

PARTNERSHIP PANEL MEETING – 12TH OCTOBER 2016

KEY OUTCOMES

The first Partnership Panel Meeting under the Chairmanship of Minister Paul Givan MLA, Communities Minister, took place on 12th October 2016. ***This Outcomes Note*** is provided by NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, to provide immediate update to member councils and local government's representatives.

Draft Minutes of the Panel will be presented in advance of the next Panel meeting scheduled for 31st January 2017.

6 Ministers were in attendance at the 12th October 2016:

Minister for Communities (Chair) – Paul Givan MLA; Minister of Justice – Claire Sugden MLA; Junior Minister – Megan Fearon MLA; Junior Minister – Alastair Ross MLA; Minister of Finance – Máirtín Ó Muilleoir MLA; Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs – Michelle McIlveen MLA. Apologies were received for all other Ministers.

The following Local Government members were present:

Cllr Hazel Gamble, Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Ald John Finlay, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Cllr Maoliosa McHugh, Derry and Strabane District Council, Cllr Rosemarie Shields, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Ald William Leathem, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Cllr Dermot Curran, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and NILGA Office Bearer, Cllr Richard Smart, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Cllr Sean McPeake, NILGA President, Ald Freda Donnelly NILGA Office Bearer, Ald Alan McDowell, NILGA Office Bearer.

With *apologies* received for Cllr Gerardine Mulvenna, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Cllr John Kyle, Belfast City Council, Ald Mark Cosgrove, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Cllr Malachy Quinn, Mid Ulster District Council, Ald Arnold Hatch, NILGA Office Bearer.

Council Chief Executives in attendance were: Dr Theresa Donaldson, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; Brendan Hegarty, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; Anthony Tohill, Mid Ulster District Council; Andrea McCooke (on behalf of Jacqui Dixon), Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council; Kevin Heaney (on behalf of Suzanne Wylie), Belfast City Council; Eamonn Kelly (on behalf of Roger Wilson), Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

CEO *apologies* were received from Anne Donaghy, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Stephen Reid, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Liam Hannaway, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council; John Kelpie, Derry and Strabane District Council; David Jackson, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

KEY OUTCOMES & ACTIONS from the Panel Meeting

- 1. New terms of reference agreed:** Local Government has welcomed the changes in the Terms of Reference for the Partnership Panel, essentially enabling the Panel to get work done between meetings, develop resources to bring this work together, and be aligned to the new government departments and the Programme for Government framework.
- 2. Investment in infrastructure and public services, central – local:** NILGA's proposal to draw together key investment priorities across the 11 council areas, which may be suitable for financial support through partnership between different tiers of government, and other methods, was AGREED, following an overview of the all council / Finance Minister meeting of 22nd September 2016.
- 3. Task & Finish Actions:** Two pieces of work developing (i) the impact of transferred functions together with the potential of additional transfers and (ii) an interdepartmental / local government integration piece on tackling Rural disadvantage (aligned to the PfG, with the DAERA Minister considered as a key advocate for rural sustainability), were AGREED. .
- 4. Delivery of a Work Plan for the Panel 2017 & 2018:** Following a Local Government proposal, the Joint Secretariat will finalise a draft for consultation with panel members, departments & councils of an annually reviewed work plan, aligned to the Programme for Government and the Programme for Local Government, building on an existing strategic, high level piece, with a view to presenting this at the 31st January 2017 Panel Meeting.
- 5. Crucial Social Strategy Outlined:** the Minister for Communities provided an update on the Social Strategy which is currently being drafted. The Strategy will provide a vision and a plan to create, through partnership and in the long term, of a society free from poverty and social exclusion. Local Government members considered this to be a vital Strategy and as such looked forward to giving the impending consultation serious consideration, recognising that key strategies such as this may require time beyond the scheduled 8 weeks response period to analyse and respond to diligently.

NILGA is seeking further development of the response time issue with the NI Executive.

6. Rural Development Programme – Local Action Groups Investing across NI:

The Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs – Michelle McIlveen MLA, provided an update on the Local Action Groups (LAGs) and the Rural Tourism Scheme within the Rural Development Programme 2014- 2020. Up to £80 million has been set aside within the 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme to specifically develop our rural communities, and letters of offers from LAGs to small businesses and rural community groups are now being issued. Local Government representatives welcomed the update and the investment but cross referenced this with the need to develop a wider, cross cutting, rural disadvantage piece, linked also to the key Strategies coming out of the PfG, so that (like urban renewal) such investment may be mainstreamed.

