



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

January 22nd, 2016

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 25th January 2016** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire.**

Agenda

- 1 **Apologies**
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
- 3 **Presentation by NILGA - New Design**
- 4 **NILGA Product Work Plan**
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- 5 **Consultation received from NILGA: Developing a Programme for Local Government 2016 - 2020**
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[Item - Consultation response to LG PfG.pdf](#) *Page 14*
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- 6 **NILGA Response to Review of Northern Ireland Housing Executive**
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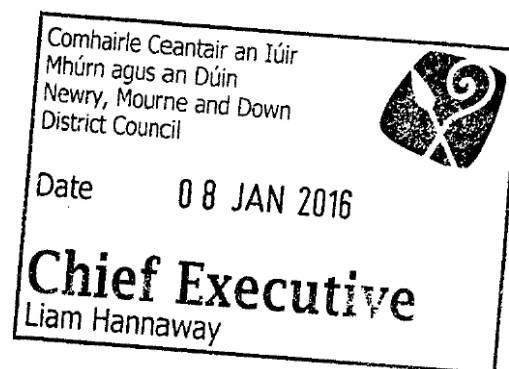
Invitees

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EMOPalad
Athletra.
Can we table this
for Council meeting with
NILGA

Mr L Hannaway
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
District Council Offices
Monaghan Row
NEWRY
BT35 8DJ



7th January 2016

Dear Liam

I have pleasure in enclosing NILGA's Summary Product & Work Plan for 2016/17, together with the investment subscription required to deliver it.

The Work Plan directly meets the requirements articulated by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in its response to the Association's Independent Review, drawing also, of course, on the feedback from all other member councils, which was substantial and constructive.

Members of the Association, including NILGA Vice-President Councillor Dermot Curran along with Executive colleagues, Councillor Robert Burgess and Councillor Charlie Casey, are valued members and will continue to participate in our work, our review and our modernisation.

Of equal importance has been the direct involvement of individual members and officers across the 11 councils not just in terms of the independent review, but in developing the core product requirements from and associated work of NILGA.

In 2016/17, all of our work will be geared to **supporting, developing and championing councils, together with bringing world class practice into local government in Northern Ireland**. NILGA will continue to develop its very strong relationship at corporate level with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, including, I trust, the aspiration of your council to gain the Charter Plus award and taking advantage of new investment opportunities for the local economy.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB
tel: 028 9079 8972 email: office@nilga.org web: www.nilga.org twitter: @NI_LGA

We will also use the council's venues such as Bagenal's Castle and Downshire Civic Centre for member and officer awareness events on matters as important, yet diverse, as the Code of Conduct, new economic investment opportunities, EU investment, and the new Powers of councils resulting from the Local Government Act 2015.

The constructive comments received from the 11 councils, as well as government departments, Colleges NI, regional enterprise bodies and the sister local government bodies in England, Scotland and Wales, highlight

- the need for a strong representative body for all councils in NI
- the importance of delivering the clear changes worked on by NILGA to date
- member development and bringing best practice to NI councils drawing on our Network
- the Association's role in supporting the independent, sovereign work of each member council
- the demonstration at all times of performance and value for money
- the need for member council commitment aligned to each local government mandate, to provide professional resource planning for the Association.

NILGA looks forward to continuing to engage in an overall strategic set of outcomes **for and with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council**, and to realising some of your corporate and member development aspirations, promoting your successes and championing the sustainability of the wider local government sector in Northern Ireland.

Councils are an essential and growing part of democracy, community cohesion and public service delivery for citizens in Northern Ireland. NILGA's regional co-ordination, communication and related support work is fully aligned to this new ambition, underpinned by the practical support requested in your constructive response.

Approval of the attached Work Plan and Investment for 2016/17 is requested by 29th February 2016.

I look forward to working with you, your members and officers in 2016/17.

Yours sincerely



Derek McCallan
Chief Executive

Enc.



11 Council, New NILGA, Product / Work Plan 2016/17

1. National and Regional Policy, Lobbying, Guidance, Publications, Representation:

Provision of Policy Guidance and evidence submission spanning all NI Executive Departments and Westminster, co-ordinating sector's representation to ensure NI council input / participation in National strategic work of the Local Government Group UK and Ireland wide, drawing down investment and collating best practice for NI councils on matters including member development, enterprise and job development, coastal erosion, infrastructure and community investment.

2. Regional and Sub Regional Events, Awareness, Flagship Annual Conference:

Holding 15 key events in 2016/17 on matters critical to NI councils including General Power of Competence, new parts of the Code of Conduct, and future economic investment roles of councils, with specific sessions on key topics including Waste, Planning and the proposed Programme for Government. **These bespoke events will be free to members and subject matter determined by council representatives.**

NILGA's flagship conference is scheduled for 6th October 2016, and will emphasise Enterprise, Excellence and Investment in Local Government, and this will be subsidised for members with free places for First Citizens.

