

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 APRIL 2009

Belfast City Council Learning and Development Centre

Members:	Cllr Sammy Wilson, MP, MLA	Environment Minister (Chair)
	Cllr Helen Quigley	SDLP, NILGA (Vice Chair)
	Ald Arnold Hatch	UUP, NILGA
	Cllr John Mathews	Alliance, NILGA
	Cllr Sean McPeake	Sinn Fein
	Cllr John O’Kane	SDLP
	Cllr Tony Hill	Alliance
	Cllr Sean Begley	Sinn Fein, NILGA
	Ald Sam Gardiner, MLA	UUP
	Ashley Boreland	LG Adviser (Ards BC)
	Stephen Peover	DOE
	Cynthia Smith	DOE - Planning Service
	David Ferguson	DSD
	Geoff Allister	DRD
	John McGrillen	LG Adviser (SOLACE)
	Peter McNaney	LG Adviser (RPA Working Group)
Apologies:	Cllr Jim Wells MLA	DUP
	Cllr Joanne Bunting	DUP
	Ian Maye	DOE, Joint Secretary
	Heather Moorhead	NILGA, Joint Secretary
Joint Secretariat:	James Hutchinson	DOE
	Nora Winder	NILGA
In Attendance:	Graham Craig	Special Adviser to Minister
	John Price	DOE
	Helen Richmond	NILGA
	Gerry Cunningham	NILGA
	Speers Charters	DOE (Minute Taker)
	Julie Broadway	DOE
	Brenda Mooney	DOE
	Paula O’Neill	DOE
	John Murphy	DOE
	Jackie Lambe	DOE
	Angela Fitzpatrick	DOE
	Pamela Baxter	DOE

1 WELCOME AND MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

1.1 The Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies had been tendered on behalf of Cllr Wells, Cllr Bunting, Ian Maye and Heather Moorhead.

1.2 The minutes of the last meeting, held on 6th March 2009, were agreed subject to paragraph 5.4 being recast to record that local government members consider that all key messages should be signed off by the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) before they issue. The Joint Secretariat is to revise the minutes accordingly and circulate a revised draft, with the amendments shown as tracked changes, for the approval of members before they are published in final form.

**Joint
Secretariat**

2. MATTERS ARISING

Paragraph 2.2 - Formal Relationship With Land and Property Services

2.1 The Chair said that at the last meeting it had been confirmed that NILGA was pursuing a number of issues, originally raised at a meeting with Minister Dodds, through the NILGA / Land and Property Services Working Group. The key issue was NILGA's wish to afford local council a greater input into the decision making process and governance of Land and Property Services (LPS) and the Chair asked if there was anything to report.

2.2 Cllr Quigley said that discussions with LPS were ongoing and that it was expected that NILGA would be in a position to report progress at the next SLB meeting on 22nd May.

Paragraph 2.3 - Secondment of Staff to Local Government

2.3 Ald Hatch said that Policy Development Panel C had hoped to be in a position to present a paper, on the staff secondment issue, for consideration at this meeting. However, he explained that:-

- this did not prove possible as the Panel was awaiting legal advice which would form part of the paper;

- it was expected that the legal advice would be available shortly;
- the Panel is to hold a meeting on 23rd April which is to specifically focus on Human Resource issues including secondment; and
- against this background, it was anticipated that the local government view on secondment would be presented at the SLB meeting on 22nd May.

**Chair of
Panel C**

Paragraph 2.5 – Role of Winding Up Managers

- 2.4 The Chair confirmed that the draft guidance, on winding up arrangements for existing councils, had been recast to provide greater clarity on the proposed financial responsibilities of Winding Up Managers. He said that the revised guidance had been presented to each of the Panels for consideration and asked that their respective Chairs do all that they could to ensure that any comments are provided as quickly as possible.

Paragraph 2.9 – Programme Management System

- 2.5 The Chair reported that the Department proposed to obtain consultancy support to help develop a new programme management. Cllr Mathews stressed that local government members consider that it is very important to have the new system up and running as soon as possible. He said that the new system had been awaited for some time, that it was crucial that local government members have an active role in populating and developing it and asked for clarification of the timescale involved in securing the consultants.

- 2.6 James Hutchinson said that an Assignment Brief, setting out the developmental work required, was being prepared and would be circulated to the Joint Secretariat for consideration. He said that, subject to Joint Secretariat comments, it was hoped to invite tenders within the next few weeks.

