

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

## KEEPING YOU INFORMED



Issue 6

September 2008

### Minister Wilson endorses the Reform Programme

“Having been recently appointed Environment Minister, I would like to use this newsletter to deliver a message to all the stakeholders affected by the restructuring of local government.

Now that we have an agreement on the future of local government we need to press on to have the new 11 councils in place by May 2011 as agreed by the Executive.

There are many challenges ahead, but I look forward to seeing a strong local government that will provide efficient services for all citizens.”

### Omagh Public Services Centre

Omagh District Council's new Public Services Centre is designed to bring council services closer to ratepayers, offering a wide range of advice, guidance and support. However the town centre office can also be used as a first point of contact for queries about services provided by government agencies in the region.

Performing the opening the Minister said:

*“I hope this is the first of many collaborative ventures across the public sector. I would also like to think Omagh will be held up as an example of how public services provided by local and central government can be delivered to communities in a modern and accessible way and in a manner which addresses their needs.”*



*The minister meets staff at Omagh District Council while opening its new Public Services Centre*

### Progress so far

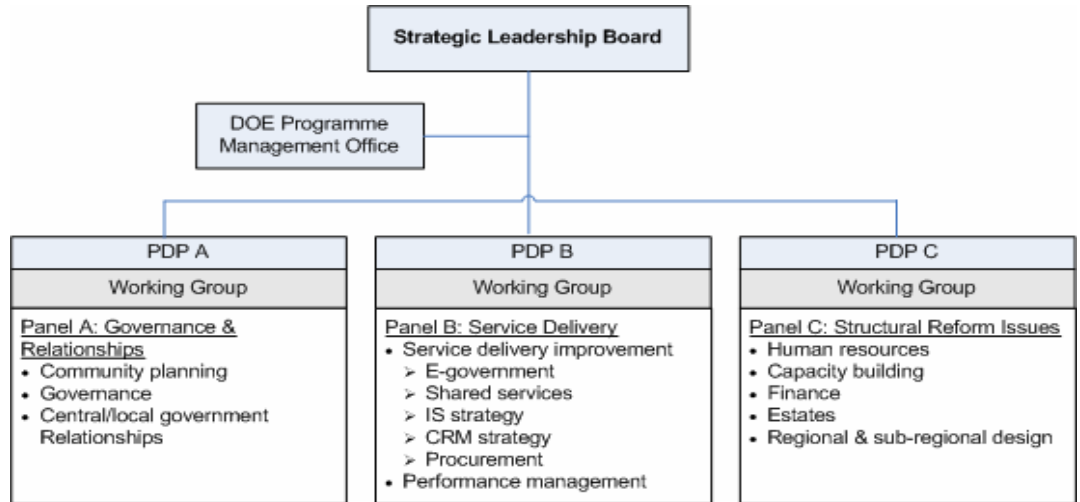
The last edition of this Newsletter provided details of the Executive's decisions, announced by the Minister of the Environment in the Assembly on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008, on the new structure of local government in Northern Ireland.

The decisions taken include the reduction of the current 26 councils to create 11 new councils and the transfer of a range of services from central government to the new councils. This is due to take place in 2011.

Structures were also put into place to help manage and encourage the processes involved in such major changes.

## The way forward

This edition of the newsletter provides an update on the type of structures that have been developed to help manage the implementation of this stage of the reform of local government.



The Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) has been formed to help manage the reform process. The SLB is chaired by the Minister of the Environment (Mr Sammy Wilson MP MLA) with the President of NILGA (Alderman Arnold Hatch) as Vice Chair and membership includes elected representatives of each of the five main political parties.

The SLB is supported by three Policy Development Panels (PDP's), also comprising elected representatives along with central and local government advisors which have been charged with developing the policy and implementation proposals necessary to ensure the smooth transition of the new councils in 2011.

The PDP's proposals are subject to the approval of the SLB with recommendations being taken forward by a Regional Implementation Group in conjunction with Transition Committees representing the 11 groupings of existing councils which will form the proposed new local authorities.

## Policy Development Panels

Three Policy Development Panels have been formed to help implement the changes required for the new 11 council model for Local Government in Northern Ireland.

The three panels are as follows :

- ✚ PDP A – Governance and Relationships
- ✚ PDP B – Service Delivery
- ✚ PDP C – Structural Reform

The membership of each panel comprises ten elected representatives from local government supported by local government Chief Executives and senior officials from NI Departments involved with transferring functions to the new councils.

