

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP BOARD

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2010

#### Belfast City Council Learning and Development Centre

<b>Members:</b>	Cllr Edwin Poots MLA Cllr John Mathews Cllr Helen Quigley Ald Arnold Hatch Cllr Sean McPeake Cllr John O’Kane Cllr Tony Hill Cllr Sean Begley Cllr Jim Wells, MLA Cllr Roy Beggs, MLA Cllr Joanne Bunting Ashley Boreland Peter McNaney David McCammick Leo O’Reilly Ian Maye Cynthia Smith Henry Johnston Michaela Glass	Environment Minister, Chair Alliance NILGA, Vice Chair SDLP NILGA UUP NILGA Sinn Fein SDLP Alliance Sinn Fein NILGA DUP UUP DUP, NILGA LG Adviser LG Adviser LG Adviser DOE DOE DOE - Planning Service DSD DRD Roads Service
<b>Apologies:</b>	Geoff Allister David Ferguson	DRD DSD
<b>Joint Secretariat:</b>	Wesley Shannon Nora Winder John Price	DOE Joint Secretary NILGA Acting Joint Secretary DOE
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Paul Givan Danny McSorley Helen Richmond Brian Moreland Speers Charters Stephen Western Brenda Mooney Louise Thompson Tracy Morgan Pamela Baxter Angela Fitzpatrick Noreen Donnelly Jacqueline Burns Tara Cunningham Judith McCleary Lesley-Ann Black	Special Adviser to Minister Local Government Adviser NILGA (minute taker) DOE DOE (minute taker) DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE NILGA NILGA NILGA

**1 AGENDA ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that since the last meeting there had been a couple of changes to the membership of the Board. David McCammick had succeeded John McGrillen as the local government adviser from SOLACE and Heather Moorhead will be taking up a new post as the NI Director of the NHS Confederation. The Chair said that, on behalf of the Board, he wished to:-

- record members thanks for the very valuable contributions that both John and Heather had made to the Board's deliberations; and
- welcome David to their ranks.

1.2 Apologies were tendered on behalf of Geoff Allister and David Ferguson. It was noted that Michaela Glass was representing DRD and Henry Johnston was representing DSD at this meeting.

1.3 The minutes of the last meeting, held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010, were agreed subject to the amendment of paragraph 6.6 to include the additional bullet point set out below:-

“that Policy Development Panel A expressed the view that Transition Committees should, as far as possible, focus on operational issues and avoid issues that are likely to be contentious and require the use of the adverse impact call – in procedure”.

1.4 The Chair provided members with a verbal update on his discussions with Executive party representatives, over the past few weeks, to discuss issues relating to the local government reform programme and find a common way forward. He said that:-

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- the meetings had embraced the key issues of council boundaries, efficiency savings and funding of the programme;
- the most recent meeting had been held on Monday (i.e. 12<sup>th</sup> April);
- the meetings had been constructive and representatives had been provided with a paper which identified three options for the way forward;
- these options were:-
  - first, that the programme proceeds as planned on the basis of early agreement on the outstanding issues;
  - second, that the new 11 council model, with the full transfer of powers, is implemented in May 2015. However, some functions, such as planning, could transfer to the 26 council model in the interim providing an opportunity for reform to progress gradually and councils to draw out the potential linkages and synergies between functions transferring and those functions already delivered by Councils;
  - third, that the new 11 council model and the full transfer of powers plus all functions takes place in May 2015 with no functions transferring from central government prior to this date; and
- the paper was being considered by the parties, no agreement had been reached on the options but further meetings are to take place.

1.5 In response to questions from members, the Chair confirmed that:-

- although the current timescale for the introduction of the 11 council model was extremely tight, he

considered that it was achievable providing the boundaries issue was resolved and that there was a clear demonstration that the efficiencies, previously discussed, can be delivered – this latter point would be considered further at agenda item 4;

- realistically, it was unlikely that the way forward on the programme would be agreed prior to the general election;
- the introduction of the 11 council model was envisaged in each of the three options;
- the transfer of planning responsibilities had been specifically mentioned in option 2 of the paper; and
- he was of the view that community planning powers could also be taken forward by the existing 26 councils under option 2.

1.6 Members enquired about the impact of any decision to delay the introduction of the 11 council model on the transfer of DRD and DSD functions. Michaela Glass and Henry Johnston confirmed that the implications of this, for the suites of functions identified for transfer from their respective Departments, would have to be carefully considered and agreed by Ministers.

## 2 **AGENDA ITEM 2 - MATTERS ARISING**

2.1 A table, which detailed the progress on following up the action points arising from the last meeting, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

2.2 This was noted by members and in discussion:-

- Alderman Hatch registered his concern that the Rates Convergence options paper would not be presented to Panel C for another 3 – 4 weeks and asked if the allocation of additional staffing resources would assist in delivering the paper more quickly;
- Wesley Shannon explained that staffing was not the

delaying factor, that there were complex issues to be considered, DOE and DFP officials were addressing these issues and that realistically it would be 3 – 4 weeks before the options paper was available; and

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- Wesley also confirmed that Councillor Tom Hartley, one of the local government employers' representatives on the Joint Forum, would be available to meet local government members of SLB. It was agreed that the Joint Secretariat should arrange the meeting as quickly as possible.

