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Council

Your Ref:
Our Ref: Circ LG 04/09

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Local Government Circular LG 04 / 09

Transition Management – Advisory Note on the Convergence of Plans, Programmes & Projects

Dear Chief Executive,

At a meeting on 12 February 2009 the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) considered and approved the attached Advisory Note for voluntary Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams. The Advisory Note is designed to assist councils in the consideration of initial work on the convergence of plans, programmes and projects within new council areas. It sets out the kind of areas that could be considered initially in terms of understanding existing activities and systems in converging councils, and also sets out a range of questions which could be useful in consideration of the impact of key decisions on new council areas.

If you have any queries or need any further information on the Advisory Note, please contact John Price, Local Government Policy Division (john.price@doeni.gov.uk). John and his team would also be pleased to assist, advise or talk with your Transition Management Team as you deem necessary.

Yours faithfully

IAN MAYE

TRANSITION MANAGEMENT – ADVISORY NOTE ON THE CONVERGENCE OF PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

BACKGROUND

1. The Department issued Circular No: LG 16/08 on 28th October 2008 setting out detailed guidance on the establishment of voluntary Transition Committees (TCs) and Transition Management Teams (TMTs). This initial guidance was to enable those Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams to be established as soon as possible and to begin their work, as set out in the terms of reference in Annexes 1 and 2 of the circular. The guidance pointed out a range of important areas for consideration: -

- *To develop a shared corporate vision for the new Council.*
- *To advance the convergence of key plans and programmes, including the capital development programmes of existing councils.¹*
- *To examine the potential for service delivery efficiencies and economies through service rationalisation measures.²*

SHARED CORPORATE VISION – SHORT TERM

2. As a first step, Transition Committees should consider agreeing a shared, short term vision for the new Council to help inform key decisions on governance, service delivery, programme priorities, etc. However, it is clear that new Councils will, as soon as possible after May 2011, wish to develop a clear and challenging long term strategic vision for their area,

¹Annex 1 Governance - Circular No: LG 16/08 - 28th October 2008

²Annex 1 Service Delivery - Circular No: LG 16/08 - 28th October 2008

based on effective and ongoing engagement with the local citizens, organisations, communities, etc comprising the new area and, as a result, ensure that it is owned by its stakeholders.

COHESION AND INCLUSIVENESS

3. An important element of the transition process is to promote the cohesion of the new Council area through the priorities agreed in the interim vision. To secure cohesion will be an important challenge for Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams. Therefore, it will be critical during the transition period for the transferor bodies to take account of this shared vision for the new Council in any relevant decisions. All transition activity should proceed in an interdependent and inclusive environment, having regard to the overall benefit likely to accrue to the new Council.

CONVERGENCE – KEY PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

4. The interim shared vision agreed by the Transition Committee will, therefore, critically inform initial work associated with the convergence of key plans and programmes. This convergence process will only be successful if it includes:
 - 4.1. A comprehensive review of the existing priorities of the amalgamating Councils and the other transferor bodies.
 - 4.2. The preparation of an integrated set of new priorities for the new Council.
 - 4.3. Carrying out the key initial steps in the transition, such as:
 - 4.3.1. Conducting an audit of existing activities.
 - 4.3.2. Assessing the status of financial systems.

- 4.3.3.** Auditing facilities and asset registers.
- 4.3.4.** Assessing IT and information systems.
- 4.3.5.** Preparatory work to assist in staff transfer.

- 5.** As part of this process, the Transition Management Teams can also begin to consider facilitating cross-departmental and sector working, and in accordance with the terms of reference –

To undertake, in the context of policy direction from the Transition Committee, the convergence of key plans and programmes, including the corporate plans and capital development programmes of existing councils³

- 6.** To successfully complete this convergence programme the willing cooperation of the amalgamating Councils and the other transferor bodies will be essential. The prospects for an effective Council post May 2011 are, therefore, inextricably linked to the successful participation of all the transferor bodies in the process of convergence, integration and development of new plans and programmes

TRANSITION PERIOD – PROJECT AND PLAN DECISIONS

- 7.** During this initial transition period, Councils and other transferor bodies will be considering implementation of major projects, developing new plans, etc, which may have significant expenditure and policy commitments. As such decisions may have considerable implications for the new Council, transferor bodies are encouraged to liaise with their Transition Committee before making a final decision so that what is best for the citizens of the new Council area is fully considered.

³ Annex 2 - Circular No: LG 16/08 - 28th October 2008

DECISIONS – ASSESSMENT AND WIDER CONSIDERATIONS

8. Transition Committees, Councils and other Transferor Bodies when assessing the potential impact of key decisions on the new Council area are able to determine the critical factors to be taken into consideration, by addressing important questions, such as: -

- Is the decision informed by Strategic Leadership Board/ Policy Development Panel policies?
- Is it compatible with the new shared vision?
- Does the decision meet the key priorities for the new Council established through the plans and programmes convergence process?
- Does the Business Plan/Case take account of affordability, in particular the financial legacy to the new Council?
- Will the decision lead to projects and services that are efficient as well as effective - providing VFM for the new Council?
- Will the expenditure in the transition period deliver sustainable benefits for the citizens of the new Council area, such as service improvement, accessibility?
- Are there issues of duplication and overlap to consider between amalgamating Councils?
- Does the proposal meet the diversity of needs in the new Council area?

- Are there opportunities for collaboration and joint working with other new Councils and/or Public bodies e.g. shared services, rationalisation
 - Does the decision take account of organisational needs for the new Council e.g. staffing, capability, etc?
 - Is the decision compatible with the post 2011 environment of community planning?
 - Are there any important legal implications for the new Council?
 - Are there audit requirements to address arising from the decision?
- 9.** This advisory note emphasises that key decisions of amalgamating Councils and other transferor bodies during the transition are extremely important and should not be taken in isolation, but rather in the context of their imminent convergence to form new entities. The Department believes that it is essential that all transferor bodies involved in each of the 11 new Councils formally engage with each other in the transition period on these issues to, as far as possible, safeguard the public interest post May 2011.