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Victims post to be re-advertised - McGuinness



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By Staff reporter

The Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness has denied speculation that he and Ian Paisley had a serious disagreement over the appointment of a victims commissioner.

In a joint statement yesterday, the First and Deputy First Ministers announced the position will be readvertised and that the successful candidate will be appointed by the end of the year.

At a press conference in Stormont yesterday morning, the First Minister said he was in agreement with Martin McGuinness about the need for accountability in the selection process. "I know there has been a lot of ill-informed speculation that the Deputy First Minister and I have been at loggerheads over the appointment but that simply isn't true. Yes, we have taken time to consider the best way forward but that is just as it should be," he said.

Mr. McGuinness said the needs of victims were a priority and appealed for prospective commissioners to apply. "We believe that readvertising the post now against the background of a fully functioning Executive will bring forward a greater number of candidates. Victims and survivors are a key priority for us and we want them to see that we are searching as widely as possible. The successful candidate will also know that they will have the unwavering support of the First Minister and myself as they address the needs of all those who have suffered great personal loss over the years," he said.

The Deputy First Minister also said the new commissioner would be chosen by himself and

Dr Paisley, not the Secretary of State. “The final stage of the process will involve a presentation to Dr Paisley and myself personally by all candidates deemed appointable before a final decision is made. We consider this to be an essential new element of the appointment process,” he said.

Earlier this year, the decision to appoint Bertha McDougal as interim Victims Commissioner caused controversy amid allegations of influence from political parties. Mr. McGuinness said he is confident that will not happen this time. “We would like to say that we have not played politics with this issue – it is much too important to us. There has already been too much ill-informed comment and controversy about this issue. All we ask now is that no one else should play political games with our decision. We think everyone would agree that the victims and survivors deserve better than that,” he said.

Last Updated: 09 October 2007 1:53 PM

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