# "BEYOND TRANSITION"

## Aligning the People and Organisation Development Strategic Framework to Councils' Objectives

### 20 October 2015

## CONFERENCE REPORT

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# INTRODUCTION,

# CONFERENCE OBJECTIVE

# AND

# CONFERENCE SESSIONS

## 1.    INTRODUCTION

The "Beyond Transition" Conference was held on Tuesday 20 October 2015.  It was attended by some 80 delegates, including Elected Members, council Chief Executives, HR Professionals and other senior officers.  The conference was organised by the Local Government Staff Commission with support from the Local Government Training Group.

This report sets out the proposals for future people and organisation development actions which emerged from discussions in workshops held during the conference.  There are also summaries of the presentations made at the conference.  Copies of these conference presentations are available on the Local Government Staff Commission Website – www.lgsc.org.uk

## 2.    CONFERENCE OBJECTIVE

The objective of the conference was to help align the People and Organisation Development Strategic Framework (the Strategic Framework) with Councils' Objectives as they move from the transition phase of reform to the longer term transformational agenda.

## 3.    CONFERENCE SESSIONS

The conference programme was divided into three sessions

**Session 1** - **Local Government Priorities**.  This session set the context for aligning the Strategic Framework to Councils' Objectives.  It also included examples of transformational work being undertaken in local government – See Appendix 1.

**Session 2** - **Continuing the Improvement Journey in Local Councils**.  This session included case studies of People and Organisation Development Projects which had been undertaken by councils in Northern Ireland as well as support available from the Local Government Training Group – See Appendix 2..

**Session 3** - **Workshops - Aligning the P&OD Strategic Framework to Councils' Objectives**.  In session three, delegates were asked to address the following four questions:
- **Question 1**   What lessons can be learned from the case studies?
- **Question 2**   How can we practically use the lessons learned?
- **Question 3**   Is there anything else that we should consider?
- **Question 4**   What now needs to be done to align the Strategic Framework to Councils' priorities?

Each workshop was supported by an external facilitator.  The facilitators were:
- Steve Reeve, Principal Lecturer, Brighton Business School, University of Brighton.
- Alanna Cooke, Programme Director, William J Clinton Leadership Institute, Queen's University Belfast.
- Stephen Pollard, Lecturer in Management Development, Business Institute,

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# OUTCOMES

# FROM

# WORKSHOPS

## 4.    ALIGNING THE P&OD STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO COUNCILS' OBJECTIVES

This section of the Conference Report gives a summary of the outcomes from the discussions in each workshop in response to the four questions which delegates had been asked to address.

### Question 1    What lessons can be learned from the case studies?

The key themes which emerged from discussion on this question were:

- A need to actively develop a transformational culture in the new councils.
- Benefits in having flexibility in the workforce.
- Clear leadership for transformation.
- Benefits in working collaboratively and in partnership whether between councils or with other stakeholders.

### Question 2    How can we practically use the lessons learned?

The main points emphasised in respect of this question were:

- To work with all staff to generate innovations in service delivery.
- Ask challenging questions to generate opportunities for transformation.
- Ensure a range of options are considered before determining solutions to problems or potential new approaches to service delivery.
- Communication remains key to facilitating change.
- Councils should be prepared to try out new ideas and learn from them.
- Some of the innovative approaches from the conference sessions should be promoted, such as having health and wellbeing groups which could help in reducing absenteeism.

### Question 3    Is there anything else that we should consider?

Some suggestions which would help embed good people and organisation development practice were put forward in response to this question.  These were:

- A route map/structure is needed to help councils determine their People and OD objectives and plan to achieve these.
- Include details of the processes, tools and support which would be available. For example, more detail on the Leadership Academy and the Performance Culture Toolkit.
- P&OD programmes need to be promoted beyond HR and become corporately owned.
- A need for promoting enhanced employee engagement and some "how to" tools would be useful.
- Greater learning from other sectors.

**Question 4    What now needs to be done to align the Strategic Framework to Councils' priorities?**

This question was the priority area of focus for the workshops and the following points emerged.

