

24 September 2009

Role of Transition Committees is crucial - Poots

The crucial role of Transition Committees must take centre stage to deliver local government reform, Environment Minister Edwin Poots insisted today.

The Minister was addressing the Transition Committee of Causeway Coast and Glens District Council, the first in a series of visits to each of the Transition Committees throughout Northern Ireland.

Voluntary Transition Committees have been set up in each of the 11 new council areas. Their role is to undertake much of the preparatory work to facilitate the convergence of amalgamating councils. This will pave the way for Statutory Transition Committees, which will be established by the end of this year, to take key decisions in advance of the new councils coming into effect in May 2011 and ensure a smooth transition.

Mr Poots said: **“The Local Government Reform Programme is now moving into the critical implementation phase so I felt that it was important to personally meet each of the Transition Committees.**

“Through my many years experience in the local government sector and as a former member of a Transition Committee, I understand the vital role these Committees play and recognise the challenging work programme ahead.

“I am particularly pleased that my first visit is to Causeway Coast and Glens Transition Committee, which has the unique challenge of amalgamating the four councils of Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle.

“I do not for one minute underestimate the workload involved in converging four Councils. I am heartened from my visit today to see the progress already made by this Transition Committee in this ambitious programme and I encourage them to ensure that the momentum they have built up is maintained.”

Chair of Causeway Coast and Glens Transition Committee, Cllr Sam Cole, welcomed the Minister and thanked him for taking time to visit their Transition Committee.

Cllr Cole added: “The Minister’s visit demonstrates the importance of our plans to create the new Causeway Coast and Glens Council in May 2011. The four merging Councils are working well together and progress has been made in developing our strategy for the provision of services within the new council.

“We recognise that there is still much to do but it is already clear that successful implementation of the Local Government Reform Programme will lead to stronger local government and improved services for our citizens.

“I know that our Transition Committee has found the Minister’s visit helpful and productive and I am sure other Transition Committees will find this personal approach key to taking forward reform.”

The Minister concluded by stating he remained committed to doing everything possible to deliver on the local government reform timetable. He said: **“I firmly believe that this offers us an opportunity to transform services so that we are more proactive, co-ordinated and responsive to the needs of our citizens. It is right to deliver improved public services as close to the people as possible, with councils fulfilling the leading role at the heart of the local community.”**

Notes to editors:

1. The Local Government Reform Programme will see the existing 26 councils reduced to 11 in May 2011. It will involve the transfer of a range of central government functions to local government including; responsibility for planning, regeneration and certain roads functions.
2. Following guidance issued by the Department of the Environment, all 11 new council areas have now established Voluntary Transition Committees.
3. The Causeway Coast and Glens District Council Voluntary Transition Committee consists of councillors from the four constituent councils; Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Moyle.
4. All media enquiries should be directed to the DOE Press Office on 028 9054 0003. Out of office hours please contact the duty press officer via pager number 07699 715 440 and your call will be returned.