



**Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and
Integration (CSI)**

Ulster Unionist Party Position

Vision

The Ulster Unionist Party believe that creating a shared future, where the people of Northern Ireland work together constructively for their mutual benefit, should be at the forefront of the Executives thoughts over the coming Assembly mandate. It is an absolute necessity that the people of Northern Ireland learn to share their future. Much time has been spent on this subject – it is over 5 years since the Executive decided to revisit the issue of a shared future – and we must begin to make real progress.

The Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Consultation Document was an opportunity missed but we believe that this new Assembly term presents an opportunity to drive this important Strategy forward. There seems to be a change in attitude in Northern Ireland with the reaction to the tragic murder of Constable Ronan Kerr as well as the widespread condemnation of the violence in East Belfast over the summer indicating that the vast majority of people want to move towards developing a truly shared society through the fostering of closer working relationships with one another.

David Cameron, during his visit to Northern Ireland in June, spoke about the need for a shared future as opposed to a shared out future and it was encouraging to hear the Prime Minister using the language of the Ulster Unionist Party on this issue. The cost of division in Northern Ireland has been estimated at around £1.5 billion a year and this figure can be drastically reduced through an effective CSI Programme which provides a framework for Departments to put practical measures in place to encourage Cohesion, Sharing and Integration throughout our society.

This strategy needs to be long term – at least 10 years – and it needs to set out robust actions which need to be taken forward by each relevant Department, Agency or Body as well as short, medium and long term actions, targets and indicators to enable performance to be measured. It is essential that a CSI document tackles the specific issues of sectarianism and racism whilst taking into account other strategies, such as racial equality and sexual orientation. It is also important that the document seeks to build on the good work currently be done within the community and voluntary sector and civic society throughout Northern Ireland.

We have set out below a number of specific areas which we believe are fundamental and must be included within a CSI document. However, the Ulster Unionist Party recognise the need to develop shared communities in every aspect and only through a combinations of the issues outlined below can we achieve that ultimate goal.

Shared Space

Creating and supporting shared spaces within our communities is of fundamental importance if we are to build a shared future for Northern Ireland. Shared housing and education are important aspects of this which are dealt with separately below.

Shared space should begin with integrated town centres where activities such as socialising and shopping can be enjoyed by all regardless of cultural differences. The key is that all in society, regardless of how they differ, feel they can partake in such activities in a safe environment and free from discrimination. The live site big screen currently located in the grounds of Belfast City Hall is an excellent example of this.

Peace walls in Belfast have become symbolic of the segregation within our capital city and also in other parts of Northern Ireland. Indeed there are more of these walls in existence now than at the height of the troubles. The Ulster Unionist Party believes that for communities to live peacefully together, they cannot be divided so symbolically. We believe that, where it is appropriate to do so, we must start looking to remove these barriers from our society through the regeneration of interface areas. We need to develop local and national strategies to build the trust and relationships necessary for the people in these areas to have confidence to remove the barriers.

The Ulster Unionist Party also recognises that division exists in many rural areas as well as towns and villages across Northern Ireland. Segregation between sections of the community is not confined to interfaces or urban areas. The Community Relations Council highlighted this in a report entitled 'Beyond Belfast' and we believe that a CSI strategy must tackle the issues identified within that research report.

Shared space should also be extended to sports groups that could benefit from shared facilities on the basis of joint needs. This would help shape a shared future for Northern Ireland through participation in sporting activities in close proximity to one another. Efficiencies could also be delivered at a time of fiscal constraint as well as higher quality facilities. Shared facilities in this respect could relate to pitches, changing rooms, physiotherapists etc. We need to identify a strategy to carry this through. On that note, we also see the failure to produce a new shared sports stadium for next summer's Olympics as a missed opportunity and we must work to ensure there is no repetition of such failure within a sporting context at grassroots level.

Shared Housing

Housing is a priority issue for the Ulster Unionist Party. The continued decline in production of social housing places more and more strain on low income households as they are forced into a growing and largely unregulated private rental market.

