



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

BRANCH MINUTES

Venue **Tollymore National Outdoor Centre
Bryansford
Newcastle**

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





POSITION	PRESENT	APOLOGY
<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>John Quinn</i>	
	<i>Brendan Hegarty</i>	<i>Michael Docherty</i>
	<i>John Dumigan</i>	<i>Eddie Curtis</i>
	<i>Danny McSorley</i>	
	<i>Roger Wilson</i>	<i>John McGrillen</i>
	<i>Geraldine McGahey</i>	<i>Linda McCullough</i>
	<i>Ciaran Quigley</i>	<i>Michael Docherty</i>
	<i>Tom McCall</i>	<i>John McLaughlin</i>
	<i>Anne Donaghy</i>	<i>J J Tohill</i>
	<i>Mick McGuckin MBE</i>	<i>Alan Burke</i>
	<i>John Dempsey</i>	<i>Robert Gilmore OBE</i>
	<i>Richard Lewis</i>	<i>Peter McNaney</i>
	<i>Alan Cardwell</i>	<i>Adrian Kerr MBE</i>
	<i>Nora Winder</i>	
	<i>Edwin Campbell</i>	
	<i>Philip Faithfull</i>	

IN ATTENDANCE		
<i>DOE</i>	<i>Ian Maye</i>	
	<i>Wesley Shannon</i>	
<i>SOLACE Policy Officer</i>	<i>Christine Horner</i>	

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1** As above.
 Nick Harkness Sport NI welcomed Solace to the Outdoor Centre and recommended that they take the opportunity to view all of the facilities that the centre provides.
 The Chair thanked Sport NI for the use of the building for the Solace meeting.

2. DOE UPDATE

- 2.1** Ian Maye and Wesley Shannon DOE gave an update on the current financial position and expected future reduction in funding. Additional cuts of 20-25% are expected but it will be October / early November before these are confirmed. It is also expected that some areas of the Executive's budget will be ring fenced, for example, health. However, the Executive wants to retain a pool of money for the Programme for Government and to deal with the delivery of new areas of work.

DOE have already cut back on programmes, the general grant and staff within the Department, however there may be further cuts in year. The Department Of Environment is restructuring therefore there further changes can be expected.

Budget

The General Grant incorporating derating may be an issue for councils in the future; there will be public consultation on reduced spending. Members noted that councils will be against further cuts but asked if anyone is considering ways of increasing income, for example LPS recovery of rates.

Rates

It was confirmed that DOE is working with LPS to encourage better delivery of service. The NI Executive have established a sub-group to consider fees and charges, and Land ownership, it is anticipated that a consultation paper will issue from DOE next month. It was agreed that Trevor Polley will address the LPS issue at the next meeting with them.

DOE Budget Programme

The future of NDPB's and Agencies is being reviewed, whether the functions need to be delivered by them or if there is another delivery mechanism i.e. through local government.

After the Assembly elections RPA / Transfer of Functions may come back differently as the institutional landscape will change.

General Grant

Members sought confirmation of the general grant before the rates are struck. It was confirmed that the savings delivery plan response will inform these figures and confirmation is more likely to be later than normal, perhaps January 2011, but not earlier.

Staff Release Funding

Members sought clarification of the availability of staff release funding, the response was that this is not possible as the department is also having difficulty, however, there are ongoing discussions with DFP on the provision of loans to facilitate redundancy.

Statistical Returns

Members commented on the pressures to deliver more services at a time when Councils are looking at a reduction in the services through what they must deliver and what they would like to deliver. The reports and statistics that are requested by DOE are cumbersome and may need reviewed to analyse their usefulness.

Members agreed that the rate of EU regulation has reduced and the EU are now more concerned about delivery of outputs with more focus on policy.

Transition Arrangements

In answer to a question on transition arrangements and increases on regional rates, DOE confirmed that there will be increases in the regional rate but a better indication should be available in

November/ December. On the Transition arrangements it was stated that the Minister is unwilling to withdraw funding and while he does want to set the agenda he is awaiting decisions from Executive Colleagues on the reform agenda. If there is no appetite to take the reforms forward the Minister will fall back on what Solace and Nilga are doing. The Minister will retain Transition Committees if there is evidence of a significant role for them, otherwise he will cease funding them.

