the wider RPA proposals.

4. Developing the Framework for Community Planning

4.1 Statutory Duty

The RPA proposes that new councils would have a statutory duty to prepare a community plan in consultation with other service providers and the community they represent. The other service providers would be required by legislation to co-operate fully in this planning process.

- 4.1.1 This proposal was positively received by many participants provided, they said, the statutory duty requires meaningful community partnership and effective co-ordination across agencies and sectors. Participants valued the input on this issue from the representatives of the community and voluntary sector in Scotland and expressed the view that much more could be learned from the experience there. The practice in Fife whereby the Community Plan is agreed by all the partners on the basis of consensus was also welcomed. The value of local community plans (16 in the case of Edinburgh) and of thematic plans which take forward cross-cutting or inter-sectoral priorities of the Community Plan (e.g. children's services in Fife) was noted by participants. Some saw local plans as a means of safeguarding community engagement in the context of fewer local councils while others saw them as particularly relevant to issues of rural isolation and access to services. It was also commonly felt that individuals at a neighbourhood or townland level and local community groups would connect and engage more with local plans. For these reasons it seems appropriate that consideration should be given to including a requirement for local plans in the legislation to establish Community Planning.



Alison Cameron making her presentation at the Junction

4.1.2 There was a consistent call across the workshops for agreement on how Community Planning will be implemented before any structures or processes for it are established. The development of a Compact in Edinburgh was viewed as a useful model for establishing the minimum requirements and standards for community involvement in Community Planning. The voluntary sector representative from Edinburgh stressed the value of the sector pro-actively engaging early on in the process of developing Community Planning.

"It's a great opportunity for the community to get involved but it must be properly structured - for example ground rules and accountability."

4.1.3 There was scepticism expressed about the capacity and commitment of agencies to Community Planning as envisaged by the RPA. This scepticism was informed by participants' experiences of community consultation processes which were seen as tokenistic or of partnership structures where the community was not treated as an equal partner.

"[there have been] similar processes before - will this just be the same again?"

"[we] don't get a fair hearing on existing partnerships"

"confidence building is needed"

In a number of the discussion groups and evaluations there were various suggestions and comments on:

- the need to provide a 'level playing field';
- the importance of agreeing processes and building understanding and trust as pre-requisites for Community Planning;
- the necessity to resource the community and voluntary sector's participation in processes and structures;

- the importance of reflecting the diversity of the region in Community Planning processes and structures;
- the need to recognise and be sensitive to sectarian divisions within the community; and
- the value of agreeing the role and accountability of any secretariat established to service Community Planning partnerships in the future.

"The community and voluntary sector needs sufficient resources to meet the new challenges of the RPA outcomes"

Some participants expressed the view that there should be opportunities for the community and voluntary sector, councils and statutory agencies to learn from the work of the Community Planning Task Force in Scotland which:

- advised the Scottish Executive on the legislation which introduced Community Planning;
- provided advice on the preparation of statutory guidance on Community Planning; and
- researched and promoted good practice.

"Task Force appointment as soon as possible"

4.1.4 The view that a Community Planning Task Force should be established with a similar remit to the one in Scotland was reinforced by suggestions that all sectors should reflect on and learn from experiences of consultation and partnership within the region. Similarly comments on the need to begin meaningful early dialogue within and between sectors and with government on preparing for Community Planning suggested a need for a body similar to the Scottish Task Force.

As the next section of the report reflects there were many comments on process issues and embedding good practice in the period leading up to the introduction of Community Planning.

"There is much learning to be gained from other experiences and a real need for skills development across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors"



5. Community Planning Processes and Structures

5.1 Much of the debate in the discussion groups and many of the questions and comments in the plenary sessions focused on preparing for the introduction of Community Planning and ensuring its processes are effective in providing better service delivery. Most of the participants recognised that establishing Community Planning on a legislative basis offered the potential to overcome many of the problems they associate with current consultation and partnership processes. They thus availed of the opportunity to articulate how they believe this potential could be fully realised.

5.2 Some participants stressed the need for Community Planning to use a range of consultation methods as appropriate to different contexts and settings. Others sought to ensure that consultation reached out to individuals and engaged local community voices. The need to provide safe spaces for communities to air their views was identified as was the need to ensure that the ethos of partnership permeated all aspects of Community Planning processes and structures. On a similar note the case for community involvement at both the strategic and local levels of Community Planning was put forward. In other discussion groups the requirements for an increase in community involvement were expressed in terms of moving beyond community consultation to participation and developing collaboration between the community and voluntary sector and others.

