

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Capacity building in local government is critical in the context of the change in structures to larger organisations with additional responsibilities resulting in a major shift in the importance and fiscal responsibilities of the new councils. Legislative change for capacity building should be considered in the context of ensuring that there is adequate support and resourcing.

The Sub-Group identified two major strands to capacity building:

- Developing the capability of people (elected members, officers and stakeholders) to deliver improved services, civic leadership and community planning in the new structures
- Developing organisations (systems and processes) to cope with the wider responsibilities and build effective partnerships.

Elected member development will enhance not only their leadership of and contribution to the local government sector, but also help provide the platform for the development of political representation at other levels. A flexible framework for member development is proposed that will provide a best practice model that can be adapted to local and individual circumstances.

Officers will provide the leadership and management capability in service delivery, civic leadership and community planning within larger units of responsibility. The ability to plan, deliver and review at the strategic level, coupled with an improvement culture, will help deliver more effective and efficient local services. Proposals for developing all staff are included, based on a strong leadership and performance management model.

Capacity building must reflect stakeholders' needs, in order to contribute to effective local government.

Capacity must also encompass the capacity building models which are recognised best practice for organisational development.

Needs are identified at three levels:

- Continuing to deliver services and run operations, prior to the new organisations being formed
- Managing the transition

- Developing the new structures and providing quality, customer focussed services, civic leadership and community planning.

It is proposed that organisational capacity building is achieved through a focus on delivering integrated customer-driven services through reference to accepted best organisational practice.

The Sub-Group's recommendations are presented to reflect what needs to be done with regard to legislation as well as action that needs to be taken in the short, medium and long term.

The Sub-Group recommends that capacity building is achieved through the formation of a central body reflecting the knowledge and expertise available within the new sector.

In addition, it is recommended that a dedicated team be established by the Task Force to drive capacity building forward.

The process of capacity building needs to start immediately and to be funded by central government during the transition period and beyond.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Sub-Group addressing the issue of capacity building for local government.

Membership of the Sub-Group, Chaired by John Campbell, Chief Executive, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council, comprised representatives from:

- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)
- Local Government Staff Commission for NI (LGSC)
- Local Government Training Group (LGTG)
- Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
- Public Sector People Managers Association (PPMA/SOCPO)
- The five main political parties
- The National Association of Councillors
- Local government officers.

The Sub-Group was supported by the Department of the Environment with additional Peer Support provided by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA).

The work of the Sub-Group was also informed by the Steering Group for Elected Member Training.

The outputs of the Sub-Group are to:

- Describe and provide commentary on the key issues including:
 - Examine best practice
 - Identify catalysts and constraints
 - Review potential options
 - Consider the legislation needed.
- Provide recommendations, to include timescales involved, resourcing, roles and responsibilities.
- Provide the basis from which the key actions necessary to deliver each recommendation can be developed. The recommendations identify what action needs to be taken in the short, medium and long term.

1.1 Definitions

Capacity Building

The Sub-Group proposes the following definition of capacity, based on that used by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister:

“Capacity is the right organisation, systems, partnerships, people and processes to deliver against a particular agenda or plan.”

Capacity building is a process that enables individuals, organisations and communities to work together to create the conditions in which everyone can participate and be accountable in social, economic and political decision-making processes. The process addresses issues of Leadership, Governance and Management and encourages organisations and individuals to think differently and act differently, equipping them to respond to challenges posed by competitive national and international markets and changes in the policy environment.

Capacity building is not just about addressing immediate weaknesses or constraints in implementation. It is also a long-term process, in which existing strengths are enhanced to achieve mission and strategic goals, and local government becomes better equipped to respond to changing contexts.

It is also recognised that capacity building needs to be addressed in a way that is based on both local and sectoral needs.

To achieve this requires an integrated and holistic approach that acknowledges the importance of participation, strategic direction, technical skills, knowledge and attitudes, and good organisational structures and procedures.

Elected Members

Elected Members include all those who are members of the existing and / or new Councils.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder is defined as any person, group or organisation that can place a claim on or has an interest in the resources, issues or output of councils, or is affected by their output.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

On 22 November 2005 the Secretary of State announced major changes to local government in Northern Ireland as part of the Review of Public Administration. The number of local councils will be reduced from the current figure of 26 and from 2009 the new councils will be responsible for an enlarged and enhanced range of functions, to include some areas currently being undertaken by central government. The overall number of councillors will also be reduced.

