



Key Outcomes from Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) 14 August 2009

1. Welcome

Personnel Changes

- Minister Poots confirmed that Leo O'Reilly has taken over as the Permanent Secretary of DOE and Ian Maye has been promoted to Deputy Secretary with responsibility for Local Government, Planning and Environmental Policy.
- The Minister also acknowledged that this was Cllr Helen Quigley's last meeting as Vice Chair of SLB as her presidency of NILGA will come to an end before the next SLB meeting. The Minister thanked her for her work.

Minutes of Meetings

- Minutes from the previous SLB meeting on 3 July 2009 were approved. The minutes are now available on the Local Government section of the DOE website www.doeni.gov.uk and the NILGA website www.nilga.org.

2. PDP Updates

Policy Development Panel (PDP A) - Governance, Central/Local Relations and Community Planning Update

- Panel A confirmed that work is progressing on the development of a programme of activities to support the introduction of community planning. The programme will be presented at the next SLB meeting.
- The Panel advised that it has prioritised the tasks remaining to be completed in relation to the development of guidance for the governance arrangements for the new councils and central/local government relations.

Remuneration – Publication of Local Government Officers' Remuneration

- Panel A also presented a paper outlining proposals in relation to the future reporting of senior officers' remuneration in the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts and provided a potential template to assist with the presentation of this information. Whilst this is not a local government reform specific issue, Panel A was regarded as best placed to consider this due to their earlier consideration of transparency in the operation of councils.
- The paper recommended that details of councils' Chief Executives and Directors remuneration should be published in order to aid the transparency of the operation of councils.
- The paper was approved by the SLB but it was noted that the method of presenting the information needs to be set in context.

Policy Development Panel B Update - Service Delivery

- Panel B confirmed that work is ongoing to provide councils with guidelines to assist them in the development of their Customer Service Strategies. This will inform the work of Transition Committees.
- It was relayed that the NILGA e-government working group is prioritising projects to be taken forward within the IS Strategy, to ensure that these are included in the PwC business case. The Panel also confirmed that it is identifying projects that must be delivered prior to transition.
- The Panel advised that a project steering group has been established to develop a Procurement Strategy for the sector. Terms of Reference have been agreed and it is proposed that an external consultant will undertake the development work.

Local Government Network Infrastructure – Delivery Options

- Panel B presented a paper outlining the options for the development and delivery of a network infrastructure to support the delivery of effective citizen-centred services by councils.
- The Panel relayed that it supports, in principle, the recommendation that "On Boarding" to the Network NI infrastructure provides the most viable, efficient and cost-effective option for the provision of a secure, dependable local government network infrastructure.

- However, the Panel expressed their opinion that there are some outstanding policy issues that still required their input in relation to agreement on the specification of the network requirements and identification of associated costs. It was agreed that the Panel would consider these issues with input from IT officers.
- It was also agreed that when the remaining policy issues have been addressed, implementation would be taken forward by the Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG) in consultation with NILGA.

Policy Development Panel C Update - Structural Reform Issues

- Panel C confirmed that at their next meeting they will consider the options for striking rates for the new councils for financial year 2011/2012 and the identification of administrative costs likely to be incurred through pension arrangements for Civil Servants transferring into new councils.

Recommendation of the Finance and Estates Working Group Third Implementation paper

- The SLB agreed this paper which had key recommendations that highlighted the need for further work in relation to:
 - The Chief Financial Officer of the new council signing off the statement of accounts for their previous council. (This will require legislation to be put in place by DOE).
 - Any guidance prepared in relation to striking rates or preparation of accounts for a new council's first year - this needs to give consideration to the needs of councils affected by boundary changes.

3. Implementation Update

Organisational Review of Local Government Reform Programme Structures – Draft Report

- A summary of the report recommendations can be seen at Appendix A at the end of this document.
- SLB members confirmed that they are broadly content with the draft report subject to the inclusion of a number of minor amendments and further consideration being given to

political representation on the Regional Transition Committee (RTC) and the rotation of chairs on PDP's. NILGA agreed to take the lead in addressing these issues.

