



NILGA

KEY INFORMATION BULLETIN 14th December 2011

This bulletin provides your Council with information on key NILGA business and activities which are delivering tangible results for our sector. The bulletin is supplied for distribution at a Full Council or Council Committee meeting.

Programme for Government – 17th November Announcement

Following the announcement that the Review of Public Administration (RPA) will recommence as part of the Programme for Government (PfG), a special Office Bearers meeting was held on the 8th December 2011. Members agreed to seek a series of scheduled meetings with the DoE Minister and his senior officials in order to facilitate negotiations surrounding reform, its costs, governance and applications, together with NILGA's vision for local government. ***The NILGA Executive meeting of 13th January 2012 will facilitate comprehensive coverage of the PfG and the RPA process, with a NILGA Full Members meeting on 27th January 2012 in Lisburn providing further opportunity for decision taking.***

Vision for Local Government – 1st December 2011 meeting of NILGA's Modernisation, Communications and Reform Working Group

Chaired by Councillor Myreve Chambers, the meeting was attended by DoE officials. They provided the Group with first impression accounts regarding RPA - how it is to be finalised, legislated for, co-ordinated, led, and implemented. In parallel, the Group had sought a "Vision Document" on the basis that RPA and Local Government Reform should be about transformation not restructuring, and about quality, affordable public services, not costly and bureaucratic processes and systems. In the context of the PfG, it is vital that NILGA articulates clearly that the sector and local people want Councils to provide local leadership, local services and local democratic accountability as part of a contemporary group of new Councils.

ICE Programme - Induction meeting, 23rd November 2011, Antrim

The commitment from the 23 Councils present at the meeting to pursue the ICE programme was substantial and evidence of the value of shared services was reinforced through a presentation from the Chief Executive of COSLA (LGA Scotland). Councils in attendance drew a clear distinction between the legislative and political route of RPA, which it was felt was not the material issue at this induction meeting, and the shared services programme of the Councils, which is being determined by a small resource serviced by NILGA, with colleagues from SOLACE underpinning the development of actual collaborative work. Substantial existing work was evidenced - procurement, planning on infrastructure investment, collaboration on tourism and economic development, waste management work and shared advertising costs for local council recruitment. It was clear that the improvements, collaborations and efficiencies were necessary, desirable, and had full support from Councils.

The work plan for the Regional Governance Group is now being defined with SOLACE, NILGA and of course the RGG itself, to be chaired by Cllr Jenny Palmer, to resource the co-ordination and development work required, together with the central communication of the Programme's successes going out to the sector and key stakeholders including the DoE. Members in attendance were aware of the massive transfer of functions proposed and in situ regarding Councils, particularly the unknown costs. The work within ICE is one of several priorities that have to be managed, aside from the need to deliver primary services. ***The next (inaugural) meeting of Regional Governance Group is scheduled for Wednesday 23rd January at 2pm.***

Animal Welfare Implementation – overview of progress / interim arrangements

Further to progress reports at the last two NILGA Executive meetings, together with outputs of the NILGA Agriculture and Rural Development Working Group held in Banbridge, 10th November 2011, Councils will be aware of the requirement to bring the sector's solutions to the imminent transfer of some elements of the Welfare of Animals Act. Through the ICE agenda, senior officers have worked through options for delivery (required after April 2012), with Councils receiving reports for consideration in November and December.

Your Local Government Association

EU Funds 2014 – 2020

NILGA Members and the sector have been advised of the appetite to redesign the management, co-ordination and delivery of future EU Funds, with the aim of creating a NI Local Government strand of Structural Funds and related investment. At the EU Working group meeting of 23rd November 2011, NILGA officers were mandated to take forward crucial work and engagement events. Despite the wider economic and political uncertainty surrounding the EU, Councils know the indisputable fact that EU funding and EU fines (regulatory and other fees) are confusing, often impenetrable and frequently de-motivating for applicants in communities and businesses. NILGA will consult fully with the sector and draw on good practice elsewhere to lobby for practical change in this area, to provide extra opportunities for investment in local economies and communities, with Councils positioned as the accountable, knowledgeable, lead local body.

Waste Management

Work is ongoing to evolve the Waste Programme Board, including the development of a work programme, in liaison with DoE. A scoping exercise to inform a review of the Waste Strategy has recently completed, the timing of a review and the need for policy stability are key concerns in view of the impending reviews of the Waste Management Plans. The Waste Programme Board will be discussed this with the Minister at the meeting on 20th December 2011, the outcomes of which will be reported to the January NILGA Executive. Work is also continuing to reach a resolution to the current impasse on arrangements for dealing with fly tipping. NIEA are currently offering to clean up after all fuel laundering incidents, to provide councils with state of the art equipment, training and resources, and to develop a more practicable reporting mechanism than demanded previously. A report on progress will also be brought to the January NILGA Executive.

Planning

The DoE's Planning Forum held a meeting in Dungannon on 8th December 2011. At the meeting, NILGA's Planning Working Group Chair, Alderman Jim Dillon, called for real and immediate engagement with the sector on the design, cost and competencies required to deliver a new, fit for purpose, planning service. DoE officials confirmed that engagement events and more detailed operational meetings would be taking place, and SOLACE officials are ensuring that this transfer of function is afforded maximum attention, with Council members and officers involved in the design and costs of above mentioned service. DoE Minister Attwood repeated his concern regarding the need to train and provide knowledge to local government in advance of Planning transferring to Councils. ***NILGA's Planning Working group meets on 16th December 2011, in Dublin, in order to see first-hand the delivery of the planning function, and its governance, from an elected member perspective.***

2012 Olympics

Volunteer Involvement in the Northern Ireland Torch Relay In order for each Council to fully engage with the 2012 Torch Relay when it comes to Northern Ireland in June 2012, Councils are being encouraged to develop their volunteer involvement in the supporting events. To support this, Volunteer Now in conjunction with DCAL, are offering free training for Councils. The training will provide participants with the learning and skills to effectively plan for volunteer involvement in the London 2012 Torch Relay and future events. A 2 day session is being offered to Councils hosting overnight stops and a 1 day awareness rising session is being offer to all other Council areas. Further information is available from Claire McLoughlin at Volunteer NOW T: 028 9023 2020 or E: claire.mcloughlin@volunteernow.co.uk

Olympic Torch to Visit Dublin The Olympic flame arrives in Belfast on 3rd June 2012 and will be carried to more than 60 towns and villages as well as a number of beauty spots across Northern Ireland. It was also announced by the International Olympic Committee on the 8th December that the Olympic Torch will visit Dublin on 6th June 2012.

NILGA Conference and Local Government Awards

Councils are reminded that the 2012 NILGA Conference and Local Government Awards are taking place in the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick on the 23rd February 2012. Further information is available on the NILGA website and bookings can be made through Nuala McCann at the NILGA office T: 028 9079 8972 or E: n.mccann@nilga.org

NILGA
Your Local Government Association
Councils - Positively Local in 2012