"Effective 'community engagement' will be key"

5.3 Other aspects of the potential of Community Planning were also noted by participants including:

- Community Planning could (and should) address the 'gaps' in service provision and unmet needs;

- stronger integration and linkages between local needs and regional policies could be forged;
- strategic planning and decision making by all sectors could become more accessible and transparent;
- monitoring of service provision by the community could be improved; and
- the accountability of all partners could be enhanced.

5.4 Issues relating to the partnership structures for Community Planning were raised at all the workshops with participants drawing on their current and past experiences of partnership structures. Views expressed ranged from the desirability of providing representation for the community and voluntary sector on partnership structures to the sector independently selecting and/or electing its representatives and from the need to ensure all partners can engage on the basis of equality to the need to provide resources to enable the sector to participate. Reflecting on experiences of partnerships prompted some participants to ask whether there will be a role for existing Local Strategy Partnerships in the new environment.



6. Preparing for Community Planning

6.1 Throughout all of the workshops participants identified issues which they believed need to be addressed in preparing for the introduction of Community Planning. These fall into two categories, namely actions which Government should consider taking and challenges for the community and voluntary sector itself.

6.2 The most commonly suggested actions for Government to take in preparing the way for Community Planning included:

- facilitate learning by all sectors from the experiences of Community Planning in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. This should include the establishment of a Task Force with responsibilities similar to those of the one set up in Scotland including the promotion of good practice, advising on legislation and preparing statutory guidelines;
- provide resources to enable the community and voluntary sector to develop its skills and knowledge of community planning and become better prepared to fulfil its role in the Community Planning process;
- enter into early dialogue with the sector on how community participation in Community Planning will be built and what the process of involvement and partnership should be;
- recognise that community involvement will require resources for an infrastructure within the community and voluntary sector which is dedicated to Community Planning and budget plan for this now;
- initiate a 'change management' process to develop across all sectors the new culture, skills, knowledge and mutual understanding required for Community Planning.

"I feel that further public consultation/training will be required as soon as possible in order to make everyone fully aware of the full impact of this review"

"Work needs to begin very soon to be ready for 2009 - this is a long process"

Participants also made the point that more awareness of the proposals for Community Planning should be developed through the media and press and the community and voluntary sector's channels of communication and networking. There was also concern expressed at the potential for job losses within the public sector and Government was urged to ensure the fullest involvement of the Trade Unions in the process.

- 6.3 Participants also recognised that the RPA proposals pose many challenges for the community and voluntary sector itself. Some of these overlap with the actions participants said Government should take. These include learning from Community Planning elsewhere and securing resources to prepare for and engage with Community Planning. The representative from Fife Community and Voluntary Service explained that the sector there found that it was more effective in securing resources as it became better at evidencing its community impacts and demonstrating its effectiveness and added value.
- 6.4 Other challenges identified for the sector centred around the need to consider the implications of Community Planning and the wider RPA proposals for the service delivery role of the sector, its longer term sustainability and its existing structures. On the issue of structures some participants expressed the view that the sector needs to ensure its representatives reflect the breadth of the sector and not any particular interests within it. Others commented that the Review may have implications for representative structures within the sector and that these may need to be improved to ensure they are fit for the new emerging purposes and develop a joined-up approach to Community Planning processes. Finally it was noted by some that Community Planning will impact on many existing partnership structures and this needs to be carefully assessed by the sector.

7. Local Government Reform Proposals

7.1 The community consultation workshops focused primarily on Community Planning within the context of the wider RPA proposals. However participants also availed of the opportunity to comment on some aspects of these wider proposals in particular the options for local government, the suggested Civic Councils and services which may be devolved to the new councils.

7.2 Many participants gave an overall welcome to the Review's aim of simplifying what they experience as a complex system of public administration. Thus, for example, the Review was described as a "positive way forward" and its proposals as "positive" and "the only way forward".



7.3 There were diverging views on the number of new councils there should be. A few participants were concerned that the option of seven councils would result in councils being too remote from local communities and that access to services might be more difficult. Others expressed the view that seven councils may be the most cost effective option, that it might attract more strategic leaders into local government and that it might release more resources for community involvement. On the wider issue of resources a few participants from rural areas said that there needs to be equality in the resource base of the new councils.