- The draft report will be re-cast to take account of the amendments and the outcome of deliberations on the issues identified with the final version presented at the next SLB meeting.

Regional Transition Co-ordinating Group (RTCG) Update

- A summary was provided of the issues discussed at the last RTCG meeting. This included that RTCG has accepted the role of Steering Group for phase two of the Service Delivery consultancy assignment being taken forward by PwC. This will provide a detailed economic appraisal of the shortlisted options provided in the phase 1 report.

Local Government Reform Joint Forum (LGRJF) Update

- SLB members were informed that the LGRJF have had two meetings, 22 July and 5 August.
- The Joint Forum has identified key work priorities such as, the need for an updated vacancy control system and a model protocol for local negotiations between Trade Unions and local government employers, arrangements for filling senior posts in the new councils, and staff severance arrangements.
- It was also relayed that communications bulletins are issued after these meetings. These are available at the following link <http://www.lgsc.org.uk/new-initiatives/local-government-reform-joint-forum-/joint-communication-bulletins/>

Transition Committees Update

- It was agreed that the DOE would ensure that all Transition Committees are aware that the Local Government Staff Commission advisory and oversight provisions will apply to Transition Committees with regard to staffing and relevant human resource matters including the appointment of Change Managers.
- It was relayed that feedback from Transition Committees, Transition Management Teams, Change Managers and transferring functions on the 'Making Transition Work' seminar which was held on the 6 July was very positive. A further seminar is being organised for the autumn and details will follow from NILGA and DOE.
- It was agreed that Transition Committees should continue to provide minutes of their meetings.

- It was established that the PA Consulting report on programme implementation should highlight any key areas for Transition Committees attention and action.

Local Government Reform Implementation Framework

- The updated framework was presented to SLB. This detailed the current position on the programme management work being taken forward by PA Consulting. Meetings have taken place with various stakeholders to develop the overall programme plan and design the Programme Management Office framework.
- DOE confirmed that PA Consulting should be in a position to deliver their report on the programme plan and the specification for the programme management and reporting system to the Department by the end of August 2009. This was welcomed, as it is crucial for moving into the next stage of the reform programme.
- It was also relayed that the SLB/RPA Working Group are to consider the PA Consulting report before the next SLB meeting on the 7 October.

Minister Goggins and Co-option

- It was confirmed that a meeting between Minister Poots and Minister Goggins has been arranged for the 1 September to discuss co-option.
- It was explained that if an appropriate severance scheme can be agreed, this will allow new councillors the opportunity to participate in the Statutory Transition Committees.
- Summaries of the responses to the consultations on severance arrangements and the Statutory Transition Committees are available on the DOE website at:
http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/local_government/local_government_consultations/archived-consultations.htm

4. Funding Update

Assessment of Options for Local Government Service Delivery Project – Phase 2

- DOE conveyed that the final phase one report issued on 5 August has now been sent to SLB members.

- It was relayed that PwC are moving forward with the phase 2 economic appraisals and RTCG, as the Steering Group, is reviewing progress on an ongoing basis.
- It was confirmed that the draft phase two report is due to be completed by 31 August. Following a one day discussion and feedback session with PwC, the final phase 2 report will be presented by the 14 September.

Funding for Local Government Reform

- Local government confirmed that SOLACE and NILGA have issued a joint letter to the Permanent Secretaries of DFP and DOE requesting an urgent meeting to discuss the appropriate funding mechanism for the Local Government Reform Programme.

