

# STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP BOARD

## MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6 MARCH 2009

### Belfast City Council Learning and Development Centre

<b>Members:</b>	Cllr Sammy Wilson, MP, MLA	Environment Minister, Chair
	Cllr John Mathews	Alliance NILGA
	Cllr Sean McPeake	Sinn Fein NILGA
	Cllr John O’Kane	SDLP
	Cllr Tony Hill	Alliance
	Cllr Sean Begley	Sinn Fein
	Cllr Jim Wells, MLA	DUP
	Cllr Joanne Bunting	DUP, NILGA
	Ashley Boreland	LG Adviser (Ards BC)
	Paul Simpson	DOE
	Cynthia Smith	DOE - Planning Service
	Geoff Allister	DRD
	John McGrillen	LG Adviser (SOLACE)
	Peter McNaney	LG Adviser (RPA Working Group)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Stephen Peover	DOE
	David Ferguson	DSD
	Cllr Helen Quigley	SDLP NILGA
	Ald Arnold Hatch	UUP NILGA
	Ald Sam Gardiner	UUP
<b>Joint Secretariat:</b>	Ian Maye	DOE Joint Secretary
	Heather Moorhead	NILGA Joint Secretary
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Graham Craig	Special Adviser to Minister
	Helen Richmond	NILGA (minute taker)
	James Hutchinson	DOE
	Julie Broadway	DOE
	John price	DOE
	Speers Charters	DOE
	Paula O’Neill	DOE
	John Murphy	DOE
	Louise Thompson	DOE
	Siobhan Tweedie	DOE
	Nora Winder	NILGA

### Actions

- 1 **WELCOME AND MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**
- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a special welcome to Geoff Allister (Chief Executive of Roads

Service) who has replaced Paul Priestly as the Department for Regional Development (DRD) representative.

1.2 Apologies were tendered on behalf of Councillor Helen Quigley, Alderman (Ald) Arnold Hatch, Ald Samuel Gardiner, David Ferguson and Stephen Peover. The minutes of the last meeting, held on 23 January 2009, were agreed subject to minor typographical amendments.

1.3 In the absence of Cllr Quigley, Cllr Mathews was designated acting Vice Chair.

## 2. **MATTERS ARISING**

### **Paragraph 1.3 – Minutes of Meeting Held on 5 December 2008**

2.1 It was confirmed that an amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2008 was circulated for consideration and the minutes have now been published on the Department's website.

### **Paragraph 2.4 – NI Local Government Association (NILGA) Meeting With Minister Dodds**

2.2 Cllr Mathews confirmed that local government was continuing to pursue a number of issues originally raised at a meeting with Minister Dodds through the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) / the Land and Property Service (LPS) Working Group and would keep the Chair informed of any developments.

**NILGA to coordinate**

### **Paragraph 2.9 – Secondments**

2.3 Cllr McPeake indicated that Panel C expected to present a paper on secondments to the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) at its 10th April meeting.

**Joint Secretariat to coordinate**

### **Paragraph 2.12 – Panel C's Policy Proposals**

2.4 It was confirmed that the DUP's views on the paper had been formally recorded and would be dealt with as part of the public consultation process on the Finance Bill.

### **Paragraph 2.14 – Role of Winding Down Managers**

2.5 It was noted that a further paper focusing on the financial responsibilities of the Winding Down Managers will be presented to the SLB on 10 April.

**DOE to coordinate**

### **Paragraph 3.1 – Panel A Work on Call In Procedures**

2.6 It was noted that work was being taken forward by Panel A on the

detail of how the call in procedures mentioned in the paper on governance arrangements would be carried out.

**Paragraph 3.3 – Panel A Proposals on Governance Arrangements for Transition Committees**

- 2.7 Members were informed that this issue would be considered under Item 3 of the main agenda.

**Paragraph 3.7 – Panel B Project Initiation Document (PID)**

- 2.8 It was noted that the PID was being updated and it was agreed that there is no need, at this stage, for any further SLB involvement.

**Paragraph 3.10 – Panel Risk Registers**

- 2.9 Local government members emphasised that an appropriate programme management system is required as soon as possible to allow members to take ownership and play an active role in populating and updating the system. **DOE to action**

**Paragraph 4.5 – HR Implementation Issues**

- 2.10 Cllr McPeake indicated that Panel C hopes to be in a position to present a paper on HR implementation issues to the SLB at its 10 April meeting. **Joint Secretariat to coordinate**

**Paragraph 5.2 – Local Government Reform Implementation Framework**

- 2.11 Cllr O’Kane reiterated that the implementation framework should be updated and circulated for members input as soon as possible. **Joint Secretariat to coordinate**

**Paragraph 5.3 – Legislative Aide Memoire**

- 2.12 This was taken under item 6 of the main agenda.

