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ATTWOOD - PARADE FOCUS NOW ON DISSIDENTS AND EXTREMISTS BUT UNIONIST LEADERSHIP MUST TONE DOWN LANGUAGE

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SDLP West Belfast MLA Alex Attwood has welcomed the alteration of a protest parade planned for Belfast on Sunday.

Speaking after a meeting of SDLP Belfast representatives attended by deputy leader Dr Alasdair McDonnell MP MLA, Alban Maginness MLA and members of the SDLP Belfast City Council group, Mr Attwood said pressure must now be applied on dissident republicans, loyalists and far-right groups ahead of Sunday's parade and protest.

Mr Attwood also called on Unionist politicians to tone down their language to help calm tensions after both Sinn Fein and the British Army changed their plans.

He said: “The alteration of the route of the protest march announced this afternoon is to be welcomed.

“These steps could have been taken earlier in order to calm the situation and I very much hope they have the desired effect.

“The SDLP has been continually asking everyone from Sinn Fein to the British Army to take a step back and formulate words and actions that would help ease tensions surrounding Sunday's parade and protest.

“There are other people and organisations that plan to be on the streets of Belfast on Sunday. There is now an onus on dissident republicans, loyalists and far-right groups to make step back over the next 48 hours to help improve the situation.

“Furthermore, in light of the recent developments there is a huge responsibility on Unionist politicians to tone down and moderate their language as we all work to achieving a better outcome.

“The broad view of the nationalist community is that they did not support the military parade in the first instance and do not support the protest in the second instance.

“The SDLP would like to repeat our message that the proper and dignified response is that they should go to neither the military parade nor the protest this Sunday.”

ENDS

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