**Strategic Direction**

There now needs to be a new momentum generated to move ahead with transformational People and OD activities.  This should be carried out as follows:

- There should be a clear alignment of P&OD activity in councils with strategic objectives.
- P&OD activity should be embedded across council organisations and not just seen as HR based.  In particular, the top tier in each council should part of the discussion on how it is to be aligned with strategic objectives.
- Councils should aim for greater consistency and collaboration to drive best practice and reduce duplication of effort and collaboration on P&OD activities can help this.

**Using Existing Tools and Resources**

The benefits of previous collaboration on HR issues was noted, for example:

- Local Government Jobs
- Situational Judgement Tests
- The eLearning Platform - it was proposed that an eLearning Working Group should be established to make sure the new system is used to best advantage.

There was also support for the Local Government Training Group to promote its services more widely to councils and professional groups.

**Future Development of People and Organisation Development Activity**

Delegates in the workshops were invited to get involved with the future development of P&OD activities under the following headings:

- Utilising the Performance Culture Toolkit
- Developing a Talent Management Model
- Considering a Unified Pay and Reward Framework
- Implementing the Leadership Academy
- Enhancing Employee Engagement

There was interest in supporting work in each of these areas as well as continuing work in respect of the "Learning Organisation".

The areas of focus for the future should centre on the following (and Working Groups could be formed to develop matters further):

**Performance Culture Toolkit**

- There was agreement that the Toolkit should be deployed across councils.

**Talent Management**

- There is a need to promote a career path in Local Government.
- Revisit and link to work previously undertaken, eg, Leadership and Talent Pillar Working Group and the Recruitment Working Group.
- Reintroduce a balance between public advertising and the need to develop internal promotion procedures intra-Council and between Councils.
- The John Lewis model which was a case study at a previous P&OD Conference could be revisited to help discussion.

**Pay & Reward**

- There needs to be a collaborative, 'One Employer' approach to address issues of fairness, and 'poaching' of staff from one council to another.
- There is potential for standardising roles, terms and conditions, etc., to introduce some flexibility and movement in the sector.
- There is potential for common approaches and a strong feeling that Councils, as employers, should take back control and reduce bringing in external/ independent stages in job evaluation processes, particularly which lead to increased pay bill costs.

**Leadership Academy**

- There was agreement that the Leadership Academy model should be rolled out across the sector.

**Employee Engagement**

- The sector needs proper negotiating forums applicable to Northern Ireland and relevant to councils.
- Councils should actively engage employees across departments and grades in working groups on transformational projects.

**Learning Organisation**

- Elected Member engagement needs to be improved including:

  o Mechanisms for a 'slot' reporting L&D opportunities and reporting feedback from events attended on council meetings' agendas.
  o Recognition that councillors are not full-time and so time management is a real issue.
  o Improved communication regarding commitment.
  o Explanation as to benefits of any training offered and how it might benefit councillors in the wider responsibilities outside Council (benefits plus transferable knowledge).
  o Broaden engagement/attendance as it tends to be same people attending.
  o Explore opportunities for joint engagement with officers - there is a feeling amongst Elected Members that they are kept at a distance.

## 5. NEXT STEPS

- Commission officers will now engage with those representatives from councils who have advised that they wish to work in partnership to develop the People and Organisation Framework.

- This will include further development of a strategic direction for the local government sector, bringing forward projects for transformational change and supporting implementation of existing resources to promote improvement such as the Leadership Academy and the Performance Culture Model.

- The opportunity to participate will be extended to other local government officers via the networks of SOLACE NI and PPMA NI.

There were four presentations in this conference session..

## Presentation 1 - Chief Executives' Priorities and Expectations, Liam Hannaway

The first presentation was from Liam Hannaway who is Chair of the Northern Ireland Branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Chief Executive of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.  Liam was also Chair of the Programme Board for the Strategic Framework, from its launch in 2011.

Liam provided delegates with an overview of the people and organisation development priorities identified by the Chief Executives of the 11 new councils.  He emphasised a number of key themes:

- The establishment of the 11 new councils has meant that the local government sector has become stronger as a whole.
- Good leadership at all levels is important if councils are to progress with transformation and there will therefore need to be continuing development of leadership capacity.
- This in turn will influence new organisational cultures which will:
  o be more flexible and agile allowing staff to develop beyond their existing roles;
  o seek more opportunities for partnership working and collaboration between councils and with other organisations.
- The new councils will be able to align resources better against strategic priorities and identify opportunities to co-operate/share services at a regional level.

