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FROM: FIRST MINISTER  
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

22 December 1999

DEPARTMENTAL MINISTERS

cc Minister for DFP

*John M*

PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT

We are conscious of the need to make a start on the work required to produce a Programme of Government covering strategic objectives for the life of the Assembly. We need this for our own purposes but also to provide a coherent platform for any negotiations with HM Treasury in the 2000 Spending Review.

We are asking each Departmental Minister to make a first contribution by 14 January. The responses should be addressed to us but copied to the Minister for DFP and the Secretary to the Executive.

This contribution, which would take as read the material in the base line study, should identify a limited number of priority issues within your Departmental responsibilities which you feel need to be included in such a Programme. We would also wish you to identify cross-cutting issues, which you regard as sufficiently important to justify inclusion in a Programme of Government. In formulating your proposals you would need to take account of public expenditure realities. Our Block should increase given the Barnett formula but additions are unlikely to transform our financial prospects.

We hope to produce a paper on the procedures for producing the Programme of Government for the meeting of the Executive Committee on 11 January.

*David Trimble*

FIRST MINISTER

*John Hume*

DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

cc Mr Carrill  
~~Mr M'Connell~~  
~~Mr M'Connell~~  
Mr Brown

## RESTRICTED – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

5. On 22 December FM/DFM wrote to Ministers asking them to identify by 14 January a limited number of priority issues as well as cross cutting issues which should be included in a Programme of Government.

### Process

6. Although responsibility for leading the exercise lies with FM/DFM, there is a clear responsibility on each Minister to participate in and to operate within the framework of the Programme of Government.
7. Ministers are invited to regard the Programme of Government as an opportunity to develop new cohesive policies and programmes which address the needs of the people and to show that locally elected representatives can deliver better government.
8. It is proposed to take the exercise forward in the following way.
  - (i) Meetings will be held during January between FM/DFM and each Departmental Minister on the basis of their replies to the note from FM/DFM of 22 December.
  - (ii) Meetings will be held between FM/DFM and the leadership of each of the Assembly political parties, again during January.
  - (iii) In addition and in parallel to the work on a Departmental basis, a number of cross cutting themes ('joined up government') will be addressed and work will be organised involving Ministers and officials on this basis. (It is noted that this is the approach taken in the UK wide CSR which is now under way). Following further consultation, firm proposals on cross cutting themes will be made in January, with a view to the work being completed in March.
  - (iv) Departmental Committees will be sent appropriate material to aid their own deliberations.
  - (v) Business, trade unions and the voluntary sector will be invited to submit their views on priorities for the programme of government.

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- (vi) There will be regular reports to, and discussion in, the Executive Committee.
  - (vii) A draft Programme of Government will be produced by the Executive Committee in March. This will go to the Assembly.
9. It should also be noted in this context that proposals for a fundamental review of public administration in Northern Ireland will be prepared and brought to the Executive Committee.

### Organisation of Work

10. FM/DFM supported by their Junior Ministers, and at official level by the EPU (together with the Minister for Finance and Personnel and his officials as regards expenditure implications), will be involved in all aspects of the work. They will look at overall priorities, draft the report and oversee its passage through the Assembly. They will ensure the equality-proofing of proposals. Departmental Ministers will have leadership responsibilities for particular themes.

### Decisions Sought

11. Ministers are asked:
- To note and approve the above proposals and arrangements.
  - To ensure that priority is given to this exercise.

TO: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT

1. The Agreement sets out that “the Executive Committee will seek to agree each year ..... a programme incorporating an agreed budget linked to policies and programmes subject to approval by the Assembly .....”  
The pledge of office requires that Ministers participate in the preparation of a programme of government and operate within the framework of that programme.
2. At the Executive Committee meeting of 2 December a paper providing a baseline analysis of all 11 Departments’ work, their aims, objectives, major programmes and financial allocations was introduced as a preliminary background to the task of agreeing a Programme of Government.
3. The Economic Policy Unit has the remit of assisting FM/DFM in determining, within the Executive Committee, the Administration’s detailed strategic goals and inputting them to the Programme of Government and the allocation of financial resources (in conjunction with the Minister for Finance and Personnel).
4. The Executive Committee meeting of 14 December approved a draft budget for 2000-2001. This has cleared the way for work to begin on a Programme of Government for 2001 and beyond. It is proposed that the Programme of Government should contain long term strategic objectives, although firm commitments can only be given for the life of this Assembly and the programme will of course be subject to annual revision, annual incorporation of a budget and annual approval by the Assembly. The long term objectives would provide a context for individual objectives for each year and provide continuity.