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Subject: Inquiry into public procurement

To the members off the committee for finance and personnel

Can I firstly thank you for allowing me to input into your inquiry and take the next few lines to tell you about myself and my group

I am a forty nine year old epileptic with severe muscular arthritis and sadly sewn into the benifts trap by the government and lack off proper training I want to work and I believe that the social economy is the way forward I have a vast knowledge off the following sustainable renewable energy health-care services building sustainable communities and waste management

WESTERN INNOVATIONS NETWORK

I am in the process off setting up a network off groups within the community to encourage the take up off government contracts which it is believed can be provided to a higher quality and dare I say cheaper than the traditional procurement route bringing true employment into areas off the province and sustainable jobs However there are a few things the government need to put in place before this becomes a reality

CONTRACTS

If you read the European journal new community enterprises are put at a disadvantage by the rules off the contract in that they have to provide three years accounts before being allowed to tender For new start ups this need to be waived and an alternative mechanism put in Large contracts should also be split up and it would be wildly welcomed if consortiums were allowed to tender for contracts

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO SET UP THE COMMUNITY BUSINESS

Sadly it has been my experience that there is no help from Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment either in kind
A hand up not a hand out

or financial to encourage community business start ups in fact the opposite is true There is a great reluctance to actually provide any information on the community business and I have had to get information from England where community business,s are the norm for local councils and in receipt off millions off pounds off money from councils Sadly such innovative procurement does not yet exist within N.I .

FUNDING THE START UP OFF COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE

A community bank already exists to help with loans for development off premises and other services it is the Ulster Community Investment Trust better known as U.C.I.T. Can I state that I do plan to speak for this group However it might be worth your while to speak to Phelam Shervin from this organization to determine the funding needs

While under this title can I say that Invest N.I. And its council partner Omagh Enterprise Company have an abysmal record off setting up the community business as I have tried to get help and failed Perhaps a slimmer more focused organization is what is needed .

SUB CONTRACTING FOR QUALITY

The community business has the unique opportunity off knowing the local market and being able to sub tender procurement off the products needed to be successful within the given remit

I know I am stepping outside the terms off reference here but I believe an example can give a greater balance to what I am saying

Local health trust decides to out source meals on wheels

Community business tenders

Community business draws up business plan for U.C.I.T. And receives funding

Community business identifies suitable community owned premises

Community business uses funding to employ local SME to bring kitchen up to hotel standard

Community business employs chefs from local area

Community business sub tenders for raw product to local S.ME s farmers butchers greengrocer etc etc

Community business can decide off course to offer these services to a greater population when the original contract is fulfilled and any profits are reinvested back into the business

HOW CAN D.F.P. HELP PROMOTE SMES AND SOCIAL ECONOMY BUSINESS,S

One issue that I detest is targets as sometimes they get in the way off quality services but perhaps the D.F.P. Committee could suggest a target for the take up off community enterprise however right away I can see a problem as all services need to be tendered on the open market

More help from D.E.T.I. Would certainly go a long way to encourage the setting up off the social enterprise as instead in my case total opposition

A hand up not a hand out

More information perhaps to a e-mail database or the employment of someone with time to gather the information together and to discuss the ideas as I have laid down

SOCIAL CLAUSES FOR THE COMMUNITY BUSINESSES

The introduction of social clauses into a S.M.E may not be relevant however as it is planned by myself and others to look at the community business model a number of social clauses are already built in

Profit making but not profit taking means that only those working for the organization get any pay a number of benefits accrue for the managers however no large pay outs nor use of profits For all management the following is paid traveling allowance for meetings subsistence allowance for meal while traveling on business off group

Profits are retained as capital reserves on a yearly base allowing large flexibility within the system . Alternatively any profits can be split two ways and half put into a community fund this however must be fully enshrined in the constitution of any community enterprise

EMPLOYMENT WITHIN A COMMUNITY BUSINESS

It is believed that the marginalized people now on benefits like myself can be employed with the community business structure and should be a social clause again within the constitution of the group As I explained in my introduction I am multiply disabled and in severe pain I also need tablets which slow down the mental process and a forty hour week is impossible due to extreme tiredness early on in the afternoon As you can understand no one will employ me however job sharing with others is easier managed within the group and I believe this is vitally important to the community business

SPENDING MONEY ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY

As touched on earlier let me explain in greater detail now monies accrued by the community enterprise could be spent the Government agencies could avail of such funding to provide a greater number of services however it must be stressed that this funding is totally complimentary to any Government funding for example as well as not instead of

Assume we have £100.000 pounds in the innovators fund and that a service could be provided given £50.000 was available sadly no monies are available from government sources The service provider can with a business plan approach the community business and funding can be made available A commitment to longer term funding from government sources would of course be a prerequisite

CHARITABLE DONATIONS FROM PROFITS

There is also a mechanism available to the community business to guarantee a fixed amount to a charitable organization every financial year with the rest going to capital reserves this can be as little as 10% or as high as 100% or any amount within the two

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EMPOWERMENT IS A STRONG DRUG

By this time you are probably wondering what is he on about?

Can I just say that the empowerment off people to help themselves is a great opportunity to involve those now marginalized by society disabled poorly educated Sadly there are no mechanisms for ensuring anyone is heard . There is a strong belief that as the D.F.P. Is the paymaster off the Departments they should be able to encourage all Ministers and civil servants to avail off all expertise

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

How do these suggestions fit in with the program for government

I believe there are two strands off thinking within this subject as a keen follower off the plenary sessions off N.I.A I remember the former Min of D.F.P. Mr Peter Robinson M.L.A saying at the dispatch box when the clarion calls were coming left right and center for more money and I quote

Government Ministers will have to realize that they will have to do more with what they have got or perhaps maybe less

In the program for government and budget documents it was also said on the very last page

CONCLUSIONS

Government can only do so much it is up to every business person community group and most importantly for me individual to do his or her bit to help the government make N.I a better place for all

Can I say that sadly this message has not got through to the Ministers nor the policy makers as I know from bitter experience

Let me again take this opportunity off thanking all members off the committee for allowing me to submit my thoughts and I hope you find them thought provoking and off some use in your deliberations I hope to be working on some issues with the Western Health Trust shortly and perhaps within a year or so the N.I.A. As well You way wonder what the small sentence is at the bottom off every page this is my strap line Give me a hand up not a hand out

Sincerely

Kevin Taylor