



**STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2009
CLIFTON HOUSE, NORTH QUEEN STREET, BELFAST**

PRESENT:	Cllr Edwin Poots MLA	Environment Minister, Chair
	Ald Arnold Hatch	UUP NILGA, Acting Vice Chair
	Cllr Helen Quigley	SDLP NILGA
	Cllr Joanne Bunting	DUP NILGA
	Cllr Sean McPeake	Sinn Fein NILGA
	Cllr John O’Kane	SDLP
	Cllr Tony Hill	Alliance
	Cllr Jim Wells MLA	DUP
	Leo O’Reilly	DOE
	Ian Maye	DOE
	Cynthia Smith	DOE - Planning Service
	Geoff Allister	DRD - Roads Service
	David Ferguson	DSD
	John McGrillen	LG Adviser (SOLACE)
	Peter McNaney	LG Adviser (RPA Working Group)
	Ashley Boreland	LG Adviser (Ards BC)
APOLOGIES:	Cllr John Mathews	Alliance NILGA
	Cllr Sean Begley	Sinn Fein
	Ald Sam Gardiner MLA	UUP
SECRETARIAT:	Heather Moorhead	NILGA Joint Secretary
	Wesley Shannon	DOE Joint Secretary



IN ATTENDANCE	Paul Givan	Special Adviser to Minister
	Brenda Mooney	DOE
	Jim Stewart	DOE
	Jackie Lambe	DOE
	John Murphy	DOE
	Angela Fitzpatrick	DOE
	Speers Charters	DOE (Minutes)
	Louise Thompson	DOE
	Tara Cunningham	NILGA
	Nora Winder	NILGA
	Lesley-Ann Black	NILGA
	Pamela Baxter	DOE
	Tom Clarke	DOE Planning
	Jim Thompson	DOE Planning
	Jacqueline Burns	DOE
	Catherine Fisher	DOE
	Stephen Western	DOE
	Brian Burns	DOE
	Noreen Donnelly	DOE

Actions

1. AGENDA ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone and said that this Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) meeting had originally been scheduled for 7th October but, as he was out of the country at that time, it had been postponed until today. He thanked members for accommodating this meeting in their busy schedules.



- 1.2 The Chair said that since the last meeting, on 14th August 2009, Cllr Mathews had succeeded Cllr Quigley as President of NILGA and that Wesley Shannon had been appointed as Director of Local Government Policy in the Department. He said that Cllr Mathews had tendered his apologies for being unable to attend the meeting but that, on behalf of the Board, he wanted to:
- congratulate Cllr Mathews and wish him well in his new role which includes Vice Chair of SLB; and
 - welcome Wesley as Joint Secretary of SLB.
- 1.3 It was noted that apologies had also been tendered by Cllr Begley and Ald Gardiner and that Ald Gardiner would be resigning from the Board. The Acting Vice Chair, Ald Hatch, said that his party would provide the name of Ald Gardiner's replacement as soon as possible. **NILGA**
- 1.4 The minutes of the meeting, held on 14th August, were agreed. It was confirmed that these would be published on the DOE and NILGA websites. **SLB Secretariat**
- 1.5 Members agreed, with the Chair's proposal, that the order of business set out in the agenda be revised:
- with items 3(a) and 3(b) – Policy Development Panel A papers (SLB51/2009 and SLB 52/2009) - being taken next;
 - followed by item 7 – the economic appraisal report on the Assessment of Options for Local government Service Delivery (SLB 57/2009);
 - followed by item 12 – the Planning and Programme Management paper (SLB 62/2009); and



- members then return to item 2 – Matters Arising from the last meeting and the other agenda business items.

2. **AGENDA ITEM 3 – POLICY DEVELOPMENT A**

Item 3(a) – Dashboard Overview Report (SLB 51/2009)

2.1 The Chair of Panel A, Cllr Bunting, introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- draft guidance to underpin the programme of activities for the introduction of community planning had been finalised and would be taken as the next item of business; and
- the three month forward work programme for the Panel included the development of draft guidance and proposals to support the outworking of policies agreed by the Panel and endorsed by SLB.