5. Legislation Update

Local Government Primary Legislation Programme

- DOE advised that three Bills are being taken forward in the Assembly's legislative programme. A summary of these is at the end of this document in Appendix B.
- On the Reorganisation Bill, NILGA raised concerns regarding the lack of engagement with Local Government over the ethical standards regime and Code of Conduct.
- The Minister confirmed that ethical standards proposals require Executive agreement before a Code can be developed and these proposals will be considered by the Executive in the autumn. When agreed, a draft code will be prepared for consultation and will be referred to PDP A for comment prior to full consultation.

Boundaries Commission Report

- The Minister confirmed that he and officials are currently considering the Boundary Commissioner's final recommendations report.
- Following this he will decide if any modifications are required before taking the report to the Executive.
- Following Executive agreement, the report will be laid before the Assembly in the autumn with or without modification.
- The Minister confirmed that he is keen to hear the views of Transition Committees in terms of the new council names.

- It was agreed that DOE will write to each Transition Committee urgently asking them to put forward their views as the Minister will be bringing this before the Assembly in the autumn.

Other Legislation

- The Minister took the opportunity to inform members that he would welcome their views on bringing forward 'High Hedges' and 'Clean Neighbourhoods' legislation.
- NILGA confirmed that they would support this as the current lack of legislation on these matters has a significant impact on citizens and on society, and they have been lobbying for this for some time.

6. Planning Service Update

Development Plans

- Following some debate, the Minister agreed that Planning Service should begin to take forward preparatory work on development plans even though the consultation on planning reform is ongoing.
- It was agreed that Planning Service should engage with Transition Committees on piloting two or three areas.
- NILGA, SOLACE and Planning Service held a joint seminar on the 26 August on the planning reform consultation; as well as informing the local government response to the reform proposal; this was a capacity building opportunity for members and officers prior to the transfer of planning in 2011.

7. Any Other Business

Date of Next Meetings

The next two SLB meetings will be held on Wednesday 7 October and Wednesday 18 November at 10am.

Please note: The information above may be subject to change. The formal minutes will represent the information in finalised format.

Joint Secretariat

Appendix A

**REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM PROGRAMME STRUCTURES - DRAFT
REPORT SUMMARY**

- **SLB:** to continue as it currently operates.
- **Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG):** to be dissolved and two new groups established - Regional Transition Committee (RTC) and Regional Transition Management Team (RTMT).
- **RTC:** to be accountable to SLB and comprised of an elected member from each Statutory Transition Committee and five political representatives on the SLB, chaired by the vice-chair of the SLB. Task and Finish Working Groups (TFWG's) to be established to support the work of RTC on specific projects.
- **RTMT:** to be comprised of an officer from each of the Transition Management Teams, the Chief Executive of the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) and Chief Executive and two directors from NILGA. This group would meet directly after the RTC meeting to implement the agreed actions.
- **PDP's:** to end when they have completed any remaining policy development work.
- **Timeframe:** It is proposed that these new organisational structures be introduced when the Transition Committees become statutory in January 2010.

Appendix B

LEGISLATION PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

Key provisions in the Bill relate to:

- Local government contracts
- Vesting land for waste management purposes
- Severance arrangements
- Statutory Transition Committees
- Financial controls

Progress

Consultation on the proposals is complete and the Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 22 June 2009 and completed its Second Stage on 30 June. The Committee Stage of the Bill will commence when the Assembly returns from recess in September.

Local Government (Finance) Bill

Key provisions in the Bill relate to:

- Local government finance arrangements
- Councillors' remuneration

Progress

Consultation on the proposals commenced on 24 July with a closing date for responses of 31 October 2009. The Bill is scheduled for introduction to the Assembly in January 2010.

Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill

Key provisions in the Bill relate to:

- Establishing the new councils and bringing the old councils to an end
- New governance arrangements
- A new ethical standards regime
- A new Code of Conduct

- Provision for central/local governance relations
- The introduction of community planning and well being
- The introduction of a new service delivery and performance improvement system
- Transition arrangements from the old to the new council structures

Progress

Subject to Executive agreement, it is anticipated that the Bill will be introduced to the Assembly by May 2010.