



## Engagement Notes

Stage one: Economic Theme

Community planning engagement notes containing a synopsis of results; Identifying issues relating to economic concerns following stage one of the community involvement process

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# COMMUNITY PLANNING

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: STAGE ONE, ECONOMIC THEME

### 1.0 Introduction

Part 10, Section 73 of the *Local Government (NI) Act 2014* outlines that the council and its partners must ensure community involvement in the development, implementation and review of its community plan and ‘*seek the participation of and encourage the person’s mentioned in subsection (2) to express their views, and take those views into account in connection with – (a) community planning (b) the production of a community plan for the district; and (c) the review of community plans*’. The persons outlined at section (2) are ‘*(a) persons resident in the district: (b) persons who are not resident in the district but who receive services provided by the council or one of its community planning partners: (c) representation of relevant voluntary bodies: (d) representatives of persons carrying on businesses in the area: (e) other persons who, in the opinion of the council, are interested in the improvement of the district’s social, economic and environmental well-being.*’

In facilitating the **community involvement** requirement contained in the Local Government (NI) Act at Section 73, a series of engagement methods were adopted and implemented by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council. The purpose of was to collate the views of the persons outlined in the legislation at subsection (2) and to ensure representation from the new Fermanagh and Omagh District in the identification of priority issues representing all section 75 groups outlined in the NI Act 1998 . Section 75 representations were monitored by the completion of Equality Monitoring Forms (*Appendix 1*) to assist in identifying gaps where more specific engagement may be required in stage two and three of the process.

The engagement will be undertaken over three stages; stage one to present and discuss the data analysis and identify key issues; stage two during the month of September, to present the initial findings and to prioritise the issues which have emerged and which are evident in data findings; stage three during the month of October, to agree what long term outcomes might look like and how progress and performance will be measured.

## 2.0 Engagement Process



The contents of this report reflect the community planning engagement process of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, in relation to the social **issues identified during stage one consultation. Public workshops were held** to seek participation from interested members of the community in relation to community planning on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 in Omagh Leisure Centre and 27<sup>th</sup> July Castle Park Leisure Centre 16<sup>th</sup> July in Dromore Community Centre. In addition, an event took place and 10<sup>th</sup> July in Community House Omagh with key stakeholders, specifically in relation to social issues. Public events were open to all to attend and were promoted and advertised through a wide variety of media. 53 participants took part in total at public events. An additional public workshop which combined social, economic and environmental issues was held 29<sup>th</sup> July in the Bawnacre Centre, Irvinestown, and 38 participants took part in the discussion.

The results presented below also take into consideration the outcomes of an online survey through the Council's website and social media pages, which ran during the same period as the public events; 50 surveys were received and validated. In addition four road shows took place; two of which were held at both Asda's in Omagh and Enniskillen from 9.00am until 5.00pm during the month of June; and the other two at both agricultural shows in Omagh and Enniskillen during the months of July and August. The road shows generated 121 survey responses. Some respondents submitted additional supplementary emails following public meetings which have also been considered.

## 3.0 Public Events

### 3.1 What is Community Planning?

Ensuring consistency in approach, attendees were informed at all public events what community planning in NI should look like and what the legislation requires. Members were advised that the NI definition of Community planning states ‘a council must – (a) initiate: and (b) having done so, maintain, facilitate and participate in, community planning for the district. Community planning for a district is a process by which the council and its community planning partners – (a) identify long-term objectives for improving –(i) the social well-being of the district; (ii) the economic well-being of the district; and (iii) the environmental well-being of the district ; (b) identify long-term objectives in relation to the district for contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in NI; and (c) identify actions to be performed and functions to be exercised by the council and its community planning partners’. Attendees were given a brief overview of the process to develop and agree a community plan adopted by Fermanagh and Omagh District alongside a timeline for implementation.

### 3.2 Data Summary

Smart Region collated data and statistics on behalf of the Council which identified priority areas in relation to employability skills, jobs/ support for businesses, infrastructure and the economy in relation to the economic theme. The initial findings attached at <http://www.fermanaghomagh.com/communityplanning/community-planning-data-gathering> were presented to attendees before breakout sessions progressed to discuss key issues.

Attendees were then asked to break into discussion groups, where trained facilitators asked three specific questions relating to high priority concerns that the statistical data had identified, attendees were encouraged to question the validity of the statistics based on personal experience and local knowledge and to identify the key issues which they felt the data identified or which they felt were relevant to the area. The online survey also directed respondents to the data sheets before allowing completion of the survey.

The diagram below outlines the high level topics identified and the questions used.

