

SOLACE

Response to the Emerging Findings document

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper has been produced in response to the Emerging Findings document published by the Northern Ireland Executive on 19 October 2007, which sets out proposals for the future of Local Government in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 SOLACE believes that this response addresses a number of serious weaknesses within the Emerging Findings Paper and sets out how alternative Local Government structures can best meet the needs of local communities and their citizens.

2 RPA – The Key Message

- 2.1 The Review of Public Administration has many interlocking dimensions, not least the important component of Local Government. Throughout the review process Local Government has featured prominently. It has been the subject of detailed research, extensive public consultation and comprehensive analysis. Surveys of public opinion and focus group activity with key stakeholder groups also confirmed the preference for Local Government being strengthened. What has emerged is an undisputed message that significant change is required and that there is widespread demand for **Strong Local Government**.

3 Supporting Evidence for Strong Local Government

- 3.1 There is strong evidence from all of the other jurisdictions on these islands that improvement in the quality of life for communities is dependent upon a strong Local Government sector with the *ability to provide leadership, deliver a full of range modern services and effectively shape the places where people live and work*.
- 3.2 Governments in both Britain and Ireland have recognised it is only through empowering Local Authorities to deliver social, economic and environmental gains at a local level that national policy objectives can be met. This evidence provided the basis for the recommendations set out by the original RPA team and the decisions ultimately taken by the then Secretary of State. SOLACE contends that the Emerging Findings Paper

does not align with the evidence produced by the RPA Team and consequently seriously weakens the case presented in that document.

4 What does Strong Local Government mean?

4.1 ‘Strong Local Government’ in essence means a significantly increased role in powers and service delivery for local Councils. This would have obvious implications for other parts of the public service as some major functions and roles would require to be transferred to the new Councils.

4.2 Some of the transferred functions, namely *Planning, Roads, Economic Development and Regeneration* are regarded as “**Strategic Drivers**” and form an essential integrated package of services which will secure more effective delivery, enhanced democratic accountability and improved outcomes. Without these strategic drivers Councils will remain weak.

5 Core Principles

5.1 SOLACE believes that there are a number of core principles on which the changes to the Local Government sector should be based. These include:

- *Central Government should concentrate on the Programme for Government, legislation, regional policies/strategies, budgetary frameworks, performance setting and scrutiny, with Local Government concentrating on delivery of key public services and its important roles in community planning, civic leadership, etc.*
- *The interests of the citizen should be at the centre of not only the vision for Local Government but also all decisions relating to the new arrangements.*
- *The focus should be on improving the quality of life, health and well being of the community.*
- *There should be a more integrated approach to public service delivery involving the public, private and community/voluntary sectors in order to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness.*

5.2 Given that all of the stakeholders agree the vision, which has been set out for Local Government it would have been appropriate to illustrate how the key principles above can be delivered upon.

5.3 The Emerging Findings Paper fails to reflect some of the key principles set out above e.g. the need for an integrated approach to public service delivery in order to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

6 Roles and Functions

6.1 Strong Local Government would involve exercising new roles and responsibilities in the context of appropriate governance arrangements.

6.2 Roles

The key roles would include:-

- Service Procurement and Delivery
- Civic Leadership
- Community Planning – Visioning, Place Shaping and Strategic Planning
- Consultation, Representation and Advocacy
- Partnership and Participative Democracy
- Building Sustainable Communities
- Local Engagement