Item 3 (b) – Community Planning Programme of Activities for Transition Committees Paper (SLB 52/2009)

2.2 Cllr Bunting introduced the paper which outlined the Panel's detailed proposals for the programme of activities to support the statutory introduction of community planning and the formation of Regional Task and Finish Group. Before summarising the key points, Cllr Bunting stressed that unionist and nationalist members of the Panel had not been able to agree on the issue of cross border partnership working, in the community planning context, and hence there was no reference to this in the paper.

2.3 Key points Cllr Bunting made about the paper included:

- the importance of ensuring that there is a shared understanding of what Community



Planning means (the Introduction sets out the Panel's view on this);

- that the proposed programme was designed to enable all the Transition Committees to have suitable preparations in place for the introduction of the statutory duty in 2011;
- a key priority was to build up the evidence base to support the Transition Committees and the new councils;
- the evidence gathered during the process and the experiences of the Transition Committees would help inform the development of the statutory guidance for community planning;
- it was not about putting in place formal structures or programmes that could fetter the discretion of the new Councils;
- the lessons learned from the programme would be important for the future operation of community planning and there was, therefore, a need for effective evaluation of the programme both as it proceeds and at its conclusion;
- there was also a clear need to establish a group to manage the programme at the strategic level; and
- it was important that Departments fully support the process and the commitment of the members of the Executive Sub Committee, to do so, was helpful.

2.4 The Chair noted that the Panel had not reached a consensus on the issue of cross border partnership working and said that he would consider the matter further. **Chair/DOE**

2.5 In the course of subsequent discussion members agreed:



- the proposals in the paper;
- that a Regional Task and Finish Group be established to manage the programme at a strategic level; and
- that Panel A should develop the draft terms of reference for the Group.

Panel A

2.6 The Chair thanked Panel A members for their work on this issue.

3. **AGENDA ITEM 7- ECONOMIC APPRAISAL REPORT ON ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY (SLB 57/2009)**

3.1 The Chair said that the economic appraisal report, which formed Phase 2 of the Assessment Of Options for Local Government Service Delivery project, was a key business item for the meeting. Before inviting PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) colleagues to make a presentation, the Chair made the following key points:

- the report was now largely complete with only typographical corrections to be made;
- he was anxious to ensure that the Board had the opportunity to consider it at this meeting;
- he would be making a statement in the Assembly early the following week (subsequently confirmed as Tuesday 20th October) outlining, inter-alia, his continuing commitment to the local government reform programme and his intention to launch a six week period of stakeholder engagement on the appraisal which would be published;
- in making the statement he would make it clear that the report is being considered by



the political parties and others and that he looked forward to receiving and considering their views; and

- the statement would also stress that he would be seeking the views of his colleagues in the Executive, particularly those Ministers transferring functions to local government, and that he would discussing the report with the Finance and Personnel Minister, Sammy Wilson, with a view to exploring the implementation and longer term funding options that may be available to the Executive.

3.2 Members confirmed that they welcomed this approach and agreed that they would carefully consider the report and provide their views at the SLB meeting scheduled for 9th December.

NILGA to co-ordinate

3.3 The Chair welcomed Stephen Smyth, Paul Terrington and Gareth Hetherington, from PwC, and invited them to make the presentation to members.

3.4 A copy of the PwC presentation, which has been circulated to members, is attached as an Annex to this note. Key areas addressed included:

- an overview of the financial and non financial assessment of the five identified options for service delivery;
- an analysis of the key costs and benefits of each option;
- a summary of the funding considerations;
- a summary of PwC's recommendations including the overarching recommendation that Option 5 "Transfer with Regional Collaboration" is adopted as the way forward; and
- implementation of the associated programme would require upfront



investment of some £118 million over a 5year period, at today's prices, but would deliver projected savings of some £438 million over a 25 year period, again at today's prices.