**Joint
Secretariat**

Paragraph 2.10 - HR Implementation Issues

2.7 It was noted that the Panel C paper on the suite of HR implementation issues was not available for this meeting. The Chair said that the timetable for the Reorganisation Bill, which will include legislative HR provision, was extremely tight. The timetable includes the key requirement to present a policy document to the Executive in early May of this year. In view of this, the Chair emphasised the importance of presenting the HR implementation issues paper by the end of April.

2.8 Ald Hatch confirmed that the paper was being prepared by the HR Working Group and would be considered at the Panel C meeting on 23rd April. This would enable the Panel to present a written response to the Department by the end of April.

**Chair of
Panel C**

Paragraph 2.11 – Local Government Implementation Framework

2.9 Copies of the updated Implementation Framework were distributed at the meeting. The Chair said that it would now be circulated to the Panels, and other key stakeholders, for consideration. He also confirmed that it would continue to be updated and presented at each SLB meeting.

2.10 Cllr McPeake said that the revised Framework was very welcome and emphasised the importance of the Panels' input. He also said that it was necessary to ensure that the Framework is integrated with the overall programme management system and reiterated the importance of getting that system operational as soon as possible.

Paragraph 2.16 – Severance Scheme for Elected Members

2.11 The Chair said that NILGA's letter dated 6th March 2009 to Minister Goggins, confirming the cross party support of the case put forward for co-option in order to pave the way for early severance, was very helpful. The Chair then briefed members on continuing discussions with NIO Ministers on this issue.

Paragraph 3.3.2 – Reconvening the Executive Sub Committee

2.12 The Chair confirmed that he had written to Ministerial colleagues about reconvening the Executive Sub Committee to consider a number of inter-Departmental implementation issues including the future funding of the programme and Panel C's Transfer of Functions report. The Chair said that it was proposed to convene the first meeting of the Sub Committee within the next few weeks.

2.13 The Chair also said that he welcomed local government's proposal to contribute items for inclusion on the agenda for the meeting.

Paragraph 4.3 – Transition Committee Minutes

2.14 It was noted that the minutes of Transition Committees, requested at the last SLB meeting, had been circulated to members and would be considered under agenda item 4.

Paragraph 4.4 – Guidance for Transition Committees

2.15 It was noted that the requirement to circulate draft guidance to the appropriate Panel(s) for consideration, was being adhered to. The draft paper on winding up arrangements had been circulated to each of the Panels and it was confirmed that draft guidance on key tasks and milestones was being prepared and would be sent to Panel A shortly.

Paragraph 5.4 – Communications Plan

2.16 It was noted that the Communications Plan would be discussed under agenda item 5.

Paragraph 6.2 – Primary Legislation Programme Summary

2.17 It was agreed that the summary chart, which had been circulated to members, be amended to include a brief overview of the contents of each of the Bills.

**Joint
Secretariat**

3. PLANNING REFORM

3.1 The Chair said that he thought members would find it helpful if he provided a brief update on difficulties currently being encountered

in taking forward the planning reform agenda. Key points the Chair mentioned included:-

- the reform proposals included the transfer of planning functions to the new councils as well as speeding up the planning process and reforming enforcement powers;
- Sinn Fein had raised some fairly fundamental concerns about the consultation paper on the proposals and consequently it had not yet been cleared by the Executive;
- the legislative programme for planning reform was extremely tight and delay in agreeing and publishing the consultation paper could have major implications for the whole process and may jeopardise the establishment of the new councils by 2011;
- discussions, between the Department and Sinn Fein, aimed at resolving these concerns were ongoing; and
- he would keep members informed of developments.

3.2 Cllr McPeake said that his party had concerns about the equality proofing aspects of the proposals and other key issues but was hopeful that these could be resolved in course of the ongoing discussions.

4. **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL UPDATES**

Policy Development Panel A

4.1 In the absence of the Chair of Panel A, Cllr Begley spoke to the Dashboard Report (SLB 14/2009). He said that the Panel was considering a number of governance issues that were not covered in detail in the earlier proposals presented to SLB. These included the role of the Monitoring Officer in the proposed new Ethical Standards regime and the outworking of the proposed “call in” procedure. He indicated that the Panel hoped to be in a position to present proposals on these issues within the next few

weeks. He said that the Panel was also beginning to consider how community planning might operate and the guidance framework for councils.