3. Elected Member Development including Charter / Charter Plus:

All council working group delivering regional member development initiatives and publications pertinent to enhancing the role of the councillor and councils in NI, including The New Councillors Guide / all Council regionally co-ordinated training / Code of Conduct Revision / General Power of Competence / Planning Guide 2016.

4. European Policy, Investment, Representation:

Co-ordination of input into Committee of the regions, reestablishment of Council led NI European Forum with OFMDFM, Negotiation re Small Business Act, Regulations, Structural Funds, and Showcasing NI Councils as part of European Entrepreneurial Region Award.

5. Regional Communication, Bulletins, Information Portal, Member Liaison:

12 NILGA Member Council Bulletins, related Press Releases, Presentations to councils and group leaders as required, Party Conference input, revised interactive website, Ulster in Bloom media work



6. Strategic, Regional Working Groups:

18-20 sessions during 2016/17, NILGA dedicated (and supporting Government Departments where appropriate) Working Groups for Planning, Community Planning, Economic Development, Interreg, Growth & Jobs, Rural Development and Waste. These will have specific work plans tailored exclusively to councils requirements and can be further shaped to assist the emerging modernisation and shared services agenda.

7. Partnership Panel:

Support, co-ordination, administration and communication for Panel Meetings, Preparation Meetings, delivery of Work Plan and revised governance, inclusion of council items on agenda, auctioning outcomes, delivering reports and bulletins for Standing Committees.

8. Locally Important Research and Development:

Work on Council required initiatives such as Devolution, New Financial Models, Coastal Erosion, Economic Policy, Un-adopted Roads, developing a Programme for Local Government, advising on / engaging in new NICS / Programme for Government outcomes, and additionally as required by councils.

9. Corporate Planning & Performance Management:

NILGA will provide a new Corporate Plan for the period June 2016 – May 2019, to succeed the present Plan and in accordance with member councils needs, at its 2016 AGM, together with performance measurement and management aligned to this.

10. Back Office:

Support for member & council liaison, Full Members and Executive Meetings, Personnel, Finance and Office Management, Ulster in Bloom, Audit Committee.

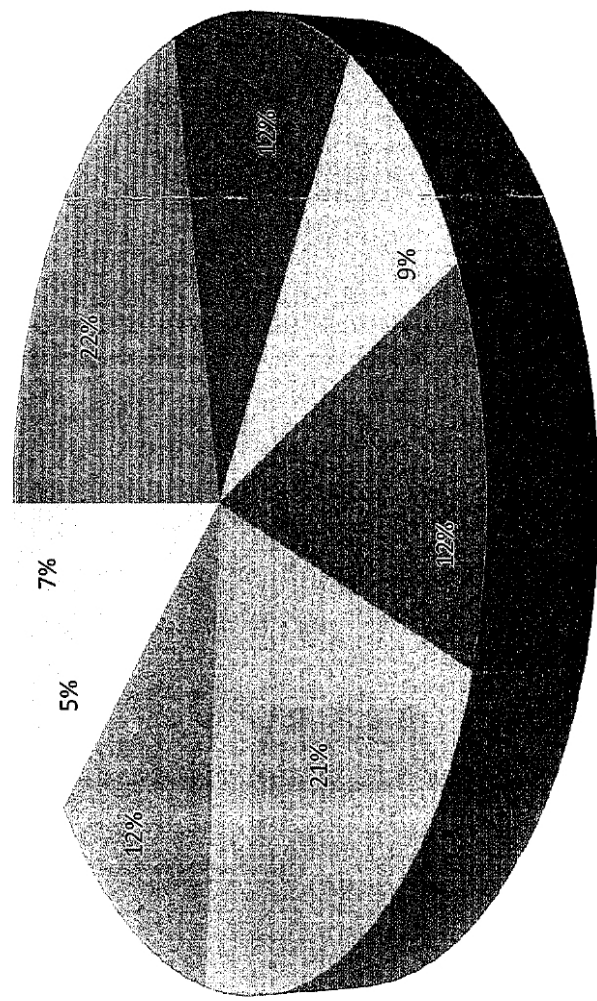
NILGA's subscriptions did not increase between 2010/11 and 2015/16. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Subscription* to enable investment in the above for 2016/17 is £48,430 (excluding VAT), which equates to 2015/16 plus 1% to accommodate National Pay Proposals. An invoice will be sent to your Council on 1st April 2016.

NB: NILGA will maintain the link with National Pay machinery (NJC) but will not engage in workforce or industrial relations work pending an Independent Review of such matters. Maintaining this link is part of the above costs, but the investment to Local Government Employers to benefit from wider policy, negotiation and fiscal work performed by the LGE (about £2,727 per Council) is not and will be billed separately following agreement with SOLACE.

*Newry, Mourne & Down District Council along with Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon, Derry & Strabane and Ards & North Down, is a Band B Council, which is a Council with a population between 145,000 - 300,000.

