

1. **PRESENT**

**ACTION**

Maureen Taggart (Chair)	Dir. of Personnel & Management Services NIHE
Paul Lowe	Personnel Officer NIHE
Wendy Hunter	DoE
Neal Willis	Director of Central Services Newtownabbey
Ivor Paisley	Director of Corporate Services Cookstown
Debbie Rogers	Head of HR Limavady
Linda Leahy	Professional Officer LGSC
Cllr Helen Quigley	SDLP
Sharon Currans	PPMA
Cllr Robin Newton	DUP
Eddie Curtis	Director of Administration Newry & Mourne
Carmel Connolly	PPMA
Adrian Donaldson	Chief Executive Castlereagh
Cllr Eddie Rea	UUP
Jill Minne	Belfast City Council
Marie Cochrane	DoE
Jacqueline McKee	Head of Employment Devt. Equality Commission
Alison Millar	NIPSA
John Adams	NIJC

2. **AGENDA**

The Chair opened the meeting and introduced the agenda. The agenda was agreed.

3. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- a) Detail was given on the structure and terms of reference of the Local Government Taskforce and the role of the HR Sub-Group within this. It was indicated that the DoE were currently involved in the work of all 9 sub-groups and that interface mechanisms would be put in place across the groups.
- b) The Chair outlined the terms of reference of the HR Sub-Group and explained that they should concentrate on the main issues from a high level perspective with a view to providing a limited amount of detail around any options which they ultimately would recommend. The main focus was to be on the legislative requirements. It was suggested that the term 'facilitate the departure' of staff should be amended.

**Maureen Taggart / Wendy Hunter**

- c) There followed a brief discussion on the role of the Public Service Commission (PSC) and its relationship with the taskforce and sub-groups. The Chair defined the sub-group's role as that of informing the PSC and looking at ways of implementing its recommendations. It was queried why there was no PSC representation on the sub-group. The reason identified was that the PSC wished to remain independent. The DoE is doing some work around clarifying these relationships.

#### 4. **WORKSTREAMS**

- a) The Chair referred to the workstream areas within the remit of the sub-group which were identified as:
- Structure
  - Filling the structure
  - Terms & conditions
  - Future HR management

These areas should be examined with a view to identifying best practice, catalysts & constraints, potential options and a set of formal recommendations to include legislative requirements.

- b) A discussion ensued on the workstreams. It was suggested that structures should be examined in the context of the broader framework of the new councils to include the political structures. It was indicated that the Chief Executives of the new councils may want to establish their own structures and that any information provided by the sub-group on structures should be by way of advice only. The group was informed that there would be facilities within the legislation to permit the councils to explore their own solutions and stressed that nothing should be precluded. It was therefore suggested that the group could provide a number of models for consideration. The need for a clear understanding of current legislation was emphasised. It was also acknowledged that there was a need to address HR issues relating to the set-up of shadow councils. This is to be picked up at a later meeting.
- c) The Chair suggested that the sub-group separate out HR priorities, both short-term and longer-term and as part of this should include some exploration of the case and models for shared services. The need for locally based and locally accessible HR departments was stressed.
- d) The Chair then asked the sub-group to consider whether or not the issue of 'single status' could be addressed through the work of the group. The view was expressed that this was outside the remit of the sub-group. It was indicated that there was a commitment under NIJC to resolve the issue of single status by April 2007 irrespective of the RPA. There was consensus that the group should set aside the issue of single status allowing the

various bodies involved to progress it on their own basis.

- e) There was some discussion around the issue of terms and conditions. The view was expressed that the group should not be exploring the harmonisation of terms and conditions, but rather should be focussing on the assimilation of staff within the revised structures. It was indicated that terms and conditions are currently not standardised across the councils and should be left to the new employing bodies to determine. The Chair clarified that the sub-group should scope and identify issues where they exist and highlighted the need to give some consideration to transfer issues around current organisational policies, for example, access to family friendly initiatives.
- f) A question was raised asking if sufficient communication mechanisms were in place surrounding the work of the taskforce and the sub-group. The need to be open about the work of the sub-group, in order to avoid the spread of misinformation, was emphasised. To be raised with the Department.

**Wendy Hunter**

- g) Maureen sought volunteers from within the group to take on the work associated with each of the streams identified. The workstreams were allocated as follows:

- Structure	<b>Eddie Curtis Newry &amp; Mourne</b>
- Filling the structure	<b>Linda Leahy LGSC</b>
- Terms & conditions	<b>Stanley Black/Jill Minne Belfast City Council</b>
- Future HR management	<b>Sharon Currans PPMA</b>
- Redundancy & Compensation	<b>Maureen Taggart NIHE</b>

It was agreed that it would be useful to scope the current Local Government legislation as it applied to HR issues. John Adams agreed to take this forward with Marie Cochrane.

**John Adams / Marie Cochrane**

Legislative input and advice is to be provided by Marie Cochrane whilst Wendy Hunter will provide policy support to the sub-group.

The need for external assistance was discussed and organisations such as APSE, the LGA and the IDeA were highlighted as potential providers. APSE has offered assistance and it was suggested that Des Murray be invited to participate. LGSC to facilitate.

**Linda Leahy**

- h) The Chair asked the work groups to complete their research and report back to the whole sub-group by the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2006. In response to a query on communication between the work groups and the rest of the sub-group it was agreed that the work groups would try to channel issues as they arose and circulate relevant documents.

### 5. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the HR Sub-Group would be held on **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2006 at 2.00pm** in the Local Government Staff Commission offices, Commission House, 18-22 Gordon Street, Belfast.

The Chair asked group members also to schedule meetings of the sub-group for each Monday in June – 12<sup>th</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> - to facilitate discussion on the issues and to agree the final report back to the Taskforce Working Group.