

## Response to Consultation Document

### 'A Shared Future'

This is the report on a consultation undertaken with representatives of community and voluntary groups in the Armagh City and District Council area held on 17 September. It was done as part of a networking evening for groups and there were 23 people present.

Owing to time constraints, consultees were asked to consider only three questions.

1. What is your vision for Armagh and Northern Ireland?
2. What actions need to be taken to reach that vision?
3. Who should deliver the actions?

## **1 Vision**

- 1.1 The agreed vision was that people could live and work together in peace and where there was a real sense of intra and inter community respect and tolerance.
- 1.2 There was a real wish for city/town centres to become shared/neutral spaces which could lead to the regeneration of the night-time economy and normalisation of social activity.
- 1.3 There was a desire for people to have friendship across the divide without fear of recrimination.
- 1.4 Many participants stated that one vision would be for most children to be educated in integrated schools.
- 1.5 There was an aspiration for law and order to be improved.
- 1.6 Political parties would in the future be non-sectarian and that politicians would be honest, caring and listen to communities.

## **2 Actions**

- 2.1 It was acknowledged that increased funding was not necessarily the answer, learning respect for each other should start at the kitchen table. Responsibility lay initially with parents, then schools and then the wider community.
- 2.2 Citizenship should widely be taught in schools.
- 2.3 Younger people are more included to mix, however opportunities and 'safe places' need to be made available to enable them to do so.
- 2.4 There needs to be more opportunities for people to meet and talk openly on real issues. (Community Fora)

- 2.5 Many people mix at work, but many do not necessarily do so socially. Employers should be encouraged to develop good relations through team building and social activities.
- 2.6 In acknowledging good CR work undertaken, there needs to be much greater promotion of good practice.
- 2.7 Elected representatives need to be varied as role models and show consistency.
- 2.8 Much could be learned from European or other countries which had recovered from a conflict situation.

### **3 Who**

- 3.1 There was a unanimous feeling that there needed to be a 'bottom up' community led approach.
- 3.2 Local Councils had an important role to play in supporting communities, however, it was felt that this should be done within existing resources without extra burden on ratepayers.
- 3.3 Everyone in the community has a part to play – parents – schools – employers – individuals. Part of the problem is that people think its someone elses responsibility.
- 3.4 Churches have an important role to play. They fulfilled an important role during times of conflict, but now have a responsibility to take a lead in promoting peace building and reconciliation.
- 3.5 Government has a role to play, but departments need to create better linkages with each other and with local communities and agencies delivering projects on the ground.