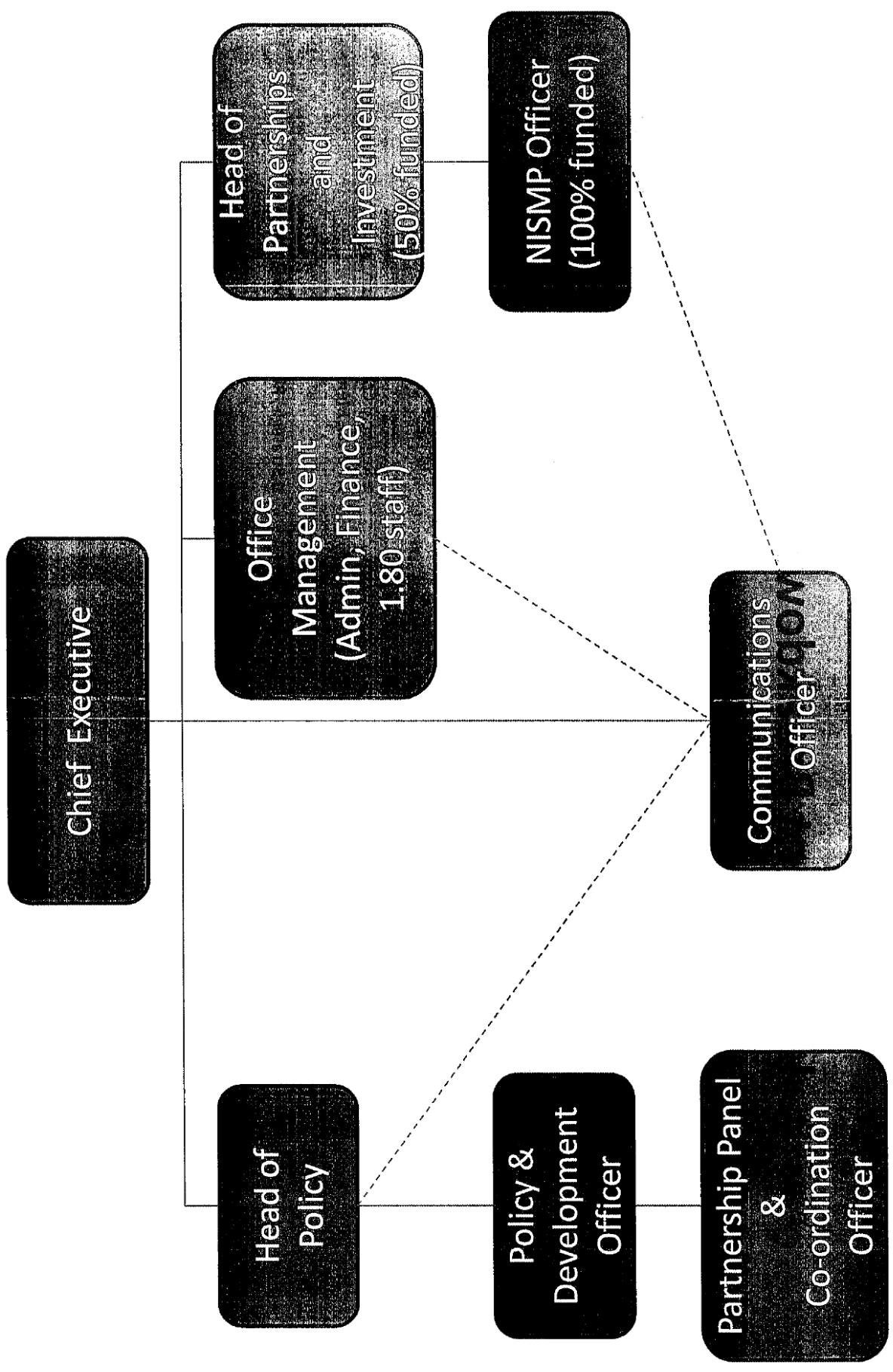
Investment Breakdown 2016/17

- National & Regional Policy, Lobbying, Guidance, Publications & Representation
- Regional and Sub Regional Events, Awareness, Flagship Annual Conference
- Elected Member Development including Charter/Charter Plus
- Regional Communication, Bulletins, Information Portal, Member Liaison
- Strategic, Regional Working Groups
- Locally Important Research and Development
- Corporate Planning & Performance Management
- Administration, Finance & Back Office



Total Band B Subscription: £48,430

NILGA Organisational Chart 2016/17



Consultation: Developing a Programme for Local Government 2016 – 2020

NILGA are inviting councils to respond to the questions outlined in this consultation, and to provide any other comments that they wish to add by 31st December 2015 to Claire Bradley at the NILGA offices (c.bradley@nilga.org). A summary of the questions are provided on the final page.