The changes envisaged by the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and the associated modernising agendas are being taken forward by central and local government in partnership with wider community interests such as trade unions and the voluntary and business sectors. The Department of the Environment has established a Local Government Taskforce, to develop proposals for modern and effective local government. The Taskforce has engaged politicians strategically through a **Political Panel** chaired by the Minister which, along with a high level **Working Group** chaired by the DOE Permanent Secretary, provides oversight, cohesion and direction to the RPA process. A number of workstreams have been taken forward through **nine Sub-Groups** and many of the issues developed by these will feed into the new legislation being developed for local government.

The Taskforce Working Group has agreed the terms of reference for the Sub-Groups and will consider the recommendations made by each of the Sub-Groups.

Overall Aim of Taskforce:

To produce proposals for modern and effective local government in light of the requirements of the Review of Public Administration and other drivers for change. The Taskforce will draw on independent expert advice and best practice from elsewhere but will seek solutions appropriate to local needs and circumstances.

The Taskforce will describe and discuss the key issues, catalysts and constraints relating to the stated aim and having identified best practice and options, to produce a set of recommendations on the way forward to include the key actions necessary to achieve this outcome.

2.1 Specific Terms of Reference

Specific Aim of the Sub-Group Addressing the Issue of Capacity Building

By 30 June 2006 to identify the key capacity building issues relating to the RPA within local government as a means of informing both the new restructuring legislation and the way forward in delivering the new arrangements by 2009 and beyond. The Sub-Group will examine and make recommendations on the optimum approach to building the capacity and competencies of the sector to provide modern, effective and sustainable local government which is responsive to the challenges of modernisation and continuous improvement, and which delivers excellent services to customers.

The Sub-Group recognised the need to consider the interests of all stakeholder groups and to address both the immediate and longer term capacity building considerations. The Sub-Group has focused on both:

- Enhancing the capacity of elected members, officers and the organisation to deliver on the RPA commitments by 2009; and
- Proposing arrangements to ensure a sustainable sector equipped and able to provide an excellent service for its customers.

This Sub-Group has also taken account of cross-cutting themes within the Taskforce Sub-Groups:

- Governance
- Community Planning
- Finance
- Central / Local Government Relationship
- Performance Management
- Estate
- Shared Services
- Human Resources.

The transfer of functions is also being considered.

3. MAIN AREAS OF FOCUS

3.1 Overall Context

Building capacity amongst staff and elected members is crucial at an early stage and should therefore lead and underpin the change process.

A number of factors were highlighted as barriers affecting current arrangements for capacity building across the local government sector. These included:

- The human and financial resources and the time required
- The relatively small size of councils, differing commitments to capacity building and the inconsistent use of competency frameworks
- The range of roles exercised by elected members ranging from strategic management issues to individual constituency and representational work
- Inconsistent development opportunities for elected members
- The differing standards of induction of elected members and officers in different councils
- Variation in the nature of relationships between elected members and officers
- The attractiveness of the local government sector as an employer
- Skills shortages and recruitment and retention problems in some professional areas
- The parts of central government, agencies and non departmental public bodies that will transfer to the new councils have not been finalised, making capacity building with these impossible until this happens.

It was agreed that capacity building will help ensure that capability exists within the new councils to develop their structures, systems, people and skills and ultimately to deliver against their business strategies.

The Sub-Group therefore addressed capacity building from two dimensions:

- The People elected members, officers and stakeholders, in terms of the development of skills and competencies
- The Organisation focussing on systems and processes within the new structures, developed to meet specific organisational goals, and the ability to create effective partnerships and networks.

The Sub-Group also distinguished capacity building needs on three levels:

- Maintaining the organisation and its services during the period of transition
- Managing the transition
- Developing and implementing the new structures while continuing to deliver high quality services.

Those with responsibility for capacity building will need to take cognisance of a number of risks:

- Losing staff with critical knowledge and expertise
- The lack of a consistent approach by professional bodies and those providing technical and professional education
- Lack of clarity regarding which staff from government agencies are to be transferred and the necessary competencies for their roles.

It is important that there is a clear recognition that all staff will be new whatever organisation they previously worked for. The culture of the new councils needs to reflect that diversity.

The Sub-Group also highlighted concerns about the possibility of the loss of regionality and local identity.