3.5 It was noted that the key recommendations in the report included:-

- each of the 11 new councils in Northern Ireland delivering the full range of local government services;
- current group working arrangements for Environment Health and Building Control to cease and each council developing self contained capacity to deliver these services;
- the creation of a regional Business Services Organisation - wholly owned, operated and governed by local government - enabling collaborative solutions across local government;
- the creation of a single Waste Disposal Authority - wholly owned, operated and governed by local government - to drive out efficiencies in future procurement and contract management activities;
- the creation of a new Local Government Association, revitalising the representation of local government;
- the enhancement of the Northern Ireland Audit Office's role to reflect its proposed new role of monitoring the new performance management framework for local government; and
- the enhancement of the NI Ombudsman's role to reflect its new role of monitoring a Code of Ethics for councillors.



- 3.6 In response to points raised by members, PwC colleagues confirmed that:
- their estimates of the implementation costs were purposely on the high side and conversely that their estimates of cash savings were on the low side;
 - the Net Present Cost assessment used in the report, in relation to the calculation of costs and savings, was an established and appropriate economic technique;
 - the report had been carefully considered by the Department's economists; and
 - they would consider a number of specific points identified by members about some of the figures quoted in the report (e.g. the need to ensure consistency between rating figures quoted in page 163 of the report and those provided in a recent paper from Panel C)
- 3.7 The Chair thanked the PwC representatives for the presentation and confirmed that he would press ahead with the arrangements for the publication of the report, the statement in the Assembly, stakeholder engagement, etc, outlined earlier. **DOE**
- 3.8 Cllr Quigley informed the Chair that NILGA members were deeply concerned that the Assembly does not have the resources necessary for the programme and that unless they were made available from central government it could not go ahead. The Chair agreed that funding of the programme was a key issue. He said that he was committed to moving forward with reform and would be addressing the funding options with his colleagues in the Executive.



4. **AGENDA ITEM 12 – PLANNING AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (SLB 62/2009)**

- 4.1 The Chair introduced the paper which sought members' approval of the recommendations made by PA Consulting on the Local Government Reform programme planning and management. He then welcomed Karen O'Regan and Stephen McComb, from PA Consulting, and invited Karen to make the presentation.
- 4.2 A copy of the presentation, which was distributed to members, is attached. Key areas addressed included the:
- aims and objectives of the work that had been taken forward;
 - findings of the review of the current planning and management of the reform programme;
 - proposals for the future management of the programme including an assessment of the three key options (i.e. a "paper based option", "web page development" and an "off the shelf solution project/programme system"); and
 - key recommendation that "paper based option" was preferable in the immediate future, with the opportunity to assess the other two options in some 3 month's time.
- 4.3 In response to questions from members about the roll out of the programme:
- Ian Maye confirmed that there were sufficient Project Management Office resources available to support the introduction of the proposed project management framework (reports, templates and reporting cycle) over the next 3 month period and that the position



would then be reviewed;

- Karen confirmed that support for Transition Committees was a key part of the implementation arrangements; and
- the importance of carefully choreographing the timing of meetings, and associated reports, of the various bodies which form the implementation structures was stressed.

4.4 Against this background, members agreed the key recommendations and the reporting templates outlined in the paper.

4.5 Ian Maye confirmed that each Transition Committee would be visited and resources committed to supporting the staff running the programme in the early phases. This approach was welcomed.

5. **AGENDA ITEM 2 – MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING**

5.1 The Chair invited Ian Maye to take the lead in reviewing the action points arising from that last meeting.

Paragraph 3.8 – Engagement With Transition Committees on Area Plans

5.2 It was noted that a paper on the issue of engaging with Transition Committees on Area Plans would be taken at item 14 of the agenda.

Paragraph 7.6 - Organisational Review of LG Reform Programme Structures Report

5.3 It was noted that the draft report on the review of LG Programme Structures had been amended to take account of the points made at the last meeting and that the final version of the report would be considered at item 9 of the agenda.



Paragraphs 8.2 and 8.3 - Transition Committee Issues

- 5.4 It was confirmed that the Department had written to Transition Committees about the Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection. It was noted that the Department's letter, dated 2nd September 2009, drew particular attention to the fact that the Commission's advisory and oversight powers would apply with regard to staffing and human resource matters including the appointment of Change Managers.
- 5.5 At the last meeting, it had also been agreed that the Department would ensure that the work of PA Consulting would include the reporting of Transition Committee issues. It was noted, from discussion on the previous business item, that this had been addressed.

