NILGA

KEY INFORMATION BULLETIN *15h August 2012*

This bulletin provides your Council with key information being taken forward through NILGA, councils and partners, delivering results for our sector. The bulletin is supplied for information / distribution at a Full Council or Council Committee meeting.

FUNDING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM - MAKING THE SOBERING CASE

Members will be aware of the unsuccessful bid in June 2012 by the DoE Minister for Executive funding to pump prime reform. At NILGA'S request, Office Bearers met the Minister on 13th August and were informed that he will be making further bids for Reform starting in September 2012. The September bid is extremely important since this is for investment available throughout the Comprehensive Spending Review period (CSR) – not just this financial year. NILGA asserts that the short, medium and long-term costs of reform **simply cannot be borne exclusively** by councils. A stark and robust financial case must be presented to the Assembly based on the fact that councils cannot merge, transform and acquire new services and responsibilities without partnership funding to ensure their sustainability. Important policy issues remain unresolved including matters such as severance, call - in procedures and performance management. Councils and councillors want to and must bring their knowledge and requirements to the table. NILGA has sought (and provided) ways to adapt the present structures in order to get local government fully behind Reform - rather than let the present lack of engagement prevalent in many quarters **reach critical levels.**

OFFICE BEARERS – CROSS PARTY AGREEMENT

NILGA's five Office Bearers issued a memorandum on 9th July 2012 to the DoE Permanent Secretary reminding him that all councils are seeking funding for reform, that greater councillor representation within reform structures is necessary for RPA to (i) be democratic and (ii) work, and that NILGA has sought remedial action on other critical issues such as legislation and communication. We have already received feedback assuring us that any Regional Transition Committee (RTC) member may query and seek amendments and additions to the draft minutes in line with standard practice in councils, contrary to the initial RTC practice.

POWER OF GENERAL COMPETENCE

Members may be aware of the DoE's report (issued in late July) on the 77 responses received regarding the Local Government Re-organisation Bill. NILGA has prepared a summary which has been distributed to all councils. The Minister has agreed to recommend to the Assembly that Councils are afforded the **Power of General Competence**, a much stronger piece of legislation than that formerly on offer – i.e., the Power of Well Being. This change, lobbied for by NILGA greatly strengthens the hand of councils, assisting them in determining the resources and buy in of other government departments and agencies in delivering Community Planning. This will be a real gain for communities, and councils.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT (ASSEMBLY) - at last, Localism in NI emerging?

NILGA has been pushing for a formal mechanism to ensure that local government is able to sit down as an equal with the Executive's Departments and plan what comes to us and what doesn't. The DoE is now recommending to the Assembly that a Partnership Panel is set up. This will ensure the collective consideration of strategic issues which relate to councils, and will avoid the far, far too regular instances of sending us whatever functions others don't want. The Office of the **First Minister and Deputy First Minister** has asked NILGA's Office Bearers to meet on 4th September 2012 to discuss ways in which the Assembly and Councils can do business with each other more effectively, following NILGA's case that the present system is one way, one sided and not like other parts of the UK.

COLERAINE AND 2012 OLYMPIC SUCCESS

Councillor Maurice Bradley of Coleraine attended a reception event on 11th August 2012 in London as guest of the Northern Ireland Office, courtesy of NILGA. Whilst the Coleraine link is purely coincidental in regard to the trio of medals won by rowers from the Borough, it is nonetheless fitting that a councillor from NI represented our local authorities amidst home grown success.

Coleraine will host the first meeting of NILGA's **local economy group**, meeting on 20th September 2012. This group will support the nomination of Northern Ireland as an entrepreneurial region for the year 2014 as designated by the EU. It also is developing ways in which local economies, including town centres and small businesses, can gain from procurement and promotion using new EU investment.

19th September 2012 ANNUAL NI ECONOMIC CONFERENCE - *SPECIAL NILGA OFFER!*

The Northern Ireland Economic Conference is NI's annual economic summit and is attended each year by economic policy-makers and decision-takers as well as key players in the business and voluntary sectors. It is a not-to-be-missed event in the local economic calendar, particular for local government officers and elected representatives with a focus on issues including local economic development delivery and policy making.

Speakers include: Secretary of State, Owen Paterson, MP - Richard Bruton, TD, Irish Government Minister - David Smith, Economics Editor, The Sunday Times - Esmond Birnie, Chief Economist, PwC – Gerald Law, Chief Executive, UK Innovation Forum - Jim Farmery, Director of Business Investment, Creative England - Joe O'Mahony, Managing Director, Northern Ireland Electricity. Full programme available online at www.agendaNi.com/events

Negotiated by NILGA: A special discounted rate of £150 ex VAT (full fee £255) is available for local government elected representatives and officers wishing to attend. This offer is limited, to secure your place at the discounted rate please contact agendaNi directly on 028 9261 9933 or email registration@agendaNi.com

Please reference NILGA when making your booking to secure the reduced rate.

NILGA MEETINGS – DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

NILGA Executive Meeting - 14th September, 12th October and 9th November 2012– All meeting will take place at the NILGA office, Castlereagh Road, Belfast.
NILGA AGM - 28th September 2012 in Lissanoure Castle, Ballymoney, Minister Alex Attwood will address the meeting as part of a series of engagement exercises on Reform.
NILGA Full Members Meetings – 23rd November 2012, Newtownabbey.
NILGA Annual Conference - 28th February 2013, Everglades Hotel, Derry / Londonderry.

NILGA - Your Local Government Association

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