

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TASKFORCE - CAPACITY BUILDING SUB GROUP

CONTEXT

➤ Local Government Taskforce

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 reduce from the current figure of 26 to 7, each with responsibility from 2009 for an enlarged and enhanced range of functions, to include some areas currently being undertaken by central government. The number of councillors will also reduce.

The changes envisaged by the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and the associated modernising agendas will be 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 will establish a Local Government Taskforce, to develop proposals for modern and effective local government. The Taskforce will engage politicians strategically through a **Political Panel** chaired by the Minister which along with a high level **Working Group** chaired by the DOE Permanent Secretary will provide oversight, cohesion and direction to the RPA process. A number of workstreams will be taken forward through **9 Sub Groups** and many of the issues developed here will feed into the new legislation being developed for local government.

The Taskforce Working Group will agree 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 need 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.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

➤ **Specific Aim of the Sub Group Addressing the issue of Capacity Building**

By 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 recognises 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 will focus both :-

- on enhancing the capacity of Members, Officers and the organisation to deliver on the RPA commitments by 2009; and
- on proposing arrangements to ensure a sustainable sector equipped and able to provide an excellent service to its customers.

This Sub Group should also take account of cross cutting themes within the Taskforce Sub Groups.

- Governance
- Community Planning
- Finance
- Central /Local Government Relationship
- Performance Assessment
- Estate
- Shared Services
- Human Resources
- Transfer of Functions

➤ **Sub Group Membership**

- **Chair** – John Campbell, Chief Executive, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council

➤ **Political Party Representation**

- Alliance Party Cllr Stewart Dickson
- DUP Cllr Deirdre Nelson
- Sinn Féin Cllr Michelle O'Neill
- SDLP Cllr Catherine McCambridge
- UUP Cllr Roy Beggs jnr

➤ **SOLACE Reps (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives)**

- Gerard McGivern, Director of District Development, Newry & Mourne District Council
- Sharon O'Connor, Down District Council

- Mervyn Rankin, Chief Executive , Ballymena Borough Council
- Anne Donaghy, Director Environmental Services, Antrim Borough Council
- Philip Lucas, Head of Community & Leisure, Belfast City Council
- Valerie Richmond, Director of Development , Limavady Borough Council
- Robert Gibson, Director of Leisure, Tourism & Arts, Fermanagh District Council

- **Local Government Staff Commission** – John Hanna
- **Local Government Training Group** – Norman Dunn
- **NILGA (NI Local Government Association)** – Denise McStravog
- **PPMA (Public Sector People Managers' Association)** - Karen Ellison, North Down Borough Council
- **NAC** - Cllr J McBriar
- **Support to Chair** – Brendan Currie, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
- **Dept of the Environment Legislation Support** - Dickson Holliday
- **Dept of the Environment Policy Support** - Wendy Hunter
- **Dept of the Environment Secretariat** - Claire Devlin

- **IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency) – Officer Peer** - Oonagh Aitken
- **IDeA Member Peer** – Cllr Richard Kemp

- **Outputs**

A presentation for the consideration of the Taskforce Working Group which :-

- ❖ Describes and provides commentary on the key issues including
 - an examination of best practice;
 - identification of catalysts and constraints; and
 - review of potential options.

- ❖ A section on formal recommendations to inform legislation, policy and implementation, and to include timescales involved, indicative costings/ resourcing, roles and responsibilities

- ❖ Details the key actions necessary to deliver each recommendation and where appropriate an action plan showing the actions necessary to deliver each recommendation, detailing how each will be delivered, the timescale for delivery and taking account of resources implications. The action plan should identify what is achievable immediately and what will require further development or work.