## Presentation 2 - The Performance Framework Explained, Dr Theresa Donaldson

The second presentation was from Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chief Executive of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, and Lead Chair of the Performance Improvement Working Group within local government.  Theresa set out the duty of continuous improvement placed on councils under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014.  She referred to the defined areas of improvement in the Act which are:

- Strategic Effectiveness
- Service Quality
- Service Availability
- Fairness
- Sustainability
- Efficiency
- Innovation

Theresa then described how Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council is addressing the duties arising from the Act, including the Council's IT-based system which supports this. She emphasised that local government in Northern Ireland has always had a strong culture of performance management and a commitment to accountability and transparency.

## Presentation 3 - Case Study, Shaping a Brighter Future/the Ensuring Council, Neil Schneider

Neil Schneider, Chief Executive, Stockton on Tees Borough Council outlined how his Council has been aligning its people and organisation development activities to deliver and sustain the 'Ensuring Council' model. This was against a backdrop of substantial pressure on council services and budgets. The main elements of the 'Ensuring Council' model are:

- Democratic Accountability
- Public Value and Social Justice
- Financial Capacity
- Municipal Entrepreneurship
- Core Capacity
- Empowering Local Communities/Stewardship

In order to engage with staff to meet the challenges they face the council established its 'Shaping a Better Future' Programme which consists of eight work streams. Staff across all grades and functions could become involved in these work streams:

- Workforce Culture
- Team Development
- Relationships with Partners
- Right People, Right Place
- Employee Support and Retention
- Personal Development
- Selection and Recruitment
- Talent Identification

Neil also referred to the Corporate Peer Challenges undertaken in his council and this topic was the subject of the next presentation by Judith Hurcombe.

## Presentation 4 - Corporate Peer Challenge, Judith Hurcombe

Judith Hurcombe, Programme Manager with the Local Government Association gave an outline of the Corporate Peer Challenge process which the Association is supporting. Peer challenges have five core components of:

- Setting Priorities
- Financial Resilience
- Effective Leadership
- Governance
- Organisational Capacity

Some key attractions of the Corporate Peer Challenge approach are:

- Councils taking responsibility for their own improvement: "by the sector, for the sector".
- There is currently an absence of formal inspection architecture at corporate level so the Peer Challenge can instead provide useful analysis.
- Councils have one for a variety of reasons so there is flexibility.
- It gives assurance on how the organisation is operating and can address concerns in this respect.
- It helps in exploring new ways of working.

In 2014 Cardiff Business School reviewed the Association's Programme of Corporate Peer Challenges which had previously been carried out. The results showed that generally councils were supportive of the process. The core components were broadly supported and the flexibility of approach taken was valued.

In this session of the conference there were five further presentations, three of which were the case study examples from Northern Ireland councils outlining People and Organisation Development projects they had undertaken.

**Presentation 5 - Supporting Performance Improvement and Building Capacity, Linda Leahy**

Linda is Director – Talent and Development, Local Government Staff Commission, and Secretary, Local Government Training Group (LGTG).  She gave an overview of the range of support available from the LGTG to councils, in particular in the context of P&OD activities.

- Three Open Course Programmes in a year (90+ short skills-based courses).
- In-house training in councils (100+ courses).
- A range of leadership, management/other programmes at QUB and UU.
- A range of OD projects in councils.
- Elected Member training (short skills-based courses, regional events and Charter).
- A major sector-wide RPA Capacity Building Programme in 2014-15.
- The new Learning Management System (eLearning Platform).
- Call-off frameworks of providers for use by councils.

Provision planned and delivered across:

- Leadership and Talent Management
- Performance Culture and Learning Organisations
- Employee Relations and Pay and Reward
- Capacity Building for Reform
- Equality and Diversity
- Elected Member Development

Leadership Development:

- Bespoke in-house leadership programmes, QUB and UU programmes, development centres.
- In discussion with health, education, NICS, PSNI about a public sector leadership programme.
- Development of a Coaching and Mentoring Network.
- Diversity Champions and E&D projects in councils.

