

Joint Secretariat Progress Paper

NILGA eGovernment Working Group Update

The last meeting of the NILGA eGovernment Working Group took place on the 1st November. The group continues to progress in line with the report made to Strand B for the previous meeting.

1. Presentation

The meeting had a presentation from the Best Practice Group Ltd who provide advice and associated services to councils and other organisations involved in IT procurement. While not endorsing any individual company the Working Group found the advice from the presenter, Richard Kerr, very valuable and would encourage the Finance and IT Officers group, and the Strand B sub-group to be aware of the expertise of companies like the Best Practice Group. A copy of Mr Kerr's presentation was circulated to Strand B group members with the papers for this meeting.

2. Funding

The eGovernment Business case has been approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel to cover the costs of the Mobile Working pilot programmes, the Local Citizen View project and the IS Strategy. There is also funding allocated for an independent evaluation of the eGovernment Working Group programmes.

3. Pilot Programmes

The programmes in Mobile Working and Local Citizen View are making steady progress and identifying a number of valuable lessons for the future.

4. IS Strategy

The terms of reference for the IS Strategy are going through final revision with a view towards being issued to the market for bids in the New Year.

Wider eGovernment Issues

1 Common ICT Infrastructure

1.1 Network Infrastructure

Following a meeting with NIRAN (NI Regional Area Networking -high speed network infrastructure) and IT Officers Group representative on 10 October 2007, it was agreed that IT Officers would seek to identify some suitable pilot Councils. We would then approach NIRAN for costs for pilots and look at potential pilot implementation. Further meeting due on 27 November 2007 NIRAN are responsible for the Northern Ireland use of the JANET high speed internet network used extensively in further and higher education and research across the UK.

1.2 Microsoft

It was reported at the last meeting that the Enterprise Agreement negotiated nationally was the best available but there was some concern that it was not being fully utilized in Northern Ireland. North Down Borough Council are liaising with Microsoft on the potential for pilot exploration of best practice applications.

Microsoft held an event recently on Unified Communications –this is a product which joins up email, msn, VOIP and video conferencing services. A further meeting is planned with Microsoft on 19 November 2007 to start to explore potential for Local Government, and possibly an information event.

1.3 Local Authority Customer Relationship Management (LA CRM)

Local Government Reform Division, in partnership with councils and other organisations are running a series of Modernisation Seminars flowing from the ongoing work of the two sub-groups of the Strategic Leadership Board. The first of these is hosted by Antrim Borough Council on Friday 30th November. Two seminars will be run on that day starting at 9.30am or 1.15pm and members have been invited. This first seminar is on: Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Systems and the link to Improved Customer Service

The seminar includes speakers from Local Government in Northern Ireland who will share their experiences of introducing improved systems and processes with particular emphasis on the introduction of a CRM system to improve customer service. Speakers include: Catherine McFarland, Director of Corporate Services, Antrim Borough Council; Liz Johnston, Assistant Director of Administration, Antrim Borough Council and Alan Neilly, Assistant Manager IS, Belfast City Council.

A further event has been organised with APSE on “Concentrating on Customer Services”. This is scheduled for 13 December 2007 at the Ramada Hotel, Belfast.

2 Procurement

2.1 Procurement professionals group

Lorcan O’Kane and Damien Dean of Local Gov Reform are conducting an initial review of current procurement arrangements and systems used in Local Government looking at the potential for a more common approach to purchasing to maximise Local Government buying power and savings. Savings of 20-30% are generally recognized as possible in this area. A meeting with the Local Government procurement professionals group is scheduled for 8 November 2007 to look at relevant issues and Centre of Excellence possibilities.

2.2 E-Procurement

The potential for an event in January 2007 on the e-procurement system used in Newry and Mourne is being explored.

3 EU/ERNACT

There are ongoing discussions on the potential for Interreg funding proposals and other applications through ERNACT. Of particular significance are the discussions that are continuing on the potential for a major project (and resourcing) on multi-channel service delivery. Further meeting scheduled for 7 November 2007 with ERNACT, Fujitsu and Derry and Donegal Councils.

4 NI Direct

The Delivery and Innovation Division of the Department of Finance and Personnel have agreed to a meeting to discuss Local Government involvement in NI Direct. This will take place on 20 November 2007 at 11am. Membership of the Local Government delegation is to be finalised.

5 Shared Services Consultancy Terms of Reference

This is a complex area and more time is required to produce the best possible terms of reference. Members will be circulated with the draft terms of reference and these can be discussed at the next Strand B meeting or be cleared by correspondence within the Sub-Group. There will need to be consultation with all Councils and relevant professional groups but these will hopefully be ready for circulation in the New Year.

6 LGCSB

Joe Nugent, a Director of the LGCSB, was a guest speaker at the SOLACE Northern Ireland conference and other links are being explored with LGCSB.

John Price

Alan Hanna

7 November 2007