



Strategic Leadership Board Meeting, 8th January 2008 Briefing Paper

Introduction

The SLB held its first meeting of the New Year on the 8th January in Goodwood House, Belfast. The issues discussed were; Composition of the SLB, Progress Report on the Review of Local Government RPA Decisions, SLB Modernisation Subgroup Report and Progress on the NILGA Business Case. NILGA members also welcomed the formal letter of offer received from the department for the approval of the NILGA business case resulting in a £2 million investment. The papers for the meeting can be viewed on the DoE website.

Present at the meeting: DOE The Minister Arlene Foster MLA (Chair), Ian Maye, Andrew Crawford, Paul Simpson, John Price, Grace McGuinness and John McAreavey **Local Government** Ald Arnold Hatch, (Vice Chair); Cllr Mervyn Storey MLA, Cllr Joanne Bunting, Cllr Alex Maskey MLA, Cllr John O'Kane, Cllr Tony Hill, Cllr John Matthews, Cllr Dermot Curran, Ald Sam Gardiner, Cllr Sean Begley, Ashley Boreland, Peter McNaney, Heather Moorhead, Andrea Reid and Alan Hanna. **Apologies:** John McGrillen

Composition of the SLB

The issue of the political composition of the SLB was raised in previous SLB meetings. The Minister stated that she would make a decision on this for 8th January meeting. She has recommended that the SLB should be composed of the NILGA office bearers and one other nominated member from each political party, making ten political party representatives. The Minister has agreed to forward a paper outlining her thoughts to NILGA in the next few days; this will be circulated to parties for comment.

Progress Report on the Review of Local Government RPA Decisions

The Minister praised NILGA, SOLACE and Councils for their very substantive responses to the Emerging Findings Paper and reported that she has used this work in her series of bilateral meetings with ministerial colleagues. She highlighted that Ministers still remain reluctant to transfer more functions to local government. For example, in relation to Libraries and the Youth Service, both Ministers are concerned that the strategic nature of each could be lost. The Minister confirmed that the decision on the package of functions would be made and brought to the Executive on 31st January. Heather Moorhead reported that NILGA have also been conducting a series of ministerial meetings, which have been positive and have facilitated substantive discussion. NILGA have met with Ministers Robinson, Dodds and Ritchie and meetings with Ministers Murphy and Poots have been arranged for the next few days. The Minister highlighted the importance of meeting the remaining ministers as soon as possible due to the timeline for decisions.

SLB Modernisation Subgroup Report

Dr Andrea Reid, NILGA, and John Price, DoE, presented an update on the work of both SLB modernisation subgroups. The major priorities for each group were outlined. Within Strand A these have been identified as; an Assessment of Current Capacity, Development of a Communication Strategy, Elected Members Development Programme, Development of a Customer Service Strategy, Change Management/Transition Strategy and Human Resource Strategy. The Strand B priorities have been identified as; NI Direct, Procurement, IS Strategy and eGovernment Projects to include Local Authority Customer Relationship Management, Shared Services, Network Infrastructure and Finance and Payroll Systems. In the discussion that followed it was agreed to keep an open flow of communication from both subgroups to inform both SLB members and the wider sector of the work that is being done. The Minister agreed that the minutes from the subgroup meetings should be sent to all SLB members for information and that it is necessary to provide Councils, both elected members and officers, regular updates on this work. In addition, members agreed that it would be useful to hold a workshop with Council Chief Executives to examine ways of engaging the involvement of the Councils in this intensive work programme. In relation to the future role of the subgroups and Policy Development Panels (PDP's), the Minister stated that she will bring forward a paper to the next meeting explaining the development of the five PDP's.

Other Issues

NILGA Business Case – NILGA have received the formal letter of offer from the department, which involves £2 million investment over a three year period to build capacity within the organisation during the programme of local government modernisation. NILGA are currently recruiting two director posts, Director of Policy and Strategy and Director of Improvement. The other new posts will be advertised shortly.

Communication Strategy – Heather Moorhead and Máire Killoran are meeting senior DoE officials to discuss the development of a robust communication strategy for use within the sector and with all stakeholders.