

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2009

Belfast City Council Learning and Development Centre

Members:	Cllr Edwin Poots MLA Cllr Helen Quigley Cllr John Mathews Cllr Sean McPeake Cllr John O’Kane Cllr Tony Hill Cllr Sean Begley Cllr Jim Wells MLA Ald Arnold Hatch Ald Sam Gardiner MLA Leo O’Reilly Ian Maye Marianne Fleming Michaela Glass Henry Johnston John McGrillen	Environment Minister, Chair SDLP NILGA, Vice Chair Alliance NILGA Sinn Fein NILGA SDLP Alliance Sinn Fein DUP UUP NILGA UUP DOE DOE DOE - Planning Service DRD – Roads Service DSD LG Adviser (SOLACE)
Apologies:	Cllr Joanne Bunting Peter McNaney Ashley Boreland David Ferguson Cynthia Smith	DUP NILGA LG Adviser (RPA Working Group) LG Adviser (Ards BC) DSD DOE
Joint Secretariat:	Heather Moorhead John Price	NILGA Joint Secretary DOE Acting Joint Secretary
In Attendance:	Paul Givan Brenda Mooney Jim Stewart Jackie Lambe John Murphy Angela Fitzpatrick Speers Charters Noreen Donnelly Louise Thompson Nora Winder Helen Richmond Pamela Baxter Mark Maher	Special Adviser to Minister DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE DOE NILGA NILGA (Minutes) DOE NILGA

1 AGENDA ITEM 1 - WELCOME

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that Leo O'Reilly has taken over as Permanent Secretary of the Department and Ian Maye has been promoted to the Deputy Secretary post with responsibility for Local Government, Planning and Environmental Policy. He referred to the fact that this meeting was Cllr Quigley's last meeting as Vice Chair of the SLB and thanked her for all her hard work.

1.2 The Vice Chair acknowledged the Chair's best wishes, welcomed Leo and congratulated Ian on his promotion. She said that members looked forward to working with them.

1.3 Apologies were tendered on behalf of Cllr Bunting, Peter McNaney, Ashley Boreland, Cynthia Smith (DOE), David Ferguson (DSD) and Geoff Allister (DRD). It was noted that Henry Johnston would represent DSD, Marianne Fleming would represent DOE Planning Service and Michaela Glass would represent DRD Roads Service at the meeting.

2. AGENDA ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting, held on 3 July 2009, were agreed.

3 AGENDA ITEM 2 – MATTERS ARISING

Paragraph 4.3 – Primary Legislative Summary

3.1 It was noted that copies of the legislative summary had been sent to members on 20 July and that a further update on the programme would to be taken at item 8 of the agenda.

Paragraphs 4.8 and 4.13 LG Reform Joint Forum And Finance and Estates Implementation Group

3.2 It was confirmed that the accountability arrangements of the Local Government (LG) Reform Joint Forum and the Finance and Estates Implementation Group have been considered as part of the review of LG Reform Programme Organisational Structures. This would be covered in the discussion on the report of the review taken at agenda

Item 6.

Paragraph 4.15 Capital Expenditure and Voluntary Transition Committees

- 3.3 Members were provided with a copy of the note, issued by the Department on 8 July, clarifying the role of Voluntary Transition Committees in relation to council capital expenditure projects.

Paragraphs 4.18 and 4.19 Minister Goggins and Co-option

- 3.4 It was noted that that Minister Poots would meet Minister Goggins on 1 September to discuss co-option. Heather Moorhead confirmed that NILGA had written to Minister Goggins on 13 August reiterating its view on co-option.

- 3.5 Cllr McPeake stated that it was important that a decision on this issue is finalised soon along with final outcomes on severance arrangements for long serving district councillors.

Paragraph 4.20 NILGA to write to Minister Murphy

- 3.6 Heather Moorhead confirmed that NILGA had written to Minister Murphy thanking him for meeting with NILGA representatives.