Introduction

With the reform of local government, the impending review of the NI Assembly, looming Assembly elections and the forthcoming publication of the Programme for Government for NI, local authorities in Northern Ireland have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to work collectively as a sector to improve the governance, economy and quality of public services for our citizens.

The forthcoming NI Executive's Programme for Government (PfG) will set out the plans and priorities for Northern Ireland as a region for the next Assembly mandate. Notwithstanding the current political uncertainty and the potential to return to direct rule, no incoming Executive should ignore the significant role that councils and local communities can play in the future successes of Northern Ireland. Indeed, it is a distinct possibility that councils may be the only locally elected political forums available for decision-making in Northern Ireland, should the Assembly be suspended.

NILGA, in conjunction with the 11 new councils, and following discussions at the last Partnership Panel meeting, has agreed to develop a Programme for Local Government 2016 – 2020, setting out why and how the two spheres of government can and should work together, with shared goals and a collective purpose - whilst ensuring that councils quite clearly retain their independence.

Developing a contemporary local government for Northern Ireland

The services and powers provided by councils have now been augmented by council-led community planning, development planning and management, enhanced economic development responsibilities, the power of general competence and soon, by regeneration/ enhanced community development responsibilities. These welcome and vital strategic additions will transform councils' ability to improve the lives and experience of their local people, businesses and visitors to their areas, and the quality of the areas as a whole.

NILGA views the recent reforms as just the first phase in the development of a stronger, modern local government in Northern Ireland.

The public expects efficiency at all times and is keen for a 'citizen led' normalisation of government structures and service provision, to suit the requirements of local people,

communities and economies. For this to happen, NILGA asserts that there must be more devolution of powers and resources to councils to enable them to better deliver for local people.

It is clearly understood that cost benefit analyses will be a necessary part of any redesign, as will taking an outcomes-based approach which fully considers the involvement of local communities and the impact of services across Northern Ireland.

For ease of reference, NILGA has listed a suite of services, considered to be the completion of the **first phase** of local government's contemporary development in Northern Ireland (i.e. post 1st April 2015).

Powers, Functions and Duties

Pre 2015		2015 Reform Gains
Leisure and recreation	Waste Management	General Power of Competence
Parks and open spaces	Economic Development	Partnership Panel
Food Safety & Standards	Tourism development	Community Planning
Pollution control	Community Relations	Planning
Building control	Emergency Planning	Economic development +
Welfare of animals	Museums & Art Galleries	Off street car parking
Dog control	Street naming & cleansing	Performance Improvement
Community centres	Consumer safety	Museums & Art Galleries +
Rural Development Partnerships	Policing & Community Safety Partnerships	
		2016 – Reform continues...
Licensing	Markets and Fairs	Urban and Rural Regeneration
Public Conveniences	Culture and Arts	Community development +
Burial grounds & crematoria		Advice services + (Key: + enhanced powers)
Representative Role		
Education and Library Boards (to 2015)		Education Authority(post-2015)
Local HSC Commissioning Groups		
Housing Council		
Consultative Role		
Health and Social Care Trusts		
Transport NI		
Power NI, NI Water and other utilities		
Post Office		

NILGA recommends that strategic discussion should take place within the sector in relation to the strengthening of contemporary local government.

Such discussion should include the consideration of potential enhanced responsibilities as follows:

- *European Programmes*
- *Local roads and transport including planning of local bus and ferry services*
- *Maintenance of the public realm*
- *Economic development including co-ordinating skills development*
- *Housing and the built environment*
- *Libraries, arts, culture and sport*
- *Community relations*
- *Environmental services, including conservation of natural and built heritage*
- *Fishery harbours*
- *Other services carried out in partnership with or on behalf of departments and other bodies e.g. certain health promotion and protection functions.*

Devolution of powers and functions such as these to councils is happening in neighbouring jurisdictions and across Europe. Is this something we should be exploring?

NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to the list of suggested 'potential enhanced responsibilities' outlined above. Are there any other functions that we should consider discussing? Are there any of the functions listed above that you feel are not suitable to be devolved to local councils?

Specific Asks 2016 – 2020

Furthermore, NILGA offers, for councils' consideration, a number of more 'specific asks' – issues that we would press the NI Executive to include in its next Programme for Government. NILGA asserts that these 'asks' are prerequisites for councils to deliver solutions for government.

1. A **power to enable** effective **pooling of budgets** by departments, public bodies and councils to facilitate the implementation of community plans and the achievement of agreed outcomes by March 2017.
2. To monitor the progress of the impending review of the NI **Code of Conduct** for Councillors.
3. A new **Civil Contingencies Bill**, recognising the local co-ordination role of councils in emergency planning activity; and ring-fencing funding for emergency planning and climate adaptation measures by January 2017.
4. Commitment from DFP to work with Treasury to **return 'ring fenced' Landfill Tax revenue directly to Northern Ireland councils** for investment in waste management infrastructure by December 2016.