7.4 On the RPA suggestion that there might be civic councils there were both comments and questions. Comments included the views that any such councils should be partnership models and not local government-dominated and that they could be a valuable counterbalance to fewer more remote councils.

Questions on civic councils ranged from whether they will have any powers to whether they will replace the existing Local Strategy and/or Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships.

- 7.5 There were a few comments on the proposals for giving the new councils responsibility for land use planning and neighbourhood renewal. Some participants asked how these responsibilities would fit with Community Planning while a few others expressed some concerns about councils having a greater role in determining planning applications. Those with experience of land use planning issues commented that Community Planning could be a mechanism for linking together social and economic needs and planning. They expressed the hope that this opportunity would be taken to ensure that housing and other built developments are co-ordinated with infrastructure and services development.

The RPA consultation report seeks views on whether local councils should have responsibility for the Youth Service. Brief discussion of this issue at one workshop included concluding comments by a few participants that wherever it is located the Youth Service needs to be locally responsive and flexible in addressing the needs of individual areas.

"Accessibility of services is paramount"


- 7.6 Finally a few participants stressed the need for the Northern Ireland Assembly to meet to consider the Review proposals and the consultation process and give its approval to the final recommendations of the RPA.

Appendix I - Presentation of RPA Proposals by Dr Debbie Donnelly
Slide 1

**Northern Ireland Review of
Public Administration**

Voluntary and Community Sectors Consultation on
Community Planning
MAY 2005

www.rpani.gov.uk




RPA
Public Review Authority
Review of Public Administration

Slide 2

Timetable

- Launch June 2002
- First Consultation Oct 2003 – Feb 2004
- Further Consultation 22 March 2005 – 30 September 2005
- Final Decisions – end 2005?
- Implementation through to 2009



RPA
Public Review Authority
Review of Public Administration

Slide 3

**Messages from 1st Consultation
and Research**

- High quality, accessible services for all
- Strong local government with fewer, but larger Councils
- Urgent need for change
- Fewer service delivery organisations
- More collaboration – co-terminosity




RPA
Public Review Authority
Review of Public Administration

Slide 4

Research


- Briefing papers
- Public attitudinal surveys
- Mapping the public sector
- Distribution of the Domestic Property Wealth Base
- Identification of new administrative zones using existing districts councils as building blocks
- Local identity



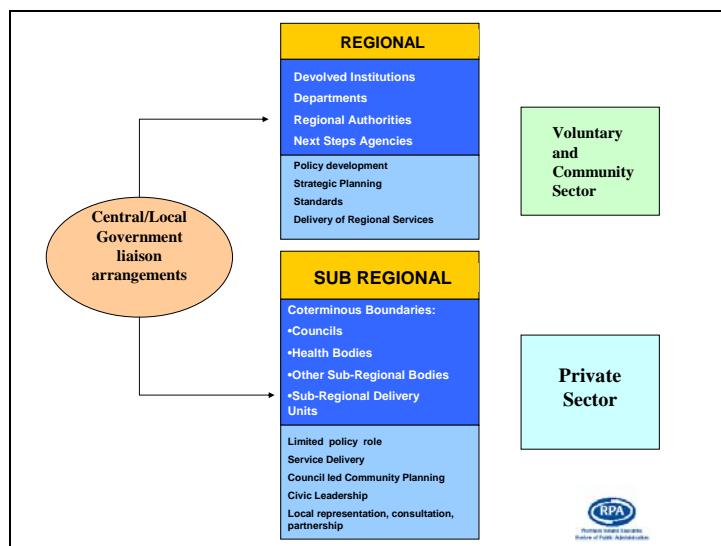
Slide 5

The Second Consultation

- **RESPONSES BY 30 SEPTEMBER**
- Options on Local Government
- Proposals on Health
- Proposals on Education
- Options on QUANGOs
- Human Resource Issues
- Equality and Social Need issues



Slide 6



Slide 7

Local Government Options

- System of safeguards essential
- Stronger local government, with a greater range of powers and functions
- Central role in developing and co-ordinating service delivery through community planning
- Strong civic leadership role
- Three illustrative options proposed, based around configurations of 7, 11 and 15 councils
- Decisions on actual council boundaries will be the responsibility of an independent Boundary Commissioner