Economic Theme	Questions
<b>Employability Skills</b> <b>Jobs/Support for businesses</b> <b>Infrastructure</b> <b>Economy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thinking of what you have heard today, what do you see as the main issues?</li> <li>2. What currently works well?</li> <li>3. What, collectively, needs to happen to bring about improvements?</li> </ol>

### 3.3 Key Issues Identified through engagement process in relation to economic issues

Outlined below is a synopsis of the issues raised in relation to economic concerns during stage one of the engagement process.

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM ENGAGEMENT EVENTS : ECONOMIC ISSUES	
<b>1. Based on the evidence presented, the following main issues were identified:</b>	<b>Employability &amp; Skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited pool of skilled people; need for a shift in focus from academia to more vocational training courses; need to re-educate on the importance of ‘traditional’ roles (and skills) i.e. plumbing, electrician etc.</li> <li>• Soft/life skills not valued and/or recognised such as skills acquired through membership</li> </ul>

of/involvement in Girls/Boys Brigade, Young Farmers, and Brownies etc.

- No communication between employers and training/education providers; the importance of linking in with employers to identify needs in terms of skills as well as job opportunities and training/education providers providing courses to meet the skills needs of employers; the level of training (i.e. Level 1) offered does not meet the requirements of employers (i.e. minimum Level 3); no career structure (opportunities for progression); culture of re-hiring people who are/have re-tired.
- Wide range of courses/support on offer however there is no central organisation/body with responsibility for co-ordinating learning/development/training opportunities (including educational and government supported initiatives) for the District; and those that are available could be more widely promoted/ marketed.
- Need to re-think the role of Careers Advisory Services (in schools and generally).
- How to make employment an attractive option for young people (in general and those on benefits) and how to make young people an attractive option for employers; agriculture is not an attractive career for young people.
- Self-employment and the role of unconventional businesses (e.g. working from home) is undervalued.
- Lack of investment in 'employees' and the link between this and the growth potential of businesses.
- Potential for growth of the tourism industry is linked to the need to invest in expertise in this area (i.e. appropriate training such as Blue Badge scheme, skills etc).
- Sell the 'quality of life' to encourage and attract investment.

#### **Jobs/Support for Business**

- Lack of opportunities for distance working (and learning)/'hot desking' and this is compounded by



inadequate infrastructure (transport, technology etc).

- Limited employment opportunities/job creation (apprenticeships, training, business start-ups, re-training); low paid jobs – ‘the working poor’ and a lack of professional/higher paid jobs (which is what fuels commuting).
- Business start-up rates are high but survival rates are low; cost of operating/issues of affordability for a small business (rates, rent, electricity etc.); lack of incentives to encourage growth.
- Need to market/promote the support that is available for businesses; clarity around what the Council’s role is in terms of supporting business; need for a system to be able to identify businesses that have growth potential; ability to adapt support offered as businesses evolve/grow.
- Lack of support for agri-businesses; lack of investment in niche markets such as in the food sector (linked to food tourism).
- Social enterprises are not in competition with private enterprises i.e. important role for both and both should be valued.

### **Infrastructure**

- Vacant/unused/underutilised properties/sites (e.g. school sites) and the need for these to be re-developed/used (which could also help to tackle anti-social behaviour and littering); lack of availability of smaller work spaces as an option for business start-ups; lack of quality office spaces with good accessibility (i.e. chrome, glass as opposed to over a shop).
- Car parking in town centres – inadequate, not convenient, costly, issue with the size of parking bays; issue of how to service town centres in terms of car parking; no link between park and ride facilities and town centres (e.g. shuttle bus).
- Town centres are difficult to navigate; traffic flow is an issue.
- De-centralisation of town centres; decreasing footfall; town centres in competition with ‘centres’

e.g. the Showground's in Omagh.

- Poor/inadequate transport infrastructure – road networks and transport links e.g. A4,A5, A32, Enniskillen by-pass, links between District towns; improved transport infrastructure could just encourage more through put; poor public transport provision which is costly and ineffective; the poor transport infrastructure dictates the need to have access to a car; transport provision for disabled users is costly and favours the service provider as opposed to the service user; no rail network; the need for investment in/expansion of St Angelo.
- Broadband provision and cost (poor spots and not spots)/mobile phone coverage (including roaming charges) – ability to compete (in terms of business) but to compete you have to be able to communicate.
- Lack of outdoor recreational opportunities/leisure facilities/family friendly activities (including indoor) in the District.
- Maintenance/upkeep of and investment in existing public footpaths, walking and cycling routes across the District; lack of public footpaths on country roads.
- Issue with regards public conveniences in town centres such as baby changing facilities, seating in shops (social aspect of shopping).
- Cost of electricity/provision of cheaper utilities (and more emphasis on renewable technologies); brown outs an increasing issue for small businesses; gas to the West.
- Social infrastructure i.e. childcare provision.

