

NEWS BULLETIN - Regional Governance Group meeting 19th September 2012

Issued 26th September 2012

Members of the Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency (ICE) Regional Governance Group held their 4th meeting at the Mossley Mill offices of Newtownabbey Borough Council on 19th September 2012.

Councillor Myreve Chambers, acting Chair for the meeting, presided over detailed presentations and debate in regard to progress achieved in the key matters of Procurement and Network NI.

Improvements and efficiencies gained through collaboration were warmly endorsed and encouraged in the areas of procurement and ICT and the specific presentations drew out both gains already made and the prospects for further cost reductions and service improvements through greater buy in and practical investment, by councils and government departments.

For a full copy of the presentations, please contact ice@nilga.org

1. Network NI / ICT

Paul Gribben, Belfast City Council's Head of Information Services, affirmed that the **value** of ICT is the ability to support & improve business performance. Making IT more productive focuses on 3-5% of expenditure whilst making the business more productive focuses on 95-97% of costs.

Members discussed the pros and cons of Network NI's evolution, gaining insight into the opportunities available in terms of capital financing bids by DoE and DSD, and the Eircom Broadband offer for users of this ICT platform.

Members agreed, after constructive debate, to champion the use of Network NI – the ICT platform for many public services in NI - whilst developing the service to suit the specific needs of local government.

2. Procurement

Liam Flanigan, lead officer within the Procurement Sub Group of I.C.E., presented members with progress and opportunities to members regarding the development of a NI local government procurement strategy and its delivery options. Discussions surrounding the importance of balancing accountable practices with support for local economies ensued, and members debated the virtues of councils determining substantial purchases through consistent standards and thresholds, supporting short term (working together to purchase goods and commodities) and long term (developing a consistent framework for procurement using a dedicated web portal) strategic objectives.

C o n t ' d

Members agreed to advocate the work underway and sought finalisation of the work plan to develop the new procurement delivery model which will be consulted upon.

The Local Government Procurement Group's recently established website will be linked to the ICE / NILGA web pages to enable further information sharing, access by elected members and to widen the good practice message.

3. Other Issues

Members debated and approved the update report (now available on the ICE / NILGA website) of all work streams, including customer facing services, support services and HR.

An RGG Members' List was circulated to take account of new members following councils AGMs, and Councillor Chambers strongly emphasised the need for each RGG member, at each individual council, to develop knowledge and support for the I.C.E. work strands.

Members also debated the clear distinctions between I.C.E. and RPA, following the confirmation that financial benefits of I.C.E. were being sought by DoE within the RPA working processes. Members recognised the limited resources available to achieve both programmes of work, as well as the need to prioritise and avoid duplication of effort. The RGG endorsed the need to support projects which develop the sector's strengths, and promote through shared services BOTH the value of quality services AND the benefits of cost reductions.

4. Next Meeting

It was agreed that Banbridge District Council hosts the next meeting of the Regional Governance Group, on 19th December 2012, at 2pm (Banbridge District Council venue to be confirmed).