

UPDATE FROM THE FIRST MEETING OF THE REGIONAL TRANSITION CO-ORDINATING GROUP, 25 NOVEMBER 2008

Agenda Item: 5

Summary: The Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG) held its first meeting on Tuesday 25 November 2008. This paper provides a brief summary of a number of important issues that were discussed and agreed at the meeting.

Action required: To note

Background

1. The Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG) has been established to provide the link between the strategic political and the local policy and operational elements of the structures established to assist in the management and integration of the implementation stage of the local government reform programme.
2. The RTCG held its inaugural meeting on Tuesday 25 November 2008. The Group is chaired by Paul Simpson (DOE) with Peter McNaney (Chief Executive of Belfast City Council) as Vice Chair and its membership comprising senior officers from local government and the Departments transferring the more major functions to local government. In order to ensure that its deliberations are as inclusive as possible, it has been agreed that other senior local and central local governments officers are to be co-opted onto the Group on an “as required by task/time limited basis”.

Detail

3. The Terms of Reference for the Group, agreed by the Strategic Leadership Board, were considered. Central to the role of the Group is the requirement to translate the policy into consistent operational practice across the 11 council areas. The RTCG will, therefore, provide the essential interface between the strategic political level (the Strategic Leadership Board and the three Policy Development Panels), the local policy

vehicles (the Transition Committees) and the local operational vehicles (the Transition Management Teams).

4. A high level Work Plan was agreed by the Group. It was considered that a key priority would be the establishment of a proposed Local Government HR Co-ordinating Group (comprising officers from the LGSC, transferor bodies – including the NIJC – and Trade Unions) to advise on regional human resource and staff transfer implementation issues. Representatives of the RTCG will be liaising with Policy Development Panel C on proposed arrangements for the establishment of the Group, its remit and composition.
5. RTCG also considered that it was essential to have clarity on the detail of the functions and associated resources which are to transfer from central government and its associated public bodies. The Group has, therefore, asked each of the relevant Departments to prepare transfer of function position papers, to be assimilated into an overarching paper, to be considered at the next RTCG meeting on Monday 15 December 2008.
6. The Group also stressed the importance of establishing a Transfer Of Functions Working Group, comprising representatives of central and local government, as a matter of priority. The precise remit of the Working Group needs to be developed but, in broad terms, its role would be to consider the context and detail of the functions which are to transfer (particularly in relation to the public realm aspects of local roads functions) and arrangements for integrating these functions within local government. It was considered that the deliberations of the Group would be an important contribution to the Service Delivery consultancy assignment (see paragraph 7 below). It is the view of the RTCG that the Working Group should report to Policy Development Panel C. Representatives of RTCG will be liaising with Policy Development Panel C on this issue.
7. Another key role highlighted was that the RTCG will form the Steering Group for Phase 2 of the Assessment of Options for Local Government Service Delivery consultancy assignment. This will entail responsibility for guiding the work of the consultants and ensuring that all Phase 2 products (i.e. a full economic appraisal of local government service delivery in its entirety together with an implementation plan for both Phase 1 and

2 recommendations) are delivered. The Group also agreed that the terms of reference of the assignment were sufficiently wide to include an assessment of the role and structure of a revised local government association.

8. Other issues discussed at the RTCG included the winding up of the old councils and the importance of urgently finalising the overall communication strategy. There were also presentations by DRD, DSD, DETI and the Planning Service on functions transferring and in the case of planning, a brief overview of its emerging reform proposals.
9. The Group has also agreed its meeting schedule over the next few months to tie in with forthcoming SLB meetings.

RTCG Joint Secretariat