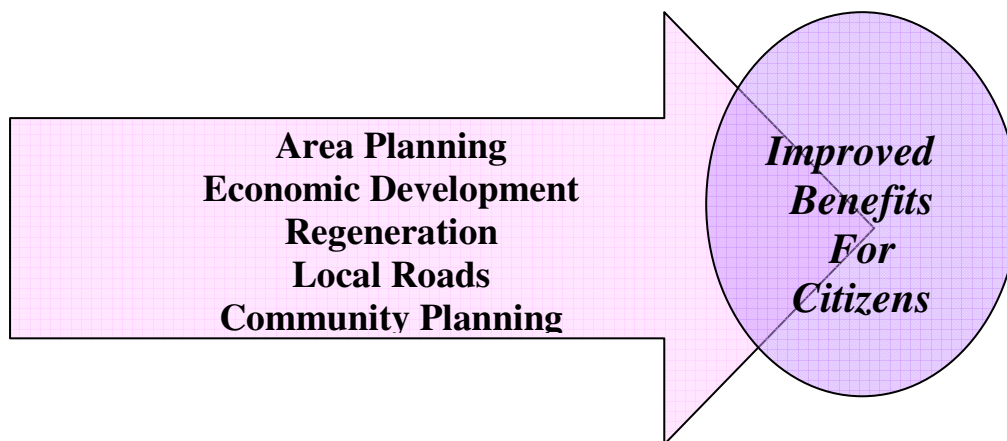
These roles would be underpinned by legislation to: -

- Legitimise the Community Planning Process.
- Define the Services to be delivered by Local Government.
- Ensure Value for Money/Best Value in the provision of Services.
- Enable a Local Authority to do anything, which it considers is likely to promote or improve the well being of their area and people within that area. (Power of Community Well-Being).
- Facilitate the deployment of innovative governance approaches in political structures and democratic accountability.
- Ensure public accountability, transparency and fairness in exercising those roles.
- Provide for the creation of structures to give expression to local identity and needs.

6.3 Findings

The major service responsibilities would include: -

Key Package of Functions – *The Strategic Drivers*



A more extensive range of services is set out below and is detailed in Appendix 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Conservation • Economic Development • Tourism • Urban and Rural Regeneration • Rural Development • Roads {excluding strategic routes} • Community Planning • European Programmes • Housing assigned services • Education Support Services • Environmental Services • Building Regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Health • Leisure and Recreation • Youth Services • Libraries and Museums • Arts and Culture • Community Development • Community Services • Community Relations • Emergency Planning • Services in partnership with or on behalf of other bodies – Shared Services • Key Services determined by the Assembly
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7 Service Delivery - a range of options

- 7.1 Local Government fully accepts that in order to discharge some of those new functions in a cost effective manner it must embrace innovative methods of delivery in order to overcome the potential diseconomies of scale which may result from transferring responsibilities from Central to Local Government.
- 7.2 Services may be delivered in a range of ways:
- Directly by the Council.
 - In partnership with the voluntary and private sectors.
 - Services may be assigned to a devolved local arrangement for delivery.
 - In a minority of cases some functions may be best exercised on a sub regional basis with Councils co-operating in a grouped format.
- 7.3 Councils are keen to embrace shared services arrangements as an opportunity to create efficiencies and believe these should be considered in partnership with the wider public sector rather than on a narrow sectoral basis. The Emerging Findings Paper does not adequately address these opportunities.

8 The Rationale for Local Government having responsibility for Planning, Roads, Regeneration and Economic Development

- 8.1 As emphasised previously these are the “**strategic drivers**” for local development, the package of functions essential for an effective, meaningful Local Government sector.

Planning

- 8.2 Given the wealth of evidence which would suggest that “**place shaping**” should be one of the key roles for Local Government it is inconceivable that a Council would not have responsibility for spatial planning in its area of influence. It is recognised that this must be set in the context of a Regional Development Strategy and procedures must be developed to ensure that local area plans reflect and integrate with the RDS. Area Plans must be more than land use designation – they must be dynamic policies with inherent economic and social outcomes.

Roads

- 8.3 If Local Government in Northern Ireland is left in a position where it will not have control over the local roads function it will in effect be unable to carry out that place shaping function. Historically Councils' attempts to re-shape their local areas have been frustrated by the fact that the key objective of Roads Service has been to facilitate traffic movement without any regard for the social, economic and environmental impact that the location of roads has on local communities and the need for their integration into broader regeneration programmes.