Slide 8

Number of Councils - Considerations

- Population for efficient delivery of services
- Co-terminosity
- Equality and Social Need
- Population and Compactness
- Wealth base
- Geography
- Regional Development and Other Strategies
- Local Identity



Slide 9

7-Council Model

- Most efficient for service delivery, but some believe it cannot deliver localism
- Economies of scale
- Full 1:1 co-terminosity
- Would facilitate strong collaboration and community planning
- 'Civic councils' proposed to ensure local engagement and community participation



Slide 10

11 Council Model

- There could be 1-1 coterminosity with some service providers, health bodies being one notable exception, where 2:1 may be possible
- Less effective for collaborative working
- Some loss of economies of scale compared with 7, but may be better in facilitating localism



Slide 11

15 Council Model

- Less efficient in achieving economies of scale, stronger for facilitating localism
- The parliamentary boundary model would provide political co-terminosity but would have shortcomings for service delivery
- Not possible to achieve 1:1 co-terminosity with other service providers, although 2:1 or 3:1 may be possible



Slide 12

Health Bodies Proposals

- The existing 4 Boards and 18 Trusts (the exception being the Ambulance Trust) would be replaced by either 5 or 7 sub-regional health and personal social service agencies
- The 6 existing regional health bodies would reduce to 4
- A regional health forum would be established.
- The 4 Health and Social services Councils replaced by 1 regional body



Slide 13

Proposals for Education

- Front line delivery of education remains unchanged
- Department of Education core role remains, but with significant change in relation to operational functions
- Major changes to organisation of support services for the front line



Slide 14

Key Points on Education

- Department of Education
- Single education services support body
- Curriculum & Teacher support
- Review of Advice services
- Inspection, Monitoring & Research
- Youth Services/Schools' Estate
- Supporting education at local level



Slide 15

Options for other Public Bodies and Executive Agencies

- Two options proposed for public bodies:
 - Abolition, with functions transferred to central or local government.
 - review to minimise number of bodies and improve accountability.
- The future of the 18 Executive Agencies should be left to the returning Executive and Assembly



Slide 16

Change Management

- Managing the impact on staff and developing leadership capacity central to delivering change
- On-going contact with Trade Unions
- Equality has been an underlying principle
- Changes should result in savings in administration costs that would be available for reallocation to front-line services



Slide 17

Equality, social need and rural issues

- Fundamental to the development of the model
- Preliminary analysis suggests there may be some implications:
 - Access to services – vulnerable, disabled, rural
 - Employment – public sector women
- Considerable amount of information in Appendix 9



Slide 18

Consultation events

- **24 May** Community Planning - Chief Executives Forum
Sustaining Communities Conference
- **26 May** Joint Government Voluntary and Community
Sector Forum meeting
- **27 May** Rural Community Network RPA Rural
Consultation event
- **31 May** Rural Womens' Policy group
- **1 June** Concordia RPA Update seminar
- **May – Sept** Meetings with Councils and other public bodies
- **June – Sept** NICVA e-consultation



Appendix 2 - Briefing Paper on Community Planning by RPA

Background on the Two-tier model of public administration

Introduction

A proposed two-tier model of public administration, based on views expressed during consultation and a body of research, has been developed. The model also takes account of the characteristics set out in the terms of reference of the review. A key consideration in the development of the model was the need for a system that would significantly enhance the quality of, and access to, public services and would clarify accountability arrangements. Figure 1 attached and the following paragraphs outline the key features and characteristics of the two-tier model of public administration.

The Regional Tier

The regional tier would be made up of the Assembly, Executive and central departments. In addition, there would be a small number of regional authorities in cases where it was considered appropriate to plan and deliver services at “arms-length” from departments. Executive Agencies, which operate as part of government departments, would continue to deliver services regionally.

The Sub-Regional Tier

The sub-regional or local tier would have at its core strong local government based on council areas, which, wherever possible, shared common boundaries with other public sector service providers. New style Health bodies (described in detail in Chapter 5 of the consultation document) would also operate at the sub-regional tier, as would the sub-regional delivery units of regional authorities.