Paragraph 12.3 - Names of New Councils

- 5.6 It was noted that the Department had agreed to invite the Transition Committees to put forward views on the names of the new councils. It was reported that:
- the Minister wrote to each of the 11 voluntary Transition Committees, on 27 August, asking for their views on the names of the new local government districts with a closing date for response of 30 September;
 - only one voluntary Transition Committee (Cookstown, Dungannon & South Tyrone and Magherafelt) submitted an agreed response by the deadline. This had confirmed that it was content with the Commissioner's proposed name of Mid Ulster;



- several other Transition Committees had asked for an extension but, because of the tight timescale involved with the Local Government (Boundaries) Order, this could not be accommodated; and
- the Minister had, however, asked officials to consider whether or not the existing provisions of the 1972 Local Government Act in respect of changing the names of councils should be available to statutory Transition Committees and they were exploring this issue.

Accountability of the Local Government Reform Joint Forum

5.7 Ald Hatch said that members had some concerns about the accountability arrangements for the Local Government Reform Joint Forum (LGRJF). These included:

- that there were only two elected members on the Forum and that this may not always facilitate appropriate discussion on key human resource issues; and
- the view that the primary negotiations on some issues should be between local and central government directly.

5.8 In response, the Chair said that:

- the LGRJF comprises two groupings:
 - the Employers' Side (consisting of representatives of central and local government)
 - the Employees' Side (consisting of representatives of the relevant trade unions);
- Panel C had recommended that each group should agree its respective membership and the NIJC/JNC



(representing local government Employers) had nominated two elected members and two officials;

- in taking forward negotiations, individual groups take their negotiating remits from their respective sectors;
- business was conducted both at the Joint Forum and, where appropriate, separately between the various groups; and
- there was, therefore, direct negotiation between central and local government.

Ethical Standards and Code Of Conduct

5.9 Members also expressed concern about the lack of information on Ethical Standards proposals particularly the Code of Conduct.

5.10 In response, the Minister said:

- the Department had been reviewing the current voluntary Code of Conduct for Northern Ireland councillors, as part of a new Ethical Standards regime, and had researched mandatory Codes of Conduct in other jurisdictions to assist in the drafting of a new Code;
- the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill would include the ethical standards provisions, including provisions for a mandatory Code of Conduct.
- the Ethical Standards proposals require Executive agreement before the Code can be fully developed; and
- officials were, however, finalising an initial draft of the Code for consultation with interested parties and that this draft would be referred to Panel A, in the very near future, for consideration prior to full consultation.

DOE



Co-option and Establishment of a Remuneration Panel

- 5.11 Ald Hatch also enquired about progress on the issues of co-option and the establishment of a Remuneration Committee.
- 5.12 In response, Ian Maye said that:
- the Local Government (Finance) Bill, which was scheduled to come into operation on the autumn of 2010, would contain an enabling provision to allow the setting up of an independent remuneration panel for Northern Ireland;
 - this would enable the Panel to be in place and make recommendations on the level of allowances for councillors in the eleven new councils;
 - it was fully appreciated that the likely level of councillors' remuneration, post reorganisation, may be an important factor for members to take account of when deciding whether to avail of any severance scheme which may be introduced; and
 - the Minister was still in negotiations with Paul Goggins, Minister of State, about proposals to amend the law on co-option – which, of course, may affect the timing of the introduction of a severance scheme.
- 5.13 NILGA members pressed for further information on the issue of co-option as this is an extremely important party issue. In response, the Chair said that, in discussions, Minister Goggins had indicated his intention to bring forward proposals for changes to the legislation on co-option. The Chair indicated that Minister Goggins intended to launch a consultation in the next few weeks.



5.14 Members reiterated the importance of a co-option scheme and asked to be kept informed. **DOE**

6. **AGENDA ITEM 4 – POLICY DEVELOPMENT
PANEL B DASHBOARD OVERVIEW REPORT
(SLB 53/2009)**

6.1 The Chair of Panel B, Cllr Quigley, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- work was continuing on the preparation of guidance on the key characteristics of a local Customer Service Strategy;
- work was nearing completion on the prioritisation of Information Systems Strategy Projects; and
- the 3 month forward work programme included starting the development of guidance to support the Service Delivery and Performance Improvement framework and work on Procurement.

