

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Agenda Item: 5

Summary: This paper summarises the key activities and milestones of the programme plan.

Action required: For discussion and approval

BACKGROUND

1. The attached plan presents the policy and strategic key dates and priorities for the local government reorganisation programme as they currently stand. While some of the dates are indicative others are absolute and cannot move, i.e. the operative date of the Local Government (Reorganisation) Act on 1 May 2011 and the local and Assembly elections date of 12 May 2011.
2. Following agreement of this strategic plan at Strategic Leadership Board, the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) will develop an operational plan derived from this chart, which will focus on the activities, deadlines and milestones that councils, Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams will need to achieve. The RTCG will update the SLB on the operational plan as required. On the basis of this operational plan the Department will issue further operational guidance to Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams.

KEY SECTIONS OF THE PLAN

3. Boundaries Commissioner and District Electoral Area Commissioner work

The final report of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner is on track and due to be issued on 30 June 2009, with the report of the District Electoral Area Commissioner to be issued one year later on 30 June 2010.

4. Legislation

The main piece of legislation for the local government restructuring is the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill. The policy proposals that will be contained in the Bill will be subject to consultation from March to May 2009. The Bill is to be introduced to the Assembly in May 2010, and the Act will be operative on 1 May 2011. The other pieces of legislation to be taken forward by the Local Government Policy Division in DOE include the Local Government (Finance) Bill and the Local Government (Modernisation) Bill. Provisions relating to the creation of Statutory Transition Committees and a severance package for elected members are currently included in the Local Government (Finance) Bill, but if there is political consensus on the legislative proposals for these issues, the Department has indicated to the Assembly Environment Committee that it may, in the interests of ensuring that the necessary provisions are in place at the earliest possible date, transfer those provisions to the Local Government (Contracts and Compulsory Purchase) Bill.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANELS.

5. Policy proposals on Governance developed by the Panel A will be subject to public consultation from March to May 2009 as part of the policy consultation for the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill. A framework for community planning trials or pilots will be developed by the end of 2009, with the trials or pilots taking place from April 2010. There are two key Panel A work strands within Local/Central Government Relations: the development of the detailed arrangements for a statutory partnership panel if this approach is endorsed by the Executive, and within those arrangements, the development of a concordat.
6. The policy proposals for performance management from Panel B should be finalised by the end of January 2009, for inclusion in the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill.

7. Panel C will continue to focus on HR, Finance and Estates, Capacity Building and on Organisational Design through the major Consultancy Assignment brief. In addition work to clarify the precise nature of functions transferring will be undertaken by a new Transferring Functions working group of Panel C.

8. Voluntary Transition Committees

The Voluntary Transition Committees are being established, and resources to support their work have been secured by the Department. The operational plan will set out in detail the tasks of the Voluntary Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

9. Programme Management

Monthly reporting by the Panels to the SLB, which now includes risks and the policy programme plan, is now in place. The development of the operational plan and benefits of the programme will feed into the programme management arrangement and detailed quarterly development reports will be issued to SLB.

10. Communications

A Communications Strategy for the programme is being finalised and will be presented to the March SLB. From the strategy will flow a Communications Plan.

CONCLUSION

11. This programme plan represents the situation as it currently stands and will continuously be refined as the programme progresses

SLB Joint Secretariat

January 2009