### **Economy**

- Decreasing footfall in town centres; link between day time and night economy – there is a need for more evening activities including restaurants/a better and more varied hospitality offering.
- Valuing the self-employed economy but importance of having a mix of small, medium and large



	<p>employers/businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role played by town centre traders is not recognised/valued/supported; town centre events should be co-ordinated/planned/organised to maximise the benefit for all.</li> <li>• Lack of inward investment.</li> <li>• Need to market the knowledge economy.</li> <li>• Need to re-invent/re-brand the Fermanagh and Omagh District and the District towns i.e. Omagh is not a ‘bustling market town’.</li> <li>• Need for investment in/to capitalise on natural assets, creative industries, home industries.</li> <li>• Need to capitalise on niche tourism areas such as cycling, angling, walking, scenic drives (e.g. the Sperrins), religious trails e.g. Devenish/Irish Pilgrim Ways; packages/linked experiences.</li> <li>• Lack of consistency of tourism signage (legal v self-erected).</li> <li>• Limited choice and lack of accommodation/bed spaces in the District.</li> <li>• Limited tourism offering/tourism is a poor multiplier; requirement for more/better tourism (including indoor) attractions; improved tourist facilities including quality and availability of tourist literature/information; need to capitalise on leisure/business/community tourism; need for tourism specialisms such as area based for example around a strategic site and investment in same such as investment in Fermanagh Lakelands and water tourism or Enniskillen ‘the Venice of Ireland’; the power of marketing/labelling e.g. the Wild Atlantic Way; role of Tourism NI.</li> <li>• What are the statistics in terms of migration?</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. It was felt that the following approaches/initiatives</b></p>	<p><b>Employability/Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South West College (SWC) in terms of the range of courses offered but these are not matched against the needs of employers in terms of skills/employment opportunities (and there is a greater</li> </ul>

**currently work well**

need to work in partnership with Colleges).

- Quality education provision although two extremes i.e. those who are highly qualified and those who do not possess basic qualifications.
- Attractive place to work/workforce has a good work ethic and is loyal.

#### **Jobs/Support for Business**

- Omagh Enterprise Centre and the role of enterprise centres in general in terms of support provided.
- Welcoming nature of businesses.
- Businesses holding 'Open Days' such as Quinn's.
- Procurement workshops.
- Indigenous Companies.

#### **Infrastructure**

- Strule Arts Centre.
- Park & Ride facilities/John St (Omagh) Revitalisation Scheme (including parking).
- Leisure Centre/Oasis/Ulster American Folk Park/Public Parks/Riverside Walk and walking opportunities.
- Lakes (fishing), natural (unspoilt)/built environment (historic buildings), quality of life.
- Council operated Summer Schemes.
- Community Centres.
- Library.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biodiversity.</li> <li>• Proximity to Border Counties; entry to Rol.</li> </ul> <p><b>Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm diversification.</li> <li>• Small independent retailers.</li> <li>• Indigenous companies.</li> <li>• Diversity of shops.</li> <li>• Range of places to eat in Fermanagh.</li> <li>• Engineering; Waste Recycling.</li> <li>• Wind Farms.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. It was suggested that the following collectively needs to happen to bring about improvements</b></p>	<p><b>Employability/Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for in-house training to fill vacancies (graduate schemes/placements).</li> <li>• Matchings skills needs to training/courses offered (SWC) and job opportunities/availability; parity of esteem between academia and vocational; identify and support industry specialisms in the District such as insurance, renewable technologies; value soft/life and traditional skills.</li> <li>• To encourage 'Champion Employers' and investment in employees/a career structure.</li> <li>• Umbrella organisation/body for the District to co-ordinate all learning/development/training opportunities (including government and other support programmes); a Directory;</li> </ul>

promotion/marketing of available support.

- Review the benefits system in terms of trying to encourage young people into employment.
- Support for/investment in distance working/hot desking.
- Higher paid jobs.

#### **Jobs/Support for Business**

- Improved linkages/better communication.
- First Stop Shop.
- Clarity around the role of the Council in terms of support for business and promotion of available support.
- Rates, rent relief/holidays for small businesses/business start-ups; affordable rental structure; incentives to encourage business growth e.g. tax breaks.
- Support for agriculture, agri-business, farmers including revival of farmers markets/opportunities to sell direct to customer.
- Support for creative industries.

#### **Infrastructure**

- Investment in transport infrastructure including public transport (roads, rail, air) across the District and to the rest of NI (A4, A5, A32, Enniskillen by-pass) ; consideration of the needs of users with disabilities (which includes access to buildings).
- Investment in public footpaths/pathways, walking and cycling routes, trails and associated amenities.
- Investment in technology (e.g. broadband).