In England, councils approach the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request a share of the revenue raised, with the Treasury deciding whether money should go back into local authority budgets.

5. To devolve powers and funding for **skills and employment support** to councils, by March 2017, albeit regionally policy co-ordinated, in partnership with higher education colleges, to accompany the devolution of local economic development and regeneration, so that investment decisions can be based directly on what local economies and local businesses need in terms of future and present workforces to create jobs.
6. To give councils in Northern Ireland the same **traffic management powers** similar to Wales and other regions, by December 2016, in order to reduce the costs, emissions and disruption from congestion and to assist in covering the costs of air quality monitoring requirements.
7. To include an elected member from each council on the Board of the new **Education Authority by November 2016**. (To be cross-referenced with 'specific ask' 5).
8. To develop an agreed, **shared**, cross-governmental, outcome-focused **performance management and improvement** system by September 2017 – so can we can improve together.
9. To develop a new **Northern Ireland European Regional Forum**, by March 2016, led by OFMDFM on behalf of regional government, and co-ordinated through NILGA within local government, to optimise knowledge and investment of Structural and Non-Structural Funds available through the EU.
10. To develop, by December 2016, more effective governance structures at regional, national and Brussels levels to **influence EU Policy and Investment Priorities** between now and 2020 – in order to develop a locally driven approach in this area of policy.

NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to the list of suggested '10 specific asks' outlined above. Is there anything else that should be included? Are there any 'asks' listed above that should not be included?

Delivering Better

Improving, innovative, high quality public services must be an aim of both spheres of government in Northern Ireland, as well as to ensure that duplication and over-administration are eliminated. It is likely that we will soon face alterations to the Barnett Formula, which will require all of NI government to work in a more joined-up way with fewer grants and a smaller national subsidy.

So, we are all expected to do more, better, with less. Longer term financial planning is vital.

Councils shouldn't be expected to provide services on the basis of annual grants or rates forecasting, without all the required data and related facts from departments.

NILGA is seeking a commitment from **all NI Executive departments to engage** with councils prior to making financial decisions that have an impact on community planning and related council budgets, within a time frame that acknowledges your fiscal budgeting and rate-setting timetable. *This needs to be more than a paper consultation exercise.*

NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to NILGA seeking a commitment from all NI Executive departments to engage with councils, prior to making financial decisions that will have an impact on local councils.

Guiding Principles

Enabling partnership through agreed principles and resources makes for better delivery. NILGA would assert that the following guiding principles are fundamental to the effectiveness of central – local government partnership working and to the Programmes for Government and Local Government.



NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to the proposed 'Guiding Principles' outlined above. Are they acceptable and should any be added or taken away?

An outcomes-based approach

NILGA asserts that we need a Programme for Government that fully recognises the roles of councils. There are many examples of how the work of councils contributes to achieving government outcomes, and which would be more effective if there was more integration of central-local efforts.

It is necessary to have a Programme for Government that commits departments to engage fully in the council-led community planning process, including the pooling of resources to have specific, single, easily measured outcomes.

NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to NILGA lobbying the NI Executive to ensure that the next Programme for Government includes local government as a key partner and that the PfG core targets are outcomes focused.

NILGA would invite councils to respond to the questions outlined above, and to provide any other comments that they wish to add by 31st December 2015 to Claire Bradley at the NILGA offices (c.bradley@nilga.org).

Please contact Derek McCallan (T: 028 9079 8979 E: d.mccallan@nilga.org) if your council would like any further information or a presentation on the proposals contained within this consultation.

Next Steps

Following receipt of responses from local authorities, NILGA intends to develop a framework Programme for Local Government in early 2016 which will be used to:

- **Recast** the relationship between NI assembly and local government, in doing so focusing delivery of co-ordinated local services and a stronger economy.
- **Deliver** a two-tier genuinely integrated government approach to meet local needs through a co-designed council led community planning process, delivered by a regional growth framework around agreed partnership working principles and actions.
- **Grow** stronger and cohesive communities, targeting investment and knowledge where needed most.
- **Allow** for greater control on local spending priorities and to allocate funding as councils (in partnership with communities) see fit, giving them greater fiscal autonomy.

- **Influence** the allocation and the delivery of sub-regional spending, as a formal part of the next Programme for Government in Northern Ireland.
- **Create** new public service partnership opportunities with the NI Executive, private and 'third' sectors, bringing better services to local places across all of Northern Ireland, for the next ten years.

NILGA is committed to supporting councils in this work by representing local government on regionally and nationally significant policy issues, to develop (if appropriate/ possible) consensus positions, facilitating engagement with government on regionally and nationally significant issues through the building of constructive working relationships. In council responses to NILGA's previous consultation on reconstituting NILGA, councils were keen that NILGA should invest time and effort in developing targeted campaigns to maximise outcomes for local government and the citizen. We hope that the development of a Programme for Local Government is testimony to this, which maximises outcomes for local councils and local communities.

