**Statement by Minister Feighan on the North Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force**

Minister Feighan notes the statement by the three community representatives on the North Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force. He very much respects the views of the three community representatives and values their contribution to the Task Force. He has asked departmental officials to meet with the representatives to explain the governance issues that have arisen in the task force and the department’s proposal to put in place a transparent process for the selection and appointment of an independent chairperson for the organisation.

Minister Feighan states that existing members of the Task Force, including the three community representatives and the statutory and voluntary representatives, will be consulted about the process to select and appoint an independent chairperson. Approval of the appointment of an independent chairperson will be a decision for the collective membership of the task force.

Minister clarifies that he has not raised any issues about the honesty and integrity of any individuals involved in the task force, nor has he suggested in any way that they are unfit or untrustworthy, as alleged in the statement on behalf of community representatives.

Minister Feighan has advised that the activities of the Task Force should be suspended on a temporary basis, while the appointment of the independent chairperson and the broadening of the membership of the task force to include all stakeholders, including elected public representatives, are completed. When the task force is reconstituted and an independent chairperson appointed, the Task Force will resume the role and responsibilities for coordinating drug and alcohol services in the north inner city.

Minister Feighan emphasises that the Dept of Health annual funding of €2.2 million for community projects and services under the auspices of the Task Force will continue and there should be no disruption in services. Oversight of the projects will be provided by the HSE and the CDCSB as the channels of funding. The employment of the two members of staff directly employed by the Task Force will continue.

Minister Feighan asks for the cooperation of all stakeholders in putting in place agreed governance procedures. As soon as procedures are in place, the Task Force will resume role in coordinating drug and alcohol services in the north inner city.