**Paragraph 6.6 – Area Plans and Transition Committees**

- 2.13 Cynthia Smith confirmed that arrangements are underway for the Joint NILGA / Planning Working Group to consider the paper (SLB / 4 / 2009) about area plans and Transition Committees, particularly the issue of the extent of piloting of the new area plan arrangements. In the interim, the Planning Service is continuing to consider what can be realistically achieved, given its workload and current resources.
- 2.14 It was noted that a number of area plans are out-of-date and it was suggested that this could be one of the factors that could help to determine which of the new Council areas are to be included in the piloting of the new arrangements.

2.15

It was also agreed that it is important to ensure that comprehensive advice and guidance is prepared for the new Councils on the exercise of planning functions; along with the provision of appropriate Capacity Building Programmes for local government elected representatives and officers.

### **Paragraph 8.3 – Severance Scheme for Elected Members**

2. 16 Cllr Mathews confirmed that NILGA had recently written to Minister Goggins to urge him to allow co-option to pave the way for an early severance package. He reported that NILGA and the National Association of Councillors have been liaising in relation to different elements of the severance scheme. Both groups are supportive of the requirement to introduce the co-option scheme. A copy of the letter to Minister Goggins will be sent to the Department for information.

**NILGA to coordinate**

## **3 Policy Development Panel (PDP) UPDATES**

### **3.1 PDP A - Governance Arrangements for Transition Committees – PDP A Recommendations**

3.1.1 Cllr Bunting spoke to the paper (SLB / 7 / 2009) on governance proposals for transition committees. She referred to a number of points in particular:

- the level of representation from constituent Councils on Statutory Transition Committees (STCs) should be that agreed by the DOE for the Voluntary Transition Committees (VTCs)
- the Panel had been unable to reach consensus on whether the level of representation from constituent Councils should be equal or related to the size of respective Councils
- Councils should have the flexibility to use the D'Hondt, Saint Lague or Single Transferable Vote approaches for the determination of their representation
- discussion is ongoing in relation to determining a definitive version of D'Hondt / Saint Lague that should be applied across those Councils that select one of the approaches. The governance arrangements proposed for the new Council's post 2011 should apply to the STCs, with some minor modifications
- a dispute resolution process, using a facilitator / mediator, should be available to STCs as a mechanism of last resort, at their own expense

Cllr Bunting also reported that the Panel considers that achieving

3.1.2 inclusivity across Council groups was unlikely to be an issue as this only affected two Council groupings (Lisburn / Castlereagh and Ballymena / Carrickfergus / Larne). Political agreement has been reached in these areas and it was recommended that if these local arrangements continue to be applied for representation on the Statutory Transition Committees, then inclusivity would be achieved.

3.1.3 The Minister thanked the Panel for its work and said that he wished to consider the views expressed before reaching final decisions on the issues raised.

### 3.2 **PDP B Update**

3.2.1 Cllr Hill provided an update for Panel B and advised that PDP B has agreed five key deliverables:

- a Customer Service Strategy
- an Information Systems' (IS) Strategy for Transition
- a Shared Services Strategy
- a Procurement Strategy
- a Service Delivery and Performance Improvement Framework

3.2.2 He indicated that the main focus of the Panel, at present, is the development of a paper setting out policy proposals for the Service Delivery and Performance Improvement Framework. The Panel is keen to ensure that key stakeholders have a full understanding of all the issues involved and is, therefore, organising a policy seminar. The paper will then be finalised and it is hoped that it will be presented to the next SLB meeting.

3.2.3 Cllr Hill also advised that the IS Strategy for Transition has been broadly agreed, but further work is required before there can be agreement on an implementation strategy.

### 3.3 **PDP C Update**

3.3.1 Cllr McPeake provided a verbal update for Panel C. He highlighted the progress made on the Assessment of Options for Local Government Service Delivery consultancy assignment. As part of this exercise, Panel C and other stakeholders have made it clear that the primary delivery option is that services should be delivered through the 11 Councils and that this should be the starting point for the modelling of final options. It is, however, recognised that there is a need for a regional element to service delivery.

### 3.3.2

Discussions on the detail of the transferring functions are continuing. Local government urged the Minister to reconvene the Executive Sub Committee on Local Government Reform to begin political discussion on any interdepartmental issues. The Minister agreed to write to his Executive colleagues within the next week seeking to reconvene the committee.

**DOE to  
coordinate**

### 3.3.3

Co-terminosity was discussed and a desire was expressed that as much work as possible is done on this issue to ensure that it is factored in to PricewaterhouseCooper's (PwC's) modelling of options.