3.2 Enhancing the Capacity of Elected Members

Northern Ireland needs elected members who can demonstrate leadership, drive, commitment, knowledge and determination. These elected members will need to:

- Provide strong leadership to their councils, including efficient and accountable decision making processes

- Provide community leadership through engagement, consultation, feedback and scrutiny
- Ensure that local key priorities are satisfied in conjunction with stakeholders
- Provide both strategic input to councils and a representational service to their constituents.

Civic and community leadership at district electoral area and council-wide levels requires different inputs and different skills sets. It is also recognised that elected members have to balance their representational roles with their corporate responsibilities to their councils.

An elected member development strategy should reflect the needs of existing and newly elected members and of those who have taken on or are about to take on a more expanded role. The Sub-Group noted that even in the case of long-standing elected members the context will change dramatically in 2009, to the extent that they too will require support and development. A development framework must reflect the changing roles of councillors as a consequence of executive, scrutiny, community leadership and neighbourhood roles.

In addition, elected members will need clarity on their roles with respect to officers, stakeholders, the provision of services, and other statutory bodies.

Any development framework should be flexible and adaptable to match the existing and future needs of different councils and to reflect local procedures and practice both during the transition period and post re-organisation.

The new structures will provide the opportunity for reviewing how decision making in local government could be best achieved. Traditionally this has been through a Committee system, but this may no longer meet the needs of modern local government.

New political arrangements will lead to substantially different roles for elected members and present new challenges in terms of managing the interface with officers. Elected member development should address these issues in a way that will help members make informed choices about how decision making and officer and member relationships should be managed in future.

Political parties have a major role to play in the selection and development of candidates. Input into the development of elected members would ideally commence prior to their election. The aim of this intervention would be to give potential candidates for office an

insight into the roles, commitment required and structure of the body to which they are seeking election. This could be provided by giving all interested individuals access to information sources and by enhancing existing information sources. The Sub-Group proposes that further discussion with political parties is required to enable potential elected members to be developed in a fair, equitable and transparent way.

It is important that during the transition period arrangements are made to allow the payment of elected members' allowances when participating in capacity building development activities.

3.3 Enhancing the Capacity of Officers

In addressing the capacity building needs of officers, there are three key groups who may have very different needs:

- Staff in the 26 existing councils
- Staff transferring from civil service departments, non-departmental public bodies and government agencies to the new council structures
- External recruits to local government.

It must be recognised that, due to the extent of the changes, all staff will be new to the councils and their arrangements.

Leadership is vital to lead the change process and to provide guidance to the new councils. In addition, there are a range of other qualities and skills needed to ensure organisational effectiveness. These include:

All Staff

Development for all staff, and particularly for those in frontline positions, should include offering skills for life, enhancing opportunities and maximising the use of technology. Knowledge and skills will include:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Governance in the new councils
- Continuous improvement
- Community planning
- Customer orientation
- Information technology
- Equality awareness
- Team working
- Health and safety

- Knowledge of the new council and the services provided.

Operational Management

Managers with mainly operational responsibilities will need to be able to plan, deliver and evaluate services within the larger structures, as well as managing and developing larger staff groups effectively. Key areas will include:

- Performance management
- Project management
- Customer relations management
- Sharing best practice
- People management
- Financial management
- Leadership skills
- Media training
- Decision making skills
- Change management
- Chairing a meeting
- Public speaking
- Confidence and assertiveness skills.

Senior Management

Within the larger structures, it will be vital to have senior managers who think strategically and act corporately, rather than as managers of departments. Key components will include:

- Strong consistent leadership
- The ability to manage change
- Service development and improvement
- People development
- Strategic awareness
- Programme management.

3.4 Enhancing the Capacity of the Organisation

It is important to recognise that there are differing capacities within the local government sector itself. Councils with greater capacity are in the best position to provide support to citizens, customers and peers.

The issue of accountability is also important in capacity building. With more money being invested in programmes a higher level of accountability is expected than previously.

It is the duty of councils both to be accountable for their own capacity-building support and to support their partner organisations in developing the skills and systems that will allow them a higher level of

accountability. A culture of transparency and continuous learning is essential for councils if they are to encourage similar processes within their partner organisations.

Below is a short review of a number of recognised models of best practice that have been used in organisational development: the Corporate Peer Review Benchmark; the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM™); and the Balanced Scorecard. Other models are possible and may be considered.

3.4.1 Corporate Peer Review Benchmark

The model for building the capacity of the new structures should be based on accepted best practice, for example the Corporate Peer Review Benchmark 2005 (the revised benchmark of an ideal authority as developed by the IDeA).