- 4.2 The Chair thanked Panel A members for the work they had taken forward.

Policy Development Panel B

- 4.3 The Chair of Panel B, Cllr Quigley, asked that members note the Dashboard Report (SLB 15/2009) and introduced the Service Delivery and Performance Improvement paper (SLB 16/2009). Cllr Quigley said that she appreciated that members had not had a great deal of time to consider the proposals in the paper but that the Panel had only recently finalised it and, in view of legislative timetable for the Reorganisation Bill, she was anxious to present it to this meeting.

- 4.4 Cllr Quigley outlined the key features of the proposals including:-

- a duty on councils to secure the continuous improvement of services framed in the context of delivering on community planning;
- the establishment of a number of regional performance indicators to be agreed through the proposed statutory Partnership Panel which should be linked to the Programme for Government and community plans;
- provision should be made for these indicators to be specified in subordinate legislation;
- a reporting regime to provide accountability to citizens;
- the provision of external assurance on compliance with the framework. Cllr Quigley said that there had been considerable debate on this issue specifically around

- the provision of a power of intervention /enforcement for the Minister with responsibility for local government.

4.5 Cllr Quigley also confirmed that developments in other jurisdictions would be taken into account by Panel B in developing more detailed proposals for the outworking of the framework over coming months. This would include the consideration of the implications of the “Comprehensive Area Assessment” framework document, issued by the Audit Office, which Peter McNaney mentioned.

4.6 Members confirmed that they were content to approve the proposals in the paper presented.

Policy Development Panel C

4.7 The Chair of Panel C, Ald Hatch, asked that members note the Dashboard Report (SLB 17/2009). He said that the Panel had met on the day preceding the SLB meeting to consider the Transfer of Functions Working Group’s proposals and that he would report the outcome following the presentation by Peter McNaney. The Chair reiterated points made earlier about the urgency associated with provision of papers on secondment and HR implementation issues and mentioned the need for an indication of the resources likely to be required for capacity building to feed into the PricewaterhouseCoopers work on service delivery options.

4.8 Ald Hatch said the Panel C meeting, on 23rd April, would address a range of issues including secondment, HR implementation, Vacancy Control, Transfer Schemes, PSC Guiding Principles and the Hunter Report on the future role of the LG Staff Commission. Ald Hatch said that he would write to the Department, before the end of the month, setting out the Panel’s views on these issues so that they can be taken into account in the policy document to be presented to the Executive on the Reorganisation Bill. They

**Chair of
Panel C**

will be considered further at the SLB meeting on 22nd May.

4.9 He also reported that a Capacity Building Task and Finish Group had been formed and was preparing costings on the capacity building recommendations.

4.10 Peter McNaney gave a presentation on the key findings and recommendations of the Transfer of Functions Working Group and Ald Hatch then presented the Panel's views on the proposals. The presentations are attached at Annex 1 to this note. Key points made included:-

- there was support, across Panel C, on most of the proposals including the recommendations relating to transfer of additional functions (i.e. off street parking and the living over shops initiative) and that responsibility for travellers' sites should not transfer;
- consensus could not, however, be reached on other proposals. Four of the parties represented on the Panel agree with the Working Group's recommendations that some DRD local roads public realm functions (e.g. street lighting, gully emptying, grass cutting, weed spraying and salting of footways) should not transfer to local government;
- one party considers that, in the interests of strong local government and local accountability, all 11 local roads public realm functions previously identified should transfer; and
- all parties represented on the Panel support other key Working Group recommendations including that the new councils must have a strong, robust and influential role in DRD Roads Service policy formulation and implementation and that the Panel should be engaged in ongoing central government consultations and strategic reviews including DETI's Barnett Review.

4.11 In discussion, on the presentations, SLB agreed that:-

- further work was required on the financial implications of implementation to ensure that there is no extra burden on the ratepayers at the point of transfer;
- these financial implications issues should be taken forward in tandem with urgent discussions with DFP on the funding of the local government reform programme;
- a report encapsulating the Panel's views and recommendations would be prepared, by the end of April, for presentation to the Executive Sub Committee;
- in the interim, Geoff Allister and David Ferguson would brief their respective Ministers on the views expressed at this meeting; and
- the Transfer Of Functions Working Group should be retained to facilitate ongoing work.

