

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP BOARD MEETING – 5 FEBRUARY 2007

ESTABLISHMENT OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANELS

AGENDA ITEM: 9

SUMMARY: **Setting out proposal on the Terms of Reference and Standing Orders for, and the phased establishment of the Policy Development Panels.**

ACTION REQUIRED: **Agreement on Terms of Reference and phasing of Panels.**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The role of the Policy Development Panels is to support the Strategic Leadership Board in the development and implementation of the local government modernisation and reform programme. The Local Government Taskforce agreed that 5 Policy Development Panels would be established with responsibility for the following work streams:
 - Human Resources and Capacity Building
 - Shared Services, Finance and Estates
 - Community Planning and Governance
 - Central/Local Government Relations and Performance Management
 - Transfer of Functions
2. Each Panel will be chaired by an elected member from the Strategic Leadership Board, assisted by a political Vice-Chair, and will be supported by a secretariat provided jointly by the Department of the Environment and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).
3. The primary role of each Policy Development Panel is to provide the overall direction and management of the workstreams to be delivered, based on the recommendations made by the previous Taskforce subgroups, where

appropriate, and subsequent discussions and agreements within the previous Taskforce Working Group and Political Panel.

4. The specific remit and functions of the Policy Development Panels will be to:
 - lead the development of a detailed programme of work, including timescales and resources, for each work stream and to agree that programme with the Strategic Leadership Board;
 - identify and manage linkages within their own and other Panel policy areas;
 - ensure that the programme of work remains on track and report regularly to the Strategic Leadership Board on progress;
 - present costed options and recommendations on policy and implementation proposals to the Strategic Leadership board for agreement;
 - ensure that policy proposals are subject to consultation and the relevant impact assessments;
 - ensure that requests to the Strategic Leadership Board for financial resources are supported by an appropriate Business Case;
 - commission task and finish projects on key work streams; and,
 - develop, where appropriate, proposals for local pilots in specific geographic areas.
5. The operation of the Policy Development Panels will be subject to external review within a year of their establishment and annually thereafter.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TASKFORCE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANELS – STANDING ORDERS

Membership of the Policy Development Panels

Elected Members

1. Each Policy Development Panel shall be made up of two elected members from each of the five main political parties. One elected member from each political party shall be the Chair of a Policy Development Panel. The Chair shall also be a member of the Strategic Leadership Board. A Vice-Chair from each political party shall be appointed for each Panel.

Local Government Officers and Central Government Officials

2. Each Policy Development Panel membership shall also include local government officers and central government officials. The number of such members shall be proposed by each Panel and shall be ratified by the Strategic Leadership Board.

Others

3. Others with expertise and experience relevant to the Policy Development Panel work stream may also be members of the Panel on a permanent or ad hoc basis. The number of such members shall be proposed by each Panel and shall be ratified by the Strategic Leadership Board.

Secretariat to the Policy Development Panels

4. A joint secretariat to each Policy Development Panel shall be provided by the Department of the Environment and NILGA.

Resignation from a Policy Development Panel

5. A member may resign from a Panel by giving written notice to one of the joint secretaries of the Strategic Leadership Board who shall notify the Chair of both the Panel and Strategic Leadership Board of any such resignation. The appropriate organisation should then reappoint a member within a one month period.

Meetings of the Policy Development Panels

6. The Panels shall meet, with due regard to the timetable for Strategic Leadership Board meetings, as each Panel may determine. Each Panel shall determine a venue for meetings and shall meet consistently at the same venue.
7. Each Panel may invite any other person to attend meetings and may invite such a person or body to submit evidence and produce documents or to speak.

Quorum

8. The quorum for any meeting of a Policy Development Panel shall be seven (excluding the secretariat) and shall include at least five elected members, one local government officer and one central government official.
9. A meeting of a Policy Development Panel shall be declared inquorate if, at the beginning of the meeting, there are insufficient members present in accordance with paragraph 13. On declaring a meeting inquorate, the Chair shall suspend the meeting until a quorum is present. If a quorum is not present within 20 minutes, the Chair shall adjourn the meeting to a date and time to be agreed.

Agendas

10. Each Policy Development Panel secretariat shall determine the agendas for meetings of the Panel. At the request of two of its members a Panel may

resolve to include an item of business on the agenda of a specified future meeting.

11. Documents relating to the business to be taken at the Panel should normally be made available to members at least 5 working days before the meeting to which they relate.

Voting

12. The decisions of a Panel will be taken on the basis of consensus. Decisions will not be made by voting. Disagreements over matters of policy or procedure will be recorded in the minutes. Individual dissension on matters of general agreement shall be recorded at the request of any member.

Minutes of Policy Development Panel Meetings

13. Minutes of Policy Development Panel meetings will be produced by each Panel secretariat and, once agreed by the Panel, will be placed on the Department of the Environment's website, as will papers discussed at Panel meetings.

PHASED ESTABLISHMENT OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANELS

1. Central government is committed to implementing the local government modernisation and reform programme and therefore intends to proceed with putting all five Policy Development Panels in place as soon as the secretariats can be staffed. In doing so the DOE is committed to finding the financial resources that can be demonstrated to be needed for local government to staff their element of the joint secretariats.
2. Given that recruitment and selection processes will be required to identify the staff to work in the Policy Development Panel secretariats, it would be prudent to identify priorities and phase the introduction of the Panels by staffing the priority work streams first. NILGA has taken the view of Members which indicates that Human Resources and Capacity Building should be given priority followed by Community Planning and Governance and Transfer of Functions.
3. The agreement of the Strategic Leadership Board is sought to the proposed Terms of Reference and Standing Orders and views are invited on the number of local government officers, central government officials and others that should be members of each Policy Development Panel and on NILGA's proposals for priority work streams.