

DOE Local Government Reform Circular

Key messages – 24 May 2012

General information

- The reform of local government will see the reduction of 26 councils to 11. The process will be completed by April 2015.
- The 11 new councils will be stronger, more efficient and will deliver more effective services. They will be citizen focused, responding to the needs, aspirations and concerns of their communities. In partnership with others, they will guide the future development of their areas.
- The complete package of functions to transfer from central to local government is being reviewed. Those currently on the table include planning, regeneration, local economic development and tourism, the public realm functions of roads and local sports facilities.
- It is also proposed that councils will have a new statutory duty of Community Planning and a new Power of well-being.
- Environment Minister Alex Attwood is pressing Executive Ministers to ensure that local government receives as strong a package as possible with which to shape their areas and communities for the next generation and beyond.
- Understandably, there may be cynicism as to whether reform will go ahead this time. It is, however, a priority in the Programme for Government 2011-15 and the Executive is committed to making it happen.

Latest news

- Draft legislation to finalise the boundaries of the new 11 council districts was approved by the Environment Committee on 17 May 2012. It will now be debated in the Assembly in June 2012.
- A structure has been put in place to drive forward the reform programme. This includes a number of committees with political representation, senior officers and officials from central and local government, and NILGA. An electronic version of this structure is attached.
- Task and finish working groups are also being set up to deal with specific aspects including finance, HR, transfer of functions, legislation, communications, pilot programmes and community planning.

Addressing Human Resource issues

There are many important resource issues to be addressed. Two groups - the Local Government Reform Joint Forum and a Human Resources Working Group; have been set up to identify and address all of these issues. Between them they have representation from central government, local government, Trade Unions, NILGA, NILGOSC and the Local Government Staff Commission.

We'll keep you regularly updated of progress and news in this area.

Coming soon

- Latest on the new council boundaries.
- Update on functions to transfer to local government.
- The DOE website is currently being refreshed and will shortly have information on the current reform programme and a section of Frequently Asked Questions.

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