6.2 The Chair thanked Panel B members for their work on these issues.

7. **AGENDA ITEM 5 – POLICY DEVELOPMENT
PANEL C**

Item 5(a) – Dashboard Overview Report (SLB 54/2009)

7.1 The Chair of Panel C, Ald Hatch, introduced the paper and said that, since the last meeting, the Panel had focussed on the preparation of the two papers which would be taken as the next business items on the agenda (i.e. Pension Provision for NICS Staff and Arrangements for Striking the District Rates in 2011/12). He also confirmed that the 3 month forward work



programme of the Panel includes proposals on funding arrangements for transferring functions.

Agenda Item 5(b) – Pension Provision for NICS Staff Transferring to Local Government (SLB 54a/2009)

7.2 Ald Hatch introduced the paper and said that the Panel had considered 3 pension options:

- Option 1 - transferring NICS employees should join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS);
- Option 2 - transferring NICS employees remain within the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme Northern Ireland (PCSPS(NI)); and
- Option 3 – create a new analogous scheme.

7.3 He stressed that the Panel considered that there were no perfect solutions and had agreed that, given all the circumstances, Option 2 was preferable. Ald Hatch also mentioned that it was the Panel's view that this option should extend to all transferring staff who are members of the PCSPS (NI) as, in addition to the NICS staff transferring, there are a small number of staff employed in other bodies - e.g. Armagh County Museum and the Museums and Galleries (NI) - who are not NICS staff but are members of the PCSPS (NI).

7.4 Ald Hatch also mentioned that the Panel had identified the need for further work on the practical implementation of this option.

7.5 In subsequent discussion, members agreed:

- the recommendations in the paper; and
- that the Finance and Estates Implementation Group and the Transfer of Functions Working Groups – which support the Regional Transition Co-

**RTCG/LGR Joint
Forum**



ordinating Group (RTCG) – in conjunction with the LGR Joint Forum should give further consideration to practical implementation issues including on costs associated with the transfer and temporary transfer of NICS staff.

Agenda Item 5(c) – Arrangements for Striking District Rates for 2011/2012 (SLB 55/2009)

7.6 Ald Hatch introduced the paper and said that the key recommendation was that district rates for 2011/2012 be struck by statutory Transition Committees on an 11 council basis, not just from mid May 2011 when the new councils come into being but, for entire financial year. This would mean that for approximately 6 weeks (i.e. from 1 April 2011 until mid May 2011) ratepayers would pay the rate of the new 11 council structure rather than that of the existing 26 councils. Ald Hatch explained that this option, referred to as option 3, was one of a number considered. The Panel's view was that there is no perfect solution to striking district rates in a financial year when two different council structures will be in place but, taking account of all the relevant factors, had agreed that option 3 was the best way forward.

7.7 Ald Hatch also highlighted the other key recommendations in the paper including:

- ensuring that the appropriate legislation is put in place to give effect to this option and any supporting factors;
- tasking the RTCG with overseeing the implementation of the preferred option which should include the provision of appropriate operational guidance for Statutory Transition Committees and existing councils;
- approving the issue of Annex 2 of the paper to Transition Committees; and



- endorsing the Panel's view that further modelling should be undertaken by central government to assess the impact of reorganisation on individual councils within groupings.

7.8 In subsequent discussion members agreed:

- the recommendations in the paper including the legislative and implementation action points for the Department and RTCG set out above; **DOE/ RTCG**
- the need to ensure that the Transition Committees are made aware of how decisions on striking the rate were reached; and **DOE/NILGA**
- that DOE and DFP should take forward further work to examine the potential impact on ratepayers within amalgamating groups and explore the potential for measures to avoid significant rises, or falls, in the rates burden on individual households. **DOE**

7.9 Ald Hatch commented that there seemed to be an increasing level of disquiet at Transition Committees about central decisions. He, therefore, highlighted the need for good communication with Transition Committees to explain why the decisions had been taken.

