

REGIONAL TRANSITION CO-ORDINATING GROUP UPDATE

Agenda Item: 7

Summary: This paper provides 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.

Action Required: To note for information.

REGIONAL TRANSITION CO-ORDINATING GROUP

1. The sixth meeting of the Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) was held on 23rd July 2009. The minutes of the meeting will be published on the DOE and NILGA websites once they have been approved by RTCG members. Annex 1 of this paper provides a summary of the key issues discussed at the RTCG meeting. Key points to note are highlighted below.

LG Reform Joint Forum

2. RTCG members noted that the first meeting of the Forum, established to facilitate consultation and negotiations between Employer and Employee representation on a range of Human Resource related issues that are cross-sectional in nature, had been held on 22 July 2009 and that subsequent meetings were to be held on a fortnightly basis. At the Forum the following points were agreed:-
 - Terms of Reference for the Group were discussed and it was agreed that the Terms of Reference and operating arrangements would be amended and brought back to the next meeting;

- Bumper Graham, NIPSA, was appointed lead member for Trade Union side and Maureen Taggart, NIHE, the lead member for Employer's side;
 - Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of Association of Public Service Excellence, would take on the role of Independent Facilitator for the Forum; and
 - a number of priority issues were identified for consideration at future meetings including the filling of senior posts in the new councils, staff severance arrangements, an updated Vacancy control system and a model protocol for local negotiations between Trade Unions and local government employers.
3. A Communications Bulletin (copy at Annex 2) was prepared shortly after the Forum meeting and this has been circulated to key stakeholders.
 4. At the subsequent meeting on 5 August, Members agreed the "Terms of Reference and Operating Arrangements" for the Joint Forum and commissioned the preparation of detailed papers on "Severance Arrangements for Staff" and "Filling Posts in the New Organisations" by the Secretariat.

Assessment of Options for Local Government

5. RTCG members noted that, at the SLB meeting on 22 May 2009, it had been agreed that the Phase 2 could commence. PwC presented a summary of its Phase 1 report to RTCG and advised that they are now working on Phase 2 which includes a full economic appraisal of the short listed options. This will include a full business case with timescales, the identification of the existing capacity and knowledge base within government. The appraisal will also include preparation of an Outline Implementation Plan.
6. RTCG are the steering group for Phase 2 and members will be liaising closely with PwC throughout the phase.

Other Key Issues

7. RTCG members also received updates on a number of key issues including:-
 - deliberations at the last SLB meeting;
 - the current position on Community Planning;
 - arrangements of the first meeting of Finance and Estates Implementation Group; and
 - priorities, purpose and direction of the LG Reform Communication Group.

TRANSITION COMMITTEES UPDATE

8. A one day “Making Transition Work” seminar - aimed at Transition Committees, Transition Management Teams, Change Managers and staff from Departments transferring functions - was held on 6th July 2009 at Craigavon Civic Centre. This was the first in a series of seminars to be hosted by the Joint Secretariat, with the support of SOLACE, to provide guidance and support during the transition process. Approximately 170 members and officers attended the event and feedback suggested that attendees found the event to be very helpful and informative.
9. The morning session of the seminar included a range of guest speakers including; The Leader and Chief Executive from Wiltshire County Council who were recently involved in a leadership capacity in the amalgamation of four district and one county council; PwC who presented the findings from Phase 1 of the assessment of options for local government service delivery; Deloitte on the progress made across Transition Committees; and the Chairs of the Policy Development Panels who provided attendees with an update on

progress to date.

