



**Sub-Group A - End of Term  
Report on Progress of Work to  
Date**

## Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Work Programme for Modernisation Sub-Group A.....	3
3. Meetings Held .....	4
4. Key Priorities Identified by Sub-Group A .....	4
5. Work on Key Priorities.....	5
5.1 Baseline Information Exercise/Strategic Outline Case.....	5
5.2 Communication Strategy.....	6
5.3 Elected Members Development Programme/Corporate Governance.....	6
5.4 Customer Focus/Customer Service Strategy.....	7
5.5 Change Management/Transition Strategy and Human Resource Strategy .....	8
6. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work .....	8

## **1. Introduction**

In August 2007 the Strategic Leadership Board agreed the Terms of Reference for two Local Government modernisation subgroups to support the Strategic Leadership Board in the development and implementation of the local government modernisation programme. The Strategic Leadership Board agreed that two Modernisation Sub-Groups would be established with responsibility for (a) Legislative Framework and Capacity Building and (b) Service Delivery. The primary role of each Sub-Group was to provide overall direction and management of the work to be agreed and delivered.

## **2. Work Programme for Modernisation Sub-Group A**

There was a large range of issues to be considered by Modernisation Sub-Group A:

### Legislative Framework and Capacity Building

Proposed Immediate Priorities were:

- Review position on legislative issues (including Local Government finance, remuneration and severance arrangements and ethical standards and mandatory code of conduct).
- Review position on other legislative issues (including regulatory framework re participation in limited and PPP/PFI arrangements).
- The latter is likely to require a scoping and investigative exercise to examine best practice ways forward.
- Review current position on Capacity Building and commission development of a Capacity Building strategy and programme.

Other priorities:

- Performance management framework
- New governance arrangements
- These issues are more dependent on the RPA Review outcome and would be better considered at the end of the year.

### **3. Meetings Held**

Sub-Group A held a series of 7 meetings, which included an away day to explore the priorities and a study trip to South East Employers in London to investigate an Elected Members Charter.

### **4. Key Priorities Identified by Sub-Group A**

During the away day the work of the Sub-Group was identified as:

- **Baseline Information Exercise**
  - It was agreed that it would be necessary to find out what systems and procedures all councils had in place at present. This would give the group a starting point and also assess the similarities and disparities between councils. Group members agreed that John Price, DOE, would work with NILGA to commission this piece of work to begin to gather an evidence base of where we are now, what is our starting point.
  
- **Communication Strategy**
  - It was widely agreed that we must keep people informed and involved. NILGA have appointed a new Director of Communications and Engagement, it was agreed that Maire Killoran would work with the subgroup to develop a robust communication strategy for both internal and external communications.
  
- **Elected Members Development Programme/Corporate Governance**
  - It was agreed that elected members would need a comprehensive development/corporate governance programme. John Adams agreed to provide details of a members development programme/charter to give the group an example of how this could be developed. It was also agreed that the group could look at courses such as the CIPFA course for corporate governance development.
  
- **Customer Focus**
  - It was agreed that councils would need overarching strategy to develop a customer focus. This strategy will put the citizen at the centre of service delivery within councils. NILGA will work with DoE to formulate a Customer Service Strategy.
  
- **Change Management/Transition Strategy**
  - Members felt when the final decisions are agreed that a robust strategy would need to be developed to support the change process. This would include the development of local transition committees.

- **Human Resource Strategy**

- It was recognised that all the work would need underpinned by a training and support programme for staff. It was agreed substantive work on this issue should also be prioritized as soon as possible when the final decisions are known.

It was agreed by all group members to focus on the first four priority actions before moving on to the final two priorities, Change Management/Transition Strategy and Human Resource Strategy. In addition it was agreed that the legislative priorities were really reliant on the Modernisation Bill that is being brought forward hopefully during the Spring 2008.

## ***5. Work on Key Priorities***

The following sections present the work to date on each of the key priority areas identified by the Sub-Group.

### **5.1 Baseline Information Exercise/Strategic Outline Case**

Sub-Group A identified a baseline information exercise as the first building block to the work priorities identified. In parallel a requirement was identified by DoE for a consultant to support the development of a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for Local Government Modernisation. Subsequently Deloitte were commissioned by DoE to carry out this piece of work to:

- Design questionnaires/ surveys for the capture of baseline information on existing operations;
- Capture baseline information from the twenty-six Local Councils including support for senior council officers where appropriate;
- Collate and report on baseline information to a standard suitable for inclusion in the SOC and future business cases at an individual project/ programme level;
- Develop outline financial estimates for the different elements of modernisation. This may include limited engagement with the market to identify outline costs;
- Undertake options development/ scenario analysis for Local Government Modernisation;
- Quantify expected benefits. Please note that high-level benefits modelling has already been completed for the Modernisation Programme;

- Draft the sections of the SOC relating to high level options, cost and benefits, risk and achievability assessment. The structure of the document will be agreed with the successful consultant prior to the commencement of work; and
- Review the draft SOC document and provide an expert opinion on its 'fitness for purpose'.