**Joint Secretariat**

3

### **AGENDA ITEM 3 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT (SLB 10/2010)**

3.1

John Price introduced the paper, which provided a progress report on the overall local government reform programme. He highlighted the following key points:-

- the report set out the key policy / strategic milestones in the reform programme;
- there had been little change to the report since the previous version and that it would need to be substantially revised when the way forward with the programme had been agreed; and
- as agreed at the last meeting of the Board, individual copies of Transition Committee meeting minutes had been circulated electronically rather than hard copy format.

3.2

The report was noted and in discussion members agreed that:-

- the footnote at the page 3 of the Management Summary should be revised to reflect that decisions on boundaries and programme timescales were required to enable revised dates and guidance to be finalised; and
- it would be important to ensure that the Programme

Management Office carefully assesses information provided and, where appropriate, challenges progress and comments presented in Transition Committee returns in order to provide clarity and realistic traffic light categorisation when reporting against key milestones.

**DOE**

#### 4 **AGENDA ITEM 4 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE ON EFFICIENCY AND COLLABORATION (SLB 11/2010)**

4.1 David McCammick introduced the paper. He explained that it had been prepared by SOLACE and endorsed by NILGA and provided local government's further proposals for achieving efficiencies across the sector through voluntary collaboration.

4.2 Danny McSorley apologised that the paper had only been circulated to members on the evening prior to the meeting. He provided members with a verbal synopsis of the overall paper, which he commended, to members. He stressed that the voluntary collaboration approach:-

- was based on an 'Invest to Save' business model approach;
- at the local, sub-regional/regional level - driven by Efficiency and Improvement Plans and Efficiency Statements within the Councils - would be more effective than the proposed Business Service Organisation;
- would also reinforce the vision of "strong, dynamic local government" and place the accountability for driving efficiency and service improvement firmly in the hands of locally elected members;
- would not require a centralised administrative organisation thereby avoiding costly start-up and ongoing running costs;
- engender a culture of partnership of Councils that supports, facilitates and encourages performance and

service improvement; and

- provided the flexibility for a varied range and level of delivery options, beyond that included in the PwC report, and would allow the sector to swiftly and efficiently make the step change towards a ‘total place’ approach.

4.3 Danny also emphasised that:-

- local government was firmly committed to this approach even if the reform programme timescale was to change;
- in that event, however, the extent and programming of the efficiencies would require reassessment; and
- the paper acknowledged that further work was required, in a number of key areas, but it was considered that the approach, set out in detail at Annex B, provided an achievable pathway for securing efficiencies.

4.4 The Chair expressed his appreciation of the work taken forward by local government and said that he considered that the paper provided a good foundation on which to build. He also confirmed that he endorsed the basic concept that local government takes the central role in the drive for achieving efficiencies.

4.5 In subsequent discussion, the Board agreed that:-

- there was a need for local government to further develop the detail of the proposals in the paper including the pathway for achieving the efficiency savings in the order of the £438 million figure mentioned in the PwC report;
- DOE would support local government in this process; and
- it would be necessary to review the efficiency saving figures, and related costs, in the event of any change to the timescale for the introduction of the 11 council

**NILGA**

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model.

5 **AGENDA ITEM 5 – VOLUNTARY TRANSITION COMMITTEE  
AND MANAGEMENT TEAM (SLB 12/2010)**

5.1 Nora Winder introduced the paper which recommended the establishment of a voluntary Regional Transition Committee (vRTC) comprising:-

- 11 voluntary Transition Committee representatives (Chair or substitute);
- 5 NILGA SLB representatives;
- a small top up, if required, to give political balance; and
- support by the Joint Secretariat.

5.2 Key points Nora highlighted included:-

- the rationale for the establishment of the vRTC and the voluntary RTMT, as an interim measure, pending the establishment of the Transition Committees on a statutory basis;
- that the joint NILGA and SOLACE Engagement Event (held on 12<sup>th</sup> March) agreed that, subject to the formal agreement of the Transition Committees, a vRTC should be established without delay;
- the proposals in the paper have now been agreed with Transition Committees and
- the key recommendations that SLB agree the proposals for constituting a vRTC and that arrangements are now made to set up the first meeting.

5.3 Members approved the proposals in the paper and agreed that the Joint Secretariat should:-

- make arrangements for finalising membership of the vRTC and setting up its first meeting; and
- present a paper, to the next SLB meeting, on the governance and terms of reference of the vRTC.

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5.4 In discussion, it was also noted that the vRTC would take a lead role in co-ordinating the work of the Transition Committee issues including the action points set out in paragraph 3.2 of this minute.