10. The afternoon session of the seminar took the form of breakout sessions where attendees were split into small groups and asked to discuss progress across transition committees, identify what is going well, what is not going so well and what additional support they require.
11. Further seminars are planned for the future. The content of subsequent seminars is currently under consideration and it is hoped that the next will be convened in September/October 2009.
12. The eleven Transition Committees continue to provide minutes of their meetings. All documents received since the last SLB, on 3 July, are provided for the information of members at Annexes 3 to 7.
13. Among other things, the Transition Committees have recently focussed on the following issues:-
 - consideration of the appointment of Strategic IT partner(s) to assist with system convergence;
 - joint bidding for NIEA biodiversity funding;
 - participation in the Citizen Survey commissioned by Banbridge District Council;
 - the commissioning of a community consultation survey, to inform new council's vision-making and place-shaping;
 - organising workshops to take forward the development of a vision for new councils;
 - the adoption of the Staff Commission's job description when appointing change management co-ordinators;
 - the importance of Transition Committees being aware of existing and proposed loan sanctions with the Department;

- the involvement of Central government colleagues from the transferring functions Departments in Transition Management Team meetings; and
- endorsement of the concept of increasing co-operation amongst Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams.

RECOMMENDATION

14. It is recommended that members note the information provided in this update.

Joint Secretariat



Key Outcomes from Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) 23 July 2009

Minutes of Meetings

- Minutes from the previous RTCG meeting on 11 June 2009 were approved. The minutes are now available on the Local Government section of the DOE website on www.doeni.gov.uk and the NILGA website www.nilga.org.

Local Government Reform Joint Forum

- It was relayed that the first meeting of the Joint Forum was held on 22 July 2009 with subsequent fortnightly meeting dates agreed (5 & 19 August, 2 Sep 2009.)
- At the first meeting, Bumper Graham (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance) was appointed lead person for Trade Union side and Maureen Taggart (Northern Ireland Housing Executive) the lead for Employers' side.
- It was agreed that the Terms of Reference and operating arrangements would be amended to reflect the discussion and brought back to the next meeting.
- It was confirmed that Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), will take on the role of Independent Facilitator for the Forum.
- There was agreement that short term Task and Finish sub groups should be established, as required, to support the work of the Forum.
- It was confirmed that a number of priority issues will be discussed at upcoming meetings including the filling of senior posts in the new councils; staff severance scheme; an updated vacancy control system; and a model protocol for local negotiations between Trade Unions and local government employers.
- It was advised that a summary of key outcomes from the Forum will be issued soon after each meeting.

Assessment of Options for Local Government Service Delivery

- PwC presented a summary of its Phase 1 report to RTCG. The report contains a number of key recommendations including:
 - A full Economic Appraisal should now be conducted on the short-listed options for the design of Service Delivery Functions (and associated common design approaches) within the new Councils;
 - Clear direction should be given to Transition Committees on the scope and range of their responsibilities in the design of their new organisations against those elements that will be designed, developed and delivered collaboratively; and
 - Decisions should be taken on the design of appropriate regional structures for local government in Northern Ireland.
- PwC advised that, under Phase 2 of the project, they are now working on a full economic appraisal and this will include an assessment of each shortlisted option. This economic appraisal will be supported by an Implementation Plan to identify the key risks, timescales, capacity and resources required to deliver the preferred option.
- PwC confirmed that the final Phase 2 report is on track to be delivered by early September 2009.
- PwC agreed to continue to meet with key stakeholders to discuss the transferring functions including those of an operational nature e.g. emergency planning with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. They also confirmed they were happy to discuss the project with individual councils and union representatives.

- It was noted that as the RTCG is the steering group for Phase 2 its members will be liaising closely with PwC throughout this phase. PwC agreed to provide weekly update reports on progress to the RTCG members via the Project Manager.
- It was agreed that a progress workshop involving RTCG members and PwC will be held in mid-August. It was also decided that the PwC draft Phase 2 report should be the primary focus at the next RTCG meeting.

Community Planning

- It was noted that SLB at the 3 July 2009 meeting endorsed Policy Development Panel (PDP) A's proposal for a broad programme of activities to support the introduction of community planning at council / Transition Committee and regional level.
- RTCG was advised that the Joint Secretariat and the Community Planning Working Group are working to develop the guidance necessary to support and underpin this programme.
- It was explained that this guidance will include material on initiatives being taken forward by central government that need to be factored into the programme following preliminary discussions with senior officials in a number of departments and the Policing Board.
- It was also noted that preparations are underway to bid for EU funding under the Peace 111 Programme. This bid will reflect the key elements and outputs for the programme that have been identified in this guidance. This is supported by officers from Belfast City Council.
- It was advised that the aim is to have the guidance and bid endorsed by PDP A in early September.