Regeneration

- 8.4 A full suite of regeneration powers is core to the Place Shaping Agenda. It has been recognised by Governments elsewhere that the provision of such powers to Local Government is central to achieving a wide range of Government policy objectives. It is abundantly clear that the current centralised structures lack strategic direction, as the resources do not always exist to meet the regeneration needs of towns and villages on a province wide basis.
- 8.5 It could also be argued that the failure to integrate the planning, roads and regeneration functions at a local level has adversely affected commercial investment in Northern Ireland in recent years. Local developers have often invested their resources in more investment friendly locations and as a result many of our provincial towns have entered into a spiral of decline as a result.
- 8.6 The regeneration function must meet the needs of both urban and rural areas and requires adequate legislative powers for effective intervention, such as compulsory purchasing and development powers. Regeneration extends beyond the important function of environmental improvement and must be capable of delivering against clear economic and social objectives as well as physical and environmental priorities.
- 8.7 Regeneration efforts are further confused by the fact that the responsibility for the regeneration of smaller towns/rural areas lies with DARD rather than DSD. It is therefore something of a contradiction that the transfer of the Rural Development Programme recognises that Councils have the capacity to deliver regeneration functions for rural towns and villages whilst this capacity is questioned by DSD.

- 8.8 In certain instances DSD make direct interventions in support of community groups who have acquired assets for the purposes of regeneration in town centres. Such projects are often driven by the fact that properties are available and often do not reflect the priorities set out in development plans commissioned by Councils. On occasion such projects have difficulty in becoming financially sustainable and at times fail due to the lack of project management capacity within the groups. These resources would be much more effectively channelled through Local Authorities who can ensure they are allocated to priority projects, provide project management support, ensure that proper governance arrangements are in place and where necessary guarantee financial viability.
- 8.9 It is accepted that those major regeneration schemes, which are likely to have a regional impact, of which there are few, should remain with Central Government and these should be developed in partnership with the Local Authorities concerned.

Economic Development

- 8.10 As Invest NI seeks to consolidate its focus on its client base of international and export focused companies there is an obvious need for the Local Government sector to meet the business development requirements of the small and micro-business sector which constitutes the vast majority of companies in Northern Ireland.
- 8.11 The development of these businesses will play a key role in shaping the economic well being of communities and will feature heavily as part of the community planning process. This is recognised to some extent by the decision to transfer the “Start a Business Programme” to the Local Government sector.
- 8.12 The Emerging Findings Paper fails to recognise however the confusion and duplication, which currently exists in the delivery of business support and other economic development services. There is a clear rationale for transferring those functions to a single body at the local level which can provide a full range of enterprise support services to local businesses.

8.13 Currently, the following agencies undertake the functions outlined below in relation to Local Economic Development: -

Councils

- (a) Agree Local Economic Strategy.
- (b) Assist new companies in locating their business through assistance with contacts, planning applications etc.
- (c) Infrastructure Development.
- (d) Training and Capacity Building for businesses.
- (e) Grants for new and start-up businesses.
- (f) Support to Local Enterprise Agencies.

Invest NI

- (a) Providing office space and industrial land for Invest NI clients.
- (b) Export Start, Global Start, Home Start and Community Business Start.
- (c) Development support for existing businesses to help with exporting, marketing, research and development, etc.

DARD

- (a) Rural Connect Officers provide support for farmers wishing to diversify out of agriculture or augment their existing farm business through assistance with business planning, marketing, etc.
- (b) Training and development of business skills for farm families.

Local Enterprise Agencies

- (a) Business Start and Business Growth Training.

