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

**BRANCH MINUTES**

*Venue*            **Antrim Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
50 Stiles Way  
Antrim**

*Date & Time*    **Friday 5 February 2010 at 10.00am**





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

<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>		
<i>DOE</i>	<i>Angela Fitzpatrick, John Price</i>	<i>Wesley Shannon</i>
	<i>Brian Moreland</i>	
<i>SOLACE Policy Officer</i>	<i>Christine Horner</i>	

## **1. APOLOGIES**

**1.1** As above.

## **2 RPA**

### **2.1 DOE Update**

John Price provided members with an update on the following issues:

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

A dysfunctionality group has been set up by the Assembly to deal with the 30 or so items that have been log jammed; this should include the issue of boundaries. The Miscellaneous Provisions Bill is in the second stage of consideration in the Assembly and will then proceed for Royal Assent by March. The Reorganisation Bill has not moved forward. Members discussed the possible delays in the process that may occur, however DOE confirmed that the Minister believes 2011 is possible.

#### **2.1.2 PWC Exercise Phase 2 and SOLACE response**

DOE confirmed that the joint SOLACE / NILGA response on collaboration is a positive step.

#### **2.1.3 Update on HR/LGRJF Issues (Secretariat)**

Linda Leahy gave an update on the recent publication by LGRJF. Phase two deals with consideration of the remaining at risk posts, which will be reviewed at the next meeting on 17 February. Vacancy control procedures continue to apply to the Phase 1 posts.

##### **Monitoring returns**

Only 6 councils made returns despite reminders and Linda asked that returns be made even if it is a nil return.

##### **Staff Severance Scheme**

Funding for the implementation of the scheme is still outstanding and remains an issue between TU side and the department. Health and Education were both centrally funded.

##### **System for filling posts**

Senior Counsel's opinion has been obtained and this will go to the forum on 17<sup>th</sup>, SLB, and Minister. It is not intended that the opinion of Counsel will be published publically.

##### **Staff Transfer Scheme**

It is intended that there will be a fast track appeals process, which will go out to consultation when completed. It is acknowledged that guidance documents will be necessary.

### **2.2 Collaboration Paper**

A paper has been drafted between the Business improvement section of Belfast City Council, the Solace Enterprises paper, the



Mid-Ulster paper and with assistance from Dessi Mitchell and Wavell Moore. The intention is to get the paper together next week and a final draft the following week. The Regional Transition Committees should endorse it, as it will go to SLB later in the month. The paper will be circulated and any comments should come back to Jim McKenzie. The meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February will give an opportunity for some more discussion on the paper, Andrew Coleman and BCC will be at the meeting. The RPA subgroup are meeting mid next week. Concern was raised that not everyone has had an opportunity to input to the paper. It was suggested that all 4 papers can be circulated before the 15<sup>th</sup> with the intention to sign off on the 15<sup>th</sup>. It was noted that the CMO in Mid Ulster Jim McKenzie was pulling this together. It was agreed that all papers would be circulated through the Policy Officer to all members.

- 2.2.1** SLB Update – None
- 2.2.2** RTCG Update – None
- 2.2.3** PDP A The code of conduct has been circulated however; no comments have yet been received.
- 2.2.4** PDP B – No Update
- 2.2.5** PDP C – No Update
- 2.2.6** It was noted that in the current vacuum there is desirability for a voluntary RTMT. There are difficulties with having this on a voluntary basis and the department are happy to allow the sector to fill the vacuum. John Price confirmed that the department would not be happy about setting up a voluntary RTMT; the current informal voluntary arrangements are working well. Members agreed that the current voluntary group would continue to work together, however it was noted that the pace is very quick and it is not always possible for everyone to fully participate. The chair noted that there is a responsibility for sharing information with the Transition Committees and that the branch should return to this issue next month.  
In closing, John Price encouraged all councils to submit their invoices for £150K for any items reasonably associated with the RPA changes.

**3. Presentations / Discussions**

- 3.1** Forrest Service sent apologies due to other commitments they are unable to make a presentation today and deferred until March meeting.

