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

BRANCH MINUTES

Venue **Belfast City Council**
City Hall
Belfast

Date & Time **Friday 5 November 2010 at 10.30am**

CONSILIUM technologies
PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS
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POSITION	PRESENT	APOLOGY
CHAIR	David McCammick	
SECRETARY	Liam Hannaway	
VICE CHAIR	Ashley Boreland	
TREASURER	Valerie Watts	
VICE SECRETARY	Liam Flanigan	
AUDITOR		John Briggs
PAST CHAIR	Trevor Polley	Trevor Polley
	John Quinn	Norman Davidson
	Danny McSorley	Michael Docherty
	Brendan Hegarty	Eddie Curtis
	John Dempsey	Roger Wilson
	Robert Gilmore OBE	John McGrillen
	Geraldine McGahey	
	Richard Lewis	Tom McCall
	Anne Donaghy	Jacqui Dixon
	Nora Winder	Alan Cardwell
	Philip Faithfull	Adrian Kerr MBE
	Kevin Heaney	
	Mick McGuckin MBE	
	Peter McNaney	
	Edward Patterson	
	Alan Burke	
	Nora Winder	

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IN ATTENDANCE		
DOE	Wesley Shannon	
	Brian Moreland	
SOLACE Policy Officer	*Christine Horner*	
ALGFO	*Ciaran Quigley*	
	JJ Tohill	
	Joe Campbell	
DARD	*Kate Davey*	
	Collette McMaster	
NILGOSC	*Deane Morrice*	

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1. APOLOGIES

1.1 As above.

2 DOE

2.1 Wesley Shannon and Brian Moreland attended the meeting on behalf of DOE.

2.1.1 Members sought confirmation that there are governance arrangements for planning however DOE stated that there is currently no ongoing work on this issue. With the loss of funding Network NI Support was one of the change projects and local government note that there was a lost opportunity on that project. It was confirmed that DOE do not envisage any opportunity to obtain further funding for that particular project, it has been made clear that efficiencies should be self funding.

2.1.2 Peter McNaney sought confirmation of how the departmental financial position will affect local government, councils need to know so that they can set the rate and he sought any information on de-rating and resource grant which could greatly assist councils planning and budgeting.
Wesley Shannon advised that the figures will not be available until the departmental budget is clear. Members sought clarification of the de-rating review with LPS and DOE. DOE agreed to forward

the figures to local government.

2.1.3 The issue of Rate Capping was raised by members, however Wesley Shannon noted that while this issue has been mentioned within wider circles it is not yet officially on the table. He also confirmed that there is the potential for planning pilots in the meantime. Members asked that the message goes back to the centre that a reduction in the Resources Grant is not acceptable, nor affordable to local government. Wesley Shannon confirmed that the formula and rationale for calculating figures in Resources Grant does feature highly in the briefings to the Minister.

3. Presentations / Discussions

3.1 12.00 DARD Kate Davey, Collette McMaster Animal Welfare Bill

DARD gave a presentation on the current Welfare of Animals Bill which is at Committee stage at the Assembly. Members expressed their concern that DARD officials regarded communication with 4 councils and CEHOG as consultation. The former Solace Chair made the point that a meeting between the NILGA Chief Executive, himself and DARD officials last year was an initial contact in the context of RPA. He recorded that there was no mention of transferring any function to local government at that stage and the level and means of consultation in this matter is unacceptable. DARD agreed to reflect on the point made by SOLACE members

3.2 12.30 NILGOSC Deane Morrice

Deane Morrice gave a full overview of the NILGOSC pension scheme and the strain on the fund costs and future changes which can be expected. He clarified some of the issues in relation to Single Status impact on pensions. A booklet on his presentation is available through the Solace Policy Officer for those members who were not available to attend the meeting.

4. MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of Branch meeting on Friday 3 September 2010

The minutes of the branch meeting on Friday 3 September 2010 were proposed by Ashley Boreland and seconded by John Dempsey.