Proposals on Community Planning

Within sub-regional areas, it is envisaged that public services would be citizen-centred, with all providers working in an integrated way. A local council would have a central role in developing and co-ordinating local policy on service delivery between the major service providers within their council boundary. This would be achieved through the community planning process whereby the council would have a statutory duty to prepare a community plan in consultation with other service providers and the

community they represent. The other service providers would be required by legislation to co-operate fully in this planning process.

The objective would be to develop a co-ordinated response to the identified needs of the population in their area. The community plan would also provide communities with a clear indication of where, how and when services would be provided, and would provide a key central accountability mechanism against which the citizen could measure progress.

Councils in Great Britain which already produce community plans also have an associated “power of well-being”. This power is very wide-ranging and enables councils to spend money on measures that will promote the well-being of their communities. This is seen as essential in the community planning context, in that it allows councils to take actions on issues identified in the plan for which no identified public body has the necessary authority to address. Councils in Northern Ireland have already pressed for this power within the current local government structures. Within the two-tier model envisaged for the future it would be essential for councils to have such a power to enhance their central role in the community planning process.

This proposal has all the key elements of the community planning process being taken forward in Great Britain, but specifically reflects the Scottish approach by placing a statutory duty on other public bodies to co-operate with the council.

Voluntary and Community Sector

The proposed two-tier model recognises the different roles of the voluntary and community sectors, which it is envisaged will develop in scale and importance at both the local and central levels of government. The values and principles underpinning the existing Compact between Government and the voluntary and community sectors offers an ideal platform for deepening further the partnerships between the sectors, public service and central government.

Community planning would provide an opportunity for the voluntary and community sectors to contribute to the development of a strategic plan for the local area and fulfil a role as key partners in the planning, co-ordination and delivery of services. Through these roles the potential future contribution of the sectors could be enhanced, in the development of their communities and neighbourhoods through the more effective targeting of resources to meet the need of their communities and the development of the social economy. This would in turn provide a context for a more sustainable voluntary and community sector.

Local Government Options

Considering the body of research and analysis produced for the review, and following discussions with elected representatives and other stakeholders, the Government believes it is appropriate to base this current consultation on local government on three options. The options considered are based around seven, 11 and 15 councils, all of which are viable. The aim of the review is to find the configuration which best suits the circumstances of Northern Ireland.

It is proposed that community planning will be a feature of the new arrangements for local government irrespective of the number of councils. However, the number of councils may have an impact on the model used by individual councils, particularly in the way in which councils consult locally.

Option 1 - The Seven-Council Model

The potential shortcoming of such a model is that it places too much emphasis on service delivery and does not attach sufficient weight to the issue of local involvement and local identity. In recognising this, the review team developed an innovative approach that they called 'civic councils'. These would not be a third tier of government but would be a development of the area committee structures employed in other jurisdictions. Committees made up of elected representatives from a given area would form the 'civic council' for the area. They would have a role to consult locally, to form partnerships and to gather local views to feed into the main council's

deliberations and undertake assigned responsibilities on its behalf. They would also have a profile in their area and provide civic leadership within it.

Option 2 - The 11-Council Model

In this option it would be for councils themselves to decide whether it was necessary to provide a more local dimension, perhaps through the use of civic councils.

Option 3 - The 15-Council Model

Within the 15-council model there may not be a requirement for more local arrangements such as the use of civic councils.

