



Minutes of the third meeting of the Strategic Leadership Board Modernisation Subgroup Strand B –Service Improvement held on 14th November 2007 in Lisburn Civic Centre

Present: Cllr Dermot Curran (Vice Chair), Cllr Ross Hussey, Cllr Alan McDowell, Cllr Eddie Rea, Cllr Michelle McIlveen MLA, Cllr Gary Stokes, Cllr Tony Hill, and John Gillanders.

In Attendance: Alan Hanna (NILGA); John Price, Angela Fitzpatrick, Damian Dean and Lorcan O’Kane (Local Government Reform Unit, Department of the Environment). John Halligan on behalf of Rose Crozier

Apologies: Cllr Sean Begley (Chair), Danny McSorley, Rose Crozier, and Ald Gordon Dunne

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Vice Chair, Cllr Dermot Curran, welcomed members and noted the absence of the Chair, Cllr Sean Begley and Danny McSorley from Omagh. On behalf of the group the Vice Chair expressed condolences and sympathy to everyone associated with the recent fire tragedy in the town.

2. Apologies

The apologies were noted.

3. Minutes of last meeting

These were accepted as a true record, proposed by Cllr Rea and seconded by Cllr Hill.

4. Matters Arising

Cllr Stokes raised his concerns about the purpose of the group and outcomes expected from it. The Vice Chair thanked Cllr Stokes for raising this issue saying that he was aware that similar concerns had been expressed by members of the Strand A sub-group. Cllr Hill explained that the Modernisation Sub-groups were set up by the Strategic Leadership Board to continue some work on modernising the local government sector while the review of the RPA decisions was undertaken. These groups were a temporary arrangement until the review was completed and at that point the original plan to establish Policy Development Panels may be returned to.

Cllr McDowell said that he felt the group should be widening its remit beyond Information Technology issues. Cllr Rea agreed with this but thought it was difficult to pursue issues such as estates management, community planning and specific service delivery areas like waste management before the review process is completed. Cllr McDowell queried why performance management was part of the remit for the Strand A rather than the Strand B group. John Price explained that significant work was already underway by the sub-group and explained that this included work on the network infrastructure for local government, NI Direct, shared services and procurement.

It was proposed by Cllr Rea and seconded by Cllr Stokes that the secretariat produces a programme setting out the detailed work of the sub-group with timelines for specific outcomes.

5. NILGA E-Gov Working group update

Alan Hanna gave a report on the progress of the NILGA eGovernment Working Group. The last meeting of the eGovernment Working Group had a presentation by Richard Kerr from the Best Practice Group. This is a private sector company which advises on IT procurement. The slides used by Mr Kerr were circulated to the Strand B sub-group for information and for consideration by those working on procurement issues for the group. The Mobile Working sub-group is continuing to implement its 3 pilot projects in Building Control and Environmental Health.

The draft terms of reference for an IS Strategy for local government are being revised following responses from councils. Cllr Hussey commented that it was important that any IS Strategy was compatible with central government approaches. Cllr Kerr, who is also Chair of the NILGA eGovernment Working Group commented that this work should be part of local government efforts to build a case for strategic leadership to be transferred to the sector. Cllr McIlveen MLA questioned why some councils were continuing to spend money on their own IT strategies when the sector were embarking on developing a single IS Strategy. The Strand B sub-group endorsed the work of the eGovernment Working Group and encouraged it to learn the lessons of other councils that had developed IT strategies.

This was proposed by Cllr McIlveen MLA and Cllr McDowell.

6. Wider E-Gov Issues

The wider e-Government issues were covered in the Secretariat's progress report It was noted that:

Network Infrastructure: IT Officers are identifying some suitable pilot Councils to implement the JANET high speed internet network. We would then approach NIRAN for costs for pilots and look at potential pilot implementation. Further meeting due on 27 November 2007 NIRAN are responsible for the Northern Ireland use of the used extensively in further and higher education and research across the UK.

Microsoft : North Down Borough Council are liaising with Microsoft on the potential for pilot exploration of best practice applications. Microsoft held an event recently on

Unified Communications –a product which joins up email, msn, VOIP and video conferencing services. A further meeting is planned with Microsoft on 19 November 2007 to start to explore potential for Local Government, and possibly an information event.

7. Procurement

A very positive meeting with the Local Government procurement professionals group was held on 8 November 2007 to explore a number of possible models for collaborative procurement including framework agreements and Centres of Excellence. Cllr McDowell suggested that a possible model was the Regional Supplies Service (RSS) which provides services to the health sector. Councils in Northern Ireland spend £450m on goods and services. It was agreed that work on exploring models for common procurement including e-procurement should continue and report back to the Strand B sub-group.

This was proposed by Cllr Stokes, seconded by Cllr Kerr.

8. NI Direct

The Delivery and Innovation Division of the Department of Finance and Personnel have agreed to a meeting to discuss Local Government involvement in NI Direct. This will take place on 20 November 2007 at 11am. The Secretariat will attend along with John Halligan of Belfast City Council (replacing Rose Crozier who is on leave). It was also suggested that Moira McVeigh join this delegation. While the sub-group did not feel it was essential to have political members present Cllrs Sean Kerr and Eddie Rea may attend if possible.

9. Shared Services

Terms of reference for a feasibility study to explore and appraise all options for shared services in local government have not yet been completed. This is a highly complex area and the terms of reference will be finalised before consulting Chief Executives for their views on the terms of reference and on which services could be shared.

10.AOB

Cllr Kerr commented that the discussion at the beginning of the meeting was a very useful one helping to clarify the role of the sub-group.

11. Date of next meeting 12th December 2007 at 10am in Lisburn Civic Centre

Dates were also tabled for further meetings, if necessary, on 16th January and 13th February both at 10am but venues to be confirmed.