The RPA provides an opportunity to pull all this together and create ***a one stop-shop for Local Economic Development.***

8.14 Giving the new Council the lead role for Local Economic Development would allow it to work with the above bodies to ensure that there is an integrated Economic Development Strategy within its District. In this way, there would be: -

- ***Easy access to Business Start and Business Growth Support, advice and assistance.***
- ***Good signposting for businesses for help.***
- ***A means to monitor value for money.***

- *Avoidance of duplication.*
- *Linkage with EU funding.*
- *Opportunities for networking and clustering for businesses.*

Invest NI Property Portfolio

8.15 Currently access to the Invest NI land bank is limited to Invest NI's clients companies or inward investment projects. The Local Government sector recognises the need to retain strategically located sites to meet the need of inward investors. Increasingly however the inward investment projects coming into NI are from the tradable services sector and tend to be office based with the accommodation being provided by the private sector. Councils would contend that there are significant elements of the Invest NI property portfolio which are unlikely to be required by Invest NI clients and could be used to meet the needs of other businesses, including the commercial and small business sectors. SOLACE would therefore recommend that a review be conducted of the Invest NI land bank with non-strategic sites transferring to Councils to support local business development.

There is also a strong case for a proportion of the strategic sites being allocated for the provision of incubation/start up units.

Fishing Harbours

8.16 The Emerging Findings Paper makes reference to Donaghadee Harbour and SOLACE believes that any response on this should be left to Ards Borough Council.

8.17 The Paper also points to a decision to reverse the transfer of the responsibilities of the Northern Ireland Fisheries Harbour Authority to Local Government. The Councils impacted by this decision fully recognise the fact that there must be an integrated strategic approach to the provision of infrastructure to support the NI fishing fleet and Councils do not have the necessary resource to make the capital investment necessary to bring the Harbours up to an acceptable standard. The harbour areas have the potential to do much more than simply serve the needs of the fishing fleet and regeneration of these areas could make a major contribution to the sustainability of the communities in which they are located. SOLACE would therefore suggest that suitable governance arrangements be put in place which will allow all stakeholders to play a role in the development of the fishing harbours. This could take the form of a joint committee consisting of Councillors from the new Councils and those representing the interests of the fishing industry.

9 Community and Environmental Services – Local Government’s Capacity to Deliver a More Effective Integrated Range of Services

- 9.1 Local Government welcomes the transfer of the resources from DCAL, which recognises that these are essentially community services best delivered at the local level. In reality these simply augment the arts, museum, sports, leisure and events services, which are primarily provided by Local Authorities.
- 9.2 The Emerging Findings document argues for the retention of Youth Services within the remit of the ESA and Library Services within a Regional Library Authority. The original RPA document made the case for these traditional Local Government services to transfer to the new Councils, but this was overturned by NIO Ministers. The case for transferring these services remains valid as they would integrate with and complement the community services already delivered by local Councils.

Libraries

- 9.3 The creation of a single library authority flies in the face of Government policy in GB which recognises libraries as under-utilised assets sitting at the heart of local communities. In many ways the “library service” could take the form of a service delivery agent providing a shared service within a community asset, which could be used to deliver a whole range of services. In many instances the library building could perform the function of a public facing service centre for the Councils, PSNI, NIHE, Health Trusts, and other public or voluntary sector agencies. Libraries and the services they provide need reinvestment and regeneration and Councils are best placed to deliver those requirements.

Youth Service

- 9.4 Similar to the Library Service, the Youth Service should not simply be considered as an informal element of the education system. If this were to be integrated within the Councils’ Community Services Function it would allow young people to become more fully engaged in a range of activities, which will deliver against a host of regional policy objectives including:

- ***The Shared Futures Agenda through involvement with the Good Relations work of Councils.***
- ***Life Long Learning through enhanced access to the Library Service.***

- *Investing in Health, in particular tackling youth obesity and related illnesses through involvement in sports and leisure.*
- *Good citizenship and contributing to community safety objectives.*
- *Enhance social skills and self esteem through team participation and personal achievement in sports and the arts.*
- *Increase in Cultural Capital.*
- *Development of an enterprise culture through involvement with the Councils' local economic development functions.*

10 Environmental Services and Sustainability

10.1 Sustainability is a critical objective that must be mainstreamed in all policies and activities, and recently a statutory requirement has been placed upon Councils to contribute to environmental sustainability. This is confirmation that Councils, due to their professional expertise within Environmental Services and Building Control Departments, are well placed to take on the delivery of a number of functions currently provided by the NIHE. Such services include Urban Renewal Projects, Houses with Multiple Occupation, Private Sector Grants, Unfitness, Energy Conservation and Group Repair Schemes.

