



**Society of Local Authority Chief Executives  
and Senior Managers  
Northern Ireland Branch**

**BRANCH MINUTES**

*Venue*            **North Down Borough Council  
Townhall  
The Castle  
Bangor County Down**

*Date & Time*    **Friday 6 November 2009 at 10.00am**





<b>POSITION</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>APOLOGY</b>
<i>CHAIR</i>	<i>Trevor Polley</i>	
<i>SECRETARY</i>	<i>Liam Hannaway</i>	
<i>VICE CHAIR</i>	<i>David McCammick</i>	
<i>TREASURER</i>	<i>Ashley Boreland</i>	
<i>VICE SECRETARY</i>		<i>Liam Flanigan</i>
<i>AUDITOR</i>		<i>Rodney Connor</i>
<i>PAST CHAIR</i>	<i>Philip Faithfull</i>	
	<i>John Briggs</i>	
	<i>John Dempsey</i>	<i>Alan Burke</i>
	<i>Norman Dunn</i>	<i>Valerie Watts</i>
	<i>Robert Gilmore OBE</i>	
	<i>Adrian Kerr MBE</i>	
	<i>Richard Lewis</i>	
	<i>Anne Donaghy</i>	
	<i>John McGrillen</i>	
	<i>Mick McGuckin MBE</i>	<i>Eamon McCotter</i>
	<i>Ciaran Quigley</i>	<i>Geraldine McGahey</i>
	<i>Danny McSorley</i>	<i>Alan Cardwell</i>
	<i>E Campbell</i>	
	<i>John Quinn</i>	<i>Peter McNaney</i>
	<i>Roger Wilson</i>	

<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>		
<i>DOE</i>	<i>Wesley Shannon, Angela Fitzpatrick, Lorcan O'Kane</i>	
<i>LGSC</i>	<i>Lisa O'Neill</i>	
<i>SOLACE Policy Officer</i>	<i>Christine Horner</i>	

## **1. APOLOGIES**

**1.1** As above.

## **2 RPA**

### **2.1 Issues Raised by SOLACE Members**

Wesley Shannon provided members with an update on the following issues:

#### **2.1.1 Update on Legislative Timetable**

Wesley Shannon confirmed that the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill has completed the Committee stage and it is hoped to have Royal assent by the end of the year.

**2.1.2** The **Local Government (Finance) Bill** - the consultation has ended and it is anticipated that it will be introduced to the assembly in January.

**2.1.3** The **Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill** – will be issues for consultation this month or December and introduced to the Assembly in May next year.

#### **2.1.4 Planning Reform**

Consultation events are now completed and responses under consideration.

#### **PWC Exercise Phase 2**

**2.1.5** The PWC Phase 2 report is effectively out for consultation, the SLB will meet on 9th December and will expect responses by that date. PWC have been briefing the political parties who will feed back thought NILGA. In order to process the responses DOE requested that responses be forwarded by the end of November. It was noted that in the Ministers statement he wishes to have the views of SOLACE and discussion took place on the appropriate person or body to whom the response should be addressed.

**2.1.6** On the question of equality impact assessment to minimise the threat of Judicial Review, Wesley Shannon confirmed that background work is being undertaken to address the issue. It was noted that the Finance Officers Group have asked to meet with PWC to discuss the financial implications of the report on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009.



## 2.1.7

### **BSO**

Members discussed the option of a Business Service Organisation as in option 5 of the report. Wesley Shannon agreed that any contrary view needs to be articulated in a response. In the event that the BSO is not established some of the collaborative items could still be taken forward.

### **Network NI – Lorcan O’Kane**

Lorcan O’Kane gave an outline of the current position of the Network NI programme and the impact that it will have on communications within local government. It was acknowledged that common decisions on resource are necessary and clusters should know what is available to enable them to cost the options. The financial and connectivity arguments are a very compelling business case and progress should be driven from the centre. Lorcan expressed concern that some councils are going down a different line which will cause problems in future. Liam Hannaway confirmed that Banbridge has already gone ahead and offered any IT officer to view what that cluster has done and the benefits that have been obtained since going live at the end of October. Trevor Polley thanked Lorcan and commented that SOLACE would welcome a summary of what has been happening in terms of IT.

