

Anne Rainey



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01/03/02 05:00 PM

To: Derek Wheeler/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Claire Cousins/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP

cc: Danny McNeill/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Mary Bunting/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Sheila Bradfield/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Wesley Shannon/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Alison McCann/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP

Subject: ORALS - 4 MARCH

See attached from Bill



1-3-02 - Min to D Wheeler re Orals - 4 March.

Anne Rainey



**Oral Assembly Questions 4 March 2002.**

**3. Mr Alban Maginness (*North Belfast*):**

**To ask the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister what progress can be reported on the North Belfast initiative.**

**(AQO 939/01)**

**Answer:**

A great deal of progress has been made on initiatives in North Belfast. Our key objective remains the promotion of dialogue between local communities.

Our Department, jointly with Dept of Social Development, launched the North Belfast Community Action Project on 3 December. The Independent and impartial Project Team – Reverend Dr John Dunlop, Monsignor Tom Toner and Roy Adams – is consulting widely and aims to have their report to us before the end of May this year.

An Advisory Forum has been established for the Project Team with support from the local MLAs. The Team is addressing issues of community capacity throughout the North Belfast Westminster constituency.

Apart from consultations with public agencies and local community groups, the Project Team is currently engaged on a series of 15 local consultative events that are enabling local people to have their say on how North Belfast develops.

The Project has also identified and is working closely with the key umbrella groups in the area. The Project has also established an outreach advisory service that is enabling local community groups to access funding from European and other programmes. It is working directly with some specific community groups to learn first hand about the types of capacity required for effective community involvement.



The Project has also commissioned some research about social and economic conditions in North Belfast to inform its report. In addition it is accessing information from all Departments in the devolved administration and from the NIO.

We look forward to having their report and expect it to be challenging.

Apart from the work of the Community Action Project, our Department continues to work jointly with other relevant Departments in Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne, and across North Belfast on a range of measures designed to assure the safety of local communities and to improve the environment.

Good progress is being made on many aspects of the proposals we set out in our letter of 23 November last, addressed to the MLAs and local community interests.

The situation on the Ardoyne Road continues to be a major issue for the Administration. A great deal of progress has been made in the area on both sides of the Ardoyne/Upper Ardoyne interface. These have included traffic calming measures in both Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne, protection for houses in interface areas and a range of other developments, including work on both Primary schools in the area.

[Consultations on our proposal to realign the Ardoyne Road are continuing - To be updated nearer the time with latest position.]

In addition a wide ranging support package for local schools of £1.5m is now in operation and the North and West Health Trust has had over £100,000 support for additional counselling. A wider assessment of counselling needs in the area is to be completed urgently.

It has always been clear that we need to find appropriate mechanisms for cross community dialogue to address the vital issues of improving



relationships and building trust. We are pleased to hear of progress in that direction and stand ready to support these initiatives.



**What are the details of the financial resources and support services committed for the North Belfast initiative announced in December 2001?**

**ANSWER**

On 3 December 2001, we, along with the Minister for Social Development, launched the North Belfast Community Action Project, with the aim of putting in place a plan of short, medium and long-term actions to address social and community issues in North Belfast. To date, funding of £250,000 has been committed to this project, to be provided jointly by our Department and the Department for Social Development. The secretariat and support services for the project are provided by a team of seven officials on secondment from the two Departments. The Secretariat is led by a senior official from our Department.

The Community Action Project is one of a number of measures to be taken by the Executive to deal with a range of social, economic and community issues in North Belfast. Other elements of the package include:

- a four-phased programme of road works designed to promote community safety in the Upper Ardoyne area. This will be facilitated by the Department for Regional Development, with the estimated costs of approximately £236,000 plus the cost of any land acquisition to be met by our Department;
- increased support for trauma and counselling services. This will be provided by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public



Safety through the North and West Belfast HSS Trust, with the additional costs of £104,000 being met by our Department.

The Minister for Education announced on 17 December 2001 a package of education measures to address the immediate needs of schools in the area and rebuild community relationships. A total of £1.5m will be available over the financial years 2001/02 to 2004/05 to support the following:

Support for 15 primary schools	£450k
Enhancement of Belfast Board Behavioural Support Unit	£250k
Additional Youth Workers	£500k
Additional after-school provision	£50k
Funding for art and music therapies	£30k
Refurbishment of Wheatfield Primary School	£100k
Development of St Gabriel's Secondary School playing field as an astro-turf facility for use by both communities.	£120k

The Department for Social Development is taking a number of steps to protect housing in the area.

There is already in existence a scheme to protect the homes of social tenants, ie, tenants of the Housing Executive and Housing Associations, living in interface areas, who require security measures to be installed to protect their homes from attacks.

In addition, the Department for Social Development is developing a scheme to enable the Housing Executive to extend its scheme to cover homeowners who are at the greatest security risk.



## **What is the history of OFMDFM involvement in Ardoyne and Glenbryn dispute?**

1. The Department (through its Community Relations Division) has been involved in North Belfast since the summer 2001.
2. In September, following a meeting between Sir Reg Empey and Seamus Mallon and the Secretary of State, the Executive agreed to place a senior liaison official in an office in the area and to establish an Interdepartmental Group to explore how wider social and economic issues might be addressed.
3. Following a series of meetings with North Belfast MLAs and representatives of the Glenbryn community, the Board of Governors of Holy Cross School and the Right to Education Group (lower Ardoyne community) FM & DFM set out in a letter to all these interested parties a series of measures to be put in place. These included actions to be taken by the devolved administration and security/policing measures to be brought forward by the NIO.
4. The protest was suspended at the end of November and since then officials from this department have been working closely with officials in other Departments in the devolved Administration and the NIO to ensure that the measures detailed in the letter to interested parties are implemented.