7. Education Vital to Community Plans: On behalf of Education Minister Peter Weir MLA, an update on the impending consultation on the Education Authority's Draft Area Plan (2017-2020) was provided; this will be consulted upon with all councils. A late January 2017 response period for the (third) call for Shared Education Campus Projects was also provided. Local Government members stressed the huge importance of both updates to local communities and the councils' Community – and other statutory – Plans, with a reiteration that 8 weeks consultation time is unrealistic in terms of the importance of high quality, relevant, community planning oriented responses.

8. Local Government Issues & Gains In Brief:

(A) *Community Planning* – the Panel heard from council and NILGA members in regard to investment in Community Plans and subsequent priorities flowing from them, it was **agreed** that an Evidential Report on progress, commitment and investment needs of councils' Community Plans would be prepared through the Joint Secretariat, building on work already commenced by SOLACE & NILGA.

(B) *Rural Disadvantage* – the Panel heard from council and NILGA members on the clear need to commit to a Rural Disadvantage action piece, drawing on work at council level and within DAERA, but materially engaging multi departmental and agency partners, to be taken forward through the Panel.

- (C) *Legacy & Current Planning Issues*– Department of Infrastructure will continue to engage on matters to do with (i) transferred legacy planning applications requiring specialist skills and an associated heavy workload; (ii) pre April 2015 complaints require a draft protocol for their handling, (iii) dynamic modernisation of the Planning Portal, (iv) Developer Contributions: Guidance on how to best distribute Community Benefits across council areas. In all cases, the need to properly resource councils in this major issue was fully articulated; evidential work in this regard will come to the Panel.
- (D) *Off Street Car Parking* – the Panel heard from councils and NILGA members on the disproportionate financial burden on councils, which has resulted in a material increase of £110,000 to the 11 councils since original transfer, more evidential work through SOLACE will be brought to bear to ensure that the principle of cost neutrality is adhered to, with NILGA undertaking further work on a NI tailored New Burdens proposal together with the Augmentation Review (see Task & Finish Actions, 3., below) in advance of any further transfers.
- (E) *Major Capital Projects* – Good Governance Guidance: the Panel heard from Councils and NILGA on progress around new ways to invest in local and regional key infrastructure projects, complementing the update provided by Finance Minister Máirtín Ó Muilleoir MLA (see 8. below for actions).
- (F) *Augmentation Review* – the Panel heard from NILGA members regarding the importance of a robust, evidence based piece of work covering the impact of Reform to date, the Augmentations to be considered and the underpinning resource management required to protect both the transferring body and the council (or other body) receiving the transfer (commonly referred to as New Burdens Doctrine in neighbouring jurisdictions). Joint Secretariat will work on this in time for next meeting of the Panel (January 2017, see 10. below).

9. **Sustainable and integrated PCSPs / Community Planning Interfaces across the 11 councils:** – the Panel heard from Justice Minister Claire Sugden MLA who outlined the importance of Community Planning as the focus and core of both PCSP and Interface work. The Minister also advised that tackling domestic violence is high on the agenda of her department and that Local Government is a best placed partner to address this issue. She added that by breaking the cycle of domestic violence, we can address a lot of our wider social problems, as will be addressed by Council's Community Plans. The Minister welcomed the comments by the NILGA President in

regard to developing a Political Reference Group for PCSPs at Regional Level, with the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

10. Finance Minister welcomes collaboration with councils & NILGA: Finance Minister Máirtín Ó Muilleoir MLA addressed the Panel on progress on two Departmental / All Council initiatives – investment in key infrastructure projects and co-operation on derelict property research. Ultimately, with further co-operation and explicit commitment, new approaches to investment through both tiers of government, social economy partners and the private sector, can ensue, as can new approaches to local taxation. Work continues on both counts.

11. We Meet Again: The next meeting of the Partnership Panel is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 31st January 2017, in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, with work developed in advance in accordance with the outcomes.

Derek McCallan, NILGA CEO
Partnership Panel Joint Secretariat
October 2016