**Chair of
Panel C**

**G Allister
D Ferguson**

5. **UPDATE ON TRANSITION COMMITTEES**

5.1 James Hutchinson introduced the paper (SLB 18/2009) which provides an update on the work being taken forward by the Transition Committees. Key points that he made included:-

- all the Transition Committees have been constituted and have met at least once;
- 8 out of the 11 Transition Committees have provided copies of the minutes of their meetings;
- the Omagh and Fermanagh Transition Committee has confirmed that it will forward its minutes once they have been ratified;
- minutes have not yet been received from the Ards and North Down Transition Committee and from the Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne Transition Committee;
- the Transition Committees have identified work streams and established task groups to scope, prioritise and implement the work to do to ensure a smooth change-over to the new councils;

- the key issues raised by the Transition Committees have included:
 - Human Resources (vacancy control, status of transferring civil servants, cost of redundancy);
 - lack of information on work programme;
 - lack of finances;
 - Importance of communications;
 - convergence;
 - capacity building;
 - shared services; and
 - branding

5.2 Cllr Quigley said that the report, which was presented for the information of SLB, was most welcome. She said that she noted that the document provided by the Antrim/Newtownabbey Transition Committee was a synopsis as opposed to the actual minutes of its meeting. It was agreed that, in future, agreed minutes should be presented to SLB.

5.3 Cllr Mathews said that the minutes of the Ballymena/Carrickfergus/Larne Transition Committee would be forwarded shortly and Cllr Hill confirmed that the Ards/North Down Committee minutes would also be available soon. James Hutchinson confirmed that the Ards/North Down minutes had recently been received.

6. **COMMUNICATIONS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

6.1 James Hutchinson introduced the paper (SLB 19/2009) which was presented for the approval of SLB. Key points he made included:-

- the plan is the next step following on from the framework and principles agreed at the last SLB meeting;
- it is very much a working document, which will be updated and amended as the overall programme plan develops;
- the aim of the plan is to support and facilitate the sector

- the accompanying paper includes a guide to the communications management process describing the roles, activities, processes and timing of the implementation structures – SLB, RTCG, Joint Secretariat, DOE, NILGA, Transition Committees, Councils and transferring functions departments.

6.2 Cllr Hill confirmed that local government broadly endorses the plan but asked that councillors be included, as a matter of course, in all communications to local government staff and in any agreed key messages. He also said that it would be useful to have an organisation style chart showing the interrelationships between the various communication stakeholders. These requests were agreed by SLB.

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

TUPE

7.2 The Chair said that in responding to a recent Assembly Question, asking for an estimate of the number of jobs that could be lost when the new local authorities come into existence, he had taken the opportunity to reinforce the Executive's commitment to TUPE. A copy of the answer (see Annex 2 to this note) was distributed and it was noted the key points the Minister had made were that:-

- it was too early to say how many jobs could be lost but that the Executive had agreed that every possible effort would be made to avoid redundancies;
- compulsory redundancy would only be considered when all other practical options have been exhausted; and
- staff would transfer to the local authorities with the protection of TUPE.

7.3 It was agreed that it would be helpful to communicate this commitment across the sector.

**Joint
Secretariat**

Consultation Papers

7.4 The Chair said that, on 6th April 2009, the Department had published two consultation papers. One invites views on the proposed severance arrangements for long serving councillors. The other invites views on the proposed arrangements for the establishment of Transition Committees in statute. It was noted that the closing date for comments is 31st May 2009.

7.5 Cllr Mathews said that NILGA would be seeking the views of local councils and preparing local government responses to both documents.

7.6 Cllr Hill said that the paper included the options of introducing the severance scheme from January 2010 or January 2011. He asked if consideration could be given to the option of having a two stage severance scheme with both these dates being available. The Chair said that the Department would carefully consider all views and options expressed in the course of the consultation period.

Review of SLB/PDP Structures

7.7 The Chair said that he considered that this would be an opportune time to review the SLB/PDP structures to ensure that they are suitable for meeting the change and challenge which will impact between now and May 2011. He pointed out that there is provision for such a review in the SLB's terms of reference. He suggested that the Joint Secretariat present a paper setting out a terms of reference for the review along with details of how it would be taken forward.