11 The Community Planning Process

11.1 The Community Planning Model is set out in Appendix 2.

11.2 Community Planning presents the Council with an opportunity to lead and help shape the development of its area across the full range of public services.

11.3 This leadership role would allow the Council to work in partnership with other public sector agencies, a range of other organisations and with local people, to assess the needs of its area, and then to plan the services and responses that meet those needs. This process involves the Council working with the other relevant agencies in the preparation and delivery of a Community Vision and Plan.

11.4 Based upon the Community Plan, the Council can then deliver the resultant services to the community in a number of ways including:

- *Direct service delivery.*
- *Outsourcing to the private sector.*
- *Deliver the service in partnership with other Councils on a group basis.*

- *Commission other public bodies to deliver services to its citizens on the Council's behalf.*

11.5 For a Council to effectively lead and at least punch its weight with its partners in the Community Planning process, it must not only have the essential legislative support, but also hold the key functions that are the strategic drivers in the process – planning, roads, economic development, and regeneration.

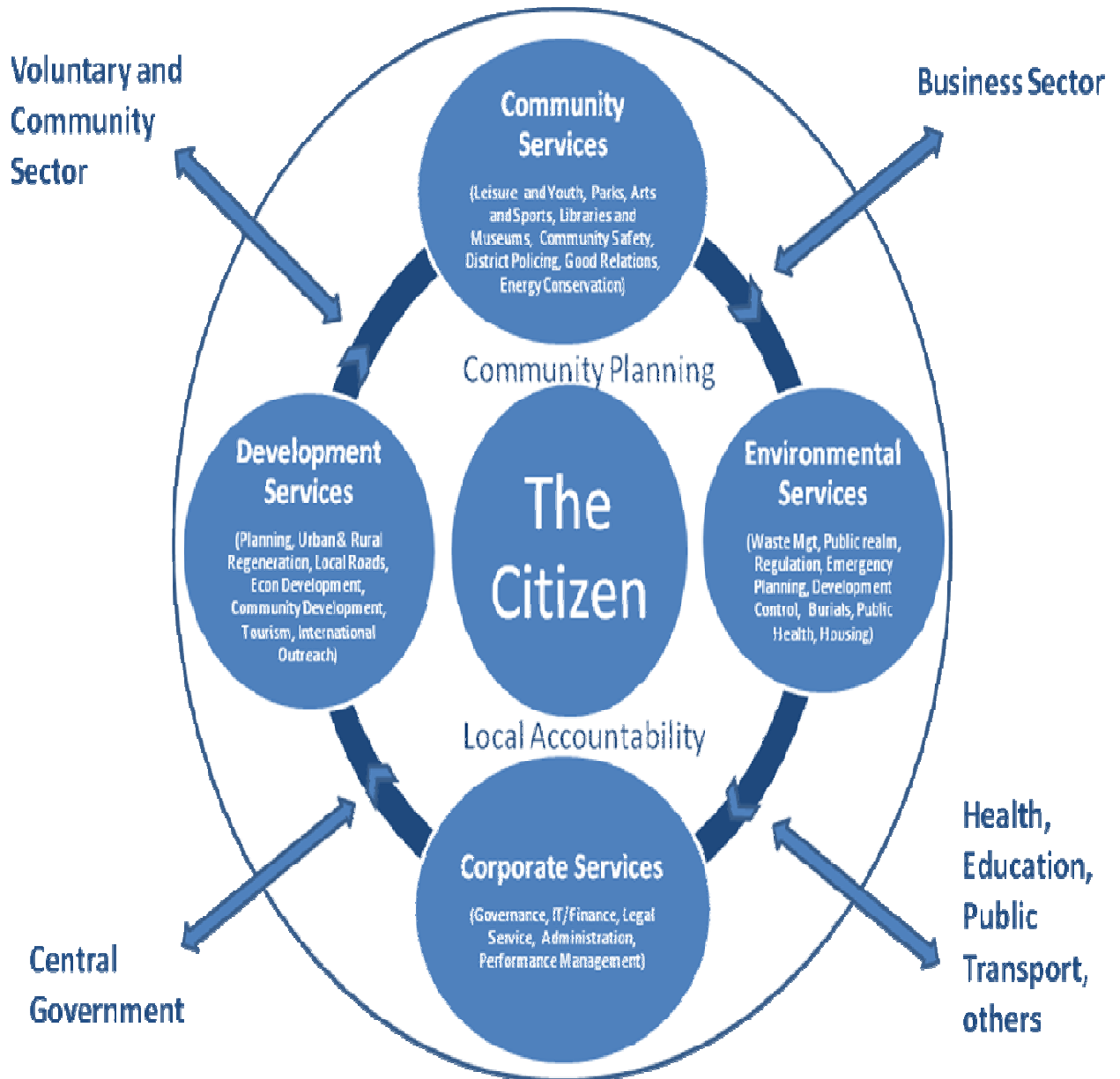
12 The benefits of transferring major functions