8. **AGENDA ITEM 6 – UPDATE ON THE LGR EXECUTIVE SUB COMMITTEE (SLB 56/2009)**

8.1 The Chair said that he had chaired a meeting of the Local Government Reform Sub Committee meeting, on 15th September 2009, which had considered a number of reform issues which cut across Departments. He also confirmed that he had written to Cllr Mathews, on 29th September, providing a résumé of the key points the Sub



Committee had agreed and that a copy of that letter had been attached to the paper circulated for this meeting.

8.2 Ald Hatch said that the Chair's letter was very helpful. In the course of subsequent discussion two key points were addressed.

8.3 First, It was noted that the Minister's letter had referred to the Sub Committee's decision that the temporary staff transfer arrangements adopted in the health sector be adopted as the starting position for central government representatives in discussions and negotiations at the LGR Joint Forum on the transfer of NICS staff to local government. Members asked clarification on these arrangements. In response, Ian Maye explained that the arrangements, which applied in the case of DHSSPS staff transferring to the new Health and Social Care bodies on 1st April 2009, were:

- staff in all grades could choose to temporary transfer for a period of up to three years from the date of transfer;
- officers who opt for the temporary transfer arrangements are eligible for redeployment to suitable posts within the NICS from their date of transfer within the three year period (this is done in consultation with the new employer, the employing NICS Department, the individual and NICS Workforce Planning);
- staff on temporary transfer are given the opportunity to formally review their position after 12 months service and again at 24 months; and
- where staff cannot be accommodated back in the NICS within the period of temporary transfer (a maximum of three years) they would permanently transfer into the new



health bodies with the protection of the TUPE regulations.

8.4 Ald Hatch said that Panel C had recommended full transfer and that the work on pensions was undertaken based on the assumption that this would be applied. There was discussion about the use of temporary transfer arrangements and related technical issues which may arise such as pension on cost and equal pay implications. As mentioned in paragraph 7.5, it was agreed that these issues should be examined in more detail by the RTCG Working Groups in conjunction with the LGR Joint Forum.

RTCG/LGR Joint Forum

8.5 Second, Ald Hatch said that he had recently written to Minister Ritchie requesting that she reconsider the proposal to transfer Travellers' Transfer Sites to local government. David Ferguson confirmed that the proposed transfer was being reconsidered in the light of the points made by Ald Hatch and the Minister would announce her decision before presenting the associated legislation, the Draft Urban Regeneration and Housing Bill, to the Executive.

9. **AGENDA ITEM 8 – REGIONAL TRANSITION CO-ORDINATING GROUP UPDATE (SLB 58/2009)**

9.1 The Chair of the Group, Ian Maye, introduced the paper and provided an update on its work, that of the LGR Joint Forum and Transition Committees. Key points made, in relation to RTCG, included:

- since the last SLB meeting the RTCG had met on two occasions (3rd September and 8th October);
- a key focus of these meetings was the Assessment of Options for Local Government Service Delivery Phase 2



project for which RTCG is the Steering Group;

- the Group had made a very valuable contribution to the PwC report which was considered earlier; and
- the Group was taking forward the implementation of the recommendations in the third Finance and Estates Working Group report (agreed at the last SLB meeting) and had agreed a local communications strategy, designed to assist Transition Committees at local level, which was within the overall communications strategy agreed by SLB.

9.2 Ian said that the Joint Forum:

- had recently finalised and agreed a Vacancy Control System for councils;
- had reached agreement on the final arrangements for local consultation and negotiation arrangements for Transition Committees;
- was working on Severance Arrangements for staff;
- was also considering the arrangements for filling posts in the new organisations; and
- would now press ahead with negotiations on the issue of the temporary transfer arrangements for NICS staff, given the remit agreed by the Executive Sub Committee mentioned earlier, initially within the Employers' Group.

9.3 Ian also mentioned that the Minister had visited and addressed 3 Transition Committees (i.e. Causeway Coast and Glens TC on 24th September; Antrim and Newtownabbey TC on 13th October; and Castlereagh and Lisburn TC on 15th October). He said that visits to the other



8 would take place between now and the end of the year.