6 **AGENDA ITEM 6 - REGIONAL TRANSITION CO-ORDINATING GROUP / JOINT FORUM PAPERS**

**Item 6 (a) - RTCG / Joint Forum Update (SLB 13/2010)**

6.1 The Chair of the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG), Ian Maye, spoke to the paper, which provided an update on its work and that of the Local Government Reform Joint Forum.

6.2 Key points made, in relation to RTCG, included:-

- the group had met on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and its members were updated on the proposals to replace it with the vRTC and a Voluntary Regional Transition Management Team;
- as this was likely to have been the last RTCG meeting it was, therefore, used as a stock take of the work of the sub groups for which it was responsible;
- the paper provided updates on the work of the Finance and Estates Implementation Group, the Transfer of Functions Working Group and a paper on branding of the councils, prepared by the Communications Group, which would be taken as the next item (6b) on the agenda for this meeting; and
- the paper also provided an update on the work that the Joint Forum is taking forward on a range of issues including the staff severance scheme (which was to be taken at item 7 of the agenda for this meeting), the system for filling senior posts, the staff transfer scheme and vacancy controls.

- 6.3 The paper was noted by members and, in discussion, it was:-
- confirmed that the draft Job Descriptions for senior posts which are being prepared are of a generic nature and that councils and their Transition Committees would have the opportunity to tailor the drafts to take account of their respective requirements; and
  - noted that, whenever the way forward on the reform programme is agreed, the Board would need to give further consideration to whether or not vacancy controls remain in place.

**Item 6 (b) – Communication Branding (SLB 14/2010)**

- 6.4 John Price introduced the paper and said that it had originated within the Local Government Communications Forum and was developed to provide advice and guidance on branding issues resulting from the reform programme. He confirmed that the paper, which had been considered by the three Policy Development Panels, recommended a phased approach to implementing branding changes for councils over a 12 month period in advance of the implementation of the new councils, preceded by a branding audit within each council.

- 6.5 Members confirmed that they were content to approve the approach set out in the paper. It was also agreed that:-
- the guidance should be held and circulated at the appropriate time for implementation; and
  - caution should be taken when branding is being taken forward as it was considered that it could potentially lead to contentious issues being addressed prematurely.

## 7 **AGENDA ITEM 7 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM JOINT FORUM SEVERANCE SCHEME (SLB 15/2010)**

7.1 Wesley Shannon introduced the paper, which sought the Board's approval to a staff severance scheme prepared by the Joint Forum. Wesley explained that the scheme:-

- had been developed by a working group of the Forum and had also been the subject of consultation via the Employers' Side of the NIJC and the JNC for Chief Executives;
- had been agreed at the Forum meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March;
- would cover staff in:-
  - the 26 district councils (including Environmental Health and Building Control Group Committees);
  - Arc 21 and SWaMP 2008;
  - any staff employed by Transition Committees;
  - staff in the new 11 councils;
  - the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
- was based on the provisions of the Executive's 5<sup>th</sup> Guiding Principle as recommended by the Public Service Commission "Voluntary Severance Arrangements" and was intended that the scheme will only have minimal application; and
- was consistent with similar schemes introduced in the reform of the health and education sectors.

7.2 Wesley also mentioned that:-

- it was proposed that the introduction of severance would be phased and expressions of interest invited from specific groups of staff, at the appropriate time, linked to the recruitment of particular posts and the development of new structures; and
- in recommending the scheme the Joint Forum had invited the Board to also address the crucial question of funding; and

- however, funding of the scheme was linked to the issues associated with the funding of the reform programme considered at agenda item 4 of this meeting.

7.3 Members confirmed that whilst they were content to approve the staff severance scheme in principle, further clarity was required on the future of the reform programme and on its funding before the proposals could be applied and the paper disseminated. It was agreed that the Joint Forum should be informed accordingly.

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7.4 It was also confirmed that any severance costs related to NILGA staff would have to be met by NILGA.

## 8 **LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME UPDATE (SLB 16/2010)**

8.1 The Chair said that this paper, which had been submitted for the information of members, provided an update on the Local Government Reform Primary Legislative Programme. He explained that:-

- Annex A of the paper set out the provisions on the new Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 and the current position on the two remaining Local Government Bills which his Department was taking forward; and
- Annex B of the paper set out the position on the Bills, which will transfer functions from central to local government.

8.2 Cllr Wells asked what the impact would be, on the Department's local government reform primary legislation programme, of a decision to defer the introduction of the 11 council model until 2015. Ian Maye said that this would not have any impact on the new Act or on the Local Government (Finance) Bill but that aspects of the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill would have to be re-examined.

9 **AGENDA ITEM 9 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

9.1 The Chair confirmed that his Department was currently preparing an economic appraisal to identify potential efficiencies in the delivery of waste services and a range of structures for their realisation including a Single Waste Authority.

10 **AGENDA ITEM 10 – DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

10.1 The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2010 at 10:00 am in Belfast City Council's Learning and Development Centre.