- Enterprise/Business zones to attract investment; incubator units; availability of smaller/affordable office/work spaces; utilising redundant assets/sites.
- Car Parking (convenience, duration of stay, cost, size of bays, trolleys for car park not trader); shuttle services linking Park & Ride facilities with town centres.
- Support for renewable technologies (solar panels, biomass, wood chip, zero energy housing); cheaper utilities (domestic and commercial).
- Thriving Hospitals (with specialisms) in the District/possibility of an Air Ambulance.
- Improvements in public conveniences (baby changing, seating in shops, provision of bins to encourage litter disposal/less littering).

### **Economy**

- Investment in 'all year round' facilities/amenities/activities and promotion/marketing of what the District has to offer (being innovative and visionary with regards to capitalising on the natural assets).
- Re-invent/re-brand the District, District Towns i.e. promote the District's personality and the personality of the District Towns (what is the District/towns good at/have to offer); increase footfall/attract people into town centres (day time and night time economies, look to best practice elsewhere); Establishment of a business tourism forum for towns; co-ordinated planning of all town centre events to maximise benefits.
- Investment in cycling, walking routes (e.g. Gortin Glens), religious trails (e.g. Devenish), public parks, family friendly activities in terms of local amenities (indoor and outdoor) but also tourism amenities (indoor and outdoor); linked/package experiences e.g. a mapped/linked drive.
- More accommodation provision/bed space (range of availability in terms of choice but also in terms of affordability); facilities for people wishing to go on 'caravan' or 'campervan' holidays; greater hospitality offering (especially in the evenings) linked to promoting the natural assets.

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunities for decentralisation of jobs to the West.</li><li>• Expand the range of shops in town centres.</li><li>• Review charges levied for hiring council owned facilities.</li><li>• Investment in services; strengthened postal network.</li><li>• Greater hospitality offering.</li><li>• Explore investment opportunities/potential that exist through the Diaspora.</li></ul> |
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#### OTHER ISSUES.

- Importance of interagency working (planning, local and central government etc.); planning to shape a more encouraging environment for business and growth
- Peripherality of the District could be a strength (look to practice elsewhere such as Westport)

## Appendix 1 Equality Monitoring Form

(COPY )

Monitoring Questionnaire

**Thematic Working Group**

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is committed to having due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- ◆ Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- ◆ Between men and women generally;
- ◆ Between persons with disability and persons without;

In addition, without prejudice to its obligations above, the Council shall, in carrying out its functions, powers and duties, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

In order to help assess if representatives from all Section 75 categories are availing of the opportunity to participate in the community planning engagement and working groups, you are asked to complete the following questionnaire:

**Please answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box and/or providing details as required.**

1. **Gender:** Male  Female

2. **Which part of the District do you live in?**

Fermanagh and Omagh Urban



Fermanagh and Omagh Rural

If your not sure; please specify town, village or area .....

- 3. Family Status:** No caring responsibilities  Care for children   
Care for other relative  Other   
..... (Please specify)

If you have indicated that you have caring responsibilities, please confirm the number of hours per week.

1 – 19 hours  20 – 49 hours  50+ hours

- 4. Marital Status:** Married  Single  Divorced/Separated   
Widowed  Partner  Civil Partnership   
Other  .....(Please specify)

**5. Ethnic Origin/Race:**

- Bangladeshi  Black African  Black Caribbean   
Chinese  Indian  Irish Traveller   
Pakistani  White  Mixed Ethnic Group

Other (please specify) .....

Nationality (*please specify*) .....

**6. Disability :**

Under the Disability Discrimination (NI) Act 1995 a disabled person is defined as a person with:

***“A physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial or long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out a normal days activities.”***

Having read this definition, do you consider yourself to have a disability?

**Yes**                       **No**

If yes, please give details of the type of disability

Visual impairment     Hearing impairment     Mobility disability

Communication difficulties     Other  please specify .....

In relation to the above questions, do you have any support needs which could impede your attendance which the Council may be able to address? Please provide details:

.....

.....

**7. Perceived Religious Affiliation/Community Background**

For most of us in Northern Ireland we are perceived to be from either the Protestant or Roman Catholic community. Please indicate the community to which you belong by ticking the box below

Protestant       Roman Catholic   
Other       (please specify) .....

**8. Which category best describes your age?**

Under 16       16-25       26-65       65+

**Optional Questions – You do not have to answer these questions**

**9. Please indicate your political opinion by ticking the appropriate box.**

Unionist generally       Nationalist generally   
Other       (please specify) .....

**10. Please indicate your sexual orientation:**

I am gay or lesbian (homosexual)       I am heterosexual or straight   
I am bisexual       Other       (Please specify).....

**Thank you for your cooperation**