

REGIONAL TRANSITION CO-ORDINATING GROUP AND TRANSITION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Agenda Item: 6

Summary: This paper provides a summary of the issues discussed at the last meeting of the Regional Transition Coordinating Group along with an update on the work of the Transition Committees.

Action Required: To note for information.

REGIONAL TRANSITION COORDINATING GROUP

1. The fifth meeting of the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) was held on 11 June 2009. The minutes of the meeting will be published on the Department of the Environment (DOE) and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) websites once they have been approved by RTCG members. Arrangements are also being made for all previous RTCG minutes and papers to be included on the websites.
2. Annex 1 of this paper provides a summary of the key issues discussed at the RTCG meeting. Key points to note are highlighted below.

LG Reform Joint Forum

3. At the meeting RTCG members noted that the establishment of the Local Government Reform Joint Forum, to facilitate consultation and negotiation between Employer and Employee representatives on cross cutting Human Resource issues, was agreed by the Strategic

Leadership Board (SLB) on 22 May 2009. RTCG members agreed the following implementation arrangements:

- the Forum will be serviced by the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) with support from the Joint Secretariat
 - the Forum will consist of the two groupings mentioned above (the Employers' Side for local government, the Departments transferring functions and other affected bodies) and the Employees' Side (comprising NIC/ICTU representatives)
 - it will be a matter for each group to agree its representative membership and put in place its own supporting structures and arrangements
 - the LGSC will prepare the Forum's defining documents (including a draft terms of reference, definition of roles, reporting responsibilities, etc) and secure its membership
4. It is anticipated that the Forum will hold its inaugural meeting during week commencing 20 July.
5. Copies of correspondence between the Minister and the Chair of Panel C, on the issue of the accountability and reporting arrangements of the Forum, are attached at Annex 2 for the information of SLB members. A copy of the Minister's letter to the Chair of the LGSC (Brian Hanna), formally requesting that the Commission press ahead with the establishment of the Forum, is attached at Annex 3.

Finance and Estates Implementation

6. RTCG members also noted that, at the SLB meeting on 22 May 2009, it had also been agreed that a range of finance and estates implementation issues (identified in paper SLB 25/2009) be passed to RTCG for implementation. RTCG agreed:
- the establishment of a Finance and Estates Implementation Group to help take these issues forward

- the draft terms of reference of the Group
- that the membership of the Group should comprise central and local government officials and a representative from LG Audit
- it would be helpful, for continuity purposes, that the Chair and Vice Chair were also members of RTCG
- its Joint Secretariat would liaise with the Department of Finance and Personnel and SOLACE about securing a Chair and Vice Chair

Other Key Issues

7. RTCG members also received updates on a number of key issues including:
- deliberations at the last SLB meeting
 - the date (20 July) for the first meeting of the Executive Sub Group to consider transfer of functions and related issues
 - the current position on Phase 1 of the Assessment of Options for LG Service Delivery project
 - the ongoing review of LG Reform Programme Organisational Structures

TRANSITION COMMITTEES UPDATE

8. A seminar, "Making Transition Work", for Transition Committee and Transition Management Team members, is due to be held on 06 July 2009 at Craigavon Civic Centre. It is the first of a series of seminars hosted by the Joint Secretariat, with the support of SOLACE, to provide guidance and support during the transition process.
9. The eleven Transition Committees continue to provide minutes of their meetings. Funding entitlement for the first quarter of 2009 / 2010 financial year has been provided to six of the eleven council clusters. All documents received since the last SLB, on 22 May, are provided for

the information of members at Annexes 4 to 14.

10. To date three Transition Committees have appointed Change Managers or Transition Coordinators (Antrim / Newtownabbey, Armagh / Banbridge / Craigavon and Belfast). The other Committees are in the process of arranging recruitment of staff to fulfil this role.

11. Among other things, the Transition Committees have recently focussed on the following issues:

- the formulation of a communication strategy
- explored Transition Committee networking; discussion of a shared vision for new councils
- consideration of new and existing capital projects and the likely effects on work programmes for new councils

RECOMMENDATION

12. It is recommended that members note the information provided in this update.

Joint Secretariat



**Key Outcomes and Action Points from Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG)
11.06.09**

Personnel Changes

- It was reported that Mary McIvor, Head of Supply Division (Department of Finance and Personnel) is moving on. Michael Daly, Head of Central Expenditure Division in DFP is likely to be her replacement on the Group.

Delays in Planning Reform

- Questions were raised about the potential delays in Planning Reform as these could impact on the transfer of planning functions as part of the Local Government Reform Programme.
- RTCG members were informed that there is ongoing correspondence at departmental and ministerial level to resolve the issues around planning reform.
- The last date before the summer recess that Planning Reform proposals can be presented to the Executive is 09 July. It is hoped that any outstanding issues will be resolved within the next few weeks.

SLB Update

- An update was provided on the SLB meeting on 22 May. This highlighted that Panel A is working on a community planning framework for councils.
- It was agreed that resources are needed to make community planning possible and that clarification on the availability of resources must be a key priority.
- This considered, it was decided that the bid for Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) funding should be progressed as soon as possible as all potential funding sources must be explored before a bid is made to the Executive in the autumn.

