

16 October 2009

Poots visits new council area representatives

Environment Minister Edwin Poots addressed the Transition Committee of Castlereagh and Lisburn Councils during their meeting on Thursday 15 October.

Transition Committees have been set up in each of the 11 new council areas and 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 early next 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 indeed as a former Chair of this Transition Committee, I understand the vital role they play and recognise the demanding work programme ahead and the unique challenges facing this Committee.

“The Castlereagh and Lisburn Transition Committee will be central to delivering this transition to a new council in May 2011 and I am confident that in continuing to work together, we can and will successfully change the face of local government for the better.

“I am heartened from my visit today to see the progress already made by the Committee in this ambitious programme. I value this opportunity to engage and respond in person to questions and I encourage the Committee to ensure that the momentum they have built up is maintained.”

The Minister concluded by stating that 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 road functions.
2. This was the third in a series of visits to each of the Transition Committees throughout Northern Ireland.

3. Following guidance issued by the Department of the Environment, all 11 new council areas have now established Transition Committees.
4. The Castlereagh and Lisburn Transition Committee consists of councillors from the two constituent Borough and City councils.
5. 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.