However, **there are deeper rooted problems within housing in Northern Ireland due to the fact that in many areas housing is strictly segregated.** Whilst some areas are clearly not ready for shared housing and this cannot be forced under any circumstances, Northern Ireland cannot move forward on the basis of a shared future without beginning to address this issue. Expertise needs to be built up in this area and integration encouraged.

An example of the disunity in Northern Ireland as regards housing is Girdwood Barracks in North Belfast. Plans were drawn up to build 200 social homes on this former military site at a cost of £20 million, however, this project could not go ahead until there was inter-community agreement as the site is at an interface between unionist and nationalist areas. This has now been shelved by the DUP Social Development Minister.

Practical solutions to problems with segregated housing need to be found. These may include the facilitation of outcomes to disputes such as those seen in Girdwood Barracks by local councils and communities as well as a clear attempt to advance shared housing where possible by the Department of Social Development which has overall control and responsibility for preparing and directing social housing policy in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has adopted a twin track approach to developing shared areas; firstly through the social newbuild programme and secondly through existing housing areas:

- The Shared Future Housing initiative aims to develop neighbourhoods where people can choose to live regardless of religion or race. The first mixed community social housing scheme in Northern Ireland in a generation was launched in County Fermanagh in 2006. 20 families on Carran Crescent outside Enniskillen signed up to a charter for their community and no more than 70% of any one religion is allowed.
- The Shared Neighbourhood Programme works with existing communities to develop shared neighbourhoods. Several housing areas across Northern Ireland have already committed to participating in this programme, including Springfarm in Antrim, Lissize in Rathfriland, Knockmore/Tonagh in Lisburn, Gortview/Killybrack Close in Omagh and Ballynafeigh in Belfast.

Both these NIHE projects should be encouraged and taken on further as there is still much to be done. Work on this could start immediately.

However, **in order to fully address this problem we need to rid our communities of paramilitaries** as these gangs often orchestrate trouble for their own means. **We also need a long term housing strategy which changes the housing estate system** in order to break the cycle of crime which can often emanate from these areas with criminal justice costs, educational underachievement, poverty and health inequalities being the knock on effect of these specific circumstances.

Shared Education

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that a debate is needed in the Assembly on the issue of creating a shared education system in Northern Ireland. Such a system has the potential to alleviate divisions within our society. Part of our education policy 'Every Child a Cherished Child' promotes shared education as a contributing factor to a shared future. The overall aim is to have a single education system in Northern Ireland but we need to work towards that and shared education is where that can start.

Too often children in our society progress through the education system with little understanding or knowledge of other cultures and this adds to the division which is apparent within our society. Controlled and Maintained schools operate in their own silos often with no interaction with each other.

A shared education system can form the basis for our children to share and learn with children from other cultures and backgrounds on a daily basis. However, parental choice must also be a priority in any education system. The Lisanelly campus in Omagh is an example where a number of schools can relocate and share facilities and the Ulster Unionist Party want to see more projects such as this being taken on. However, consideration must be given to schools which are already established. An example is Down High – a predominantly protestant school within a Catholic area. If this was to change it would actually adversely affect community relations in that particular area.

In the interim we can increase sharing of lessons, sports teams and sports facilities between schools. This is currently done in Fermanagh, for example, where Ballinamallard and St Columban's Belcoo Primary Schools take part in a series of shared activities. We should also be seeking to develop a strategy for more integration at play group level.

Cultural Issues

The Ulster Unionist Party recognises that Northern Ireland has a diverse cross section of cultures. In order to progress a programme for cohesion, sharing and integration we must understand and accept this cultural diversity and indeed use it to our advantage. It is critical that culture is not used as a political weapon so that it can be developed and enhanced for the betterment of the people and economy of Northern Ireland.

We will not impose our party political ideology in the arts or any artistic organisation. **We wish to see a Regional and Minorities Language Strategy which encompasses the needs of Ulster Scots, Irish, Chinese, Mandarin, Polish, Lithuanian and Bulgarian as well as sign language.** Such a strategy should not be solely based on or limited to one particular culture or ideology. The Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure should adopt this inclusive approach. Unfortunately the Irish language has been politicised and prioritised and a fresh approach to cultural diversity is needed. The Ulster Unionist Party is also keen to explore the merits of a Culture Strategy of which language would be a part.

