



**B**

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

**BRANCH MINUTES**

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

*Date & Time*    **Friday 3 December 2010 at 10.00am**





<b>POSITION</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>APOLOGY</b>
<i>CHAIR</i>	<i>Ashley Boreland</i>	
<i>SECRETARY</i>	<i>Liam Hannaway</i>	
<i>VICE CHAIR</i>	<i>Danny McSorley</i>	
<i>TREASURER</i>	<i>Roger Wilson</i>	
<i>VICE SECRETARY</i>	<i>Liam Flanigan</i>	
<i>AUDITOR</i>	<i>John Briggs</i>	
<i>PAST CHAIR</i>	<i>David McCammick</i>	<i>Trevor Polley</i>
	<i>John Quinn</i>	<i>Norman Davidson</i>
	<i>Danny McSorley</i>	<i>Theresa Donaldson</i>
	<i>Brendan Hegarty</i>	<i>Eddie Curtis</i>
	<i>John Dempsey</i>	<i>Tom McCall</i>
	<i>Mick McGuckin MBE</i>	<i>John McGrillen</i>
	<i>Geraldine McGahey</i>	<i>Robert Gilmore OBE</i>
	<i>Richard Lewis</i>	<i>Philip Faithfull</i>
	<i>Jacqui Dixon</i>	<i>Anne Donaghy</i>
		<i>Alan Cardwell</i>
		<i>Adrian Kerr MBE</i>
		<i>Alan Burke</i>
		<i>Joan McCoy</i>
		<i>Peter McNaney</i>
		<i>Nora Winder</i>

<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>		
<i>DOE</i>	Wesley Shannon	
<i>SOLACE Policy Officer</i>	<i>Christine Horner</i>	
<i>LPS</i>	<i>Iain Greenway</i>	
<i>BCC</i>	<i>Ronan Cregan</i>	

## **1. APOLOGIES**

**1.1** As above.

## **2 DOE**

**2.1** Wesley Shannon attended the meeting on behalf of the DOE. He outlined the announcements made by the DOE Minister in the last few days, in particular the Local Government Reform Policy Proposals and the Planning Reform Bill. It was indicated that the boundaries issue will probably not be resolved before the elections, however it is hoped that after the elections this matter will be resolved. In relation to finance, there is a major restructure of the planning service, which will be a self-financing planning function.

**2.1.1** On the question of what format of service will be, transferred to local councils old or new WS agreed to come back to the branch on the issue. The operational side will be reformed and downsized with new fees and restructuring taking place.

**2.1.2** Members brought the issue of the Ministers comments in the Assembly to the attention of Wesley Shannon as there appears to be a perception that the savings brought about by the ICE programme will pay for the reform of local government. This is not the case and the ICE programme has never been linked to the reform programme.

- 2.1.3** Members discussed the cut to the resource element of funding for the coming year and advised that it would be better to give an indicative figure to have something to work with.
- 2.1.4** Wesley Shannon confirmed that the Minister is expecting elections in 2014 to be in shadow form and full transfer of power in 2015 if all goes well politically. The Planning Bill and Reform Bill will bring in ethical standards etc. In theory, there will be a transfer to 26 councils in 2013 but have councils in 2014/15.
- 2.1.5** Members discussed the planning pilots and how planning officers will interact in an operational way, the need for capacity building and better engagement on issues such as regeneration.
- 2.1.6** On the issue of a review of the Local Government Staff Commission Wesley Shannon noted the question posed by Brain Campfield on why there are no trade union representatives on the Staff Commission. The Minister did not answer the question but did say that he is reviewing all of the quango's and is considering the need for a Staff Commission, the Minister has asked DOE to look at the need and cost associated with LGSC considering the change of circumstances since the Commission was established. Mervyn Rankin confirmed that LGSC are currently looking at mechanisms to work with unions.
- 2.1.7** Members discussed the transfer of planning service and Wesley Shannon confirmed that it will be in a suitable state when it is transferred, the council clusters can organise planning in the format that is best suited. The planners will become local government employees. He also confirmed that there are no plans to amalgamate any planning offices at present.
- 2.1.8** It was noted that the planning working group are meeting with Ian Maye next week and suggested that if any member had any questions they wished to put to Ian then they should provide those to NILGA before the meeting.

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

- 3.1 12.30 LPS Iain Greenway and Ronan Cregan BCC**

### **4. MINUTES**

- 4.1 Minutes of Branch meeting on Friday 5 November 2010**  
The minutes of the branch meeting on Friday 5 November 2010 were accepted with amendment.