Summary of Key Questions

1. Devolution of powers and functions such as these to councils are happening in neighbouring jurisdictions and across Europe. Is this something we should be exploring? NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to the list of suggested 'potential enhanced responsibilities' outlined above. Are there any other functions that we should consider discussing? Are there any of the functions listed above that you feel are not suitable to be devolved?
2. NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to the list of suggested '10 specific asks' outlined in the consultation document. Is there anything else that should be included? Are there any 'asks' listed above that should not be included?
3. NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to NILGA seeking a commitment from all departments to engage with councils; prior to making financial decisions that has an impact on council budgets.
4. NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to the proposed 'Guiding Principles' outlined in the consultation document. Are they acceptable and should any be added or taken away?
5. NILGA would be keen to hear the views of councils in relation to NILGA lobbying the NI Executive to ensure that the next Programme for Government includes local government as a key partner and that the PfG core targets are outcomes focused.

NILGA would invite councils to respond to the questions outlined above, and to provide any other comments that they wish to add by 31st December 2015 to Claire Bradley (c.bradley@nilga.org)

Report to:	Full Council
Subject:	Consultation response: Developing a Programme for Local Government 2016-2020
Date:	25 January 2016
Reporting Officer:	Liam Hannaway, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Johnny McBride, Change Manager

Decisions Required

Members are asked to note the contents of the report and consider and agree to:

- **The issues raised within this report be submitted as the Council's formal response to NILGA consultation: Developing a Programme for Local Government.**

1.0 **Purpose & Background**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set-out for Member consideration a number of issues which may form the basis of a Council response to NILGA consultation on developing a Programme for Local Government (2016-2020). A copy of the consultation document is provided at **Appendix I**.

1.2 NILGA, in conjunction with the eleven Councils, agreed at the last Partnership Panel meeting to develop a Programme for Local Government (2016-2020), with the aim of setting-out how the two sectors could work together on the wider implementation of the NI Executive's new Programme for Government (2016-2020). A Programme for Local Government (2016-2020) is the proposed mechanism for achieving this.

2.0 **Key Issues**

2.1 A summary of the issues that Members may wish to consider as the basis of a response are provided at **Appendix II**. These issues are structured according to the questions raised in the consultation document.

3.0 **Strategic Implications**

There are no strategic implications contained within this report, however the implementation of any of the proposals contained within the consultation document may have a number of the implications for the Council to consider in the future. These cannot be identified at this stage.

4.0 **Appendices**

- **Appendix I** – NILGA consultation document: Developing a Programme for Local Government (2016-2020); and
- **Appendix II** – Draft response for Member consider and approval.

APPENDIX II

Response to NILGA Consultation: Developing a Programme for Local Government (2016-2020)

Question	Basis of Response
	<u>General Comments</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation document as the Council considers it necessary, as part of the wider governance as well as the legislative changes in Northern Ireland, to secure closer alignment and integration between the ambitions of the Northern Ireland (NI) Executive and the Local Government (LG) sector.
1.0	<u>Devolution of Powers & Functions</u>
	<p>Q1(a) – Is this something that we should be exploring?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council considers it essential that a strategic discussion be urgently initiated with the NI Executive concerning the potential transfer of new functions and responsibilities to the sector. Indeed, the Council recalls a previous commitment made by the NI Executive to review the initial package that transferred on the 1 April 2015. The Council recognises that the transfer of Planning, coupled with the transfer of specific economic development powers, have the potential to transform the regeneration of the District, however this potential will not be maximised unless the delays to (DSD) regeneration powers are settled and the potential inclusion of local roads (as a key economic enabler) are considered. The absence of suitable roads infrastructure across the entire District is a considerable constraint to its longer-term regeneration. ▪ Any future discussion to transfer new responsibilities and powers must be framed within the context of the NI Executive securing and providing the Councils with the necessary resource capacity (primarily funding) to enable outcomes and benefits to be maximised at the local level. <p>Q1(b) – Are there any other functions (to the proposed list on page 7) that we should consider discussing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council considers the draft list as appropriate. The Council would also recommend the inclusion of a critical review of the functions and new powers transferred to-date, particularly within the context of the resource allocation which accompanied them. The lessons-learned from such an exercise must be used to inform any future discussions on the scope and nature of potential enhancements.