Paragraph 5.6 Area Plans

- 3.7 Marianne Fleming provided an update on Planning Service's proposal to working with Transition Committees, in advance of 2011, on area plans. She advised that the recently published planning reform consultation paper includes proposals to reform the development plan system. She explained that while no decisions have yet been made as to the number of pilots or which Transition Committees would be involved, in reaching decisions on these issues, Planning Service will consider existing work priorities and the availability of resources, both within planning and in the new council areas, to carry out such work.
- 3.8 Cllr Hill welcomed the opportunity for local government to work with Planning Service on area plan pilots. Following discussions, it was agreed that Planning Service would consider arrangements for early engagement with Transition Committees on the roll out of the pilots. Proposals are to be presented to next SLB meeting.

DOE

- 3.9 Cllr Hill also advised that Planning Service and NILGA are holding a joint seminar later this month on the Planning Reform consultation and explained that it was a capacity building opportunity for members prior to transfer of planning in 2011. He said that there would be up to 7 representatives attending from each council.

Paragraph 7.7 Finance and Estates Working Group Second Implementation Paper

- 3.10 John Price confirmed that the 2nd Finance and Estates Implementation paper was considered at the RTCG meeting on 23rd July and it was agreed that the recommendations be taken forward by the Finance and Estates implementation sub group of the RTCG which is currently being established.

Paragraph 7.12 Appointment of Senior Staff to new Councils

- 3.11 At the last SLB meeting the appointment of senior staff was referred to LG Reform Joint Forum for evaluation and to make recommendations on the way forward. It was noted that since the last meeting, the Forum had met twice and identified this issue as a priority work area. An update on the work of the Forum is provided in the paper at agenda item 7.

- 3.12 Following a query from Ald Hatch, Ian Maye confirmed that the Department does not currently have the power to issue direction in relation to the appointment of senior staff in the new councils but a provision will be provided in either the Local Government (Reorganisation) or Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bills.

Paragraph 11.3 Consultations

- 3.13 At the last SLB meeting, the importance of ensuring that the Transition Committees develop work programmes on their key work areas to be taken forward was agreed. John Price confirmed that this was being addressed in work being taken forward by PA Consulting on Programme Management. He also said that consultation with the Transition Committees had taken place at a seminar held on 10th August.

- 3.14 It was noted that summaries of the responses to the consultations (on severance arrangements for councillors and the Statutory Transition Committees) had been published on the DOE website.

Paragraph 12.1 Revised Dates of SLB Meetings

- 3.15 Revised dates for SLB meeting were agreed (i.e. Wednesday 7th October, Wednesday 18th November and Wednesday 9th December – all at 10.00am in Belfast City Council Learning and Development Centre)
- 3.16 The Secretariats (of Panels A, B and C and RTCG) will ensure that dates of their meetings are sequenced with the revised SLB meeting dates.

4 AGENDA ITEM 3 – POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL A

Dashboard Overview Report (SLB 40/2009)

- 4.1 Cllr Sean Begley, Vice Chair of Panel A, outlined the key points in the report. He explained that work was progressing on the development of activities for the introduction of community planning; and that the Panel would discuss and agree the programme of activities for Transition committees at next meeting on 20 August.
- 4.2 He also advised that the Panel had agreed a prioritised work plan and would be finalising its schedule of meeting to tie in with agreed SLB dates.
- Item 3(b) Publication of LG Officers' Remuneration paper (SLB 41/2009)**
- 4.3 Cllr Begley introduced the paper, which outlined the Panel's proposals in relation to publishing the details of expenses of Chief Executives and Directors of councils and other public bodies for which the Department is responsible, in line with arrangements in many councils in England and Wales. Key points Cllr Begley made included:-

- that there should be reporting of the relevant information, rather than disclosure;
- information on Senior Officers remuneration should be set in context (for example, in terms of personal pension contributions);
- Chief Executives and Directors will be identified with their details;
- Senior Officers with salaries over £50K should be reported according to their post, in incremental £5K bands; and
- the requirement to report remuneration details should be applied consistently across the public sector.