### 3.3.4

Some discussion also took place on application of the Public Service Commission (PSC) guiding principles. It was noted that the principles have been signed off by the Northern Ireland Executive. There was strong agreement that these principles should be adhered to, however, it was also agreed that there is a need to ensure a good understanding of the application process and that considerations detailed in the principles should be worked through on a case-by-case basis. Learning points from other sectors should assist with this. It was reiterated that PDP C hope to present a paper on HR implementation issues to the next SLB meeting on 10 April 2009.

## 4 REGIONAL TRANSITION COORDINATING GROUP UPDATE

### 4.1

The Chair of the Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG), Paul Simpson presented the update report (SLB 11 / 2009) and highlighted the following points addressed at the RTCG meeting on 12 February 2009:

- confirmation that RTCG was content with PwC's approach to the Service Delivery Consultancy Assignment (RTCG is the Steering Group for Phase 2)
- the Group's views on community planning
- its endorsement of the Communication paper, subject to some minor amendment, now being presented to SLB under agenda item 5
- the establishment of the Transferring Functions Working Group, under Panel C, which was proposed by RTCG
- the helpful verbal update Eddie Curtis, the Chair of the HR Working Group, provided at the RTCG meeting
- its endorsement of the issue of further guidance for Transition Committees

- that all the voluntary Transition Committees had met, or were due to meet, by the end of February

4.2

Paul Simpson also confirmed that the work of the Transition Committees will feature as a standing item on the agenda for RTCG meetings and will be included in all future RTCG update reports to SLB.

4.3

In response to a query from Cllr O’Kane it was confirmed that the minutes from the Transition Committees would be copied to SLB members.

**DOE to coordinate**

4.4

In the course of discussion it was also agreed that the appropriate PDPs should be given the opportunity to consider further guidance being developed for Transition Committees and that every effort should be made to ensure that all guidance produced should be disseminated widely to all members of Councils.

**DOE to coordinate**

4.5

Local government members stressed the importance of the key Departments transferring functions nominating senior officers to join the Transition Management Teams. It was reported that the Department for Social Development (DSD) had already identified its nominees, Planning Service were in the process of doing so, and that the DRD would do so soon. There was, however, some recognition that it would be important to agree the transfer package and delivery model before input could be meaningful.

5

## **COMMUNICATIONS PAPER**

5.1.

James Hutchinson spoke to the communications paper (SLB / 12 / 2009) highlighting that:

- the paper provided a framework and general principles that are to guide all communications issued by the Joint Secretariat on the Local Government Reform Programme
- Joint DOE / NILGA communications, which will primarily focus on the key deliberations of SLB and RTCG, are one of three strands of the overall communications strategy
- DOE and NILGA have both produced individual communications strategy strands which reflect the differing audience requirements of each organisation
- RTCG will be the Communications Steering Group

- the next step will be the development of a Communications Plan which will be presented for RTCG's consideration

5.2 It was noted that the RTCG, as the Communications Steering Group, will report to the SLB and that SLB has the overall strategic control of the communications agenda.

5.3 A key element of the strategy is the establishment of a Local Government Reform Communications Group. It was agreed that whilst the initial membership of this Group should comprise representatives of each of the 26 councils, it would be important to ensure that this quickly evolves to align with the 11 council arrangements.

5.4 Local government members stressed the importance of ensuring that all key communication messages are signed off by SLB. It was agreed that further work will be carried out to identify the roles and responsibilities of SLB and other key stakeholders involved in the communications process. This will form part of the Communications Plan that will be brought to SLB for consideration.

**Joint secretariat to coordinate**

## 6 **LEGISLATIVE POSITION PAPER**

6.1 Julie Broadway provided details of the main purpose and current position in the legislative process of the three Local Government Bills that the Department is taking forward. These are:

- the Local Government (Contracts and Compulsory Purchase) Bill
- the Local Government (Finance) Bill
- the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill

6.2 It was agreed that the information would be summarised in a one page document and circulated to members for information.

**DOE to coordinate**

## 7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

7.1 The Chair reported that he would be responding, on behalf of the Executive, to NILGA's letter of 25 February calling for the Executive to identify resources to support the reform of local government. Cllr Mathews reiterated that it is imperative that the RPA process is adequately resourced.

7.2 Cllr Mathews gave a brief outline of the recently held NILGA conference and reported that it was a very useful event including extremely topical and thought-provoking debates.

7.3 It was noted that this would be the last SLB meeting that Paul Simpson would be attending before his retirement. On behalf of all SLB members, Cllr Bunting expressed her thanks to Paul Simpson for his tremendous contribution to the SLB and indeed the overall local government reform programme and wished him sincere good wishes for the future.

## 8 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

8.1 The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Board would be held on Friday 10 April 2009 at 10 am in the Learning and Development Centre.