### **Update on HR/LGRJF Issues Secretariat**

The Chairman welcomed Adrian Kerr and Lisa O’Neill from Local Government Reform Joint Forum who provided an supplementary update to the formal regular communication.

### **Recruitment**

AS Associates have been appointed and a draft Job Description for Chief Executives will be sent for comment by JNC and others. The timeframe is 25 November. Boths sides met the QC Frank and draft legal opinion will be distributed.

### **Severance**

A meeting has taken place with NILGOSC, minor amendments to regulations were discussed and will be brought to the meeting on 25 November. The regulations will be issued at the beginning of December. It was noted that the scheme operates up to 2012, however this may need to change to 2015 as per the PWC report.

### **Vacancy Control System**

An addendum to the existing circular is being prepared and it will be issued for agreement in December. The next forums will be the Staff Transfer Scheme for Local government and the Transfer of



Civil Servants as well as consultation and negotiation post 2011.

Adrian Kerr noted that at a meeting with the Minister problem areas were flagged up. Bumper Graham of NILGA is willing to meet with SOLACE and Maureen Taggart to discuss the key issues of filling new posts. The deadline date remains 25 November 2009. Concern was raised that if Severance and Filling of posts are not signed off at the same time this could cause difficulties.

It was noted that the Transition Committees are currently marginalised yet they are the employers, it would be helpful if they could be consulted. In response it was agreed that this should go to the joint regional transition Committee but as yet it has not been established.

### **3. Presentations / Discussions**

No further presentations.

### **4. MINUTES**

#### **4.1 Minutes of branch meeting on Friday 4 September 2009**

The minutes of the branch meeting on Friday 2 October 2009 were proposed to be approved by Liam Hannaway and seconded by Danny McSorley.

#### **Matters Arising – Action Sheet**

**4.2** Item 4.2.2 *Scottish Visit* The chairman confirmed that the visit to Scotland will take place on Wednesday of next week 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

#### **4.3 Minutes of Executive Meeting on 16 October 2009**

The minutes of the Executive meeting on Friday 16 October were agreed as a true record by Philip Faithfull and seconded by David McCammick.

#### **4.4 Matters Arising Action Sheet**

No matters arising

### **5. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 Chairman's Annual Dinner, Friday 16 October 2009**

The Chairman thanked members for attending the Dinner and making it a success. It was agreed that the Branch send a card to Diana Stewart because of the recent family illness.

CH to send card

#### **5.2 Local Government Awards**

Robert Gilmore, Tony McGurk and Adrian Donaldson have agreed to act as judges for the SOLACE category for the local government awards.

#### **5.3 AGM**



The AGM will take place on Friday 11 December 2009 in the Lough Erne Golf Resort.

#### **5.4 SOLACE Annual Dinner**

Members gave support to the incoming chair and vice chair to attend the Solace Annual Dinner in the Intercontinental Park Lane in London on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010.

### **6. PRIORITY ISSUES**

#### **6.1 Response to PWC phase II report**

Members discussed the initial Political Parties response to the PWC phase II report. Members noted that while the report refers to a BSO in option 5 members do not agree with the format of the option, however they recognise that other options need to be explored.

**6.1.1** Concerns were raised that no further resource has been factored in and there is an attempt to have this work done on top of endeavouring to provide continuous customer services and day to day work of the councils.

**6.1.2** Members expressed unease at the figures factored in and cost savings within the report as there does not seem to be a factual basis for this.

**6.1.3** Finance officers are meeting with PWC and also have concerns at the funding, option 4 becomes a better option in light of the figures.

**6.1.4** David McCammick received Branch endorsement for using the Common template for the programme of work that the Newtownabbey and Antrim Cluster are using to progress work.

**6.1.5** Concern was expressed that some of the provisions in the report ignore the democratic process,

**6.1.6** EU Tender issues arise if a BSO is established, this would have a great impact on local government.

**6.1.7** It was noted that some councils have a very fixed view on waste disposal issues.

**6.1.8** Members noted that there is a question over where Environmental Health should sit to undertake policy development work.

**6.1.9** It was agreed that any further comments on the Solace response should be forwarded to Liam Hannaway with a view to a meeting with the NILGA Executive Committee to discuss and a finalised



response that week to go to councils and Voluntary Transition Committees before the end of November deadline.