It was confirmed that a joint consultation document from Solace /Nilga on the Governance arrangements for the Improvement Collaboration and Efficiency programme is currently with councils. DOE stated that local government should not rely on the continuation of all funding currently being paid.

It was agreed that DOE and the Branch should meet again at the November meeting. The Chairman thanked Ian Maye and Wesley Shannon for attending the meeting.

CH to note invitation for November Branch Meeting

3. Presentations / Discussions

3.1 Local Government Auditor

The Chairman welcomed John Buchanan Local Government Auditor. The auditor referred to the Improving Public sector Efficiency- Good Practice document. He confirmed that they have been looking at the role of the Auditor. While the Value for Money requirement which is built into local government legislation is good, the auditor is aware that the audit culture needs to change. John Buchanan confirmed that over the next few months he is keen to work with the sector on small studies or reports that are required to take the ICE work forward.

The Chair confirmed that Danny McSorley is co-ordinating the reform, it was agreed that it would be valuable to appraise the Auditor of the work to date and the change in culture from regulatory to development and flexibility. Danny agreed to discuss the general direction of travel with John Buchanan.

3.2 Childrens Services Planner Anne Godfrey and Fionnuala McAndrew &

3.3 Brenda Stevenson OFMDFM Play and Leisure Policy, Jacqueline McLaughlin CEO and Alan Herron Director Playboard.

Both gave a short overview of the work in which they are involved and the integration of services.

3.3.1 The Branch nominated 4 Chief Executives to the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership. Liam Hannaway, Ashley

CH to work with Anne to co-ordinate responses

Boreland, Geraldine McGahey, and Anne Donaghy.

3.4 Emergency Planning Grant

Anne Donaghy advised that LGEM are currently having discussions with the Department on why Belfast does not have to match fund the £50K that they receive, but the other £276K has to be match funded.

4. MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of branch meeting on Friday 2 July 2010

The minutes of the branch meeting on Friday 2 July 2010 were proposed to be approved, by Trevor Polley and seconded by Tom McCall.

4.2 Matters Arising – Action Sheet

LH advised that he had attended the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board however all meetings are held in Ballymena and Liam proposed Anne Donaghy take over as nominee. Branch members agreed.

4.3 Minutes of Executive Meeting

No Meeting in August Matters Arising

4.4 None

5. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

5.1 VAT on Leisure Services

An apology was received from JJ Tohill, as he is unable to attend the meeting. However Ciaran Quigley set out the current position regarding advice received from Counsel on the VAT on Leisure Services issue. Ciaran noted that there are still some concerns and asked if Chief Executives are content to delegate the issue to the finance officers who are meeting again next week. It was agreed that the Chief Executives support the broad thrust of taking this forward if there is funding to be recovered. Members agreed unanimously that the Finance Officers should prepare a business case on this issue which will be brought to the Solace Executive Committee to agree.

CH to advise
Finance
Officers

5.2 CSR Preparing to address Budget Challenges

The Chairman spoke of the current economic challenges i.e. reduced income, general grant cuts, and other considerations that the NI Assembly may take into account. He proposed that a small

CH to arrange
meeting and
obtain two

group of Chief Executives work together with some finance officers to work up a paper on this subject. It was noted that the Treasury announcements in October will probably not be palatable, it will be useful to establish the scale of what is likely to come and where it will focus and establish options for a way forward.

The group that came forward were Nora Winder, David McCammick, Valerie Watts, and Brendan Heggarty. It was agreed that Christine will co-ordinate the first meeting and David McCammick will host it in Antrim.

finance officers
to attend

Elections Meeting 10 August

- 5.3** John Dempsey gave a short summary that there are major changes proposed for NI Elections and the Electoral Office will provide two days training for CEX's and staff and it is advisable that all attend. Several issues still remain on how to minimise work on the and reconcile votes for the three elections on the one day. Discussion on the issues ensued and it was noted that there will be a further meeting of the group in one month when it is anticipated that these issues will be clarified.