Local Government Reform Implementation Framework

- An updated version of the Local Government Reform Framework was presented. This document sets out the key programme priorities and milestones. This will be continuously updated and re-issued and is available on the DOE and NILGA websites.
- It was confirmed that a Strategic Advisor will be appointed to help further develop and deliver planning and programme management and to subsequently implement a programme management system.
- It was relayed that the tender period for this consultancy has closed and six tenders were received. A contract will be awarded by the end of June.

Transition Committees Update

- The role of Transition Committees (TCs) in relation to council capital expenditure projects was discussed following SLB reports that there is confusion across local government about this issue.
- It was explained that whilst the approval of TCs is not necessary, there should be sharing of information amongst the voluntary Transition Committees as part of their role in considering the convergence of capital funding programme in preparation for the new councils.
- DOE confirmed that a note will be issued to Chief Executives, TCs and Transition Management Teams (TMTs) in order to clarify this.
- It was reported that the work of the TCs is progressing at varying rates. A key piece of support will be the appointment of the Strategic Advisor and the programme management system.
- A seminar due to be held on 06 July for TCs and TMTs was discussed. This will be part of a series of seminars hosted by the Joint Secretariat (DOE and NILGA) with the support of SOLACE to provide guidance and support during the transition process.
- It was agreed that it would be helpful to have one or two Chief Executives as part of the Local Government Reform Communications Group plus in attendance at the event on the 06 July. The Joint Secretariat agreed to take this forward.

Local Government Reform Joint Forum and HR Implementation Issues

- A DOE paper was presented on the way forward on the establishment of a Local Government Reform Joint Forum to facilitate consultation and negotiation between Employer and Employee representatives on HR issues. The detail was discussed as follows:
 - The Forum will be serviced by the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC).
 - The Forum will consist of two groupings. The Employers' Side, for local government, the departments with functions transferring and other affected bodies. The second grouping is to comprise of NIC/ICTU to represent the Employees' Side.
 - It will be a matter for each group to agree its representative membership and there should be early dialogue to identify the representatives for local government and the NICS plus supporting arrangements.
- The LGSC confirmed that it will produce a paper to define the joint roles and reporting responsibilities for clarity prior to the first meeting.
- The expected date for the first meeting of this group is during week commencing 20 July.

Finance and Estates Implementation

- At the SLB meeting on 22 May it was agreed that a number of finance and estates issues be passed to RTCG for implementation.
- A paper was presented proposing the establishment of a Finance and Estates Implementation Group to take the recommendations forward for this crucial piece of work that will set the financial context.
- There was discussion on the composition of the Group. It was felt that for continuity, it would be helpful if the Chair and Vice-Chair were also members of RTCG.
- The Joint Secretariat agreed to have further discussions with DFP and SOLACE in order to agree a Chair and Vice-Chair.

- The Joint Secretariat welcomed the views of the other departments that are to be represented.
- The Finance and Estates Implementation paper was accepted by RTCG.

Transfer of Functions

- It was confirmed that the first meeting of the Executive (Ministerial) Sub Committee will take place on 20 July. RTCG will be updated on the outcomes at the next meeting.
- It was agreed that whilst meetings are ongoing with for example, Roads Service, the Transferring Functions Working Group should meet after the Executive Sub Committee meeting. This will facilitate officials taking forward the work in their respective departments with ministerial direction.

Assessment of Options for Local Government Service Delivery

- It was discussed that there are some outstanding issues on the Phase 1 report on Service Delivery. These are affecting the finalisation of the report prior to the recommendations being presented to the political parties for decision-making.
- The Joint Secretariat confirmed that it is in ongoing discussions with the consultants that produced the report but a revised timescale may be required. This could have implications for the funding bid which will be put to DFP.
- Other RTCG members also highlighted their concerns and it was decided that it would be helpful if stakeholders wrote to DOE as soon as possible outlining any issues or concerns they have with the report.
- If a delay cannot be avoided, members discussed the option of a phased approach to the funding bid.
- All members agreed that it was essential to get Phase 1 correct before moving to Phase 2. Phase 1 has a significant bearing on Phase 2 which involves a full economic appraisal of local government service delivery along with recommendations on operating models for the effective and efficient delivery for corporate type support services.
- It was concluded that a progress report will be provided at the next meeting.

Review of Local Government Reform Programme Organisational Structures

- Following SLB's agreement on the review of Local Government Reform Programme Organisational structures, it was confirmed that there is now a work programme in place to take this forward.
- The Review has been designed to ensure that structures currently in place are fit for purpose for the implementation phase. It will look at refining these structures rather than wholesale change.
- The Joint Secretariat relayed that it is carrying out focus groups with each of the Panels during week commencing 15 June. Meetings with representatives of SOLACE and the voluntary Transition Committees are being arranged.

Please note: The information above may be subject to amendment. This is due to the quick turn around of information in order to provide a summary as soon as possible after each meeting. The formal minutes will represent the information in finalised format.