**7. NILGA**

No Additional Business

**8. CORPORATE PARTNERS**

**8.1 Tascomi Agreement**

The agreement is in the process of being signed

**9. SOLACE CONFERENCES & EVENTS**

**9.1 Joint Events with CEX Forum:**

Alvin McKinley Director of CEX forum has contacted the branch to discuss the possibility of a further series of events in March June and September of 2010 to ensure that the collaborative working aspect of the business plan is fulfilled. Members agreed that this should be referred to the Executive Committee for further discussion.

CH note for Executive Committee

**9.2 Joint Event with All Island Forum Wednesday 18 November 2009**

Sixteen members from the SOLACE NI Branch have confirmed their attendance. Members were asked to commit also to the dinner event.

**9.3 Support Programme for Chief Executives working in Transition Committees**

It was agreed that a workshop will take place in January 2010 and Steve Robinson of SOLACE Enterprises will take part

**9.4 Skills workshop for Chief Executives / Aspiring to be a CEX**

Robert Gilmore confirmed that a questionnaire will be sent out this week to all Council Chief Executives, as a scoping exercise to design a support programme. Members agreed that it will be sent confidentially to SOLACE Enterprises to collate and report back to members.

**9.5 One day Branch Conference 2009 10 and 11 December 2009 Lough Erne Golf Resort**

Adrian Kerr outlined the proposal for an HR framework event he agreed that Lisa O'Neill and Christine Horner will work with him to progress the programme, keeping cost to a minimum.

**9.6 Gender Steering Group Women's event 2010**

It was agreed to move this item to the Executive Committee meeting to discuss.

## **10. CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION**

### **10.1 Draft Bill 'A commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland'**

Noted

### **10.2 Householder Permitted Development Rights**

Noted

### **10.3 Non Householder Permitted Development Rights**

Noted

### **10.4 Permitted Development Rights for Small Scale Renewable Energy (Microgeneration ) Development in NI**

Noted

### **10.5 Additional Paternity Leave and Pay**

Noted

## **11. Correspondence for Action**

### **11.1 Request for Presentation to SOLACE by Roy Bell 'The Government Procurement Process'**

This item is on the Executive Agenda for 15 January 2010 at 12.00, any Solace member who wishes to attend may do so.

### **11.2 Filling Casual Vacancies on District Councils**

It was agreed that while Solace can comment this is best left to the politicians

### **11.3 Building Control Costs**

It was agreed that councils should be encouraged to waive fees for roof space energy efficiency improvements however it is recognised that it is up to each individual council. It was agreed that a letter should be sent to NILGA to consider the policy implications.

### **11.4 Local Government Pension Scheme**

Noted

### **11.5 Planning Service engagement with SOLACE and NILGA**

It was agreed that the existing group of Solace members will remain with Norman Dunn as Chair. Norman Dunn confirmed that the group have met and it reports to the Transfer of functions working group which feeds into the Regional transition group, which is not yet in existence. Further clarity is needed from the Department on this issue.

## **12. Communication Slot**

### **12.1 Petroleum Licensing**

Trevor Polley Philip Faithfull and Barny Haywood are due to meet the Minister on 13<sup>th</sup> November, Health and Safety want to take over this function. CEHOG are leading a working group to cover the twenty six councils.



- 12.2 Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults (the role of District Councils)**  
Liam Hannaway confirmed that this has been sent to each council and a body will be established on which a solace representative from Environmental Health or Community Safety can sit. Branch members nominated Anne Donaghy.

**13 AOB**

**13.1 Local Government Pension Scheme 85 year Rule Protections**

It was proposed that the branch write to a Scottish authority who have experience of this matter.

**13.2 Review of Investing for Health**

Noted

**13.3 Support for repair and improvement in the Private Sector**

DSD have asked for a Solace representative on the steering group, the first meeting is proposed for 23 November 2009. Members nominated Liam Flannigan.

**13.4 ASBO effectiveness review group**

Members agreed that Kieran Doherty of Coleraine be nominated to continue to sit on this working group.

**13.5 Freeman of the Borough**

The Chairman congratulated Norman Dunn on recently receiving the Freedom of the Borough of Newtownabbey.

**DATE OF NEXT BRANCH MEETING**

**Friday, 4 December**  
**Antrim Borough Council**  
**Antrim Civic Centre**  
**Stiles Way**  
**Antrim**