Executive Sub Committee

- It was noted that the first meeting of the Local Government Reform Executive Sub Committee has been rescheduled to take place on 7 September 2009.

Review of Local Government Reform Organisational Structures

- The Joint Secretariat reported that there has been good progress on the Review of Local Government Reform Structures - focus groups have been held with each of the three PDPs, SOLACE and representatives of Transition Committees.
- Members were informed that an issues paper has been prepared based on the views expressed on the existing organisational arrangements and what needs to be done to meet the changes and challenges over the next two years.
- The Joint Secretariat confirmed that it will conduct a series of interviews with the political parties, SOLACE and Transferring Function Departments between 27-30 July to seek their views on a range of options for revised organisational structures.
- It was noted that the draft final report is on course to be presented to the next SLB meeting on 14 August 2009.

Programme Management

- It was confirmed that PA Consulting, appointed to aid the development, delivery and implementation of a new programme management system, will be meeting with key stakeholders over the coming weeks.
- PA Consulting will be seeking their views on an appropriate planning and programme management system for the reform process.

Finance and Estates Implementation

- It was confirmed that arrangements are underway to set up the first meeting of the Finance and Estates Implementation Group.
- John Price from Local Government Policy Division will be Vice Chair until a new Director of Local Government Policy Division is appointed.
- The composition of the Group will be finalised and the first meeting arranged as quickly as possible.

Transition Committee Update

- It was relayed that Minister Poots views the Transition Committees as central to the Reform Programme and implementation in particular. He is keen to meet with the Chairs of Transition Committees as early as possible.
- The Minister is also keen to see Transition Committees fully embedded in the regional structures.

Making Transition Work Seminar

- It was noted that feedback from the first Transition seminar on 6 July indicated that attendees found it helpful and informative. Work is underway on setting up the next seminar, likely to be a half day session, scheduled for the autumn.

Communications Update Paper

- It was relayed that there was a helpful first meeting of the Local Government Reform Communications Group.
- RTCG members agreed the priorities, purpose and direction that the Communications Group established for future meetings.
- It was relayed that SOLACE will ensure continued Chief Executive representation on the Communications Group.
- It was reported that the second meeting will include creating a communications strategy template to provide guidance for Transition Committees. It was agreed that this should include consideration of how and when the public should be communicated with on a regional basis about the Reform Programme.
- The Group was asked to consider how funding for communications activities should feed in to Phase 2 of the PwC report.

Legislation Update – Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill

- Members were advised that the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill is scheduled for consideration by the Executive in the autumn. A consultation document will be issued once the Executive have agreed the policy proposals.

Capital Expenditure and Voluntary Transition Committees

- It was confirmed that a letter from the Department issued on 8 July to Chief Executives clarifying that while approval is not necessary, there should be sharing of information for loan sanctions amongst voluntary Transition Committees as part of their role in considering capital programme convergence.

Date of Next Meeting

- A progress workshop on Phase 2 – the economic appraisal of Local Government Service Delivery will be held mid August.
- The next RTCG meeting will be held on 3 September 2009 at 10.30 am in Clarence Court.

Please note: The information above may be subject to change. This is due to the quick turnaround of information in order to provide a summary as soon as possible after each meeting. The formal minutes will represent the information in finalised format.

Joint Secretariat

LGRJF

Local Government Reform Joint Forum

JOINT COMMUNICATION BULLETIN

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RPA NEGOTIATING BODY ESTABLISHED

The Local Government Reform Joint Forum (the Joint Forum) held its Inaugural Meeting on 22 July 2009.