TWO-TIER MODEL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

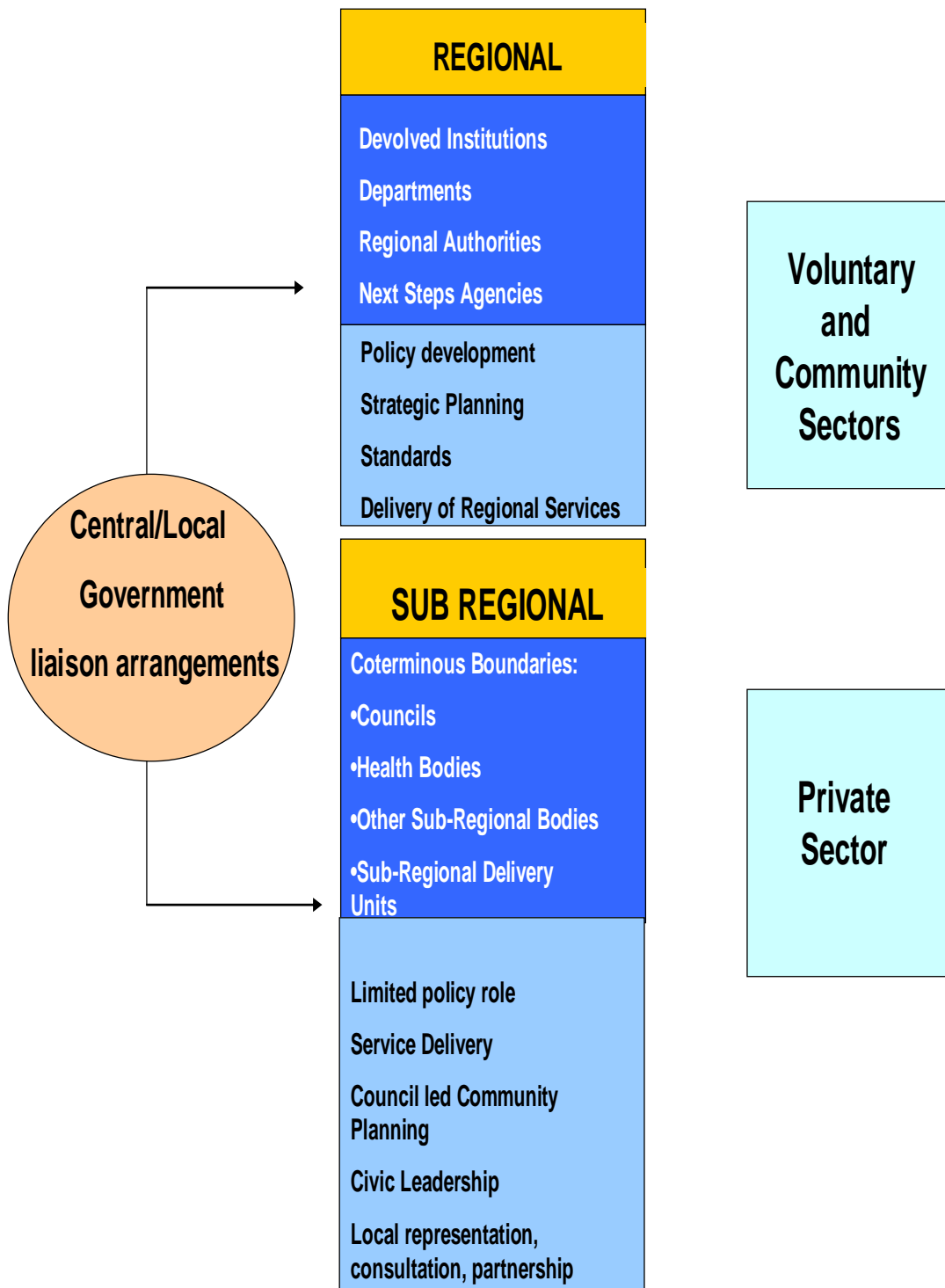


FIGURE 1

Appendix 3 - Background Paper on Community Planning by CTA

I. Introduction

The Review of Public Administration has proposed fewer local Councils with additional powers and responsibilities. The main new responsibilities for local Councils will be: land use planning, urban and rural regeneration, conservation and European Programmes. They will also have an enhanced role in tourism, local economic development, arts and culture, waste and environmental health, leisure and recreation and community development and safety (see extract from Review report attached).

A new responsibility for 'Community Planning' is also proposed for the reconfigured Councils. This is modelled on a similar new power given to local Councils in Scotland a few years ago. The Review proposes that housing, health, social services and education be delivered by agencies. The power of Community Planning will provide a significant tool for Councils to use in influencing the local priorities for these services. The Review envisages that "a local council would have a central role in developing and co-ordinating local policy on service delivery between the major service providers within their council boundary".

2. Community Planning Proposals

The consultation document states that, like Scotland, Councils would have a statutory duty to prepare a plan and statutory service providers would be required by legislation to co-operate. The Community Plan would provide "a clear indication of where, how and when services would be provided". The Review also floats the possibility of "civic councils" which "would be akin to area-based committees of the new larger councils". They would not however be a third tier of government and would not be elected parish or community councils. They would be composed of elected representatives and their role

would encompass local consultation, formation of partnerships and undertaking assigned responsibilities on behalf of the local Council.