7.8 It was agreed that the Secretariat should present a paper for consideration at the SLB meeting on 22nd May.

**Joint
Secretariat**

Farewell To James Hutchinson

7.9 It was noted that this would be the last SLB meeting that James Hutchinson would be attending before his transfer to Planning

Service. On behalf of SLB, the Chair thanked James for his very valuable contributions to its deliberations and wished him well in his new post.

- 7.10 It was also noted that this was the day that Paul Simpson retired from the Civil Service. It was agreed that the Chair should write to Paul, on behalf of SLB, wishing him a long and happy retirement.

**Joint
Secretariat**

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 8.1 It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on Friday 22nd May 2009 at 10:00 am in the Learning and Development Centre.

- 8.2 The Chair wished members a very happy Easter and closed the meeting.

Strong Effective Local Government

Implementation – Transfer of Functions

Presentation to Strategic Leadership Board

10th April 2009

1. Ministerial Announcement on the 31st March 2008

2. Agreed vision for local government

- Strong dynamic local government
- Accessible, responsive, VFM services
- Vibrant, healthy sustainable communities

3. Reality

- Transfer proposals fall somewhat short
- £100m (approx.) of budget transferring
- 1,000 people
- Tight timescale - Elections for new Councils 12th May 2011

4. The Challenge

- Transition to transformation
- Building the relationships
- Capacity to deliver
- Resources to deliver
- Devil will be in the detail in regards to what is to transfer
- *A Process not an Event*

Transfer of Functions Implementation Issues

- The Critical Question – the context for Transfer
- What is the purpose of Local Government
- Place Shaping
 - Services
 - Assets
 - Advocacy
- Need for common understanding across Regional Government of role of Local Government
- On the ground delivery, and local accountability eg enforcement
- Need for a joint conversation on the integration of initiatives and resources to make place shaping happen

***...Early recognition of the need
for further detail around the
transfer of functions...***

Progress to date

1. Established Transfer of Functions Working Group & Sub Groups
2. Constructive engagement /dialogue between central & local government
3. Started process to flesh out the detail around the transfer of functions (e.g. scope, resources, consequences etc)
4. Detailed Presentation to PDP C at its meeting on 19th March
5. Initial work has raised further questions
6. Vital to engage in a process over the next 12-18months to work through issues & answer necessary questions
7. Executive Sub Committee on LG Reform – political engagement

Purpose of Today

Objectives & Desired Outcomes

- Consider cross-cutting issues with regard to transfer of functions
- Consider those issues which require political direction
- Consider and agree initial proposals for marginal changes to transferring functions
- Consider and agree next steps for taking the process forward

Transfer of Functions Guiding Principles

- Functions to be delivered directly by councils with balanced central control
- No extra burden to ratepayer or differential impact on local rates at point of transfer
- Strong and responsive local government
- Single point accountability
- Resources will dictate success or failure

Implementation Issues

1. Budget & Resources

- Insufficient for majority of functions to transfer
- Under estimates of true costs to deliver functions – on-costs an issue
- Further due diligence work required
- Sustainability of funding uncertain – e.g. partly subject to CSR bidding
- Local government need to be engaged in CSR process as future custodians
- Early engagement & negotiations with DFP on funding model/package
- How to split budgets & resources across 11 councils

2. Integrated Service Delivery

- Recognise the connections and linkages between the transferring functions
- Clarity of roles and interrelationships between current departmental remits
- Need to integrate and deliver local services via councils

Implementation Issues

3. Policy Development - role of Local Government

- Strengthened relationship between central/local government – statutory based
- Greater role for local government in informing & shaping central policy development
- Connection with broader community planning agenda and future performance management

4. Consultation and Engagement

- Barnett Review – economic development policy
- New Tourism Strategic Framework for Action
- Enterprise Strategy – business development
- Review of the Local Enterprise Agencies – future role and remit
- Reform of the Planning Service – modernisation of the planning service
- Rural Development Programme – preparation for development of post 2013 programme
- Strategic reviews e.g. future of Local Enterprise Agencies

Implementation Issues

5. How future services will be delivered – PwC

- Premise should be that those functions to transfer should be delivered by the 11 Councils directly – keeping with the principle of strong local government and
- Series of co-production workshops scheduled for early April 2009
- Local Government engagement & input critical