4.4 He also explained that Panel Members recommended that information should be reported in a standardised tabular format for consistency, with footnotes providing the context. The tabular format would also enable comparisons to be readily made. A template had been included for consideration.

4.5 In subsequent discussion members confirmed that they were content to endorse the paper. The Minister thanked Panel A members for their work on the issue.

5 **AGENDA ITEM 4 – POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL B**

Item 4 (a) Panel Dashboard Overview Report (SLB 42/2009)

5.1 The Chair of Panel B, Cllr Quigley, introduced the report and highlighted the key work items that were being taken forward. She explained that work was continuing to produce guidelines for developing a Customer Service Strategy.

5.2 It was also noted that the NILGA e-Government Working Group was prioritising the projects to be taken forward within the IS Strategy and ensuring that these are included within the PwC Business Case.

5.3 Cllr Quigley advised that a Project Steering Group had been established to develop a Procurement Strategy for the sector. It was proposed to appoint an external consultant to undertake the development work. While Terms of Reference had been drafted for the assignment, these may need to be amended as a result of the outcome of the PwC report, which was expected to make recommendations on procurement arrangements within the sector. Once redrafted these would be issued through Central Procurement Directorate.

Item 4(b) LG Network Infrastructure – Options for Delivery (SLB 43/2009)

5.4 Cllr Quigley spoke to the paper. She explained that a number of options for the delivery of such a network were presented to the Panel at its last meeting. Paper SLB/43/2009 recommended the network infrastructure developed for the NICS “NetworkNI” as the most viable, efficient and cost-effective approach to providing a network for local government.

5.5 SLB members agreed, in principle, the recommendation. In subsequent discussions, Cllr Quigley explained that Panel B was still to finalise a number of associated policy issues e.g. accountability / transparency to elected members and costs. Ian Maye advised that to allow the necessary implementation arrangements to be put in place the deadline for completion of this outstanding policy work is October 2009.

5.6 It was also agreed that implementation will be passed to RTCG (subsequently to RTC / RTMT) who will work closely with NILGA e-Government Working Group.

6 AGENDA ITEM 5 – POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL C

Dashboard Overview Report (SLB 44/2009)

6.1 Ald Hatch confirmed that a copy of the final version of the (PwC) Phase 1 Report for the Assessment of Options for Local Government Service Delivery has been issued by e-mail to local government SLB members.

6.2 The Panel C Dashboard Overview Report was noted.

Item 5(b) Recommendations of the Finance and Estates Working Group Third Implementation paper (SLB 45/2009)

6.3 Ald Hatch introduced the paper which identified a third series of issues which Panel C recommended should be passed to the RTCG for implementation.

6.4 It was noted that the key recommendations included the need for further work in relation to:-

- a Chief Financial Officer of a 'new' council finalising the statement of accounts for its predecessor council and the requirement for legislation to be put in place in place; and
- guidance on striking rates and preparation of accounts for a new council's first year should give specific consideration to the needs of councils affected by boundary changes.

6.5 Members confirmed that they were content to agree that the recommendations in the paper be passed to RTCG for implementation

7 AGENDA ITEM 6 ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW OF LG REFORM PROGRAMME STRUCTURES DRAFT REPORT (SLB 46/2009)

7.1 John Price introduced the paper and highlighted the key issues and recommendations:-

- The SLB should continue as is.
- A new group, to be known as the Regional Transition Committee (RTC), should be established. It would be accountable to the SLB and comprise of: an elected member from each of the eleven Statutory Transition Committees, and the five political representatives on the SLB.
- A new Regional Transition Management Team (RTMT), consisting

of officers acting as advisors to the RTC, should be established.