5.4 Letter from Bumper Graham seeking meeting

A meeting has been arranged with Bumper Graham to discuss issues relating to the ICE programme. The date is 15th September at 11.00am. in Antrim Civic Centre. The chairman asked colleagues if anyone was available to attend the meeting. Roger Wilson will attend the meeting. Nora Winder also agreed to meet with Bumper Graham, Nora will circulate the letter that NILGA sent to Bumper to all Solace members.

Nora Winder to
circulate NILGA
letter to Solace
members

5.5 NILGA Review

The Chairman confirmed that he wished to open up the selection of members of the group on the NILGA review to all branch members, it was proposed and agreed that the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and NILGA Advisors will be group members.

5.6 Local Gov. Invest (NI) EU LED Partnership

Ken Bishop of NILGA has sought a Solace member to be involved in the event on 8th September at the Stormont Hotel. It was agreed that Liam Hannaway and John McGrillen be advised and if appropriate attend.

CH to advise J
McG and LH of
date and time

6. PRIORITY ISSUES

6.1

Regional Governance Group

The consultation document on Governance has issued to councils with three options to consider. Members commented on the short timescale for Councils to respond, however it was acknowledged that it is sufficient at this stage to have a general indication of councils agreement and choice before the consultation deadline this can then be ratified at a later date. On the question of whether there was a Solace View of the preferred option, it was noted that Solace and Nilga facilitated the options, which were reduced to three options by the Nilga Executive for consultation. The Chairman confirmed that Solace believes that option 2 works better but it is up to the politicians to take a view. Nora Winder stated that option 2 was the preferred cross party option.

6.2 Improvement Collaboration and Efficiency

Danny McSorley gave a brief update on the work of his group and the strands that are moving forward with the work. He asked that recognition of the enthusiasm and positive response be recognised by the Branch. The high level issues are being dealt with to meet the November deadline and it is starting to shape the business case. This will be an evolutionary model with progressive change over a short time possible.

6.2.1 Geraldine McGahey gave a brief outline of the work of the Communications group and distributed the proposed first communication for comment. She stated that the group were keen to reflect the Q&A's that had been received, it is proposed that the printed material for circulation should be kept short and easily understood with a maximum of two sides of an A4 page. Any comments should be with Tara or Geraldine by 6th September.

6.2.2 Liam Flanigan gave a short update on the procurement group, he expressed thanks for the 24 responses to requests for information and will continue with a piece of work on the mechanisms, this will be by structured interview with key people by the change managers.

6.3 Transfer of Functions

This area is being led by Peter McNaney, the position paper will be issued shortly.



6.4 Letter from Solace Enterprises

Members discussed the letter from Solace Enterprises with enclosure of a proposal for the branch to consider on funding. It was agreed that while the branch recognise the programme of support by Solace Enterprises can be of assistance to the branch this will be better utilised when further detail of the ICE programme is developed. It was proposed that the branch seek advice from Solace Enterprises to finalise the business case and seek central government support for that.

7. NILGA

7.1 None

8. CORPORATE PARTNERS

8.1 PWC – negotiations are continuing on the agreement. Consilium – have signed the agreement on the same terms for another year.

CH to take forward with Sonia and provide paper to branch

9. SOLACE CONFERENCES & EVENTS

9.1 Additional SOLACE Branch Meeting Friday 17th September

Members agreed to holding an additional Solace Branch meeting in Carrickfergus after the NILGA Conference at 1.30 in the Marina Conference Room, Carrickfergus Marina on 17 September.

CH to notify Branch Members

9.2

SOLACE NI Annual Conference

Members were asked to note that LGSC will have a conference on Wednesday 6 and Thursday 7 October 2010 in the Slieve Donard Resort and Spa. The Solace Executive Committee have decided to partner this event. The programme will be circulated next week.

9.3

SOLACE National Conference will be held on 12 – 14 October in Cardiff, members were encouraged to attend. Branch gave permission for the Policy Officer to attend.

9.4

CO OPERATION IRELAND Social Inclusion Active Citizenship Week. 20th October Four Seasons Hotel Monaghan.

9.5

NI SOLACE Chairman Annual Dinner 22nd October Old Courthouse Antrim invitations will be issued next week.

9.6

SOLACE CCMA Conference 3 November Belfast City Hall.

10. CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION

- 10.1 Consultation 10 year strategy for Social Work in NI 2010-2020**
Noted

- 10.2 Consultation Amendment of Gas(Applications for Licences and Extensions) Regulations (NI) 1996**
Noted

- 10.3 Food Standards Agency consultation The Natural Drinking Water ...Amendment Regulations**
Noted

- 10.4 Wind Energy Development in NI Landscapes Supp. Planning Guidance**
Noted

- 10.5 Letter dated May 2010 from David Clark Director General Solace**
Noted

- 10.6 Flyer for Seminar Centre for Cross Border Studies Planning for Cross Border Hospital Services**
Noted

11. Correspondence / consultations for Action

- 11.1 Letter dated 23 July form Iain Greenaway LPS seeking nominee to GI Delivery Board**
The Branch agreed to seek confirmation that Trevor Polley will take this opportunity to sit on the GI Delivery Board, if he is not available then Geraldine McGahey.

- 11.2 Consultation on a Draft Strategy for better regulation of Health and Safety at Work NI**
The branch approved the draft letter of response provided by Anne Donaghy .

- 11.3 Consultation Meeting EU Landfill Diversion targets**
The Branch agreed to delegate this to TAG

- 11.4 Landfill and NIEA Waste Issues**
The importance of addressing the Waste Financial Provisions issue was mentioned and discussed. It was noted that NIEA had consulted in June with technical officer and finance officer but this was never brought to the attention of the Chief Executive's or Councils by NIEA. It was agreed that TAG should bring a presentation and discussion to the October Branch meeting.

- 11.5** Members noted that the full Waste Storage Guide has not yet been circulated and it is due to go out to consultation soon.

CH to note

CH to send letter

CH to contact TAG for October Branch meeting

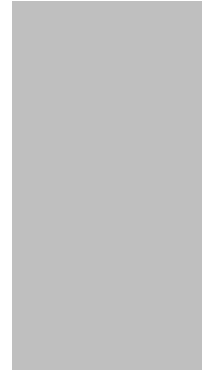
CH to obtain and circulate current draft of guide.

11.6	<p>Programme for Cohesion Sharing and integration Consultation Nora Winder confirmed that NILGA are currently trying to arrange an event around this item. Members agreed that this item should be referred to the Solace Executive for consideration.</p>	CH to note for Executive Agenda
11.7	<p>Consultation to Support Owner Occupiers in Redevelopment Areas Liam Hannaway agreed to work through the Branch Executive and bring a response to the next branch meeting.</p>	LH to note for Executive Meeting
11.8	<p>Consultation on Regional Infrastructure programme It was agreed that the policy officer should work through NILGA on a response as each council will have their own individual response.</p>	CH to work with NILGA
11.9	<p>Letter from NITB seeking support and use of SOLACE Logo on their report It was agreed that advice is sought from John McGrillen to see what the broad involvement of the branch is before making a decision.</p>	CH to contact John McGrillen
11.10	<p>Letter from Dept Education NI seeking view on the Community Use of School Premises by 24 September and Nilga seeking 2 SOLACE reps. for the working group on the subject. The branch nominated Tom McCall and Philip Faithfull to discuss matters with NILGA.</p>	CH to note
Communication Slot		
12.1	<p>Sustainable Development Event OFMDFM Roger Wilson nominated Anne Donaghy to attend the event this was seconded by David McCammick.</p>	CH to advise Karen Smyth and Anne D
12.2	<p>Sport Matters Letter from Permanent Secretary seeking confirmation of Solace actions to date. Philip Faithfull confirmed that he is working with Jim Rose and CLOA to develop a response.</p>	PF to return to branch with progress.
12.3	<p>21st Century Welfare Noted</p>	
13 AOB		
13.1	<p>Children's Services Planning Anne Godfrey and Fionnuala McAndrew The branch nominated , Ashley Boreland, Tom McCall, Anne Donaghy and Liam Hannaway, and Geraldine McGahey</p>	CH to note to all
14.	<p>DATE OF NEXT BRANCH MEETING Additional Meeting</p>	



**Friday 17 September 2010 1.30pm
Carrickfergus Council Marina
Conference Room**

**Friday 1st October 2010
Craigavon Borough Council
Civic Centre
Lakeview Road
Craigavon
BT64 1AL**



DRAFT