4.1.1 Matters Arising – Action Sheet

Item 3.4 Peter McNaney sought confirmation that LGEM are content with the reasons that Belfast receives more funding in the Emergency Planning Grant. Anne Donaghy confirmed that there is not an issue.

4.2 Minutes of Branch Meeting On Friday 1 October 2010

The minutes of the Branch Meeting on Friday 1 October were proposed as a true reflection of the meeting by Liam Hannaway

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and seconded by Ashley Boreland.

4.2.1 Matters Arising

No matters arising

4.3 Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting Friday 15 October 2010

The Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on Friday 15 October were proposed to be adopted by Ashley Boreland and seconded by Liam Hannaway.

4.3.1 Matters Arising

No matters arising

5. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

5.1 VAT on Leisure Services JJ Tohill Ciaran Quigley and Joe Campbell

CQ explained that there are two legal arguments arising in relation to the VAT levy on leisure charges. Firstly, leisure provision is a statutory requirement and should be classified as a 'special legal regime' and therefore exempt from liability to tax. Secondly, because leisure provision is made at a financial loss, it is not a 'business activity'.

5.1.1 CQ has investigated with Brett Lockhart QC whether there would be any advantage in going to the NI High Court. However, he is now satisfied that the appropriate forum for legal challenge is the Valuation and Duties Tribunal.

5.1.2 CQ's advice is that the legal issues should now be tested, preferably on the basis of a lead council approach but with all councils sharing the costs on an equitable basis.

5.1.3 It was proposed and agreed that ALGFO will now take the matter forward with the councils. CQ agreed to act as a central legal co-ordinator with the London solicitors.

ALGFO and CQ to take this forward

5.2 Brendan Hegarty noted that several legal companies have been lobbying individual councils to take a case on landfill tax. It was noted that ALGFO are already looking at this area with a view to an all council approach.

5.2.1 Branch Reconfiguration, Relationships with professional bodies and Branch Vision

5.2.2 Valerie Watts circulated and briefed members on the Draft Vision

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that she prepared at the request of the branch on 17 September. The chairman reiterated that the branch need to review what the vision is for the sector and what role the branch will play in that vision.

5.2.3 The Discussion was welcomed by Peter McNaney and Danny McSorley as it will help to clarify the role of the Chief Executive as advisor to the politicians who make the decisions on Policy issues. It will also help take forward the agenda for change.

5.2.4 The Chairman proposed that the next steps are to arrange a workshop or seminar which includes a closer look at what the Vision should be for the branch. It was proposed that the Executive Committee make arrangements for an event separately from a Penna workshop.

Executive Committee make arrangements for a ½ day visioning and business planning workshop

6. PRIORITY ISSUES

6.1 Governance

Ashley Boreland gave a short overview of the progress of the Governance Group. The aim is to have the governance arrangements in place in January.

Improvement Collaboration and Efficiency Group

6.2 Danny McSorley confirmed that workstream A is well advanced and it is anticipated that there will be a period of consultation in December / January. It was noted by some members that the level of communication and understanding of what work is taking place is unbalanced. There is a need for a communication event to fill that gap and ensure that commitment is obtained from members and officers. Danny McSorley went on to note the points raised and accepted that the timetable is short, however time available for Change Managers is also short and he commended the timetable to members. The lack of funding to take the work forward and to arrange events was raised as an issue.

6.2.1 Geraldine McGahey advised that the communications group have proposals for an event on 29th November 2010 for Elected members with a short overview of the ICE support template for officers afterwards. Members agreed that this should be taken forward. It was agreed that a venue should be sought with little or no cost and seek input from an Economist Esmond Byrne or Victor Hewitt, to set the scene would be helpful. The Policy Officer agreed to take this forward. Nora Winder noted that it is important to get the three issues of, the Financial Situation, the wider political arena, and the work that is going on, to the elected members and officers.

