

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM – KEEPING YOU INFORMED



## Issue 4

### Minister Foster Announces the outcome of the Review of Local Government

The Executive agreed today, 13th March 2008, to the recommendations of the review of the local government aspects of the Review of Public Administration.

We will continue to produce regular updates during the course of the implementation of Minister Foster's announcements.



### Key Points

The Executive agreed the vision for local government: a strong, dynamic local government creating communities that are vibrant, healthy, prosperous, safe and sustainable and have the needs of all citizens at their core.

A statute-based council-led community planning process, assisted by a new power of well-being, will ensure that services are delivered to meet local needs and ambitions.

Equality and fair treatment considerations will be central to the work of local government to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society. To support this aim, a range of governance models with appropriate checks and balances will be developed, piloted, evaluated and placed on statute, to ensure the protection of the rights of all people in Northern Ireland and provide for fair, transparent and efficient decision making.

### The number of councils

There will be 11 new local government districts, using the 11b model set out in the [RPA Further Consultation](#) of March 2005 as the starting point for the work of a new Local Government Boundaries Commissioner.

This configuration provides the optimal grouping of existing councils and strikes a balance between reducing some of the diversity between the existing areas in terms of population characteristics and rating wealth, and promoting the ability of the councils and their communities to identify and interact with each other.

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New models of service delivery, based on groupings of the new local government districts will also be developed to promote the efficient and effective delivery of services. Central government will support local government in driving towards the efficient delivery of services by the development, in partnership, of appropriate performance management systems and by developing proposals for a modernisation challenge fund that will support innovative and efficient practice.

### **Functions to transfer to Local Government**

For local government to realise the potential of our shared vision it will be a leader and shaper of communities with direct responsibility for the delivery of a family of services.

Accordingly, the Executive has agreed the range of functions that will transfer to local government.

These functions include:

- Planning (local development plan functions, development control and enforcement);
- Rural development;
- The public realm aspects of local roads functions;
- Urban regeneration and community development, and a range of housing related functions
- Local economic development and tourism.

The Executive will review the family of functions to be delivered by local government 12 months after the new councils become operational and periodically thereafter.

### **Next Steps**

The aim is to implement the structural reform package by 2011. An immediate priority will be to provide for the appointment of an independent Local Government Boundaries Commissioner to undertake a review.

Following the Easter Recess, Minister Foster proposes to bring forward a draft Local Government (Boundaries) Bill in the Assembly and seek the Assembly's agreement to deal with it by way of accelerated passage.

[Local Government Policy Division](#) will be establishing the necessary implementation structures, building on the work of the Local Government Taskforce.

Minister Foster will make a full statement to the Assembly when it returns from the Easter Recess which will set out in more detail the range of functions that will transfer.

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