Inter-relationships, Inter-dependence, Compatibility and Added value factors.

- 12.1 In considering the transfer of functions on a department by department basis the Emerging Findings Paper reflects the failure of Central Government to recognise the inter-relationships of functions such as planning, roads, regeneration and economic development – the strategic drivers - and indeed is indicative of the urgent need to address this particular problem. Furthermore, any analysis which looks solely at the financial cost of the disaggregation of services by transferring them from Central to Local Government fails to consider the efficiency gains to be had from delivering services in an integrated fashion, the benefits from creating an operating environment which supports regeneration, commercial investment, job creation and environmental improvements.
- 12.2 Such developments also bring with them improved living standards, better health, enhanced community confidence, improved community relations and enhance civic pride.
- 12.3 What these major functions and the Council role in Community Planning deliver is also the ability to address cross cutting issues in a planned way. The social, economic and environmental well being of communities and positive citizen engagement which are the stated objectives of a range of Government policies would be better realised with the range of Local Government functions set out in this response. The vision of a single access point for public services becomes achievable with the outcome being enhanced service delivery, greater accountability and an improved level of citizen satisfaction with the public sector.

A Model Council - Integrating Services Around the Citizen

vision – civic leadership – modern public services - shaping places
Assembly Setting Policy and Strategy



13 How Local Government Would Work – A practical example

- 13.1 A Council endowed with the envisaged package of functions and equipped with the powers to perform the enhanced roles, would be capable of making a real difference to the quality of life of the electorate to whom it is directly accountable. What is evident is that this structure of Local Government would facilitate a better outcome for service users and communities beyond the present arrangements. In particular, the opportunity to directly combine more functions and roles would generate a new dynamic and synergy resulting in major improvements in service delivery far beyond the impact of the current disparate arrangements.
- 13.2 An example of how this would work in practical terms is illustrated in Appendix 3, which was included in the initial RPA document.

14 Model Illustration

- 14.1 The model in Appendix 4 illustrates how a Council can: -
- *Integrate Services Around the Citizen.*
 - *Focus on: vision – civic leadership – modern public services - shaping places.*
 - *Relate to Assembly Setting Policy and Strategy.*

15 Localism - arrangements for local subsidiarity

- 15.1 The Emerging Findings Paper is silent on local arrangements. The initial RPA addressed this issue and it remains an important consideration. It is felt that the new Councils may wish to establish democratic arrangements based on defined geographical areas to give expression to local opinion and identity. Government should ensure that the legislative provision provides Councils with the opportunity to develop locality sensitive arrangements, such as area committees, civic Councils (RPA model), etc This would help Councils in identifying local needs and priorities as part of the Council's strategic and community planning process. Localism would also play an active role in shaping Council services as a whole and in carrying out consultation. Overall, it would extend the principle of subsidiarity, enhance participatory democracy and secure local support and allegiance to the new Council.

