

## CAPACITY BUILDING REPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Agenda Item:** 5 (b)

**Summary:** Outlining Policy Development Panel C's (Panel C) agreed policy proposals and implementation plan in relation to Capacity Building.

**Action:** To note the policy proposals and agree that it passes to the joint structure comprising the Local Government Training Group (LGTC) and Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) for implementation.

### Background

1. You will be aware that Panel C has been specifically charged with the development of recommendations on policy and implementation proposals in relation to the structural reform work strands. These embrace Human Resources, Capacity Building, Finance, Estates, Transfer of Functions and Service Delivery.
2. Panel C agreed that working groups should be established to assist in the development of policy and implementation proposals for each of these work strands or projects. The Capacity Building Working Group presented its final report to the Panel at its meeting on 26 March 2009. (Attached at Annex A) and an implementation plan with associated costings on 22 June 2009. (attached at Annex B)
3. The Panel endorses the recommendations in both reports and would wish to put on record its thanks to members of the Capacity Building Working Group for the considerable work that has been completed on this issue.

### Detail

4. The Panel would emphasise from the outset that addressing capacity is vital to ensure effective and efficient transition, the sustained success of the new councils and that work should begin on implementation without delay.

5. The Panel agrees that the immediate focus should be on the capacity building needs of those people who are directly involved in the established reform delivery structures and with responsibility for driving forward the reform implementation process at the local level e.g. Transition Committee/Transition Management Teams and other key people involved in addressing important strands of work e.g. HR, finance, policy and IT professionals. The implementation plan provides a high level framework which identifies the key areas of capacity needs.
6. It is important to recognise that the proposed capacity building programme needs to be rolled-out on a phased basis with the key areas of work prioritised and aligned with the overall reform implementation programme. Clearly, the nature and extent of the capacity needs and supporting activities will evolve through the implementation and transition process.

### **Key Objectives**

7. The Panel recommends that resources and efforts should be focused to achieve the following objectives:-
  - To support the effective and efficient delivery of the RPA process and the embedding of new council arrangements post 2011;
  - To minimise the risks (e.g. misalignment of activities; lack of conformity with emerging legislation and guidance; delays in the overall reform programme; inefficiencies and duplication of effort) attached to the ineffective management of the reform implementation process;
  - To identify the core competencies and skills required to successfully deliver the reform process;
  - To provide an understanding of the nature and extent of the capacity needs of local authorities and to identify current gaps;
  - To identify learning and development interventions that could be applied to address such gaps;
  - To provide recommendations on a capacity building framework to provide coherence in the delivery of necessary capacity building activities;

- To develop an effective delivery model that will incur maximum benefit to the sector and enhance the ability of elected members and officers to successfully implement the reform process;
- To enhance the overall capacity of the local government sector; and
- Inform the work being undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers with regard to the development of a business case for necessary funding to support reform implementation

## **Resources**

8. Significant investment will be required to ensure the delivery of the capacity building programme. Based on the indicative programme of work set out within the attached implementation plan, it is estimated that the cost of the capacity building programme would be between £903k (minimum) to £1.8m (maximum) depending on the activities agreed and the level of participation.
9. The Panel supports the Working Group recommendation that at minimum £1.5m should be made available to support the development of regional capacity building frameworks and support capacity building activities at the local level i.e. within individual Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams.
10. It is recommended that the Department of Environment secures a specific budget to support implementation independent of the transition fund already allocated to Transition Committees.
11. The costs set out in the implementation plan are indicative at this stage and have not been market tested but are based on the experience of working group members in relation to costs for similar initiatives. It should be noted that realistic costs can only be provided when capacity building needs have been formally identified and prioritised and exact numbers of participants are known.

## **Governance**

12. The Panel agrees the requirement for strategic support for the sector in relation to capacity building and the longer-term governance arrangements to support capacity building across local government. It is therefore recommending that a joint strategic governance structure operated jointly between LGTG and NILGA which would oversee the implementation of elected member and officer development activities delivered through the LGTG (employees) and NILGA (elected members). Such a structure will require appropriate links to other relevant bodies within the reform process.

### **Recommendations**

13. The SLB is asked to note the Capacity Building proposals and agree that it passes to the joint structure comprising the Local Government Training Group (LGTC) and Northern Ireland Local government Association (NILGA) for implementation.

**Policy Development Panel C  
June 2009**