Communities In Transition

Participatory Design Process – Reporting Template

Please complete this report following each participatory design session (i.e. one per session) to record the key of the discussion. Please use the sections below to structure the report. If any area was not covered during the discussion, please note that in the relevant section.

Please return the completed report to cit@cooperationireland.org within one week of each participatory design session.

Area: Carrick/Larne

Theme: Community Safety and Policing

Date: 16/01/19

Number of attendee's: 8

1. **Proposed interventions discussed to address the issues identified in Phase 1 fieldwork?**
   - Rather than discussing the suggested interventions, participants suggested that there needed to be stability and consistency of PSNI community police officers who invest time and effort in building relationships, not only with the community, but also with key statutory and political representatives. The high turnover of police officers was reported to have led to most in attendance being unaware of who their local officers were – and it was felt that this did little to improve community confidence in policing. Although it was noted that the PSNI had increased the numbers of their neighbourhood policing team over the past 12 months, it was suggested by one participant that most of these extra officers (6/7 personnel) were based in Castlemara (which has been heavily impacted upon by the paramilitary feud) and thus this had little impact on Carrick and Larne more generally.

   - Rather than focus on policing, participants strongly argued that the aims of this project were too high to be achievable and actual long-term aims should be founded upon building up community capacity at a core grassroots level in a community development approach (which was linked to improving feelings of community safety first). Governance issues and a lack of capacity to organise and function as community groups are major inhibitors to community engagement in both Carrick and Larne. It was noted that the council began a process more than a year ago of trying to assist with the establishment of community organisations in some of the B4 areas – although it was reported that this has been a slow process and there has been little progress to date. Additionally, it was suggested that there is a considerable legacy of paramilitaries usurping control of community groups

and associations in Carrick and Larne. While it was not felt that this was happening to the same extent as it did in the past, the legacy of this is to discourage 'ordinary' members of the community from getting involved in such groups. It was felt that if one could draw in a 'critical mass' of 'ordinary' members of the community to start an organisation (churches, youth organisations, local business etc.), then such a group would be less vulnerable to being dominated by the interests of paramilitary organisations.

- Some participants pointed to the Housing Executive as a possible pathway to facilitate engagement with the community (for example by starting a tenant's association). It was suggested that focusing on community safety through initiatives such as safer street lighting, cleaner neighbourhoods etc., would be extremely useful ways to build relationships with the community before trying to make inroads on 'lawfulness' and other more ambitious programme goals. Given there are very few community organisations at present in the B4 communities in Carrick and Larne, there are few ways or means of gaining access to the wider communities for such sensitive work.

- This initiative should be mindful of the work already being undertaken by the PCSP and Council in the areas of Larne and Carrick. It was suggested that the Locality group emerging from the PCSP in previous years was a very effective means of getting statutory agencies around the table (it had 25 representatives on it) – but restructuring of statutory organisations in recent years had led to the loss of such useful forums which was a detriment to the community.

- Given the difficulty of attracting community members to public events it was suggested that it may be easier to collate a virtual community as with the Larne Regeneration Group. However, one participant noted that while such virtual technology could be useful as a 'hook' to get people involved, there still needed to be face to face interaction in terms of engagement.

- It was also suggested that statutory organisations needed to 'step up to the plate' and support the establishment of local groups with admin support, guidance etc.

2. **Comments on current community capacity to address issues identified?**
   - Capacity within communities is extremely low in the B4 areas and the significant structural changes within Council, police (retirement of officers) and the PCSP has severely impacted on community-statutory-police relationships. It was generally felt that this community capacity needed to be developed first before significant work take place.

3. **Outcomes that participants suggested these interventions would achieve?**
   - Tangible change within the community rather than parachuting money in that will have no legacy or impact in tackling paramilitarism.
   - Creation of community organisations that are resilient to paramilitary coercive control.

- Historically funding applications from Carrick/Larne areas have been extremely low, an indicator of increased community capacity could be an increase in eligible applicants from each area.

4. How did participants suggest will we know if these projects/interventions have succeeded? (indicators/measures)
- Visible engagement between police and community.
- That when politicians, community organisations and even local people are asked who their community police officer is they will be able to respond correctly with the name of an officer.
- From a policing perspective, participants commented that recently appointed officers have no local knowledge or awareness and a measurable outcome could be increased community recognition amongst police officers.

5. **Target beneficiaries/participants of the suggested interventions?**
- Police officers
- Community
- Community groups
- Statutory organisations
- PCSP

6. How did participants suggest these projects/interventions will build the capacity/capability in the community?

Establish groups where there are none (e.g. Antiville/Craigyhill). It was reinforced on several occasions that with few community organisations there are very limited pathways 'in' to grass-roots communities to engage in education work/workshops etc.

7. How did participants suggest these projects/interventions will support the overall objectives of the Tackling Paramilitarism Executive Action Plan…?
  a. **Paramilitarism has no place.**
  b. **Citizens and communities feel safe and confident.**
  c. **The public support and have increased confidence in the justice system.**
  d. **Support is available for those who wish to move away from paramilitary activity and structures.**

It was felt that the programme at present needed to be framed around issues such as community development and health and well-being rather than paramilitary centric. It was felt however that by building up community capacity first, objectives b and c above could be achieved first, before addressing a and d.

8. Any dependencies identified by participants?

Two key issues were raised by participants in relation to this question. Firstly, the challenges and tensions of policing paramilitary feuding and the impact this has on delivering community policing. Secondly, the poor relationships and lack of trust between statutory agencies (particularly the Council) and the community is a major impediment to the sustainability and effectiveness of any interventions within this programme.

9. Any risks identified by participants?
- Any groups formed may be subject to coercive control of paramilitaries. It was suggested that groups needed to be assisted to develop a 'critical mass' of 'normal' community members to help prevent this.
- Funded interventions are tendered for without sufficient and necessary consideration given to building the foundations within the community. It was emphasised that the foundations and relationships must come before any funded projects - otherwise the interventions will not be effective.

10. Any other comments made by participants?
- No PCSP members in attendance due to a clash of events with a PCSP meeting
- No police representatives in the room
- No community members from either Carrick or Larne in the room
- "We need to get community groups up and running before anything regarding policing and community safety will have traction".
- Need a critical mass of trusted representatives (Church leaders / politicians / statutory agencies) who can bring expertise and guidance to embryonic community groups to enable them to withstand paramilitary attempts to assert control.
- A number of participants noted the 'positive' atmosphere in the town associated with the success of the Larne football team – and in particular, the support provided by 'Purple Bricks' (the owner of whom now owns Larne FC) to supporting the local community – e.g. sponsoring the Music Yard where local residents (including young people) can participate in music, drama and the arts.
- It was felt that the language of 'tackling paramilitarism' was perhaps one reason to explain the lack of community attendance at the event. Other reasons include apathy and how news of the event was publicised/disseminated. It was also noted that residents of Larne were unlikely to attend events in Carrick, and vice versa. It was felt that a more appropriate 'way into' local communities was to promote community development

11. Is a further follow-up workshop required? Please provide details.

It was noted by participants that attendance at the meeting was low and there was little community representation. It was also noted that there were no police officers

or PCSP members in attendance – although it was suggested this might be as a result of a PCSP meeting also being scheduled at the same time as the PDP event.