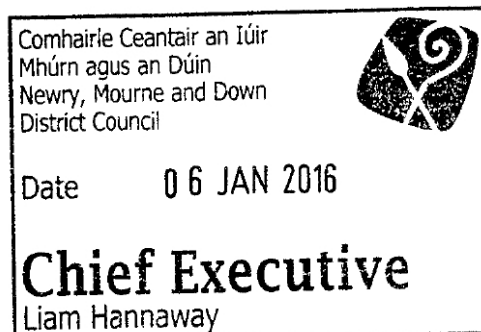
	<p>Q1(c) – Are there any other functions (listed on page 3) that you feel are not suitable to be devolved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council notes that in the majority of cases, the sector already performs a role (consultative, discretionary or otherwise) concerning the discharge of these functions, therefore a basis already exists for strengthening the role of Local Government in these areas. Council would wish to re-emphasise the need to consider the appropriate resourcing of any future functions and powers, as well as the need to secure a strategic fit with the suite of functions and powers already transferred. The NI Executive’s new Programme for Government, coupled with a Programme for Local Government should provide the rationale for these. The proposed transfer of Housing raises potential historical issues attached to its previous discharge in Local Government; therefore a clear rationale would need to be articulated to a wide-range of stakeholders, as well as the necessary governance frameworks established, in advance and as part of its transfer.
2.0	<p><u>10 Specific Asks</u></p>
	<p>Q2(a) – Is there anything else that should be included (as part of the ten specific asks on pages 3-4)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council notes the ten specific areas requested for consideration. Further information is requested on the practicalities and corresponding implications for the Council attached to a power to enable the effective pooling of budgets to facilitate the implementation of community plans and the achievement of agreed outcomes. ▪ The Council considers the inclusion of a transformational fund as critical for the future modernisation of the sector in-line with the ambitions of Local Government Reform (LGR). The Council notes the NI Executive has secured funding for the transformation of other sectors, including Health & Social Care as well as the reorganisation of NICS Departments. Assisting Councils with the provision of pump-prime financing is considered as essential for the investment in new technologies, implementing new ways of working, which will underpin the wider transformation of the sector. The Council further notes that this is a well-established practice in other jurisdictions where specific examples include using the proceeds from capital receipts to finance digital transformation etc.
3.0	<p><u>Commitment from all Departments to engage with Councils prior to making financial decisions</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council considers early engagement as essential for effective financial planning with the sector and considers the role of the Partnership Panel as critical.
4.0	<p><u>Guiding Principles</u></p>
	<p>Q4 – Are they (the Guiding Principles on page 5) acceptable & should any be added or taken away?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council considers the guiding principles previously established by the NI Executive as part of the vision for LGR as sufficient for future engagement between the NI Executive and Local Government. The challenge for the sector is ensuring the NI Executive “lives out” those principles that were previously established and that they remain relevant in the future.
5.0	<p><u>Local Government as a Key Partner & PfG Core Targets are Outcomes Focused</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council notes, in particular similar arrangements in Scotland, as well a recent developments concerning the role of Local Government there concerning the realisation of nationally agreed outcomes. The Council considers a similar arrangement in Northern Ireland is critical for the effective coalescing of various sectors (public, private, voluntary & community) in the delivery of improved outcomes. It is critical that the performance management arrangements are integrated (as far as possible) and do not create an unnecessary administrative burden on key stakeholders, including Local Government. ▪ The Council considers the achievement of this as a major milestone in securing practical, as well as true joined-up working between the key players in this jurisdiction.

9/4/55

the voice of local government

Mr Liam Hannaway
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
District Council Offices
Monaghan Row,
NEWRY
BT35 8DJ



Felp Coun

5th January 2016

Dear Mr Hannaway,

Role of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive – Your Council's Views

Further to a request from the Northern Ireland Housing Council, at its meeting on 11th December 2015, NILGA's Executive discussed the current role of the NI Housing Executive and **whether its previous role as a builder of social housing should be reinstated.**

Members of the Housing Council support the reinstatement of the role of NIHE as a house-building organisation. The Housing Executive has not been responsible for house building since 1996. The issues with the consistency of performance of Housing Associations were noted, as was the complexity of delivering housing provision in Northern Ireland, with many mixed tenure areas having developed over the last 20 years. It was also accepted that a wider debate would be necessary in relation to the financing of social housing provision.

The NILGA Executive was also concerned that due to the reduction in the number of Housing Council members to 11 and the workings of council d'Hondt systems, **not all political parties are represented on the Housing Council; a marked difference to the previous working arrangement.**

NILGA's Executive members having considered the issue, it was agreed that **as there was no clarity on the current local government view, and with new powers of local authorities requiring greater emphasis on matters such as housing, it was important to seek the views of member councils.**

I would be grateful if you could raise the issue of the role of the Housing Executive at a forthcoming council meeting, to enable the formation of a regional local government view on the matter. I have attached some background information at Appendix 1, which may help inform the discussion.

Thank you in anticipation of your Council's consideration of this matter, and it would be greatly appreciated if your response was received by **Monday, 29th February 2016.**

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Karen Smyth
Head of Policy

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Σ MCPalad - Canal mtg
Feb 16.



Appendix 1

Request from the Northern Ireland Housing Council in relation to NIHE house-building

At its November 2015 meeting, the Northern Ireland Housing Council, which presently has oversight responsibility for the activities of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), requested that NILGA provides a view as to whether NIHE should be a builder of social houses. The Housing Council is supportive of NIHE as a house-builder.

