

ALLIANCE RESPONSE TO THE PWC LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT

Alliance Party considers that PwC should move on to Phase 2 Economic Appraisal of the Options listed. It would however add the following commentary to be considered as part of the Phase 2 economic appraisal.

The factors to be considered in no particular order are:-

- **Should there be an intermediary body between central and local government post 2011?**
- **If so, what would be its role?**
- **What services are the new councils likely to require and what would be the efficiencies gained?**
- **If it is desirable that local government becomes stronger and that the present transferring functions are only the start of a process what part would a Local Government Association play in the cascade of responsibilities?**
- **If there is to be a new representative body how should it be funded?**
- **Is one body sufficient to serve the needs of Local and central government?**
- **If a new body is representative of the Councils and/or political parties, how can stability be maintained?**

Every question begs another number of questions and in a short timespan we do not have the time to produce an informed paper to the depth preferred. We do however submit what we consider to be a responsible route for progress to a stronger local government delivering first class services to the population of Northern Ireland. We are already bought into the process of change and there will be changes brought about by the capacity building of members and officers who will execute the duties of eleven new councils. We assume that it is desirable that local government in Northern Ireland progresses to have greater democratic responsibility. This will necessitate much clearer understanding of the role of elected representatives inter- alia the administration led by the Chief Executive/town Clerk. This clarity combined with capacity building should lead to some adjustment in the role of representatives of the electorate.

We as a party are inclined to the following opinions which we must emphasise have not yet been fully debated within the membership. We are open to hear other views.

- A. We consider that it is necessary for there to be an organisation to represent the 11 councils, as an interface with the regional assembly or whatever central administration is in place.

- B. We recognise this organisation whilst being the “child” of the councils, should accommodate as wide a political spectrum as is practical.
- C. We are of a mind that there may be certain services that could be delivered to councils by a single body e.g. Ulster in Bloom, FLGA etc. there may be other functions post 2011. What these functions may be will have an influence on the shape of any intermediary body or bodies.
- D. It is essential that any intermediate body is cost effective and satisfies the needs of its member councils to achieve the strongest possible membership.
- E. It is essential that any intermediate body is cost effective and satisfies the needs its member councils to achieve the strongest possible membership.
- F. In the present part of the change process and probably for the first two years of the new eleven councils we believe that one single body can fulfill the envisaged representations and minor delivery role.
- G. There are services to councils at present delivered centrally that are less than satisfactory e.g. rates collection.

In conclusion we as a party consider that there should be a relationship between central and local government. Consideration should be given to establishing the relationship in legislation. The party considers that NILGA should continue until 2013 but consider that between May 2011 and 2013 there should be an appraisal of the needs of the eleven new councils for an interface body and the best way to provide for them.



JOHN MATHEWS
Alliance Party
29 June 2009