The purpose of the Joint Forum, as agreed by the SLB in May 2009, is to:

"... facilitate consultation and negotiation between Employer and Employee representatives on a range of Human Resource (HR) related issues that are cross-sectoral in nature ..."

The Scope of the Joint Forum will extend to:

◇ staff employed in the 26 district councils (inc. Group Committee staff, arc21 and SWaMP 2008)

◇ All identified staff employed in the transferring functions

Each Side of the Joint Forum i.e. Employers' and Trade Unions will have 7 members representing those under the scope of the Joint Forum.

The Joint Forum will have an Independent Facilitator to Chair the meetings. Members have agreed that Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of APSE be appointed to this role.

The Joint Forum was established by the Local Government Staff Commission for NI following an instruction from the Minister and the Commission will provide Independent Secretariat facilities to the Joint Forum.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT FORUM

Employers' Side

Local Government - Councillor Allan Ewart, Councillor Tom Hartley, Trevor Salmon & Roger Wilson

DoE & Transferring Functions -

Ian Maye (DoE), Maureen Taggart (NIHE & DSD) & Grace Nesbitt (DFP)

Trade Union Side

NIPSA - Bumper Graham, Paddy Mackel, Pat Baker & Connor Haughey

Unite - Albert Mills & Jim Parker

GMB - John Dawson

Each Side can nominate substitutes as necessary

OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FORUM

- Meetings will normally be held every 2 weeks. An initial schedule of meetings has been agreed i.e. 05 August, 19 August & 02 September 2009
- All decisions of the Joint Forum will be issued to the Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG) to ensure the appropriate dissemination and monitoring mechanisms are employed to ensure consistency of application across local government and the transferring functions
- A Joint Communication Note will be issued promptly after each meeting of the Joint Forum

"...facilitating local government reorganisation...."

Priority Issues for the Joint Forum:

- Introduction of Vacancy Controls
- Filling Posts in the New Organisations
- Staff Severance Arrangements
- Local Consultation and Negotiation Arrangements for Transition Committees
- Staff Transfer Arrangements

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FUNCTIONS OF THE JOINT FORUM

- Agreeing principles and arrangements for the transfer of staff
- Exercising oversight of the application of the Guiding Principles
- Consulting and negotiating on HR policies and implementation decisions
- Developing Terms of Reference for consultation and negotiating machinery for post-2011
- Ensuring that all decisions of the Joint Forum adhere to Section 75 obligations
- Actively promoting and encouraging training and development programmes

“...facilitating local government reorganisation...”

JOINT COMMUNICATION BULLETIN

At the Inaugural meeting on 22nd July 2009 the following progress was made:

- The role, remit and operating arrangements for the Joint Forum were discussed and amendments suggested. These will be considered again at the next meeting.
- Both Sides appointed a Lead Person:
 - Trade Union Side - Bumper Graham
 - Employers' Side - Maureen Taggart
- Agreement was reached that Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive, Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) be appointed as Independent Facilitator to the Joint Forum. The role of the Independent Facilitator will include:
 - ◇ Overseeing and chairing the meetings, and providing leadership to enable the Joint Forum to act effectively
 - ◇ Fostering and maintaining a disciplined approach having regard to high standards of procedure, behaviour and ethics
 - ◇ Ensuring effective and proper conduct of business.
- The following HR implementation issues were prioritised for immediate action:
 - ◇ System for Filling Posts in New Organisations (in particular Chief Executive posts)
 - ◇ Staff Severance Arrangements
 - ◇ Introduction of a Vacancy Control System
 - ◇ Developing a protocol on local negotiations for RPA issues at Transition Committee level
- The Joint Forum can establish short-life task groups or sub group as required to consider specific issues. Independent expertise may be engaged to assist with these tasks.
- Communications issued from the Joint Forum will be agreed by both Sides and disseminated to all affected groups in line with overall RPA Communications Policy.

LGRJF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM JOINT FORUM

facilitating local government reorganisation

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