Proposed Marginal Changes Non-Transfer Proposals

DRD Roads Sub Group

1. Salting Footways

- Considerable public liability risks and associated insurance costs
- Considerable costs to deliver
- No financial or asset transfer proposed
- Difficulty in separating public liability for footpaths and roads – accountability
- Existing arrangements adequate for Councils' involvement if so desired

2. Grass Cutting/Weed Spraying

- Considerable public liability risks
- Grass cutting intrinsically linked to road safety
- weed spraying intrinsically linked to road maintenance
- significant Health & Safety issues and disposal of residual waste difficulties
- scope to enhance such areas without any transfer

Non-Transfer Proposals

DRD Roads Sub Group

3. Gully Emptying

- part of the overall local roads maintenance package
- significant public liability implications - links to flood control
- Would result in greater bureaucracy and confusion for the citizen
- Additional middleman in the process

4. Street Lighting

- closely related to other highway maintenance and road safety functions
- significant public liabilities
- significantly under resourced
- massive under investment in replacing stock – capital replacement timebomb
- significant capital costs in separating local street lighting network from the strategic network
- create additional confusion for the citizen & reduce accountability
- councils can already contribute to improved lighting schemes – resource implications

DSD Sub Group

5. Travellers Transit Sites

- Policy decision taken (2003) to transfer to NIHE – EQIA proofed
- Non Transfer of Travellers Transit Sites to Councils endorsed by NILGA Executive

Proposed Marginal Changes New Transfer Proposals

DRD Roads Sub Group

1. On-Street Car Parking alongside Off-Street Car Parking

- Inefficient to split on-street and off-street car parking – should be 1 package
- Integrated service delivery
- Secures single point accountability

DSD Sub Group

2. Living Over the Shops Initiative

- Support town and city centre regeneration & neighbourhood renewal
- Potential integration with local economic development delivery
- Synergies with Local Development Planning which is to transfer to councils

New Transfer Proposals

DETI Sub Group

Inter-departmental discussions required in relation to:

- Integration of micro business support programmes across DETI and DARD and transferred to Local Government in a combined package.
- Linkages between Neighbourhood Renewal as presently constituted under DSD and initiatives targeted as Neighbourhood Renewal as under DETI.
- Need for synthesis of local physical regeneration programmes, including environmental improvement schemes, as currently delivered by DSD, DRD, DARD and NIHE with local economic development delivery.

Ald. Arnold Hatch

Chair of PDP C

PDP C recommendations

- Consensus that all functions recommended to transfer should transfer (subject to further clarification)
- Consensus on Additional functions to transfer i.e. Off street car parking, Living over the Shop initiative
- Consensus that responsibility for traveller's site should not transfer
- Four parties agree that Street lighting, gully emptying, grass cutting, weed spraying, salting of footways should not transfer , one party recommends functions transfer

PDP C recommendations

- The new councils must have a strong, robust and influential role in DRD Roads policy formulation and implementation.
- PDP C should continue to develop a framework to facilitate this role with DRD.
- Further discussions on transferring functions should progress through the Executive Sub committee on Local Government.

PDP C recommendations

- PDP C continues to explore the financial implications of the implementation to ensure no extra burden on rate payer at point of transfer .
- PDP C further engages with relevant ongoing central government consultations and strategic reviews.
- The Transferring Functions Working Group is retained to facilitate ongoing work.

EXTRACT FROM HANSARD PUBLISHED ON 20th FEBRUARY 2009

New Local Government Authorities

Mr T Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment how many full time jobs were there in local government in (i) 1980; (ii) 1990; (iii) 2000; and (iv) 2008; and to provide an estimate of the number of jobs that could be lost when the new local government authorities come into existence.

(AQW 5018/09)

Minister of the Environment: The Department does not hold the requested information centrally. The Department will request the information from the 26 local councils and will provide the member with a written response that will be placed in the Assembly Library.

It is too early to say how many jobs could be lost when the new local government authorities come into existence. However, the Executive has agreed that every possible effort will be made to avoid redundancies and that compulsory redundancy will only receive consideration when all other practical options have been exhausted. Staff will transfer to the new local government authorities with the protections of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). This is the main piece of legislation governing the transfer of an undertaking, or part of one, to another. The Regulations are designed to protect the rights of employees in a transfer situation enabling them to enjoy the same contractual terms and conditions, with continuity of employment, as formerly. TUPE protection is not subject to any specific time limit. In addition, TUPE places significant constraints on the variation of these terms and conditions at a later stage.