16 Governance

- 16.1 SOLACE believes that good governance lies at the heart of effective and efficient Local Government. It provides for best practice in policy development, decision-making and the delivery of quality services. Governance arrangements should also ensure that Councils adhere to the ethical standards of public life, that they pursue equality and fairness, and are publicly held to account for their actions.
- 16.2 Adequate legislative provision and codes to secure ethical standards, fairness and equality, and good relations etc should be put in place to underpin effective political and managerial leadership and contribute to an agreed set of 'Checks and Balances'.
- 16.3 The opportunity to develop modern, equitable democratic processes should also be facilitated, such as streamlined committees structures, the potential for cabinet style systems of governance, and the implementation of effective scrutiny arrangements.
- 16.4 Mechanisms to ensure value for money, performance assessment, and internal and external scrutiny should be amongst the governance arrangements.

17 Conclusion

- 17.1 The current structure of Public Administration has resulted in sporadic and disjointed responses to communities needs because of the difficulty in securing a co-ordinated approach to local issues. Public administration is currently played out on a crowded pitch with too many players and a poor referee. This can change if the new Northern Ireland Executive displays the political courage and maturity required to enact the changes set out in this response to the Emerging Findings document.
- 17.2 Local Government recognises that it must also change to meet these challenges. With the transfer of strategic functions and the introduction of community planning powers the new Councils would for the first time in Northern Ireland's history be able to identify the needs of local communities and meet those needs through the provision of a full range of local services in a planned and integrated fashion.
- 17.3 These reforms are essential if Northern Ireland is to move away from a set of governance structures which were introduced to meet the needs of a community in conflict and grasp the opportunity to create a peaceful and prosperous future for its citizens.

17.4 What makes this model compelling is that the proposed package of functions and roles provides for a critical mass of direct services which will allow Councils to make a real contribution to improving the quality of life for the people who live in their areas. However, if any one of those major functions were not to transfer to Local Government the impact would be significant – much more than the loss of that single function. **What is required is the transfer of a full package of functions – *the strategic drivers* - that together are more than the sum of their individual parts.**

COUNCIL SERVICES

Councils would have the capability to deliver a significant range of major services, including the following:-

Planning

- Area Plans (Subject to - cross departmental/agency and public consultation; departmental scrutiny and approval; independent planning appeals body)
- Local plans
- Development control
- Enforcement
- Consultation on Regional Planning Strategy

Conservation

- Establishment, planning, development and control of conservation Areas
- Preservation orders and enforcement

Economic development

- Planning and development - Local Economic Development
- SME assistance
- Local enterprise agencies (LEA's)
- Industrial estates – planning and management
- Marketing
- Liaison with Invest NI to ensure compatibility with regional policy and complementarity of activity

Tourism

- Planning and development
- Tourist attractions, events etc
- Marketing – TIC, Convention and Visitor Bureau, etc
- Grant assistance

Urban Regeneration

- Planning and development
- Neighbourhood renewal, Comprehensive development, etc
- Environmental Improvements

Rural Regeneration

- Planning and development
- Village/Hamlet/Communities development
- Environmental Improvements

Rural development

- Planning and development
- Countryside conservation and improvement
- Special projects
- EU initiatives

Roads (excluding strategic routes)

- Planning and development - Non strategic roads
- Maintenance and improvement
- Winter maintenance in agreement with Regional Body
- Footpaths
- Street lighting
- Traffic management
- Road safety
- Car parking and related planning issues
- Graffiti

Community planning

- Planning and development of the inter-agency (public, private, voluntary) partnership arrangements
- Leading and managing the partnership process and citizen engagement
- Ensuring the production, implementation and monitoring of a community strategy/plan

European programmes

- Peace and Reconciliation programmes
- Leader programmes (Rural Development)
- Inter-Regional programmes
- Other

Housing Services

- Urban Renewal Schemes
- Houses of Multiple Occupation
- Private sector Grants
- Unfitness Assessments
- Group Repair Schemes
- Energy Conservation

Education support services

- Grants administration
- School Transport
- School support services (Maintenance, Catering and Property)
- Staffing – admin, school meals etc.