The benchmark identifies the desirable attributes of a modern and effective council and comprises four themes:

- Leadership and Governance
- Customer focus and community engagement
- Resource and performance management
- Organisation and people.

A peer review programme would be an important development activity if this benchmark is adopted.

In local government key elements are to build organisational capacity and to develop councils that offer integrated customer-driven services. This also must take account of:

- Process redesign and improvement
- Workforce remodelling
- High performance management
- Efficiency.

3.4.2 Fundamental Concepts of Excellence

The Fundamental Concepts of Excellence have been developed by Europe's leading businesses in the public and private sectors, academia and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM™), Brussels.

The Foundation sets out the eight key standards to which organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors should adhere in order to achieve their mission, build capacity and put performance improvement into everything they do.

The elements within this process are:

- Customer focus
- Leadership and constancy of purpose
- Management by process and facts
- People development and involvement
- Continuous learning, improvement and innovation
- Partnership development
- Corporate and social responsibility
- Results orientation.

The Fundamental Concepts of Excellence are embodied in the European Excellence Framework as the assessment model for performance against these Excellence standards.

3.4.3 EFQM™ Structure & Processes

The EFQM™ Excellence Framework is a strategic management model against which to measure and roadmap current and future desired outcomes in efficiencies and effectiveness. It will enable councils to put the right building blocks in place, prioritise areas for improvement and progress towards the desired results.

The model uses the RADAR logic – Review, Approach, Deployment, Assess and Review – for managing and monitoring the success of the improvement plan. Developing an excellent organisation will therefore involve balancing competing demands and making progress on all areas of the way the business is done.

The EFQM™ Excellence Model is a non-prescriptive framework based on nine criteria. Five of these are ‘Enablers’ and four are ‘Results’. The ‘Enablers’ criteria cover what the organisation does; the ‘Results’ criteria cover what the organisation achieves. ‘Results’ are caused by ‘Enablers’ and ‘Enablers’ are improved using feedback from ‘Results’. In brief:

Excellent results with respect to performance, customers, people and society are achieved through leadership driving policy and strategy that is delivered through people, partnerships, resources and processes.

A significant number of Public Sector organisations have used the Excellence Model as a strategic framework to help integrate improvement. These range across sectors (ie Education, Health, Voluntary, Agencies etc). A number of councils in Northern Ireland are already using these models of best practice.

3.4.4 Performance Measurement Using the Balanced Scorecard

The Balanced Scorecard combines a unique business planning tool, communications tool and a performance measurement tool. It sits ideally alongside the EFQM™ Excellence model and comprises four perspectives:

- Customer
- Results
- Internal Processes
- Learning and Growth.

The Scorecard is used to clarify strategy, communicate strategy, align unit and individual goals, link strategy with budgets, identify and align strategic objectives and conduct performance reviews to improve strategy. It may, therefore, be a useful tool for the new councils.

3.4.5 Planning the Journey

The way to develop an excellent organisation requires a disciplined and structured approach that embeds fundamental concepts into all areas of activity. Any journey needs a roadmap with a starting point, a destination and a means of measuring progress and maintaining the right direction. Knowing the starting point of the journey towards excellence is essential to knowing how to develop a realistic plan. Many organisations have taken years of consistent systematic improvement to achieve optimum capacity and the desired level of excellence but in each case they had a stage by stage approach for their journey. The plan needs to reflect the particular circumstances within business priorities. The goal of excellence remains the same but the route to achieving it must recognise an organisation's particular starting point and the extent of the challenge.

In all cases, a plan to develop an excellent organisation will have these key features:

- A clear analysis of how the fundamental concepts 'live' in your organisations to establish a starting point
- A clear statement of what improvements are required to make the concepts 'live'
- An agreed set of improvement priorities
- An overall timescale by which the improvements are to be achieved
- Resource allocation to support the work
- Ownership of the plan at the highest level
- Regular and rigorous reviews.

The Sub-Group suggests therefore that these models are considered in developing organisational capacity building. However, the Sub-Group is aware that the Performance Management Sub-Group is also looking

at performance management in the new councils and their proposals should be considered in conjunction with these models.

3.5 Enhancing the Capacity of Members and Officers to work together as a Team

The quality of working relationships between elected members and officers has been variable in the council arrangements that currently exist. It will be important in the new councils that this issue is addressed. This could be done in the following ways:

- Shared development of elected members, officers and stakeholders in capacity building
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities at an early stage
- Specific training in teamwork involving elected members, officers and stakeholders.