Expression of cultural heritage is fundamental within a CSI Programme. **There are outstanding issues to be resolved in respect of parading and the necessary change could be set in motion by the CSI strategy.** Whilst we recognise the difficulties which some have, the rights of those who parade should be respected and a mechanism, other than the current Parades Commission, needs to be agreed. We need to resolve this as far as possible and we must bear in mind that there are very few contentious parades throughout the whole of Northern Ireland. Cultural heritage must also be supported through archival services as well as, for example, bodies such as the Ulster Scots Agency.

Flags and emblems are still the source of much debate in Northern Ireland. **The Ulster Unionist Party would like to see a new agreed protocol, with communities involved at all stages, on the flying of flags.** This would help reduce the likelihood of rioting or tension over such matters.

However, there are various examples in Northern Ireland where issues relating to flags have been agreed by communities and this is ideally the best way forward.

Northern Ireland is rich in cultural history and this opens up the possibility of increasing our tourism potential in this area. **The Ulster Unionist Party believes that this tourism potential needs to be harnessed and investment must therefore be allocated to this vital area.** This is especially true given that tourism in Northern Ireland has suffered in recent times with figures showing 300,000 less tourists visiting in 2009 compared to 2008. Increased cultural tourism not only brings about economic benefits but also improves confidence and creates more understanding about other cultures. Further to that, **we also believe that it is impossible to have a serious economic strategy for Northern Ireland without a CSI Strategy.** We need to ensure that Northern Ireland is an attractive place to visit, work and live.

Hate Crime

Hate crime can take many forms be it sectarian, racist, religious, disability related or against the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender community. Hate crime is a serious problem and we must respond accordingly.

The latest annual figures for Northern Ireland show that the number of incidents with a hate motivation from 1st April 2010 to 31 March 2011 stood at a combined total of 2571. This is a decrease of 577 incidents, from 3148 in 2009/10. The vast majority of these incidents displayed racist or sectarian motives.

The number of hate crime incidents recorded by the PSNI fell for five of the six motivation types and this is an excellent result especially given the significant reductions which can be seen in racist and sectarian related hate crimes. However more needs to be done, particularly in the area of homophobic hate crime which was the only motivation type where the number of incidents actually increased. It is also important that public leaders do not enflame the situation.

As regards the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) detection rate; sectarian and transphobic detection rates were up on the previous year, whereas racist, homophobic and faith/religion and disability detection rates have reduced from the previous year. Whilst sectarian hate crime is the most prevalent and the increased detection in this area is most welcome, the PSNI must seek to improve its performance in this respect as much of this incident type still goes undetected.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that hate crime must be tackled through linking together a number of strategies and agencies and a CSI Strategy should reflect this – OFMdFM have failed to do this in the last CSI document. Some examples are outlined below:

- The PSNI must work to improve the under reporting of such crimes and should also consider the re-launch of their 2008 'Anti-Hate Campaign' which was very successful.
- The Department of Justice have included hate crime as an integral part of their new Community Safety Strategy –'Building Safer, Shared, Confident Communities' and the importance of this part of the Strategy should not be underplayed. The imminent Victims Strategy from DoJ should also look at hate crime in detail.

- The Unite Against Hate Campaign has achieved considerable success in its objective to create 'A peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all.' More projects such as this need to be encouraged, and funded adequately, throughout Northern Ireland.
- Partnership working has been shown to be effective in combating hate crime. An example of this is the Hate Incidents Practical Actions Scheme (HIPA) where DoJ work in partnership with the PSNI and NIHE in providing support to victims of hate crime in their homes, or practical help is given if an individual's home has been damaged as a result of a hate incident.
- The work of the Irish Football Association in grassroots and senior football as well as working in collaboration with other sports to tackle issues such as sectarianism.