**4.2 Matters Arising – Action Sheet**

Brendan Hegarty sought full endorsement from the branch on item 5. Of the November minutes. VAT On Leisure Services. The Finance officers are seeking endorsement of their report to the Solace Branch and seeking confirmation that they can approach all councils with the same report as it is important that this issue has clarity.

Members endorsed the report provided by the Finance Officers at the last meeting.

**4.3 No Executive Committee was held in November**

The Visioning document will be considered at the next Executive Committee meeting.

**5. CHAIRMAN’S BUSINESS**

**5.1 Branch Accounts**

The Branch Accounts for the year to end of October 2010 were available for members to view and Christine Horner confirmed that the branch needs to address new ways of engaging with partners and of generating sustainable branch income, over the next year. Members agreed that the Executive Committee will consider this area of business.

Add to the  
Executive  
Agenda

**5.2 Proposal to prepare a report on the Sector’s Experience of the RPA to date.**

Members agreed that since the announcement by the Minister earlier in the week on Local Government Reforms, it would be more fruitful to draft a response to the consultation from Solace. David McCammick agreed to contact Kevin Heaney of Belfast City Council to assist with drafting a response and asked for any others who can assist to contact him.

**5.3 Special Branch Meeting 14 December 2010**

An additional Branch Meeting will be held on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December at Magherafelt Council Offices from 10.00am until lunch time. The meeting will be to have a detailed discussion and affirm the branch endorsement of the ICE report. The report will then go to the NILGA Executive Committee on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December.

**5.3.1**

Members discussed the reasoning behind the ICE programme and agreed that it must be made clear to the Minister that it is not envisaged by Local Government that efficiencies are to be used to fund the 11 council model, and that this must remain a separate issue.

- 5.4 **Visioning Document**  
It was agreed that the Executive Committee will consider the Visioning Document and return to the Branch in February 2011.

## 6. PRIORITY ISSUES

### 6.1 Governance

Ashley Boreland gave a short overview of the progress of the Governance Group. The document is in final draft and will be brought before Solace on 14<sup>th</sup> December with a view to go to consultation as soon as possible

### 6.2 Improvement Collaboration and Efficiency Group

Danny McSorley confirmed that the first cut of the draft document will be completed this week.

- 6.3 Geraldine McGahey advised that the communications group event went ahead on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2010. The working group met and noted some issues on the timetable, however these have now been discussed with Danny McSorley and resolved.

A series of communication events were agreed and the NILGA Conference in February will be used as one of these. There has been little feed back on the Newsletter to date. Liam Flanigan noted that he has only distributed the newsletter to senior staff as those who are not involved in the process may find it difficult to follow what is happening. Geraldine confirmed that the newsletter is written specifically for all frontline staff so that they can keep up to date with progress.

### 6.4 Transferring Functions

Peter McNaney sent his apologies to the meeting. However the paper on Transferring Functions has been circulated to all branch members.

## 7. NILGA

### 7.1 Joint Office Bearers Meeting 14 December 2010

A joint NILGA / SOLACE Office Bearers meeting has been arranged for Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 1.30 after the additional Solace Branch Meeting. The main item on the agenda is the ICE programme. Members agreed that Geraldine McGahey should be invited to attend the meeting.

CH to note for invitation

### 7.2 Solace Representatives on the NIJC

Members agreed that the nominees remain the same and Roger Wilson nominated David McCammick to replace Valerie Watts, this was seconded by John Dempsey. David McCammick accepted the nomination.

CH to advise John adams

**7.2.1** The issue of the value of the NIJC was raised and it was agreed that some CEX's will meet with PPMA to discuss matters and bring the item back to the next Branch meeting.

**7.3 NILGA Conference**

It was noted that the NILGA Conference is on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

**8. CORPORATE PARTNERS**

**8.1 PWC Proposals for Collaboration**

The Policy Officer asked Members to note the content of the PWC proposal to assist four councils to progress Pilot workshops on a topic or area of business that requires involvement of multi-agencies, similar to the one on alcohol abuse in Derry / Strabane area. The subject can be an issue which arises within a particular housing estate, wider area or across several council areas. Examples may be Domestic Violence, Drug abuse, anti social behaviour or youth issues. The Policy Officer agreed to e-mail details to Chief Executives and asked that councils nominate themselves before 14<sup>th</sup> December so that Solace can agree on 4 pilots that they wish to take forward at the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December.