This exercise was being carried out by DoE and it was agreed that Sub-Group A would dovetail onto this piece of work and use the information provided by the exercise to move the work priorities forward. It is anticipated that Deloitte will have an emerging findings paper from the baseline information produced by the end of April or early May.

## **5.2 Communication Strategy**

Máire Killoran in conjunction with DoE is developing a Communication Strategy. The DOE have undertaken some of the preliminary work to develop this Strategy with support from communication professionals involved more widely in the RPA process. DoE and NILGA have now been in discussion with NILGA officers in relation to this work.

As part of the early discussions it was recommended that the Local Government Communication Officers Forum should be re-established. It was envisaged that this group will meet no more than once per month in the establishment phase and around every two or three months in the delivery phase. Additional ad hoc meetings or sub groups may be organised as appropriate.

The Purpose of the group is to:

- Advise on the design and delivery of the strategy
- Support the delivery of the strategy at council level
- Support the monitoring and evaluation process

This work is ongoing under leadership from a Communications Steering Group involving all stakeholders.

## **5.3 Elected Members Development Programme/Corporate Governance**

It was agreed by group members that it would be valuable to develop an elected member's charter for Local Councils, to include the immediate need for elected member training. The group have received presentations from John Adams, Employer's Secretary NIJC, on how to develop an elected members charter.

The group attended the member development charter implementation network meeting in IDeA, Layden House, London. Firstly the group received a presentation from Wendy Thompson, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council on their use of a Member Evaluation Toolkit, developed by the West Midlands LGA. Staffordshire Moorlands have been proactive in utilizing the evaluation toolkit and cited a range of practical examples of how they put this into practice. Staffordshire Moorlands were the first local authority in the West Midlands region to achieve the Charter and have successfully retained their Charter status following their two year assessment in January 2008.

The group then received a presentation from Chas Leslie, IDeA on the standard role definitions for councillors, the level of support for councillors and how the charter could be developed to strengthen both these elements. Then there was a presentation and case study by Cllr Lorna Reith and Yuniea Semambo from the London Borough of Haringey on their experience of the Charter and the benefits they have gained to date.

A very useful break out session followed the presentations and this allowed members to discuss the Charter with other Councillors and Officers who have been involved in implementing this in their Councils. Afterwards the group had the opportunity to discuss the way forward with Jennifer McNeill, Regional Director, and Mark Palmer, Head of Improvement and Governance, both from South East Employers. Both have offered to help us to construct a Business Case to present to the Minister in order to obtain funding to carry out some pilots within Councils.

In addition the joint secretariat has been conducting preliminary research into what training and development is currently being offered to elected members by Councils. It is envisaged that the work carried out in the baseline assessment exercise will give us further information in relation to what is currently available across councils. The outcome of this exercise together with information from the study visit will inform how the sub group proceeds.

The elected member's development programme is the first phase of Capacity Building. The next phase of this work will involve an officer development programme. Although the priority is the development of an elected member programme, the group feel there is also merit in developing a joint member/officer development programme.

## **5.4 Customer Focus/Customer Service Strategy**

This strategy is being developed as an over arching strategy between both subgroup A and B. Dr Andrea Reid, NILGA, is leading the development of this and has presented a draft version of this strategy, based on best practice, to both groups. The strategy is based on four key principles – citizen focused government, accessible services, social inclusion and using information better. It has been agreed that it will be necessary to engage each Local

Council to help develop this sector wide strategy. This engagement will require the support from Local Councils and will need to be coordinated with the other priorities from both subgroups. This strategy involves a significant change in the way Councils operate, for example, the focus will be on the citizen and not on the service being offered. This involves a change in organisational culture, processes and technology. This will be the foundation for all other strategies being developed as they will dovetail from the actions required within this strategy. Therefore this will create various issues within Councils and it is important that both officers and Councillors are fully aware of these issues. It will require full support from Chief Executives within Councils in order to be successful. Issues that commonly occur with this type of strategy involve people, i.e. mainly open lines of communication throughout the organisation, people wanting to retain power in silos and re-evaluation of job roles (some staff may have additional tasks, others may have reduced tasks).

The Strategy is currently in draft form awaiting consultation with Councils. It is envisaged that a customer journey map needs to be included along with timescales for the implementation plan.

Joint group consensus is that a consultation with the new 11 Councils should begin in order to collect best practice from the Councils who have already developed and implemented a Customer Service Strategy. This consultation will involve both Officers and Elected Members.

#### **5.4.1 Stakeholder Engagement Events**

The joint secretariat, in conjunction with the Local Government Staff Commission and the Social Research Centre, have organised two events to showcase two successful pilot projects that have been conducted in Newry and Mourne District Council and Newtownabbey Borough Council on Stakeholder Engagement. These events are scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May. Such events are a vital part of increasing knowledge and capability in Local Government.

#### **5.5 Change Management/Transition Strategy and Human Resource Strategy**

It has been agreed that work will commence on these two strategies when the new PDPs have been formed.

### **6. Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work**

It is envisaged that the work started within this Sub-Group will be moved forward within the new PDP structure. Group members are asked to consider recommendations of how this work should be completed within the new

structures, especially around consultation for the Customer Service Strategy and the Elected Members development programme.