

# LGRJF

facilitating local government reorganisation

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

HELD ON 29 APRIL 2010 AT 2.30PM  
IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION OFFICES  
COMMISSION HOUSE, 18-22 GORDON STREET, BELFAST

### MEMBERS PRESENT

<u>EMPLOYERS' SIDE</u>	<u>TRADE UNION SIDE</u>
<p><b>NIJC</b> Jill Minne, Belfast City Council</p> <p><b>JNC</b> Cllr Tom Hartley, Belfast City Council</p> <p><b>NICS</b> Wesley Shannon, DoE Sheila Cunningham, DSD (subs)</p> <p><b>NIHE and Other Transferring Functions</b> Maureen Taggart, NIHE</p>	<p><b>NIPSA</b> Bumper Graham, Assistant General Secretary Connor Haughey, Newry and Mourne DC Pat Baker, Down District Council</p> <p><b>GMB</b> John Dawson, Organiser</p>
<p><b>INDEPENDENT FACILITATOR</b> Adrian Kerr, Chief Executive, Local Government Staff Commission for NI (subs)</p>	
<p><b>INDEPENDENT SECRETARIAT</b> 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 and noted.

## **2.0 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT FORUM HELD ON 24 MARCH 2010**

The Minutes were agreed, subject to the following amendment of 3.1 Matters Arising. For clarification the minutes would be amended to read:

### **7.0 Update on Filling Posts in the New Council Structures**

(Referring to the need to amend NILGOSC Regulations)

Wesley Shannon confirmed that he had discussed the matter with the Department's legislation section and did not think any adjustment to the NILGOSC Regulations would be required based on the information provided.

### **1.1 Matters Arising**

Referring to the above item in the Minutes the Trade Union Side Lead stated that he had had recent discussions with NILGOSC and thought that there would still need to be amendments to cover any appointments made by Statutory Transition Committees.

Wesley Shannon recognised that there were a number of issues to be teased out regarding the remit of Statutory Transition Committees between NILGOSC, Trade Union Side and the Department of the Environment.

#### **Decision**

Wesley Shannon agreed to follow up in conjunction with Trade Union Side Lead and NILGOSC before the next meeting.

### **Economic Appraisal**

The Trade Union Side expressed thier disappointment that there had been no approach from the Department to discuss the lack of consultation and engagement with trade unions in relation to proposals for delivering savings, voluntary collaboration, etc.

#### **Decision**

Wesley Shannon agreed to liaise with the Trade Union Side Lead to ensure that the trade union's view is feed into discussions and to keep them appraised of continuing progress.

### **Funding for the Joint Forum**

The Trade Union Side Lead sought an assurance from the Department that funding would be made available to support the work of the Joint Forum. He reminded Members that the Commission had resourced the Joint Forum to date from existing funds.

Wesley Shannon stated that whilst there was no funding ring fenced for the Joint Forum there was potential funding yet to be assigned. He confirmed that the Joint Forum was recognised as a priority by the Strategic Leadership Board and would be treated as a such when bids for funding are made.

Members were informed that there already existed a mechanism whereby the Commission could request funding from the Department for specific projects and that this could include supporting the Joint Forum.

### **Decision**

Members agreed that the Sides Leads and the Commission should agree a forward work plan to enable the Commission to make a bid for funding to the Department in September 2010.

### **Transfer of Functions Report**

The Trade Union Side Lead reported that the Trade Union Side had not yet received a copy of the final paper of the Transfer of Functions Working Group. He stated that this detail was critical in identifying the transfer of NICS staff and the development of structural arrangements within cluster.

Wesley Shannon provided an overview of the strategic level work of the Transfer of Function Working Group.

Members agreed that there were clear implications for the Joint Forum particularly in dealing with the cultural shift between central and local government.

### **Decision**

Wesley agreed to meet and discuss the matter with the Trade Union Side Lead.

## **4.3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM PROGRAMME**

### **3.1 Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) 14 April 2010**

The Trade Union Side Lead referred to the legislative update and enquired why there appeared to be conflicting information on the progress of the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill.

Wesley Shannon stated that the timescales for the Bill are extremely challenging and that the Bill cannot now be introduced in the Assembly before the Summer recess.

### **Decision**

Members agreed that there appeared to be a discrepancy but acknowledged that it was due to timetabling.

