

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TASKFORCE
CENTRAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS SUB-GROUP MEETING

NOTE OF MEETING

**HELD AT 2.00 PM ON WEDNESDAY 17th MAY 2006 IN THE LOUGH
NEAGH DISCOVERY CENTRE, OCFORD ISLAND, CRAIGAVON**

In attendance: Wavell Moore (Chair)
Angela Fitzpatrick (Secretary)
Colin Knox (UUJ)
Stephen Finlay (SOLACE)
Lorraine Crawford (Craigavon)
Ken Webb (North Down)
Alan Cardwell (Carrickfergus)
Andrew Hassard (Belfast)
Barry Heywood (Omagh)
Naomi Long (Alliance)
Liz Johnston (UUP)
Stephen Huggett (Sein Fein)
Colin Reid (IOD)
Attracta Tremers - for Barry Jordan (DRD Roads)
Victor Douglas (DCAL)
Seamus McCrystal (DFP)
Roberta Dalton – for Drew Haire (OFMDFM)
Jim Wilkinson (DOE Planning)
Stephen Martin (DSD)
Gerry Arkins (DOE)
Pauline Hughes (DOE)

Apologies: Esther Mulholland (Moyle)
Liam Flanigan (Limavady)
Mervyn Storey (DUP)
Kate Lagan (SDLP)
Richard Kemp (IDeA)
Eleanor Kelly (IDeA)
Eleanor Gill (GCCNI)
Michael Briggs (NICVA)
David McCune (DETI)
Nigel Carson (DHSSPS)

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Wavell Moore, Chair of the Sub-Group introduced himself and welcomed new attendees to the Group.

2. NOTE OF MEETING 3 MAY 2006

The note of the meeting on 3rd May 2006 was agreed.

3. CHAIR'S UPDATE FROM 17TH MAY MEETING WITH DOE PERMANENT SECRETARY & CHAIRS OF OTHER SUB GROUPS

The Chair advised the group that the above meeting was attended by the DOE Permanent Secretary, Chairs of the 9 Sub Groups and representation from the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA). He advised members that the main themes arising from the meeting were:

- The overlap between the various workstreams e.g. central/local government relations and governance etc.;
- There was a need for groups to liaise and engage with other groups early June to address cross-cutting/overlap issues; and
- Some advice was given on the format of the report i.e. what groups need to provide legislatively by the end of June 2006.

4. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT PAPER

4.1 The Chair advised the group that as per Item 6 of the Note of the Meeting on 3rd May 2006, that various papers had been circulated to members for consideration. The Chair asked Colin Knox to talk attendees through "The Devil is in the Detail" discussion paper prepared for the meeting. The Chair then suggested the group split into 5 smaller groups to consider the 5 areas suggested in the paper: advocacy, political liaison between central and local government, strategic & operational liaison, partnership principles and a model of central/local relations before returning for a plenary session to discuss the findings in the wider group.

4.2 The feedback for the 5 areas was as follows:

(i) Advocacy: It was agreed there was a need for a Minister/Junior Minister for Local Government (LG) and that responsibility for LG should be moved from DOE to OFMDFM. The role of the Minister should be to oversee/champion an ongoing modernisation agenda within LG. It was also agreed that irrespective of direct rule or devolution, there should be some senior political figure appointed to the position.

(ii) Political Liaison: Discussion centred on the composition of the Partnership Council and it was agreed that Chief Executives and Permanent Secretaries should not be on the panel in a "voting capacity" but instead form part of the conversation between the Minister and LG Representatives in a supporting role. It was agreed the preferred method of nominating individuals

to the partnership council was via NILGA although the benefits of integrating the new councils more directly were acknowledged.

(iii) Strategic & Operational: It was considered that the Public Service Agreement (PSA) framework would not be the correct mechanism for LG as it may be too strategic in nature. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) or the Community Planning process were considered to be more appropriate mechanisms for taking forward the PSA targets whilst also addressing local needs. It was agreed that if the partnership model operates effectively, that the PSA/LLA process should also work effectively.

(iv) Partnership Principles: It was agreed that accountability should be included in the partnership principles, the status of the principles should be formally signed up to, there was a need to promote mutual understanding of constraints etc. between LG and Central Government. It was also agreed that the sample M.O.U provided was quite prescriptive and should perhaps be more enabling/flexible. Finally, the group considered that financial sanctions should be imposed for any breach of the principles.

(v) Model for Central Local Relations: The Chair talked the group through the proposed model which was on the flipchart. The model was largely based on the model detailed in “The Devil is in the Detail” paper but amended to take into account the discussions under (ii).

5. NEXT STEPS

As a result of the feedback from the smaller groups, it was agreed that Wavell Moore, Colin Knox, Andrew Hassard and Stephen Finlay would take away the feedback from the day’s meeting and prepare a 1st draft of the report for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 31st May 2006. The Chair advised members the next meeting would be a full day (10.00 – 4.00pm). He also advised members that the draft report may not be issued very far in advance of the meeting due to the tight timescale and diary commitments.

Action: Wavell Moore/Colin Knox/Andrew Hassard/Stephen Finlay

6. A.O.B

There was no further business discussed. The Chair thanked members for their participation and the meeting concluded.