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6.2.2	David McCammick confirmed that the HR working Group will be issuing a request for data and asked that members encourage their staff to make a return on this request.	
6.3	**Transferring Functions** Peter McNaney referred to the recent draft paper on Transferring Functions, which he recently circulated to all Solace Executive Committee members. He requested that the paper be circulated to all SOLACE members and that the subject is included for discussion on the branch agenda for 3 December 2010.	CH to circulate the TF paper to all solace members and note for Branch Agenda
7.	**NILGA**	
7.1	Danny McSorley agreed that he will attend the NILGA Executive Meetings on Friday 12 November, 17 December and 14 January to speak on the ICE programme.	DMcS to attend meetings
7.2	**Solace Response to NILGA Review** Noted	
7.3	**Joint Office Bearers Meeting** It was agreed that a joint office bearers meeting should be arranged as soon as possible.	CH to arrange a joint office bearers meeting
8.	**CORPORATE PARTNERS**	
8.1	**PWC Proposals for Collaboration** Members agreed to support the proposals from PWC for Pilot workshops.	CH to take forward with S Rheinlander
8.2	The Policy Officer has been trying to contact Tascomi without success, however the renewal of the agreement is currently with Sonia Rheinlander.	
9.	**SOLACE CONFERENCES & EVENTS**	
9.1	**Solace workshops for Chief Executives** Members agreed that these should take place around the second half of February 2011.	Ch to arrange dates and programme with LGSC
10.	**CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION**	
10.1	**Thank You Letter dated 25 October 2010 from Leo O'Reilly** Noted	
10.2	**Letter Dated 20 October from Hon. Sec. Solace to Environment Committee Finance Bill** Noted	
10.3	**Community Relations Council Submission on Programme for Cohesion Sharing and Integration**	

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Noted

10.4

Amendment of Council Directive on Fruit Juices
Noted

10.5 **Western H&SC Accounts**
Noted

10.6 **Committee Report on the Sumbeds bill dated 21 October 2010**
Noted

11. **Correspondence / consultations for Action**

11.1 & 12.4 **EDRF Drawdown**
Issues were raised in relation to the draw down of funds and if the funds could be used for Tourism.

11.2 **DHSSPS Consultation on the Next Steps for Healthy Start**
Noted

Communication Slot

12.1 **LPS Strategic Steering Group**
Peter McNaney confirmed that Belfast City Council have a Memorandum of Understanding with the LPS and it will expect this to be adhered to as 75% of council income comes from Rates. It was noted that a small group of individuals are currently trying to address the issues with LPS.

12.2 **General Grant Resources Meeting**
Dealt with above at 2.

12.3 **Elections 2011**
John Dempsey gave a short review of the matters under discussion by the elections working group and the questions to be answered.

1) Members agreed that 2 days training for Chief Executives and Count supervisors on the new legislation will be necessary.
2) It was confirmed that the Council will be responsible for its own paperwork and to pass the ballot papers to the presiding officer. John will seek clarification on this for the next meeting.
3) Count Timing: Polling day will be Thursday. Members asked if they could start the Council count immediately after the Assembly count or if all were to wait and start at the same time on perhaps Monday. It was agreed that a common start time was preferable. John Dempsey agreed to clarify this and circulate decision to all councils.
4) There are two options for additional screens and ballot boxes required.

JD to take this forward

1) that the councils buy the ballot boxes or
2) that the electoral office buy the boxes and councils hire them

5) The use of electronic counter was discussed and members concluded that manual count appears to be better. Training on the electronic count is available.
6) If additional leaflets are required then Electoral Office will supply them.
7) Members agreed that the web address that should be used is NI Direct.

JD to circulate questions to all councils and seek responses before next working group meeting.

12.4

Dealt with at 11.1

13 AOB

13.1 Peter McNaney advised colleagues that Paddy McIntyre is retiring soon and requested that the branch consider making arrangements to mark the occasion. It was agreed that the Executive Committee will consider the proposal.

Executive Committee to consider

14. DATE OF NEXT BRANCH MEETING & ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Friday, 3 December 2010
Antrim Borough Council
Antrim Civic Centre
50 Stiles Way
Antrim