3.6 Enhancing the Capacity of Stakeholders

The new councils will have an enhanced role in engaging with organisations and individuals that are external to local government and the public sector. In particular in the context of community planning, the voluntary and community sectors will become increasingly important stakeholders.

This engagement will build on and deepen the links already made by councils. To ensure the value of this engagement, councils will need to address some of the capacity issues within those stakeholder organisations.

Development for stakeholders might include:

- Understanding of new local government arrangements
- Partnership arrangements
- Consultation and stakeholder involvement in decision making
- Public sector values and approaches.

In addition, it should be recognised that some stakeholders will be able to provide capacity building that will be of benefit to elected members and officers, for example child protection and equality training.

4. LEGISLATION

Consideration should be given to the legislation that would be required to enable councils to:

- Invest in capacity building for elected members, officers and stakeholders
- Start this investment in capacity building immediately
- Give continued support for capacity building after the new councils have been set up
- Ensure elected members can attend development activities and be paid allowances by the existing and new councils
- Provide training, learning and development for elected members, officers and stakeholders to enable them to provide an effective service and civic leadership.

4.1 Current Legislative Arrangements

The following sections outline the most significant current provisions referring specifically, or implicitly, to capacity building in Northern Ireland.

4.1.1 The Local Government Staff Commission

The most substantial statutory provision for capacity building in local government in Northern Ireland is implicit in the functions of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission).

The Commission is an executive non-departmental public body, established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. It exercises oversight of matters including the training and development of officers of councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and can make recommendations in statute (ie requiring compliance or appeal to the Minister for authorisation of non-compliance) on matters relating to human resources, such as ensuring arrangements are in place to train staff.

The Commission exercises oversight of the training and development of officers of councils chiefly through the Local Government Training Group (see 4.1.2 below).

Schedule 3 to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 provides that the budget for the Commission is apportioned across all the district councils and Northern Ireland Housing Executive by means of a deduction from the general grant.

The final decisions on the Review of Public Administration, which were announced on 21 March 2006, stated that the functions of the Local Government Staff Commission will transfer to local government when the new councils are established.

4.1.2 The Local Government Training Group

The Local Government Training Group is a stakeholder group, including elected members, established by and responsible to the Commission. Although founded by a statutory body (the Commission) in 1993, the Training Group is not itself a statutory body as its structure and functions are not prescribed in law.

The Training Group delivers training to council officers only, and does not provide any service to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The Training Group identifies common needs and addresses these by developing and arranging courses and programmes on behalf of all councils. It also facilitates the sharing of best practice and provides a focus for sector-wide improvement initiatives.

Although the activities of the Training Group are not prescribed in law, the funding of the Training Group has a statutory basis in the General Grant (Specified Bodies) Regulations (NI) 1994. In these regulations, the Training Group is specified as a body having its expenditure defrayed by the Department of the Environment through deductions from the General Grant payable to district councils.

As ownership of the Training Group rests with the Commission, the current arrangements for the Training Group will come to an end when the functions of the Commission transfer to the new councils.

4.1.3 Payment in respect of attendance at conferences etc.

Section 38 of the Local Government Act 1972 (Northern Ireland) enables a council to make payments towards expenditure incurred by a member or officer when authorised by the council to attend any conference or meeting relating to matters connected with the discharge of the functions of the council, or the development of trade, industry or commerce in the district, or otherwise affecting the district or its inhabitants.

This is a wide-ranging provision, and would include events intended to enhance the capacity of the council.

There is no intention to remove this provision.

4.1.4 The Local Government (Best Value) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002.

This Act places a duty on councils to make arrangements for continuous improvement in the way in which their functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Capacity building is an essential activity for the achievement of continuous improvement.

The duty to secure best value in the pursuit of continuous improvement will remain.

4.2 Options for Legislation.

The Sub-Group considered a number of options, the most significant of which are outlined below.

4.2.1 The Power of Well-Being

The power of well-being applies to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, and enables an authority to do anything it considers likely to promote or improve the well-being of its area and the persons within it. Capacity building would fall within this remit.

A power of well-being is likely to be introduced in Northern Ireland and is being considered by the Community Planning Sub-Group.

4.2.2 The Power of General Competence

The power of general competence applies only in countries where local government is provided for in the national constitution.