### **3.2 Regional Transition Co-Ordinating Group (RTCG) 25 March 2010**

Members noted the key outcomes.

### **3.3 RPA Implementation Timeline**

Wesley Shannon stated that there was continuing discussion at political level in relation to the Boundaries, service delivery models and financing and that the Minister had put forward a number of options for consideration.

Members expressed frustration at the continuing lack of clarity expressing concern about the impact being felt by local government staff delivering frontline services.

### **Decision**

The Side leads agreed to consider writing to the Minister to express their concern about the implementation timeline and the impact on staff.

Members agreed that any convergence in advance of reorganisation must be undertaken with the agreement of the Joint Forum and in accordance with the Guiding Principles issued by the Public Service Commission.

Members agreed that the delay and uncertainty is already impacting and having practical implications on the work of the Joint Forum, for example the Vacancy Control System.

Members further agreed that clarity is required on the way forward as soon as possible in order that a strategic approach to implement RPA can be developed regardless of the date of implementation.

#### **4.0 RPA STAFF SEVERANCE SCHEME FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Wesley Shannon reported that the details of the Scheme were agreed, in principle, at the SLB meeting on 14 April, the only issue was around funding.

The Trade Union Side Lead stated that there was additional detail required on how the funding of the Scheme would be managed. The Employers' Side Lead reminded Members that it had been agreed to develop more detailed guidance at the appropriate time.

##### **Decision**

The Side Leads agreed to discuss the content of the additional guidance.

#### **5.0 VACANCY CONTROL SYSTEM**

##### **5.1 Operation of Vacancy Control System in Local Government**

Linda Leahy guided Members through the Agenda Paper and there followed a wide ranging discussion of the issues raised.

##### **Decision**

Whilst recognising that the Vacancy Control System needed to be reviewed, in light of the delay in the implementation of the RPA and the delay in decision making at political level, Members agreed that there needed to be further discussion and a programme for action agreed by the Side Leads before the next meeting.

##### **5.2 Monitoring and Review for Period 01 December 2009 – 31 March 2010**

Diana Stewart provided a progress report on data collected for the second monitoring period.

Members praised councils for their prompt response but were disappointed that Carrickfergus Borough Council had not submitted a return for either the first or second monitoring period.

##### **Decision**

Members agreed that a more detailed analysis of the completed proformas submitted by councils would inform the discussion on the future implementation of the Vacancy Control System. The Secretariat agreed to prepare a report for consideration at the next meeting. Members requested that the Secretariat contact the Chief Executive, Carrickfergus Borough Council to express the Joint Forum's concerns regarding their lack of response.

Members agreed that consideration should be given to providing further guidance to councils to assist with the Vacancy Control System implementation through briefings, etc.

## **6.0 FINAL DRAFT MODEL GENERIC JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION FOR THE 11 NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE POSTS**

**AND**

## **7.0 DRAFT PROCEDURE FOR FILLING POSTS IN THE NEW COUNCIL STRUCTURES**

Members agreed to consider Agenda items 6.0 and 7.0 together.

Linda Leahy reported that following consideration the Commission agreed and supported the two papers. The Commission made a few suggestions for minor substantive changes to both papers.

Cllr Hartley requested that reference was made in the Chief Executive documentation to 'rates' and 'ratepayers'.

### **Decision**

Members agreed that the Side Leads should agree the amendments to both papers in advance of the next meeting.

The Sides Leads agreed to have a fuller discussion on how to progress the papers and the next steps.

## **8.0 DRAFT SCHEME OF TRANSFER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF**

### **Decision**

Members agreed that the Side Leads should progress work on the draft Scheme with a view to considering a final draft at the next meeting.

The Trade Union Side Lead sought clarification from the Department that the Scheme would be a provision with the Local Government (Re-Organisation) Bill. Wesley undertook to check and report back to the next meeting.

## **9.0 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED, AGREED BUSINESS**

### **Review of the Public Service Commission (PSC)**

The Trade Union Side Lead referred to the review of the PSC undertaken by DFP. He emphasised the continuing need for the PSC and proposed that the Joint Forum write to DFP outlining the important role it has for the oversight for RPA.

### **Decision**

The Employers' Side Lead stated that they would consider the matter at their next Side meeting.

## **10.0 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

### **Decision**

Members agreed that to stand down the May meeting and use the date for Side meetings in order to progress Agenda items.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 June 2010 at 2.30pm in Commission House.