**8.2 Tascomi**

Liam Hannaway confirmed that several branch officers are meeting with Tascomi on 8<sup>th</sup> December, they have indicated that they would like to obtain more value for money from the partnership.

**8.3 Consilium**

Ashley Boreland indicated that Consilium have also indicated that they would like more engagement with the branch members.

**9. SOLACE CONFERENCES & EVENTS**

**9.1 Solace workshops for Chief Executives**

Members agreed that these workshops should take place around the second half of February 2011, a meeting with LGSC has been arranged for 9<sup>th</sup> December to discuss branch activities.

**10. CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION**

**10.1 Elections 2011**

John Dempsey gave an overview of the proposals and arrangements agreed with the Electoral Office. Most Chief Executives agreed to collect the ballot boxes and hire rather than purchase them. Legislation will not be available for discussion until January of 2011. It was agreed that two days training will be necessary for officers. It was noted that security is likely to be an issue for those who are using the leisure centres for the election count, as premises are likely to be searched and sealed on

Thursday and if the count continues from Friday to Monday premises are likely to remain sealed and closed through the weekend.

**10.2 District Registration Service**

The GRO have sent letters to councils to cut back on their contribution to the Registrar position, Geraldine McGahey noted that some councils who have not responded to the letter have already had cuts made. If redundancies have to be made then the responsibility lies with General Registry Office and not councils. Several anomalies have come to light for example the Registrar cannot move to another district but their deputies can. Members noted that demographics have changed in the last few years with birth rate up and death rate up. It was agreed that a sectoral view would be helpful and Geraldine agreed to work along with Liam Flanigan and Danny McSorley to draft a sector wide response.

Geraldine and Liam Flanigan and Danny McSorley to take forward

**10.3**

**Consultation on Planning Fees in NI Proposals for Change**

Members agreed that each council will respond individually.

**10.4**

**Meeting of Ministerial Group on Neighbourhood Renewal**

The Chairman noted that he is unable to attend this meeting at which funding will be discussed. Jacqui Dixon agreed to attend the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December and report back to Solace.

Jacqui Dixon to attend meeting and report back to Solace

**10.5A**

**Meeting with Planning Service**

David McCammick circulated notes from the meeting with planning service to Solace members and continues to sit on the working group.

**10.5B Planning Fees** Dealt with at 10.3

**10.5C Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning and Economic Development**

Liam Hannaway agreed to consider this item and return to the branch.

Liam Hannaway to return to branch on Ec. Dev.

**10.5D**

**Local Government Reform Consultation**

Members agreed that a Solace response should be prepared by the Solace Executive Committee and volunteers.

Exec. Committee to prepare response

**10.6**

**Letter from NILGA on Waiving Fees for Loft Insulation**

Noted

**11.**

**Correspondence / Consultations for Action**

**11.1**

**DHSSPS Consultation on a fitter Future for All**

Noted

**Staff Commission for NI Annual Report**

**11.2**

Noted

- 11.3 Educational Underachievement and the Protestant Working Class**  
Noted
- 11.4 Public Consultation on the Review of Financial assistance for Domestic Properties Not Served By a Water Main**  
Noted
- 11.5 Consultation on the Implementation of all Provisions of the EU Third Internal Energy Package**  
Noted
- Communication Slot**
- 12.1 LPS Strategic Steering Group**  
The LPS Strategic Steering Group will meet on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December and Iain Greenway LPS agreed to relay the concerns expressed by members during their discussion today to the Group.
- 12.2 General Grant Resources Meeting**  
Lobbying is continuing totroy to ensure no further in year cuts.
- 12.3 Retirement of Paddy McIntyre**  
Branch agreed to note the retirement in the normal way.
- 13 AOB**
- 13.1** Danny McSorley noted that a survey has been sent out by John Adams from the employers side and would encourage members to return it. Danny also asked for a nominee to attend the pay briefing which will take place on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2010. Roger Wilson agreed to attend.
- 13.2 Winter Gritting**  
John Dempsey raised the issue of gritting pavements and footpaths, it was noted that some councils already have a local agreement, which is dealt with as part of the Emergency Planning and staff are working under the supervision of DRD. Many of the other councils are also assisting DRD but this has not been mentioned news reports. It was agreed that a sectoral response to the issue is needed. However it was noted that there are some difficulties with the existing proposals from DRD which remain to be ironed out.
- 14. DATE OF NEXT BRANCH MEETING**  
**Friday, 4 February 2010**  
**Venue to be Confirmed**