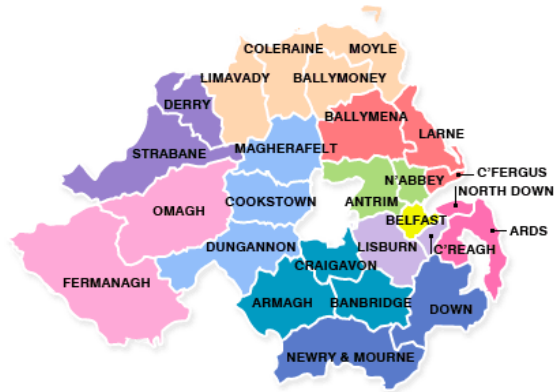
The panels will report to the Strategic Leadership Board at its regular meetings. It is hoped that these panels can perform an important role in the setting up of the new councils.

A membership list for each panel together with minutes of meetings and related documents is available on the LGPD website:- [http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/local\\_government.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/local_government.htm)

## PDP A – Governance and Relationships

The Policy Development Panel for Governance, Community Planning and Central / Local Relations has been tasked with the development of recommendations on policy and implementation proposals in relation to:

- governance arrangements for the new councils;
- community planning framework and the guidance required for effective council led projects
- development of mechanisms for effective relations between central and local government, particularly on matters of mutual interest and concern.



SOURCE: NI Review of Public Administration 2005

*This colour map shows how each of the existing councils will fit into the new 11 council model.*

## PDP B – Service Delivery



The Policy Development Panel for Service Delivery has been tasked with the development of recommendations on policy and strategy in relation to:

- E-government,
- Shared services,
- IS Strategy,
- Customer Service Strategy and procurement

The panel also has responsibility for the development of policy and implementation proposals in relation to Performance Management.

## PDP C – Structural Reform

The Policy Development Panel for Structural Reform has been tasked with the development of recommendations on policy and implementation proposals in relation to 6 structural reform work strands. These are Human Resources, Capacity Building, Finance, Estates, Transfer of Functions and Service Delivery.

At the inaugural meeting of the panel, on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008, it was agreed that working groups should be established to assist in the development of policy and implementation for each of these work strands or projects.

It was agreed that some of the work strands were closely linked and for this reason 4 working groups have been established to take forward the work. These groups are :

- Transfer of Functions/Service Delivery
- Human Resources
- Finance/Estates
- Capacity Building

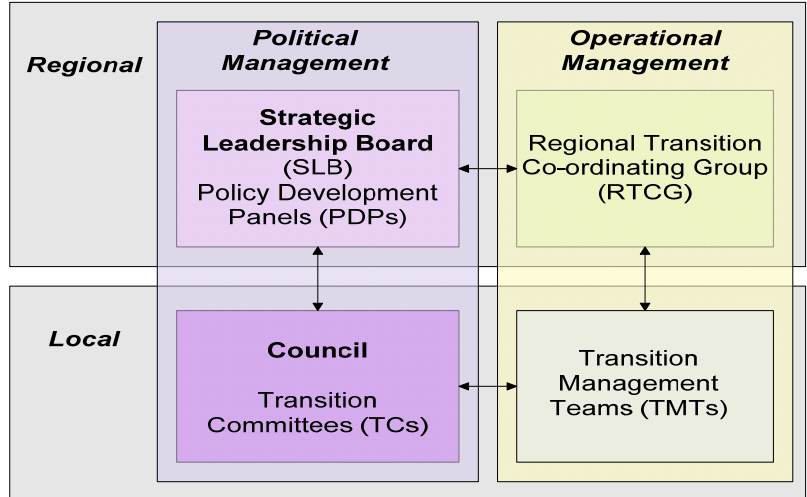


## Regional Transition Structures

Now that the Policy Development Panels are operating, the next step is to form teams at local and regional level to deliver the changes in Local Government in NI. These groups will also allow direct interaction between local government and central government departments on the operational issues in relation to transferring functions. The structures are described further below.

### Regional Transition Coordinating Group

The Strategic Leadership Board has agreed that a Regional Transition Coordinating Group should be established. This will provide the link between the strategic political level and the local policy and operational structures. The Regional Transition Coordinating Group will be made up of officers and officials from central and local government. It will be responsible to



the SLB for co-ordinating and supporting the consistent implementation of the regional restructuring policies across the 11 Council areas.

The next step is to finalise the guidance to councils to set up the local level structures.

### Transition Committees

There will be eleven Transition Committees, made up of elected members from the constituent councils which will form the new authorities. The primary role of the Transition Committee is to take the key decisions necessary to ensure that there are eleven effective Councils in place on the operative date of the changeover.

### Transition Management Teams

Transition Management Teams will work under the direction of each of the local Transition Committees. They will have responsibility for the management of the transition at local levels. The Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group will provide guidance to the Transition Management Teams.

### Formation of the new teams

The Minister will write to all councils before the end of November with further guidance on the establishment of Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams.

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The Local Government Policy Division management team get down to work at one of their weekly meetings.

**Did you know ?**

Incinerating 10,000 tonnes of waste creates one job, land-filling the same amount of waste creates six jobs but recycling this much waste creates 36 jobs.