**Statement on behalf of Community Reps on the North Inner City DATF**

**12th July 2021**

We note the statement by Minister Frank Feighan dated 8th July.

In his statement, the Minister says that he has asked Departmental officials to meet with the community representatives to explain the “governance issues” that the Dept is alleging have arisen in the Task Force, and also to explain the Dept’s proposal to put in place a transparent process for the selection and appointment of an independent chairperson. The statement fails to respond to our call on the Dept to withdraw the suspension and it is difficult for us to understand how the Dept could consider it acceptable that it invites only some members of the Task Force to a meeting, when the suspension has been applied to the full Task Force. We consider this to be disrespectful to our colleagues and, until the suspension is lifted, we do not consider it appropriate that we meet with the officials.

When considering an action as serious and unprecedented as suspension, an action that has never been taken before by any Minister in 25 years across 24 Task Forces, it is an absolute requirement of good governance and proper procedure to put the alleged shortcomings to the members of the Task Force in advance of such a decision, so that there is a right to reply in line with the principles of natural justice.

The very fact the Community Reps are now being asked to meet Dept officials after the Task Force has been publicly suspended, shows that no attempt has been made by the Dept to raise the “governance shortcomings” with the Task Force in advance of the suspension. Nor did the HSE, who are members of the Task Force, raise any of these “governance shortcomings” at any Task Force meeting and they recently signed off on the Task Force Service Level Agreement without raising any questions.

The Minister goes on to state that 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. If the Minister has read all correspondence between the Task Force and his senior officials who are briefing him he must be aware that defamatory statements have been made, and repeated, by one of his senior officials.

Minister Feighan states that existing members of the Task Force will be consulted about the process to select and appoint an independent chairperson and that the approval of the appointment of an independent chairperson will be a decision for the collective membership of the Task Force. This completely ignores the fact that this decision on the appointment of the new Chair has already been taken by the collective membership of the Task Force in accordance with DATF Handbook guidelines, and as required by the legal responsibilities of a limited company, and with unanimous agreement of the members. The incoming Chairperson should now be free to take up the position for which they have been chosen by the Task Force without any further interference from the Dept.