Organisation Development:

- Performance/transformation projects in councils linked to Performance Culture Toolkit.
- IiP support.
- Support for Community Planning.
- General Power of Competence training for councillors.
- New Councillors' Guide and Councillors' Guide to Waste.

## Presentation 6 - Creating a Culture of Innovation and Improvement, Moira Quinn and Ian Young

Moira is the Director of Performance and Ian is the Health, Safety and Well-Being Officer in Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. Moira set out the context for the "Leadership Challenge" as defined within the Council.

- That leadership and management are complimentary yet different concepts.
- That leadership is about setting the direction for the organisation, service, team so that the individual can see their contribution.
- That employee engagement is central to organisational success – we need '*engaging leaders and manager*s'.
- Cultural integration is a key priority.
- The Council will succeed through the talent of our people who are enabled and supported.
- Leaders should have emotional intelligence.

The Council had initiated a Leadership Development Programme in association with the William J Clinton Leadership Institute, at Queen's University Belfast. In total 60 Managers and Officers, in three cohorts of 20 staff participated in the programme. The programme consisted of six modules:

- Leading Alignment
- Leading Engagement
- Leading with Emotional Intelligence
- Leading Enablement
- Living the Values – Leading the Way
- Final Event: Reflection and Graduation

Ian's presentation related to his own participation in the Leadership Programme.

He set out his learning outcomes as:

- A vision which reflects Council corporate plan and values.
- To lead by example.
- To ask the simple question why?
- To be innovative, creative and reflective.
- To communicate effectively, active listening and build meaningful relationships on trust.
- To be aware of my emotions/others.

In applying this in practice he was aiming to:

- Deliver a world class health and safety management system.
- Lead by example.
- Use reflection and innovation to improve how we do things.
- Develop a culture of excellence and pride in who we are Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council.
- Engage, empower and support staff and management.
- Use emotional intelligence to negotiate, persuade, motivate and build relationships based on trust.

### Presentation 7 - Utilising the Performance Culture Toolkit, Karen Hargan

Karen is the Director of Organisation Development and Community Planning in Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

Karen referred to the objective under the Performance Culture Pillar of the Strategic Framework:

> *'Local government will create an environment where, individual, team and council goals are aligned; individuals will receive continuous development and feedback on performance and will be recognised for excellence in service delivery.'*

She then set out how the Council had utilised the Performance Culture Toolkit. The Model provides a holistic approach to building a performance culture and accordingly, managing performance at organisational, service, team and individual level.

The fundamental premise of the model is that a performance culture results from a combination of the right mindsets coupled with the right practices within an organisation.

## Presentation 8 - Employee Engagement for Enhancing Performance, Helen Hall

Helen is the Business Change Manager in Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.

Helen spoke about the elements of the approach to engagement which had been taken by the council since its formation in April 2015. These included:

- Employee Roadshows on the Council's new strategy 2015-30.
- Staff recognition events.
- Staff Newsletters.
- Communication Champions to ensure effective communication in their department/section/site.
- Health and Well Being initiatives.
- Staff surveys.
- External assessment and accreditations.
- Support for staff initiatives – case studies published.

## Presentation 9 - Launch of the "Local Government Learning "eLearning Platform", Linda Leahy

Linda gave an overview of the new eLearning Platform which has been developed in association with Learning Pool. The platform provides a shared library of content and resources. It complements and supports traditional methods of Learning and Development by allowing councils to have a "blended" approach. It is hosted in the cloud and centrally managed by LGTG with up to 11 'landing pages' – if required.

The eLearning Platform can be used on a desktop, laptop or smartphone. Staff using it will be able to dip in and out and progress with their learning can be tracked. There is a test facility (and certificates can be issued) where there is a requirement for this. Councils will also be able to add their own learning areas, for example on council policies.

The eLearning Platform is due to be released to councils in November 2015 and will be managed in councils by their HR teams. Learning Pool will help individual councils set up landing pages and any internal launch or publicity. New content will be developed by a project team, overseen by LGTG Practitioners' Group and LGTG.

Courses currently available are:

- Health and Safety
- Data Protection
- Equality and Diversity
- Social Media
- Risk Management
- Change Management
- Code of Conduct
- Performance Management