East/West, North/South and European Issues

Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom and links are strong with Westminster and the other devolved administrations. This can be seen through various examples of cooperation such as the British-Irish Council. This cooperation is vital in maintaining the cultural heritage and beliefs of those in Northern Ireland who are Unionists or indeed the growing number of people who do not vote for Unionist Parties but who would still prefer Northern Ireland to stay within the United Kingdom.

There is also a requirement within the Belfast Agreement for North/South engagement and this is important given our land border with the Republic of Ireland as well as various economic links and matters of mutual interest regarding security issues. The North South Ministerial Council provides the opportunity for dialogue and cooperation in this regard.

The Ulster Unionist Party also recognises the opportunities and benefits that stem from membership of the European Union. Having elected representatives from Northern Ireland in Brussels can be of great advantage and indeed European Funding makes possible a number of community projects and events in Northern Ireland.

The links which are present in all three areas mentioned above are important in ensuring that cultural diversity and differences in lifestyle within Northern Ireland are promoted and nurtured at the highest levels of Government as is working with the USA and emerging economies.

It is also necessary to address the issue of identity. In the context of Northern Ireland we have British, Irish, Northern Irish, Ulster and European and we need to create sharing and integration between all. It is fundamental that there is respect for whatever people want to classify themselves as.

Dealing with the Past

There have been renewed calls for some kind of 'Truth Commission' in Northern Ireland following a number of high profile inquiries. **The Ulster Unionist Party is acutely aware of the need to deal effectively with the past and indeed it represents the single greatest challenge for all political parties as we move forward** and we believe that ideally a CSI Strategy would deal with this issue.

However, we are also mindful of an agenda to rewrite history and that will simply not be allowed to happen. Such a process would need to be inclusive and this would undoubtedly be difficult given Sinn Fein's lack of cooperation with the HET and current inquiries as well as the lack of admission from the Sinn Fein leadership about their past. It seems clear that either we draw a line under the past or we tackle it seriously.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that storytelling could be an effective and inclusive aspect in dealing with the past. People from both sides of the community could come forward and have their thoughts recorded about their own personal experiences of the past. This information should then be stored in an archive as it is important that these stories are not only told, but also heard.

The Role of the Community Relations Council

The role as set out for the Community Relations Council (CRC) in the Programme for CSI Consultation Document was unacceptable and signified the lack of regard which that document gave to the various community and voluntary groups across Northern Ireland who play a vital role in community relations.

Two options were set out for the CRC and with one being that they act as an NDPB with funding and the other as an NDPB without funding. The Ulster Unionist Party see the second option as untenable due to the fact that it takes almost all power away from the CRC and renders it little more than an advisory body. With the first option there was a requirement that an assessment be undertaken to determine whether the current CRC is fit for purpose. Therefore, both these options leave serious doubts over the future of the CRC and its role in relation to creating a shared future for Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist Party believes that the CRC have a vital role to play in the monitoring and evaluating of the success of a Programme for CSI in Northern Ireland and this must be reflected within the Strategy. The CRC could also be instrumental in providing models of practice for scenarios within the CSI Strategy. Therefore, we see the role of the CRC as a watchdog for OFMdFM but also to have the power to bring forward proposals – the Council would therefore take a largely strategic hand in CSI operations.

Implementation

There must be consensus as to how a Programme for CSI will be implemented otherwise it will be impossible to take forward.

The Ulster Unionist Party recognises that this is a cross department issue with many cross cutting themes. All Departments therefore need to take responsibility for implementing the Strategy within their own remit. However, **the CSI Strategy must be driven forward by OFMdFM** as they are the only Department who can guide and administer the strategy effectively. OFMdFM should also ensure that the CSI Strategy links with a number of other strategies including the Sexual Orientation Strategy and the Racial Equality Strategy.

It is also vital to remember the number of community and voluntary organisations as well as churches who are fundamental in ensuring that a CSI Strategy is workable. Adequate credence, as well as funding, needs to be given to these organisations within the Strategy if they are to continue and build on the work they are currently doing.