This group would comprise an officer from: each Transition Management Team; the Chief Executive of the Local Government Staff Commission; the Chief Executive and two Directors from NILGA; and a senior representative from each transferring function department. The group would be chaired by the DOE Deputy Secretary (Ian Maye) and it would meet directly after the RTC meetings to co-ordinate implementation of agreed actions.

- Task and Finish Working Groups (TFWGs) would be established to support the work of the RTC on specific projects. These groups would normally comprise of officials. However, councillors may also form the membership where appropriate. Existing working groups should continue to operate and report to the RTC.
- As a consequence of the creation of the RTC and RTMT, the RTCG should be dissolved.
- On the introduction of a Programme Management Framework, the SLB should agree with the PDPs achievable target dates for each of their remaining tasks. PDPs will end once they have completed any remaining policy development work.
- Any unforeseen policy issues, arising after the dissolution of the PDPs may be addressed by an ad hoc Task-and-Finish PDP as appointed by the SLB. Membership would consist of two representatives from each political party. The Chair of any ad hoc Task-and-Finish PDP should be a member of SLB.

7.2

Mr Price also addressed the issue of accountability of the LG Joint Forum. He explained that the report proposes dual reporting lines to SLB and RTC/RTMT which provides the flexibility required in terms of the wide range of issues that the Forum will be addressing. This reporting relationship will be in a managerial sense only, with RTC/RTMT taking the lead in ensuring that the Forum continues to meet on a regular basis to address the key work issues and priorities identified by SLB; and

7.3

It was noted that the individual Employee and Employer Groups included in the Forum will take their respective negotiating remits from

their respective sectors. These reporting arrangements dovetail with the TOR and Operating Arrangements of the Forum. These views would be reflected more fully in the final report, which was to be presented to SLB.

7.4

The paper was agreed subject to some minor typographical amendments.

- Paragraph 15 should read “the five *NILGA* representatives
- Paragraph 23 should include “... any unforeseen policy or *political* issues”.
- Paragraph 18 – *Elected members should have the opportunity to attend the RTMT as observers*
- Page 6 Amend footnote on diagram “*** When the present PDP’s have completed their work the facility will be available for the formation of an ad hoc PDP *to be established by the SLB*, when required.

7.5

It was also agreed that Parties, through a NILGA Office Bearer’s meeting on 21 August, would give further consideration to the issues of political representation on RTC and the rotation of chairs of PDPs.

7.6

The Draft report would be amended to take account of the outcome of those discussions and presented in final form to the next SLB meeting.

Joint
Secretariat

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AGENDA ITEM 7 RTCG AND TRANSITION COMMITTEE UPDATE (SLB 27/2009)

8.1

John Price introduced the paper which provided members with a summary of the issues discussed at the last meeting of the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group along with updates on the work of the LG Reform Joint Forum and the Transition Committees.

8.2 There was some discussion about employing staff on fixed term contracts prior to the establishment of the new councils. It was agreed that the Department would ensure that all Transition Committees are aware of the procedures for the appointment of Change Managers. DOE

8.3 There was also further discussion on the work of the Transition Committees feeding into any new programme management system which was currently under development by PA Consulting. It was agreed that the Department would ensure that PA Consulting would include reporting of Transition Committee issues. DOE

8.4 Members agreed the need to provide support for Transition Committees in their work. Any guidance that is issued must be clear and unambiguous. It was reiterated that any guidance will be cleared through the PDPs before it issues.

9 AGENDA ITEM 8 - LG PRIMARY LEGISLATION PROGRAMME UPDATE (SLB 48/2009)

9.1 Jim Stewart introduced the paper which provided an update on the legislative programme.

9.2 In response to a query from Cllr Begley about the lack of meaningful engagement with local government on the Ethical Standards Regime and Code of Conduct, the Chair explained that the Department has been reviewing the current voluntary Code of Conduct for Northern Ireland councillors, as part of a new Ethical Standards Regime, and has researched mandatory Codes of Conduct in other jurisdictions to assist in the drafting of a new Code. He said that the Ethical Standards proposals require Executive agreement before the Code can be fully developed and that the proposals would be considered by the Executive in the Autumn.