- 9.4 Ald Hatch said that this update was very helpful and thanked the Minister for finding the time in his busy schedule to fit in the programme of Transition Committee visits. He also enquired about when the next Transition Committees seminar would be held, as one had been agreed for the autumn. He reiterated the pressing need to ensure good communication with the Transition Committees. In response, Ian Maye said that he thought that the next seminar would be held around mid November but that he would confirm this.

Joint Secretariat

10. **AGENDA ITEM 9 – REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM PROGRAMME STRUCTURES – FINAL REPORT (SLB 59/2009)**

- 10.1 The Chair said that the paper invited members to:
- note the final report on the Review of LGR Programme Structures;
 - note the proposal that the existing Chairs of the 3 Panels remain in post; and
 - agree arrangements for a small top up to the new Regional Transition Committee (RTC), if it is required, to ensure political balance.
- 10.2 The Chair said that he recalled that the draft report had been agreed at the last meeting subject to a number of minor textual amendments being incorporated. He was aware that these had been included and accordingly he understood why the report had been presented for members to note. The Chair also said that he agreed that it was sensible that, in order to avoid disruption, the existing Chairs of the Panels



should not change. However, he expressed concern that there were no firm proposals in the paper on the detail of how the proposed top up of the membership of RTC could be achieved but that he noted that NILGA had promised to develop a further paper on the issue.

- 10.3 Ald Hatch confirmed that the paper on this issue was being prepared and would soon be presented for the consideration of members. **NILGA**

11. **AGENDA ITEM 10 – LG PRIMARY LEGISLATION PROGRAMME UPDATE (SLB 60/2009)**

- 11.1 Jim Stewart (LG Policy Division) introduced the paper and highlighted the following key points:
- the Committee Stage on the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which commenced in September, was due to end the day prior to this meeting (i.e. Thursday 15 October). It was intended that the legislation would become operational before the end of the year;
 - consultation on the Local Government (Finance) Bill was due to end on 31 October and, at present, the Department had received 8 comments. The Bill was scheduled for introduction to the Assembly in January 2010;
 - the Department is still awaiting Executive agreement to commence policy consultation on the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill. That agreement would be needed fairly soon if the Bill was to be introduced to the Assembly by May 2010;
 - consultation on the Department's Planning Reform Bill ended on 2 October. Responses to that consultation were being



analysed and it was intended that final policy decisions be made to enable proposals to be put forward for Executive consideration in early 2010;

- as noted earlier Minister Ritchie was giving further consideration to the issue of Travellers' Transit Sites; and
- in response to a request from the Executive Sub Committee, the Department for Regional Development (DRD) was considering how it might progress its Local Government (Transfer of Roads Functions) Bill which would transfer the agreed list of Roads Service functions to local government. The 2011 timescale for such a transfer was considered to be extremely challenging.

11.2 Geoff Allister confirmed that it had now been agreed that DRD officials would take forward policy development work on "on street parking" in parallel with the drafting of the Local Government (Transfer of Roads Functions) Bill. Consequently, the revised timetable for the Bill would achieve the 2011 timescale. Geoff said that he would provide members with a copy of the revised timetable.

DRD

11.3 Ald Hatch thanked officials for the update.

12. **ADENDA ITEM 11 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK (SLB 61/2009)**

12.1 Wesley Shannon presented the paper which highlighted the key policy and strategic priorities in the reform programme. Key points made included:

- the paper was an updated version of the framework presented at the last SLB meeting;



- the key changes were highlighted in Annex A of the paper; and
- the framework would be superseded by the new reporting templates and programme plan presented at agenda item 12 of the meeting.

13. **AGENDA ITEM 13 – PLANNING REFORM UPDATE (SLB 63/2009)**

13.1 Cynthia Smith introduced the paper which provided details of the current position on the programme of reform of the planning system in Northern Ireland. Key points made included:

- the 12 week period of public consultation on the “Reform of the Planning System in NI: Your chance to influence change” consultation paper had closed on 2nd October;
- the consultation process had included a series of 11 stakeholder events, one in each of the new council areas, during September;
- there had been a total of 480 attendees at the events representing a wide range of sectors with councillors / council representatives being the best represented of all the sectors;
- some 261 formal written responses to the consultation had been received, these were currently being logged and processed and would be published on the Department’s website;
- summarising the key the key themes arising from the consultation set out in the paper;