Branch Members to finalise the paper by 15 Feb

All 4 papers to be circulated to members by CH

Comments on the paper to J MCK

Add item for March Agenda

Confirm with Forrest Service

<b>4.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Minutes of branch meeting on Friday 4 December 2009</b> The minutes of the branch meeting on Friday 4 December 2009 were proposed to be approved by John Dempsey and seconded by Ashley Boreland.	
	<b>Matters Arising – Action Sheet</b>	
<b>4.2</b>	<b>No matters arising</b>	
	<b>Minutes of Executive Meeting on Friday 15 January 2010</b> The minutes of the Executive meeting on Friday 15 January were agreed as a true record by Liam Hannaway and seconded by Ashley Boreland.	
<b>4.3</b>		
	<b>Matters Arising Action Sheet</b> No matters arising	
<b>4.4</b>	Liam Hannaway noted that the presentation from Roy Bell was excellent and very useful for collaboration and Banbridge is considering implementing some ideas.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	<b>SOLACE Representation on RPA Structures</b> The Chairman proposed that he replace Trevor Polley on any of the bodies on which he sat as Chair of Solace. Members agreed. Philip Faithfull proposed that Trevor, as Former Chair, replace him as substitute on the RTCG, this was agreed.	To notify parties
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Portfolio Holders</b> The chair suggested that to enable members to represent the Branch on various bodies a Chief Executive should be nominated to take the lead on various matters by subject. Members agreed that the Executive Committee should look at this further.	PO and Executive Committee to progress
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Proposed SOLACE policy process</b> Members accepted the policy process proposed by the Policy Officer.	Policy Officer to implement process
<b>6.</b>	<b>PRIORITY ISSUES</b>	
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Update Peace III</b> Pat Colgan has been discussing Peace III arrangements in relation to trying to align this with the council clusters. Phase II will not start until June 2011 so there will be a contract with the new councils. Members discussed the difficulties with changing midstream as opposed to the difficulties that already exist where changes have not been made. Liam Hannaway suggested that the approach that should be taken is to target clusters, Anne Donaghy agreed that this would be appropriate as at present Ballymena and Larne have funding but Carrickfergus have no capacity building funding. However others noted that the branch should be arguing flexibility	Liam Hannaway to feed back to SEUPB

in the system to suit the circumstances of the council as targeting the clusters would cause their area difficulty. The two issues are, Governance structures and how money is spent and How councils come together to bid for monies. Liam Hannaway agreed to feed back a mixed view to SEUPB.

**6.2 Update DPP / CSP**

Philip Faithfull, Ann Donaghy and Liam Hannaway have been dealing with this issue. A consultation paper has been prepared and is due to issue detailing the preferred model. However, this will depend on today's Policing and Justice outcome. Some members noted that staff are concerned about jobs, Linda Leahy confirmed that this would be dealt with in the normal run of RPA structures.

Noted

**6.3 DCAL Letter dated 15 January on Transfer of funding for Local Arts**

It was noted that as a transferring function this has not gone through the transfer of functions working group and should be left to them to discuss.

**6.4 Governance Arrangements for Waste Management**

Heather Moorhead gave an overview of the position in which there have been proposals to reduce the size of the Strategic Waste board and the number of local government representatives on this board. The waste Programme Steering Group has also been disbanded. It was pointed out that there had been no mechanism to review the effectiveness of these bodies. The Chairman confirmed that the branch is content to allow the current mechanisms to progress this issue.

**6.5 E-PIMS**

Danny McSorley gave an overview of the project, which is a central database of civil estate properties; land holdings and occupations as well as textual information on the estate. It gives the location and outline of properties shown on computerised maps. It is available on GSI and internet. OGC will come to councils and do the training for officers in February. Danny confirmed he is content to co-ordinate this and will circulate the contact details. Michael Donnelly is doing the co-ordination locally, and Danny will work through the Policy Officer to give details of the training.

Danny McSorley  
to forward  
training details  
to PO for  
circulation

**6.6 LGEMG**

Anne Donaghy gave an update on several aspects;

1. Belfast has a protocol on flooding agreed with NIHE, which allows the council to use NIHE contractors in a flooding emergency. This has been legally proofed by BCC. This can be circulated to all councils to have such a call off and

the legal advice with no obligation.

2. Mutual aid agreement – this applies where one council has a problem then other councils can come in and help, again this is on a voluntary basis, it works well in the Eastern group and legal opinion is available.
  3. Grant to call down 11K, some councils have had to be chased up on this so it should be kept on the radar.
  4. PSNI DOE Civil contingency Board, and Fire and Rescue are arranging a community risk assessment.
- It was noted that it might be useful to get councils to feed into this through the emergency planning officer for example some areas have coastal issues that others do not.

## **7. NILGA**

### **7.1 Letter dated 15 January 2010 from Cllr J Matthews President of NILGA**

Noted

Heather Moorhead clarified that the choice of words for Improvement arrangements was a misunderstanding.

## **8. CORPORATE PARTNERS**

### **8.1** The chair confirmed that it is hoped that the partners will each contribute to one meeting this year.

## **9. SOLACE CONFERENCES & EVENTS**

### **9.1**

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

Conference Report noted and accepted

### **9.2 Local Government Awards**

The finalists were noted

### **9.3 Workshop for Chief Executives in Transition Committees 15 February 2010 Antrim**

It was noted that there are 7 names to date for the workshop, the cost of which is £100 per person. Ann Donaghy Mick McGuckin Ashley Boreland, John Dempsey and David McCammick confirmed that they would also attend.