This differs from the position in the United Kingdom, where local authorities are established under specific pieces of legislation. The functions and powers of local authorities are then conferred by central government through subsequent pieces of legislation.

There is no intention to give any local authority in the United Kingdom the power of general competence.

4.3 Recommendation

The Sub-Group expressed a strong preference that any legislation would be enabling rather than prescriptive.

Given the strong policy rationale for capacity building, the Sub-Group recommends the inclusion of the Power of Well Being in legislation.

5. KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

5.1 A Local Government Framework

There is a need to establish a framework for Northern Ireland, based on best practice elsewhere but reflecting local needs. The following elements of the framework are not given in any priority order since they all need to be considered:

5.1.1 Skills Sets for Officers and Elected Members

Capacity building programmes should be designed to deliver the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed by officers and elected members. This will help to ensure that all involved can take on their roles in delivering organisational effectiveness. Examples include:

- Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Member Development Framework
- "How will you manage?" framework for Chief Executives published by SOLACE (UK)
- Competency frameworks developed by the Local Government Training Group (LGTG) at managerial, supervisory, administrative/clerical and operational levels.

5.1.2 Standards

External standards of best practice may provide the route and framework for the development of the new councils. Examples include:

- Charter for Member Support and Development (WLGA)
- Human Resource Standards (LGSC)
- Investors in People
- ISO 9000
- EFQM™ (European Foundation for Quality Management).

Standards which reflect Northern Ireland issues and problems should be developed.

5.1.3 Role Clarification of Officers and Members

Within the new councils, officers and members will require early clarification of roles and responsibilities as well as an understanding of the organisation, its roles and services. Action needed includes:

- Definition of roles and responsibilities
- Development and use of a Corporate Peer Review benchmark for an ideal structure (as developed by IDEA)

- Outline of the council, key roles, structures, services and contact details.

5.1.4 Joint Member/Officer Development

In order to ensure a common language and integration between the work of elected members and officers, where possible there should be overlap and integration of the development offered to both groups. This will be particularly important at the top three tiers of management for officers and for those elected members who assume leading roles in their councils.

This could be achieved through:

- Designing programmes which address issues of relevance to both groups
- Participation by elected members in officer training and vice-versa
- Information sessions and presentations
- Other relevant activities.

5.1.5 Organisational Development

Using structured organisational development techniques will assist councils to embrace continuous change and enhance the quality of service. These could include:

- Organisational management models and frameworks
- Externally assessed models of best practice
- National and international benchmarks of best practice
- Proven organisational development approaches and systems.

5.1.6 Individual Performance Management

To ensure organisational effectiveness, there may be a need for formal performance review processes. Key processes might include:

- Performance management frameworks
- Personal development plans.

This issue is also being examined by the Performance Management workstream and co-ordination will be needed.

5.1.7 Recruitment and Retention

Best practice recruitment and retention underpins organisational effectiveness. Issues that might support the new councils in ensuring best practice could include:

- Development of standardised person specifications and job descriptions, taking into account local needs and demands
- Process development (co-ordination is needed with the Human Resources workstream)
- Skills frameworks for all staff and elected members. All employees and elected members require generic skills to contribute to and work effectively in a high performing council.

There are five groups of skills which broadly impact on a council's workforce, namely:

- Governance and partnership skills
- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Occupational / Technical skills
- Generic skills.

5.1.8 Succession Planning

This is a major issue. To ensure effectiveness, the new councils should have activities integrated into their operations which will ensure staff are being developed into new roles and are able to compete to replace others who leave or are promoted. This development must ensure that the knowledge, skills and expertise of the different constituent parts of the new councils are shared. Examples of activities include:

- Secondments, mentoring, job rotation, job swaps
- Participation in working groups and other development initiatives
- Graduate programmes
- Traineeships.

There will be a number of issues to be considered in relation to equality of access.

5.1.9 Leadership Development

The existing and new councils will need to develop:

- A framework of leadership skills needed by staff at all levels in the organisation
- The means to assess staff (and involve staff in the assessment) against that framework
- A range of approaches and programmes that will address leadership development issues.

5.1.10 Change Management

The capacity to manage change needs to be developed, so that elected members and officers can develop the personal skills required. This will require the identification and establishment of change champions within both the existing and new councils.

Elected members and officers will also need an understanding of the organisational models and frameworks through which effective change can be planned, implemented and evaluated.

