

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM JOINT FORUM (JOINT FORUM)

HELD ON 02 SEPTEMBER 2009 AT 10.30 AM
IN COMMISSION HOUSE, 18-22 GORDON STREET, BELFAST

MEMBERS PRESENT

<u>EMPLOYERS' SIDE</u>	<u>TRADE UNION SIDE</u>
<p>NIJC: Jill Minne, Belfast City Council (Substitute) Roger Wilson, Coleraine Borough Council (Lead for this meeting)</p> <p>JNC Cllr Tom Hartley, Belfast City Council</p> <p>NICS/DFP Ian Maye, DoE Sheila Cunningham, DSD (Substitute)</p>	<p>NIPSA: Pat Baker, Down District Council Connor Haughey, Newry and Mourne DC Bumper Graham, Assistant General Secretary Paddy Mackel, Assistant Secretary</p> <p>Unite: Jim Parker, Belfast City Council</p> <p>GMB Bill McClinton (Substitute)</p>
<p><u>INDEPENDENT FACILITATOR</u> Paul O' Brien, Chief Executive, APSE</p>	
<p><u>INDEPENDENT SECRETARIAT</u> Adrian Kerr, Chief Executive, Local Government Staff Commission for NI Linda Leahy, Professional Officer, Local Government Staff Commission for NI Diana Stewart, Project Officer, Local Government Staff Commission for NI Lisa O' Neill, Policy Officer, Local Government Staff Commission for NI</p>	

1.0 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Sides and noted.

2.0 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT FORUM HELD ON 05 AUGUST 2009

The minutes of the Joint Forum meeting held on 05 August 2009 were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

2.1 Matters Arising

2.1.1 Terms of Reference and Operating Arrangements

Copies of the agreed Local Government Reform Joint Forum Terms of Reference and Operating Arrangements were circulated and members noted that it was also available on the Joint Forum web page.

2.1.2 Change Manager Posts

In response to a query from the Trade Union Side Lead regarding guidance issued to transition Committees for the appointment of Change Managers a copy of DoE Circular No: LG 16/08 was circulated for member's information.

3.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM PROGRAMME

3.1 Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) 14 August 2009

3.1.1 Senior Officers' Remuneration (SLB paper 41/2009)

The Trade Union Side Lead stated that the proposal would have an impact on staff rights/entitlements under data protection and other issues of privacy and that the trade unions therefore had fundamental difficulties with the proposals contained in the paper.

Ian Maye responded by stating that the Environment Minister specifically asked PDP A to prepare these proposals in relation to the future reporting of senior officers' remuneration which will now be considered by the Department and issued for wider consultation including trade unions.

3.1.2 Review of Local Government Reform Structures (SLB paper 46/2009)

Following discussion it was agreed that the Joint Forum would be made aware of the establishment of any short-life Task and Finish Groups that may impact on staffing issues and that places would be available to trade union representatives and/or Joint Forum members.

3.1.3 Local Government Service Delivery Project – Phase 2

Following discussion it was agreed that:

- DoE would circulate the details of the decisions reached regarding the transfer of functions
- DoE would report on the Phase 2 outcomes at the next Joint Forum meeting.

3.1.4 Funding for Local Government Reform

Members noted that the work currently being completed by PWC on the Local Government Service Delivery Project will be key to determining the resources required to meet the up front implementation costs and transition costs in the first three years including that needed for any severance scheme.

3.2 Regional Transition Coordinating Group (RTCG) 23 July 2009

3.2.1 Community Planning

In response to a query to from the Trade Union Side Lead Ian Maye confirmed that details of likely structures, types and levels of posts, etc would be available within the next three months and that he would be happy to discuss with trade unions.

Trade Union Side expressed concern regarding the application for EU funding under the Peace 111 Programme to support the implementation of Community Planning.

3.2.2 Capital Expenditure

The Trade Union Side Lead restated his concern regarding the application of the DoE Guidance in relation to Transition Committees, specifically the requirement to advance the convergence of key plans and programmes, including capital development programmes of existing councils.

3.3 Legislation Timetable

DoE agreed that in relation to the drafting of Regulations arising from the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill they would ensure to engage with trade unions.

4.0 MODEL TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS FOR LOCAL CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION FORUMS AT TRANSITION COMMITTEE LEVEL

Decision

Members agreed the draft model terms of reference and operating arrangements and noted that they would be considered by the Employers' Side of the NIJC and JNC respectively with a view to the Side Leads agreeing final text before the end of September. Should significant issues arise, the Side Leads will revert to the Joint Forum for further discussion.

5.0 VACANCY CONTROL SYSEM – DETAILED PROCEDURE

It was recognised that other work needs to commence in relation to the implementation of a vacancy control system, for example:

- Identifying the 2nd and 3rd tranches of at risk categories
- Providing assistance to the at risk group of staff
- Approach to be taken when a council has a vacancy but no 'at risk' staff

Decision

Members agreed the draft, subject to minor revisions the detail which could be signed off by the Side Leads as soon as possible with a view to issuing for implementation from 1 October 2009.

6.0 DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT RPA STAFF SEVERANCE SCHEME

Following an overview of the Agenda Paper by Linda Leahy members made a number of comments on the issues raised.

Decision

Members agreed to establish a short-life Task Group to take forward the development of a detailed scheme. The Task Group would comprise the Individual Sides Lead Person plus one member from each Side.

It was agreed to consider a further draft at the next meeting.

7.0 FILLING POSTS IN THE NEW ORGANISATIONS – UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Following a briefing by Linda Leahy on the proposed approach for filling posts in the new council structures members discussed the issues raised.

Decision

Members agreed to establish a short-life Task group to consider this aspect of work. The Task Group would comprise the Individual Sides Lead Person plus one member from each Side.

Members further agreed that the Secretariat could commence work on the drafting of chief executive job descriptions and person specifications to inform discussion.

It was agreed to bring a progress report to the next meeting.

8.0 HR IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES WORKPLAN AND TIMETABLE

Members noted the revised Workplan and agreed that consideration also be given to:

- linkage with work ongoing in other sectors, eg NICS transferring functions.
- consultation and negotiation arrangements in local government post 2011.

9.0 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

No business was reported.

10.0 DRAFT SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DATE, TIME VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to postpone the meeting scheduled for Wednesday 23 September 2009 to allow the date to be used to progress the detailed work on Staff Severance Scheme and Filling Posts in the new Council Structures with the Task Groups.

For the remainder of the proposed dates Members agreed that afternoon meetings commencing at 2.30pm would be the most suitable.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would propose some meeting venues outside Belfast for consideration.