Environmental services

- Planning and development
- Waste Management - Waste Recycling, Collection, Disposal etc including joint arrangements
- Trading Standards

Building regulations

- Applications and approvals
- Advisory role – dangerous properties, etc

Environmental health

- Planning and development
- Food control, health promotion, inspections, etc
- Health & Safety
- Licensing
- Assigned services from other agencies

Leisure and recreation

- Planning and development
- Service delivery
- Facility development and management including joint and dual provision
- Sports development
- Voluntary sector involvement and support
- Co-operation between Area Councils on regional initiatives

Youth services

- Planning and development
- Service Delivery
- Voluntary sector involvement and support
- Facility development and management including joint and dual provision

Libraries and Museums

- Planning and development
- Service Delivery
- Local Museum and Library Services (co-operation between Area Councils)

Arts and culture

- Planning and development - local arts/cultural strategies
- Theatres and Arts centres
- Cultural facilities and services
- Local/community arts
- Arts and cultural events
- Voluntary sector involvement and support

Community development and services

- Planning and development
- Requirement to develop a strong voluntary and community sector to work in partnership with Council
- Building sustainable communities
- Developing capacity to enable all communities to perform equally to help themselves
- Shared future consultation

Community relations

- Planning and development
- Community relations strategy

Community Safety

- Planning and development
- Policing Partnership with PSNI and other agencies

Emergency planning

- Planning and development
- Coordinating response to emergencies
- Joint working with other agencies

Other services carried out in partnership with or on behalf of other bodies

Such other key services as determined by the Assembly.

Scenario - Urban Regeneration

The Council leads regeneration of a run down area in a city or town. The project has been identified as a priority within the Community Strategy. It is in harmony with the Council developed Area Plan. The potential is for a mixed-use response – public and private.

The Council would establish arrangements to engage with local communities and interests to develop a shared vision for this derelict area. This is a Civic Leadership responsibility and part of its commitment to participative democracy. Through its Community Planning role, the Council would have involved its public sector partners to secure a coordinated approach ensuring that all crosscutting issues would have been identified and addressed. Housing and Health have identified important needs.

Exercising its comprehensive development powers to acquire and assemble property the Council would execute a development brief. This would involve the Council in pump priming intervention through a new cultural facility, attracting private sector retail and office interest in investment development, and securing the commitment of the housing body as social housing is a need, particularly for single parent families which the Health Body regard as urgent. The Council would also provide support roads and car parking as a direct responsibility, and develop some industrial estate land on the fringe of the regeneration area to top-up the overstretched industrial estate on the edge of town. Overriding all this activity is a responsibility to ensure that the project fulfils environmental sustainability and planning standards.

Improvement of villages as part of planned rural regeneration provides similar opportunities for Councils to make a real difference by direct action, such as, environmental schemes, through partnerships as exemplified by Health Action Zones, and as an enabler to the local community in its voluntary activities.

What this scenario demonstrates is that Councils because of their responsibility for this package of major functions, supported by the leadership role in Community Planning, would be able to plan strategically, secure in collaborative support of other bodies, and

thus achieve coordinated outcomes in a democratic accountable process that involves fewer players all of which would operate or be customer facing within common boundaries. It also illustrates that in regeneration terms a new dynamic would be generated. For example, Area Planning would be more than a sterile land use/spatial activity but become a proactive tool to achieve designed social and economic benefits.