5.1.11 Peer Support

Both officers and members have indicated that they would value peer support to help them build capacity. This will be an effective way of moving the new structures forward and it is proposed therefore that:

- Structures are developed within which the skills needed to provide peer support for both officers and elected members can be acquired
- Systems are developed by which individuals can request and receive peer support in an agreed and flexible way
- Formal structures are developed with peer bodies in Great Britain and Ireland.

5.1.12 Creation of Networks and Sharing Best Practice

As individual organisations develop their approaches and experiences, this will be of value in informing others. While some of this can be achieved informally, maximum effectiveness will be achieved through having a formal and managed support network.

5.2 Organisational Capacity Models

As highlighted previously in section 3.4, capacity building models should be introduced to councils now for future capacity building in the new councils and to manage the transition.

5.3 Awareness of the New Councils

As all staff within the new councils will be ‘transferees,’ there is a clear need for information and support for staff and elected members in how to operate within the new councils. In addition, other issues will need to be addressed including:

- Creating an ideal culture
- Developing mechanisms for self improvement
- Developing a customer focused approach to service delivery, for example through ‘One Stop Shop’ delivery.

5.4 Communication

In any change process, communication is critical in ensuring effectiveness at all stages. Among the issues to be addressed are:

- Creating awareness of the changes and their implications in organisations that impact on local government and among stakeholders
- Promoting local government's image and jobs to the wider public
- The impact of changes on individuals, including those who are currently outside the local government sector but whose functions will be transferred to the new councils. This will not be known until 2007.

5.5 Resources

Delivery mechanisms for implementation in the new structures will require dedicated and well managed resources.

In the interim period, it is critically important that a new strong central body responsible for capacity building is developed. In addition to being inclusive of all parts of the local government sector, there would be value in the body having links with national organisations with a similar remit. This body should include elected members, officers and other stakeholders as well as existing resources (LGTG and NILGA) to take on the additional work required in this area.

It is important that the body managing capacity building is 'owned' by the whole sector. While the existing councils will be a critical element, others who are joining the new councils and the wider stakeholder group should also be involved.

There are mechanisms to make capacity building funds available to the local government sectors in England, Scotland and Wales. Central funds need to be made available to start capacity building in Northern Ireland immediately, similar to those provided elsewhere in Great Britain and Ireland.

As the relative size of the local government sector is small, it will be important that there are shared resources across the wider public sector that include health, education, community planning and other relevant agencies in order to achieve economies of scale.

In addition, a dedicated team of elected members, officers and other stakeholders should be established to coordinate the recommendations made by all workstreams.

5.6 Flexibility

Any programme created needs to be flexible, so that it can cater for all of the following:

- Different levels of capacity building to support the transition period and to enable preparation across the sector for the new councils
- Providing support to help people manage the change process through the transition period
- The challenge of retaining existing staff. Arrangements may be needed to equip officers, for example if they have not attended a job interview for many years, they may need training in this in a way that does not give an unfair advantage.
- Attracting and recruiting new officers
- Developing career routes for existing and new officers
- Coping with changes in the roll-out of the Review of Public Administration
- Integrating staff from the agencies whose functions are devolving to local government. There may also be cultural differences to consider.
- Strengthening and developing working relationships between members and officers and ensuring clarity of roles
- Re-skilling officers for the transition.

The new councils will need to have the means and capability to prioritise development needs in a way that reflects their strategic priorities. The Human Resources workstream should also consider the needs of staff moving to the new councils

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Sub-Group's recommendations are set out under the headings identified in this report.

In addition, recommendations have been divided into short, medium and long term and, where relevant, they are addressed to a specific organisation.

The recommendations are put forward as important issues to be addressed and will require further work to be taken forward.

All recommendations need to be harmonised with recommendations from other workstreams.

Legislation

1. The Power of Well Being should be included in the legislation as a means of enabling councils to build their capacity to deliver excellent services for their customers (sections 4.2, 5.6).

Short-Term - Immediately

2. Establish a new strong central body to drive forward capacity building. This body should include elected members, officers and other stakeholders, as well as existing resources (LGTG and NILGA) to take on the additional work required in this area of Capacity Building (section 5.5).
3. Establish a broad-based dedicated team of elected members, officers and other stakeholders to coordinate the recommendations from all workstreams. This team should reflect all the groups transferring into the sector (section 5.5).
4. Develop and adopt a local government framework based on best practice and reflecting local needs (section 5.1).
5. Secure funding from central government to enable capacity building to happen (sections 4, 5.5).
6. Engage with political parties, independent members, the Electoral Commission and any other interested parties to encourage a structured approach to elected member development for their new roles (section 3.2).
7. Develop communication mechanisms for both capacity building and, more generally, the Review of Public Administration (sections 5.3, 5.4).