9.3 When the Executive agree the proposals, the Department would prepare a draft Code for consultation with interested parties. He added that the draft Code would be referred to PDP A for comment prior to full consultation.

9.4 The Chair also said that he was considering the introduction of legislation on “High Hedges” and “Clean Neighbourhoods”. Members welcomed and encouraged the introduction of these two pieces of legislation as soon as possible

10 **AGENDA ITEM 9 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK INCLUDING AN UPDATE ON
PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (SLB 49/2009)**

10.1 John Price presented the paper which highlighted the key policy/strategic priorities and milestones in the reform programme and provided an update on the framework presented at the last SLB meeting.

10.2 The paper also presented the current position on the Programme Management work being taken forward by PA Consulting. PA Consulting had met with various stakeholders (SLB, PDPs and Transition Committees) and were currently working with the Local Government Policy Division Programme Management Office to develop the overall programme plan and design the Programme Management Office Framework. He explained that the report on the programme plan and specification for the programme management and reporting system was on track to be presented to the Department by the end of August 2009. Heather Moorhead advised that any new programme management system should be quality assured through NILGA’s RPA Working Group.

11 **AGENDA ITEM 10- ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS FOR LG
SERVICE DELIVERY PROJECT PHASE 2 (SLB 50/2009)**

- 11.1 John Price introduced the paper, which provided members with a summary of the progress of the Service Delivery project. John advised that PwC was pressing ahead with Phase 2 which entails a full and detailed economic appraisal of the shortlisted options. He explained that RTCG is the Steering Group for Phase 2 and was carefully monitoring the work of PwC. This included a meeting to review progress on 11th August.
- 11.2 The draft Phase 2 report was due to be presented to RTCG by week commencing 31st August with an all day workshop scheduled in early September to provide key stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss and provide feedback to PwC on the economic appraisal and the outline implementation plan. The final Phase 2 report was expected by Monday 14th September.
- 11.3 Ian Maye assured members that the report would be carefully checked and quality assured by the Department and RTCG before it is issued to a wider audience.

12. **AGENDA ITEM 11 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Boundaries Commission Report

- 12.1 Cllr Mathews enquired about the status of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner's Report. In response, the Chair explained that his officials were currently considering the Commissioner's report to ensure that the rules set out in Schedule 4 to the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 (as amended) had been complied with in its preparation. In the light of the outcome of that scrutiny, he would then decide if any modifications to the report will be necessary.
- 12.2 The Chair said that the report, together with a draft Order giving effect to the recommendations, would then be brought before the Executive for agreement. If modifications are to be made to the Final Report, a statement to explain the reasons for the modifications will also be provided. Subject to the Executive's agreement, the Final Report, draft Order and, if

necessary, statement about the modifications would be laid before the Assembly in Autumn of this year. Once laid, the Order will be debated in the Assembly and must be approved by a resolution of the Assembly before it can come into operation.

- 12.3 It was agreed that the Department would invite Transition Committees to put forward views on names of the new councils by the end of September. Executive agreement on the boundaries and names of the new councils needs to be in place by the end of the year. DOE

Funding for Local Government Reform

- 12.4 John McGrillen indicated that SoLACE and NILGA had issued a joint letter to Leo O'Reilly and Stephen Peover requesting a meeting to discuss appropriate funding mechanism for the programme. He asked that this request be treated as a matter of urgency. The usefulness of such a meeting was acknowledged.

13 **AGENDA ITEM 12 - DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 13.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 7 October 2009 at 10:00 am in the Learning and Development Centre. **(Please note that since these minutes were taken, the date and location of the next SLB meeting has been rescheduled to Friday 16th October 2009 in Clifton House).**