Background

DSD is currently looking at options to improve how social housing in Northern Ireland is delivered, to ensure that the best homes and services are provided to tenants and local communities. They are seeking a long term affordable and sustainable way of doing this, which they accept is a challenging aim.

They are looking at:

- What can be done better
- What else the department and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive should do to meet the needs of tenants and other customers
- What can be done to make sure future generations can access quality homes in places they want to live

They are working with a wide range of experts to:

- gather evidence on all aspects
- look at all possible options for providing a fair and equal service
- present the most suitable option(s) for Northern Ireland to the DSD Minister and the Northern Ireland Executive

Social housing provision in Northern Ireland

All new social housing is developed by registered housing associations through the Social Housing Development Programme funded by a mixture of Government grant (Housing Association Grant) and private borrowing. This private borrowing is secured by housing associations against future income from rents. Rents for new build social homes tend to vary considerably across the housing association movement.

Currently, Housing Association Grant can only be paid to housing associations registered by the Department for Social Development.

The Social Housing Development Programme

The Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) is a three year rolling programme of planned social housing construction and provision. The SHDP is split into three individual programme years and is a mechanism used by DSD to inform social housing funding investment decisions. The SHDP is the outcome of a formulation and assembly exercise undertaken by Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Responsibility for the actual development of social housing for rent rests with registered Housing Associations.

Role of DSD

The DSD role in the first instance is to determine the level of programmes to be provided, within the finance available for social housing provision. The required number of housing starts on site is set out in the Programme for Government targets and DSD have to secure the necessary funding. In relation to the SHDP, DSD is responsible for:

- Oversight and regulation of Associations to assess if they are eligible for entry to the SHDP;
- Approval of the 'New Projects Only' programme.

DSD is responsible for setting overall housing policy under the guidance of the Minister, as well as the allocation of funding for the programme. In addition it has the responsibility for the Housing Association Guide and for the registration, inspection and monitoring of Associations so as to provide assurance to the DSD Accounting Officer in relation to the overall corporate affairs, management, financial control and service delivery of Registered Housing Associations.

Role of NIHE

NIHE is responsible for:-

- The identification and analysis of housing need. This includes setting strategic guidelines for Targeting Social Need as well as the compilation of a two year prospectus identifying unmet housing need which consists of marker schemes (NIHE Corporate Services Division i.e. NIHE Corporate Planning, Area Planners and Supporting People);
- Ensuring, as far as possible, continuity in the programme in the roll forward process, so that Associations have confidence for forward planning purposes (NIHE Development Programme Group and NIHE Area Planners);
- Planning, formulating and drafting the SHDP to ensure that Associations are appropriately directed to meet identified housing needs within the allocated budget. NIHE then formulates the draft programme - based on need - within the parameters laid down by DSD (NIHE Development Programme Group in conjunction with NIHE Corporate Planning).
- Management of the SHDP and associated funding (NIHE Development Programme Group)

Role of Registered Housing Associations

Housing Associations are tasked with identifying sites suitable for social housing for rent provision; the planning and development of scheme proposals and their subsequent construction and project management to meet SHDP targets while achieving best value for money.

Both the Housing Executive and housing associations are regulated by the DSD. In 2009, 14 out of 33 housing associations failed their DSD inspection - 10 of which failed in the area of property development, causing seven (7) associations to be suspended from development. (NIAO, 2009). Associations which were suspended from development and their schemes had to be taken over by other associations or delayed.

Since then, the number of Housing Associations involved in housing development has decreased to four (4) –

- Grove Housing Association
- Helm Housing
- South Ulster Housing Association
- Harmony Homes

Three of the above Associations have been deemed to be providing ‘satisfactory assurance’ in their latest DSD inspection reports (2014).

One – Harmony Homes - received ratings of ‘limited assurance’ in relation to financial management, ‘no assurance’ in relation to property management, ‘satisfactory assurance’ in relation to housing management and ‘limited assurance’ in relation to corporate governance, leading to an overall rating of ‘limited assurance’.

Analysis

There is evidence that further to the publication of ‘Facing the Future’ Housing Strategy and the accompanying procurement strategy, some improvement has been achieved in the performance of Housing Associations in the procurement and development of social housing.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has not been involved in house-building since 1996, so there is no available evidence that a resumption of this responsibility would achieve the aims of the Housing Strategy or that they would have access to the necessary financial instruments available to ensure value for money to the ratepayer.

Should the NIHE resume house-building responsibilities it is likely to be much more reliant on public sector funding, and it is clear, by their own admission (More than Bricks, NIHE 2011) that their maintenance and private sector grants programmes have been heavily impacted by government cuts, in contrast to new-build targets being met or surpassed.

It is evident however, that demand for social housing has been increasing with a large waiting list, many of whom are in urgent need.