8. Develop a strategy to enhance the capacities of elected members, officers and other stakeholders (sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 5.1).
9. Develop organisational capacity building models (sections 3.4, 5.1.2).
10. Ensure that elected members are eligible to be paid allowances to attend capacity building activities, prior to and after the set up of the new councils, above the existing thresholds where required (section 3.2).
11. Ensure that all arrangements have regard to equality issues (sections 3.2, 5.1.8 and 5.6).
12. Ensure clarity of elected member and officer roles and responsibilities and that this process of clarification continues (sections 3.5 and 5.1.3, 5.1.4, 5.3).
13. Commence the discussions on engagement with the wider public sector including, health, education, community planning and other relevant agencies on the shared use of capacity building funds and resources (sections 3.3 and 5.5).

Medium-Term - 2007/2008

14. Finalise the identification of the parts of government departments and agencies that will transfer and ensure that the capacity building needs of relevant staff are identified and met (section 3.3, 5.1.7, 5.1.8).
15. Establish protocols for formal information sharing and exchange from relevant organisations (sections 5.1.11, 5.1.12).
16. Consider what information sources should be available to any individual interested in taking part in local government as an elected member (section 3.2).
17. Formalise mentoring programmes for senior managers and elected members (sections 3.2 and 3.3).
18. Deliver change management programmes for all levels of staff (particularly those who will lead changes at organisational and team levels) and introduce change champions in the existing councils (sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 5.1.5 and 5.1.10).
19. Develop effective comprehensive induction programmes for elected members, officers and staff moving from the civil service, agencies and non-departmental public bodies (sections 3.3 and 5.3).

20. Set up shared capacity building arrangements and structures with the wider public sector including health, education, community groups and other relevant agencies (sections 3.3 and 5.5).
21. Re-skill staff in the existing councils to meet the needs of those transferring to the new councils, of those moving into shared services and to support those who do not transfer (3.6 and 5.6).
22. Work with the further and higher education institutions and relevant professional bodies to ensure there is an accurate reflection of local government issues in relevant technical and professional development programmes (section 3.3).

Long-Term - 2009 and Beyond

23. Provide central support which is funded and has the resources to assist with ongoing programmes of development for elected members and assist councils with staff development programmes (sections 3.5, 5.5).
24. Secure funding to continue to develop elected member and officer leadership capacity in the local government sector and establish representative teams for each new council to drive forward identified issues (sections 5.5, 5.1.10).
25. Identify champions among officers and elected members who will lead the change management processes and who will work closely with the representative team in each new council (section 3.4).
26. Create a performance management ethos. This should be co-ordinated with the work and findings of the Performance Management workstream (section 5.1.6).
27. Provide dedicated internal support for elected members (access to staff, administrative assistance and training budgets) (section 3.2).
28. Encourage councils to work towards acknowledged and accredited standards for good practice in elected member and officer development (e.g. committed to a Member Development Charter and Investors in People) (sections 3.5, 5.1.2).
29. Encourage the establishment of a Member Development Steering Group in each council, which would oversee the implementation of a member development strategy (section 3.2).
30. Initiate learning needs analysis and personal development planning and support, linked to each council's development strategy (sections 3.2, 3.3, 5.1.1 and 5.1.5).

7. CROSS CUTTING THEMES WITH OTHER WORKSTREAMS

In considering capacity building issues, there has been a degree of overlap with the work of other workstreams. The following table seeks to summarise the key areas of overlap between the Capacity Building workstream and the work of others. This list is not intended to be exhaustive

Cross Cutting Theme	Workstream Overlap
Set Up Team(s) to Manage the Transition Communication	Task Force
Performance Management	Performance Management
Learning and Development Staff Recruitment and Retention Staff Leaving the Sector	Human Resources
Capacity Building in Community Planning Power of Well Being Regionality and Local Identity	Community Planning
Establish Capacity Building Body Central Resources for Capacity Building	Shared Services
Training in Finance of New Organisations Payment of Allowances to Elected Members	Finance
Training in Governance of New Organisations Payment of Allowances to Elected Members	Governance

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