- officials were undertaking an intense period of consultation response analysis and policy finalisation;
- officials had attended the Environment Committee on 8th October to provide members with an early read out from the consultation process;
- a more detailed summary of the consultation would be presented to the Committee in early November. This would enable the Committee to provide its formal feedback on the consultation later in November;
- the formal recommendations on the final policy positions would be presented to the Minister in early December;
- in order to meet the legislative timetable, the final policy position needed to be agreed by the Executive by the end of January;
- this would allow legislative drafting before the agreement of the Executive is sought to introduce the draft Bill to the Assembly in May/June 2010.

13.3 Cynthia said that she would continue to keep SLB members informed of progress throughout this process. Ald Hatch thanked Cynthia for the direct engagement with local government which had been extremely helpful.

14. **AGENDA ITEM 14 – PREPARATORY FORWARD PLANNING WORK IN ASSOCIATION WITH TRANSITION COMMITTEES (SLB 64/2009)**

14.1 Cynthia Smith said that, in order to facilitate the transfer of planning powers to local government



in May 2011, Planning Service had been giving consideration to the work which could be taken forward with Transition Committees/Management Teams in advance of this date, to ensure a smooth transition from the old to the new local development system. She said that as well as moving the development plan programme forward in advance of the transfer, other advantages of Planning Service and councils working in this way would include:

- capacity building for all the key players (e.g. councillors, existing council and Planning Service staff);
- building effective working relationships for existing development plan staff with future council colleagues;
- the early integration of the new development plan with the emerging community planning process; and
- the early opportunity to assess the initial stages of the new development plan system and address any resulting problems.

14.2 Against this background, Cynthia said that the paper circulated to members set out proposals on the way forward with particular reference to the work to be undertaken with the Transition Committees / Management Teams and the new council areas to be selected to undertake pilot preparatory studies for local development plans.

14.3 Jim Thompson (Planning Service) outlined the proposals in the paper. It was noted that the key proposals were that:

- work on preparatory forward planning to inform development plans with Transition Committees should be at two levels:
 - initial engagement and monitoring work in all council areas;



- preparation of 3 pilot preparatory plan studies for 3 council areas (with potential for a fourth in the next business year);
- the scope of pilot preparatory plan studies would involve preparation of a draft programme management scheme, a series of position papers, draft statement of community involvement, developing preliminary aims and objectives for the local development plan and ensuring integration between the local development plan and community planning;
- in order to progress pilot preparatory plan studies, it would be important to establish appropriate management structures between Transition Committee Management Teams and Planning Service such as a pilot study steering group; and
- these pilot preparatory plan studies be undertaken for the 3 new council areas of Omagh/Fermanagh, Derry/Strabane and Antrim/Newtownabbey.

14.4 In subsequent discussion:

- Jim confirmed that the following key factors were taken into account in selecting the three pilot studies:
 - the status (notional end date) of current development plans;
 - the need to prioritise those plans which were already well beyond their end dates;
 - the need to ensure the continued provision of an adequate supply of land to meet housing and other development needs;



- the need to carry forward work already completed on stalled plans;

- Ald Hatch indicated that NILGA would welcome consideration being given to the allocation of some resource to support members at a policy level. He stated that NILGA would soon write to Planning Service to make this formal request; **NILGA**
- Cynthia agreed to consider this request;
- Cynthia also agreed to David Ferguson's proposal that relevant officials meet to discuss Planning Service's involvement in DSD's master planning work, looking ahead to RPA implementation; **DOE Planning Service**
- It was also agreed that further consideration would be given to the proposal to establish a Pilot Study Steering Group; and **DOE Planning Service/NILGA**
- members confirmed that they were content to agree the recommendations in the paper.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

15.1 No further business items were identified.

16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

16.1 It was noted that the:

- next meeting would be held on 18 November 2009;
- the subsequent meeting, which would be mainly devoted to the PwC report, would be held on 9 December; and



- both meetings would start at 10:00 am in Belfast City Council's Learning and Development Centre.

(Members will wish to note that the Chair and Vice Chair subsequently agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 18 November)