3. Voluntary and Community Sector

The consultation document refers to the sectors (plural) in terms such as: "a successful record of working in partnership with central and local government"; "potential conflicts of interest in the sectors between advocacy and service delivery" and "Community Planning would provide an opportunity for the sectors to contribute to the development of a strategic plan and fulfil a role as key partners in the planning, co-ordination and delivery of services. Through these roles the potential contribution of the sectors could be enhanced ... this would provide a context for a more sustainable voluntary and community sector".

4. Experiences of Community Planning

There have been various 'Community Planning' projects here over the years. They were introduced by local community groups and in their earlier forms were, in effect, agenda-setting processes for local lobbying. In more recent years there have been partnership- and statutory-initiated exercises. Recent examples include Community Planning by Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs). The LSPs were required to produce Integrated Strategies for their areas. In most cases these were strategies for spending the Peace funds. However in a few cases attempts were made to do much more and some called their strategies Community Plans.

Finally 'city visions' were developed in the 1990s for Belfast, Derry and Armagh - but they have largely been consigned to history. So the sector has already introduced the concept of Community Planning but experience is mixed. The Review places statutory Community Planning as a core element of the proposed model.

5. Local Councils and the Community and Voluntary Sector

Our Councils lost most of their services (housing, planning, health, education etc) in the 1970s. They do however have some responsibility within their areas for local community development and services, local economic development, leisure and arts and culture. So it is largely in these policy areas that the sector interfaces with Councils. In some cases the relationship is reasonably harmonious - in others there are difficulties. Thus, for example, each Council is required to produce a Community Support Plan demonstrating how it will administer Government funding allocated to it for community development but there are examples where parts of the local community sector have felt largely left out of the process. Currently Councils are not the main source of funding for the sector. Under the proposals the new Councils will be a more significant funding source but by no means the only one. At the same time Community Planning will provide a means of influencing how statutory agencies prioritise the allocation of their resources.

6. The Experience in Scotland

In 2004 Community Technical Aid initiated a study visit to Scotland to learn about Community Planning there in anticipation of it being introduced here. The visit was funded by Concordia and 16 people from the community and voluntary sector went to Fife and to Dundee. The participants found a lot of uncertainty within the community and voluntary sector about the transition to Community Planning. This included concerns about the future availability of funding such as Neighbourhood Renewal. Their report of the study visit suggests how the introduction of Community Planning here can learn from the Scottish experience. Key points are:

- Community Planning needs to give equal weight to achieving community participation and improving service provision. Without this public and community confidence and support will not be built.

- A requirement on Councils to prepare a Council-wide Community Plan should include an obligation to develop locally focused Community Plans (as is the case in Scotland).
- Support and resources to build and sustain meaningful community participation is essential.
- Statutory guidelines for Community Planning are needed and good practice should be demonstrated before any other programmes or processes are merged with it.

The introduction of a Community Planning power for the new local Councils may, like Scotland, create uncertainties for community and voluntary groups and challenge our capacity for partnership and negotiating a future role. However there is also a local history and experience of Community Planning and partnership working which we can learn from and build on in this new context.

Appendix 4 - Participants' Evaluation of the Workshops

At the end of each workshop participants were invited to complete an evaluation form. In addition to asking participants how they learned about the workshops the evaluation form sought their views on the quality of the workshop:

- 96% of participants described the workshops as "excellent" or "good"; and
- 90% said the workshops gave them adequate opportunity to give their views.

Some of the comments on the content of the RPA proposals are presented in the main body of the report. Comments on the quality of the workshops included:

"Very interesting workshop - good participation from all attendees - very well facilitated"

"Very good workshop - there should be more sessions like this to ensure everyone is up to date with developments"

"Great opportunity to air views and to inform local community groups on what effect this will have at a local level"

"Just the right mix of presentations, questions and answers and discussion - good lively debate and hope to engage more with RPA and CTA"

"Will look forward to getting feedback from workshops"