SLB 37/2009 ANNEX 2

Mr S Wilson
Minister of the Environment
DoE Private Office
Room 717
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT28GB

29 May 2009



I refer to the meeting of the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) held on 22 May 2009. At that meeting it was agreed that a Local Government Reform Joint Forum (the Forum) will be established to take forward all HR related issues. You also indicated that you wish to consider very carefully the accountability arrangements of the Forum but I would ask that you reserve your final decision on this issue until the outcome of the review of the local government reform programme organisational structures is known.

As you know it was also agreed at SLB that the review will, inter alia, make recommendations on appropriate structures and conveyance arrangements for managing and integrating the continued work necessary for transition to May 2011. It could therefore be considered premature to finalise the accountability arrangements of the Forum pending the outcome of the review. I am sure you will concur that this adds impetus to the importance of ensuring that the review is completed within the agreed timescale.

Yours sincerely

ALD ARNOLD HATCH

Chair, Policy Development Panel C Northern Ireland Local Government
Association

Unit 5B, Castlereagh Business Park, 478 Castlereagh Road, Belfast BT5 6BO
tel: 028 9079 8972 fax: 028 90791248 email: office@nilga.org www.nilga.org



Department of the
Environment

www.doeni.gov.uk

Alderman Arnold Hatch
Chair, Policy Development Panel C
C/O Northern Ireland Local Government
Association
Unit 5B Castlereagh Business Park
478 Castlereagh Road
Belfast
BT5 6BQ

DoE Private Office
Room 717
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB

Telephone: 028 9054 1166

Email: private.office@doeni.gov.uk

Your reference:

Our reference: COR/325/2009

8th June 2009

Thank you for your letter of 29 May 2009 asking that I reserve any final decision on the accountability arrangements for the proposed Local Government Reform Joint Forum until review of the local government reform programme organisational structures is known. You will recall that at the SLB meeting on 22 May 2009, I indicated that I wished to consider further the accountability arrangements for the proposed Local Government Reform Joint Forum and would inform PDP C and SLB of my decision.

While I welcome PDP C's recommendation that a new Joint Forum should be established to consult and negotiate with Trade Unions on Human Resource issues that are cross sectoral in nature, I do have some difficulty with the view expressed that the Joint Forum should sit under PDP C. As I am sure you will appreciate, PDP C represents only those local government employers who will sit on the proposed Joint Forum, i.e., the NIJC and the JNC. It has no role or remit over the other employer bodies to be represented on the proposed Joint Forum who will represent the transferring functions departments or other bodies, such as the NIHE. Whilst I accept that PDP C has a continuing and legitimate interest in the work of the Forum, I believe that the accountability arrangements for that body need to be more broadly based.

As regards the review of the local government reform programme organisational structures, I am sure you will appreciate that the outcome of this will not be known until August 2009. In the meantime, subject to the outcome of that review, I have concluded that the most sensible reporting and accountability arrangements for the proposed Joint Forum is not directly to PDP C, rather it should be to the Regional Transition Coordinating Group, and ultimately to the SLB. We can, of course, revisit this issue once the outcome of the review is known, but in the meantime I am keen to press ahead with the establishment of the Forum, given the urgency with which we need to address staffing issues.

SAMMY WILSON MP MLA

Minister of the Environment

Mr Brian Hanna, CBE
Chairman
The Local Government Staff Commission for
Northern Ireland
Commission House,
18-22 Gordon Street
Belfast
BT1 2LG.

DoE Private Office
Room 717
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8GB

Telephone: 028 9054 1166

Email: private.office@doeni.gov.uk

Your reference:

Our reference:

10th June 2009

ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM JOINT FORUM

My purpose in writing to you is to formally ask that the Local Government Staff Commission takes forward the establishment and servicing of a proposed Local Government Reform Joint Forum, whose purpose will be to facilitate consultation and negotiation between Employer and Employee representatives on a range of Human Resource (HR) related issues that are cross sectoral in nature.

As you will be aware, Policy Development Panel C submitted a paper to the Strategic Leadership Board on 22 May 2009 (copy attached) proposing the establishment of a Local Government Reform Joint Forum. PDP C proposed that the Joint Forum should consist of two groupings; the Employers' side which will include the Northern Ireland Joint Council and the National Joint Council [for local government employers], Departments (either Departments transferring functions themselves, or DFP acting on their behalf) and, depending on final numbers of staff transferring, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The second grouping would comprise various Trade Unions, as appropriate. PDP C further proposed that the Joint Forum should be serviced by the Local Government Staff Commission.

I would now ask you as a matter of urgency, to take matters forward; including seeking nominations from the various interested groups to the Joint Forum; preparing draft Terms of Reference and Operating Arrangements for agreement at the first meeting of the Joint Forum and preparing a draft agenda identifying the key priorities to be addressed. To this end you will find Annex A to the PDP C paper to SLB particularly useful as it sets out an initial outline of the HR implementation issues agreed by PDP C for handover to the Joint Forum.

SAMMY WILSON MP MLA
Minister of the Environment