### **9.4**

#### **Women in Local councils Making a Difference ‘Surviving and Thriving at the Top II’ 12 March 2010.**

The conference is aimed at Senior Managers, Heads of service and Directors.

## **10. CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION**

### **10.1 Copy letter dated 15 January 2010 from Electoral Office for NI**

Noted

### **10.2**



**Letter dated 14 January advising of information seminars for the National Training Awards**

Noted

**11. Correspondence for Action**

**11.1 Letter to councils on review of dog legislation – Alan Burke**

Noted

**11.2 Letter dated 13 January from DETI seeking a meeting with one or two Solace representatives to review the NI Better Regulation Strategy.**

Ashley Boreland confirmed he would attend.

11.3

**Consultation form NI Audit Office Study for improving economy efficiency and effectiveness (Absenteeism in NI Councils 2009 – 10)**

It was agreed that Ashley Boreland and Linda Leahy would draft some points, put forward the position on how unhelpful this is, and copy it to the NILGA Executive.

11.4

**Consultation on the regulation of the sunbed industry in Northern Ireland**

Noted

**11.5 Draft Local Government ( Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order (NI) 2010**

It was noted that the Branch might offer a view on this and suggested Liam Hannaway will liaise with the legal services branch in Belfast City Council regarding a response and have this cleared at the Executive Committee.

**12. Communication Slot**

**12.1 Fly Tipping**

An E-mail has been received from Karen Smyth NILGA suggesting evidence on fly tipping should come into NILGA and would like building control or the responsible department in councils to make sure that the information to assist with setting up a protocol is sent back to Karen Smyth.

Heather Moorhead confirmed that the request would go through the Chief Executives to make sure that the correct person gets the information.

**12.2 High Hedges**

At a meeting in NILGA on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February attended by Mick McGuckin and John Dempsey the additional work for environmental services to undertake was discussed. It is intended that the department will issue further information before the end of

CH to note

AB and LL to draft points for NI Audit office

LH to consider BCC response with a view to branch response for Executive Committee

CH to circulate information to CEX's



February but the indication is a £320 fee will be charged to the Complainant for inspection. It was agreed that this is a matter for each council rather than Solace.

12.3

### **Sport NI**

Philip Faithfull confirmed that Sport NI budget has been cut and he was invited to a lobbying event. There is likely to be a lot of investment to come to councils however, after 2012 the funding will change. There is an attempt to regenerate the former ESPAL. It should be noted that Sport NI has offered the new facility at Tollymore as a location for a Solace meeting.

Chair to note offer of venue for Solace meeting

13

## **AOB**

13.1

### **E-Mail from John Hanna seeking nominee to Local Government Training Group to replace Norman Dunn after his retirement.**

It was agreed that Ashley Boreland will replace Norman Dunn as chair as the chair is supposed to circulate around the Solace representatives. Anne Donaghy will replace Norman on the Training Group.

CH to write to parties to confirm

13.2

### **Update on Discussions with DARD re Post RPA**

Liam Hannaway gave a short summary

#### **1. Rural Development Programme 2007-2013**

This programme is very well progressed across all Council areas. By 2011 the rural partnerships, which have been legally constituted, will be fairly well committed both financially and legally. Most of the funding is targeted at the private sector with Councils limited in terms of direct spend (unlike PEACE III where Councils are in most cases the deliverers). For this reason, it is suggested that we do not step down these partnerships in 2011.

The preparation for the Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020 will begin in 2012 and this will be a key focus for the new cluster Councils.

#### **2. Rural Community Networks**

Across rural Councils, there are a number of Community Networks at various stages of strength and health. In recent months, we have witnessed the demise of several Networks. DARD is working with the Rural Community Network and the Networks to rationalise and encourage them to begin to liaise with their local Council clusters.



DARD will be providing funding for the remaining Networks to encourage them to begin to realign themselves with the new Council clusters. This funding is valued at £1 million and will transfer to Councils in 2011. DARD will retain its support for RCN as the regional organisation. DSD will also transfer its network funding to Councils in 2011 and retain their regional support for example for NICVA, Housing Rights Service.

It is important, and indeed DARD and DSD are keen, that Local Government, DARD and DSD begin to meet and discuss with the community sectors the shift from central government funding to local government funding. It is therefore recommended that SOLACE nominate a range of officers from across the region in conjunction with DARD and DSD, to engage with Networks to ensure a smooth transition.

Liam commented that he is content to be involved alongside David McCallum of Ards and Adrian McCreesh of Cookstown, but would like support from members in the west to have a collective voice from across the sector. Danny McSorley agreed to become involved with Philip Faithfull as a substitute.

CH to note D  
McSorley and P  
Faithfull as  
substitute

#### **14. DATE OF NEXT BRANCH MEETING**

**Friday, 5 March 2010**  
**Newtownabbey Borough Council**  
**Mossley Mill**  
**Carnmoney Road North**  
**Newtownabbey**