Appendix 5 - Participant List

Billy King	-	Age Concern Coleraine
Elaine McDowell	-	Age Concern Cookstown
Brendan Downey	-	Age Concern Network of Newcastle and District
RG Cummings	-	Armagh and Dungannon Primary Care Group
Michael McGoldrick	-	Armagh/Dungannon Volunteer Bureau
Liz Salter	-	Aughnacloy Development Association
Pat Crossley	-	Ballymoney Local Strategy Partnership
Mirjam Bader	-	Banbridge District Community Network
Pat Ward	-	BDS Ballynahinch
John Downey	-	Brantry Area Rural Development Association
Bob Northey	-	Business in the Community
Muriel Todd	-	Carrickfergus Women's Forum
Mary Sheen	-	Chrysalis Women's Centre
Susan Bateman	-	Chrysalis Women's Centre (Voluntary Sector)
Pat Brittain	-	Citizens Advice Bureau
Jean Henderson	-	Coleraine and District Arthritis Care
Maura Hickey	-	Coleraine Borough Council
Ann McNicholl	-	Coleraine Urban and Rural Network
Tom McElhinney	-	Community Action Network
Eamon Baker	-	Community Development Learning Initiative
Kate Hamilton	-	Confederation of Community Groups Newry
Marcas MacRuairi	-	Cumann Gaelach Leath Chathail
Sarah Friel	-	Derry Local Strategy Partnership
Carol Stewart	-	Derry Local Strategy Partnership
Orla McCann	-	Disability Action
Ciara O'Hanlon	-	Disability Action (Dungannon)
Brian McAuley	-	Dungannon Enterprise Centre
Alicea McDaid	-	Dungiven Community Hall
Sonia Anderson	-	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Loretta McDonnell	-	East Down Institute of Further and Higher Education
Stephanie Holland	-	EGSA Connecting Adults with Learning
Patricia Murray	-	Employers for Childcare
Catherine McCrory	-	Equality 2000 Ltd
David Hunter	-	FACT
Martin Gallagher	-	Gasyard Development Trust
George Lammay	-	Glenarm Village Committee
Adrian McCracken	-	Greater Belfast Community Network
Seamus Lynch	-	Help the Aged
Dennis Ogborn	-	Hollywood Residents' Association
Nicola McCrudden	-	Housing Rights Service
Robin McIlwain	-	Islandmagee Community Development Association
Lyn Moffett	-	Kilcranny House
John Houston	-	Killesher Community Development Association
R Murray	-	Killyfole Development Association
Catherine Doherty	-	Limavady Strategy Partnership

Ian Crozier	- Lower North Belfast Community Council
Oonagh McCallan	- Mid Tyrone Accessible Community Transport
Catrina McNeill	- Moyle Local Strategy Partnership
Ann Creith	- Moyle Local Strategy Partnership
Victor Robinson	- Newtownabbey Community Development Agency
Frances McCandless	- NICVA
Elizabeth Bird	- North Antrim Community Network
Heather Apsley	- North Antrim Community Network
Greg Martin	- North Down Community Network
Christina Duggan	- North South Rural Voice
Kevin Moran	- North South Rural Voice
Chris Williamson	- Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations
Janet Muller	- Pobal
Joyce Rankin	- Portballintrae Residents' Association
Ian Binnie	- Portballintrae Residents' Association
Simon Fingleton	- Positive Steps Community Centre
Craig Cook	- REACT Ltd
Diane Forsythe	- Rural Development Council
Eamon McMullan	- Rural Development Council
Michael Kelly	- Rural Development Council
Anita Flanagan	- Rural Lift for South West Fermanagh
Sabine McAllister	- SAVER/NAVER
Ciara Ferguson	- Shantallow Area Partnership
Kathleen Donnelly	- South Tyrone Area Partnership
Pauline Canavan	- Springfield Charitable Association
Bernadette McAliskey	- STEP
Gerard McFadden	- Strabane Local Strategy Partnership
Mary Daly	- Tara Centre (Omagh)
Kevin O'Carroll	- TRIAX
Patrick McAteer	- Ulster Society for the Protection of the Countryside
Dermot Hughes	- Ulster Wildlife Trust
Jennifer Crockard	- Upper North Belfast Community Empowerment Partnership
James Kerr	- Verbal Arts Centre
Una MacFarland	- Verbal Arts Centre
Lynda Gibson	- Vine Centre
Drew Thompson	- Waterside Area Partnership
Hilary McClintock	- Waterside Area Partnership
Joe Hawkins	- Youthnet

Community Technical Aid is the only region-wide voluntary organisation which provides professional planning and architectural services for community and voluntary groups. We facilitate community participation in planning and support community development by assisting groups to develop the skills, knowledge and infrastructure needed to regenerate disadvantaged urban and rural areas.

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