

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP BOARD MEETING – 14 May 2008

Local Government Officer Involvement

Agenda Item: 5

Summary: Providing members with paper on Local Government Officer Involvement.

Action Required: For consideration.

Local Government Officer Involvement

Introduction

In 2006, the Improvement and Development Agency made recommendations for the structural arrangements for implementation of the RPA. The key elements of the model included a Strategic Leadership Board, Policy Development Panels, and Local Implementation and Delivery Pilots in each new area. The model proposed was agreed in principle and has been adapted to suit the changing context.

A business case for the establishment of a joint secretariat has been agreed and the DOE and NILGA are in the process of establishing new teams. When all the staff are in place there will be 23 core professional officers between NILGA and the DOE supporting the process. Staffing arrangements will be reviewed during the implementation process to ensure the appropriate additional personnel are in place as required. Consultancy support will also be used where appropriate.

In addition to the secretariat the Taskforce will be supported and advised by officers from both Central and Local Government. The officers from central government will be drawn from the appropriate Departments as required, however there are a set of more complex issues to consider to facilitate local government staff involvement.

Following initial consultations across Local Government, proposals for officer involvement in the task force are set out for consideration.

Chief Executive Advisors to the Strategic Leadership Board

The I&DeA proposed that there should be three Chief Executive Advisors to the Strategic Leadership Board. Three Chief Executives were appointed to these positions in early 2007. It is proposed that the three existing Chief Executives remain in these positions to ensure continuity.

Chief Executive Advisors to Policy Development Panels

Following discussions with the joint secretariat it was proposed that a lead Chief Executive and a substitute Chief Executive should be appointed to support each Policy Development Panel.

The most expeditious method to allocate these positions is to utilize the SOLACE nomination process. The LGSC have agreed to support SOLACE in designing and implementing a nomination process to ensure equity and openness.

While the nominations will be undertaken by SOLACE the primary role of Chief Executives is to support the work of the political representatives.

Working Groups.

It is agreed that officer working groups could be set up to support the policy development processes. Local government recognizes the desirability of using cost effective 'in-house' capacity, grounding policy development in practice, and capitalising on staff development opportunities. However a balance must be achieved which reflects the finite capacity within Councils, particularly in the light of their own change management processes.

It is therefore proposed that the Policy Development Panel in scoping the work would plan the composition of any working group to meet the individual requirements of each work stream or project. The Chief Executive advisor will have the responsibility of making proposals for the design of the group in liaison with the secretariat. It is proposed that appointments to each group would be developed in liaison with Local Government Officer working groups in the context of their existing representation arrangements. The LGSC have agreed to provide support to each group, where necessary, to ensure open and equitable processes are in place.

In some instances specialist officer support may be required, outside the officer working group arrangements. Where this is the case Local Government practitioners will work with the LGSC to identify an equitable process to access the additional staff.

It should be noted that while the majority of councils have expressed support in principle to release staff in 2008, NILGA would wish to undertake further consultation with the sector to outline and seek support for the renewed proposals. Furthermore, while NILGA has developed excellent working relationships with most of the officer working groups, a further level of engagement would be required seek support for the implementation arrangements.

Contingencies and Review Arrangements

To underpin the effective management of the process local government would develop role specifications for Advisory Positions and working group membership.

It is envisaged that NILGA would review the officer arrangements on a quarterly basis in the context of the NILGA RPA Working Group.